

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



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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
NEWS CLIPPINGS

20 February 2017

Monday

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

NEWS HEADLINES

20 FEBRUARY 2017



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
AFP BATTALION JOINS WAR ON ILLEGAL DRUGS
 The military group to fight against the bad has soldiers to bring the Philippine drug enforcement agency to battle against drug syndicates.

AMULETS IN TIME OF TOKKANG

RIGHTS GROUP ALMSA FACES VS. DA LIMA

FERRY BARGE COLLIDE IN CEBU; 55 INJURED

US CORVIER PATROLS SOUTH CHINA SEA

ROBINSON DUNK NIGHTS UP ALL-STAR

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Agreement with Janet? Palace mum

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EU propaganda's 'fake news' says Duterte

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ACTIVE ARMOR PROTECTION

Erop to run for Manila mayor again in 2019

Daily Tribune
 WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

Napoles won't go scot-free—Palace

TRIBUNAL HAS JURISDICTION OVER PLEA

SC affirms Marcos protest on VP tally

By John Llanera

The Supreme Court (SC) has affirmed the jurisdiction of the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) to hear a protest against the victory of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in the 2016 presidential election.

Palace: Trillanes reshapes stale issues vs Duterte

Roque slaps Da Lima with 6th ethics suit

Sombero: I 'handed over' P50M to 2 ex-BI execs

By AFP/Reuters

Former Philippine National Bank (PNB) president Sombero admitted to handing over P50 million to two former executives of the bank.

Abu leader continues to remain militant threat despite AFP campaign

By AFP/Reuters

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) continues to remain a militant threat in Mindanao despite the AFP's campaign.

India sets southern region's 2nd national tide

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

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Department of Science and Technology
**Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and
Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA)**
Weather Division
ISO 9001:2008 Certified
Registry No. 01 100 1534769

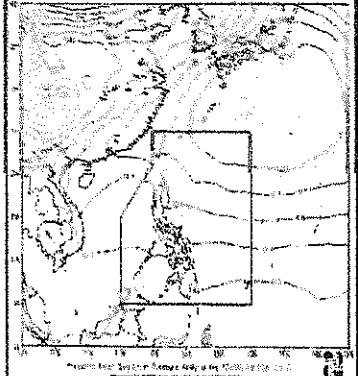
24-HOUR PUBLIC WEATHER FORECAST

ISSUED AT: 5:00 PM 19 FEBRUARY 2017

VALID BEGINNING: 5:00 PM TODAY UNTIL 5:00 PM TOMORROW

SYNOPSIS: TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT AFFECTING THE EASTERN SECTION OF CENTRAL LUZON. NORTHEAST MONSOON AFFECTING NORTHERN LUZON.

FORECAST: CLOUDY SKIES WITH MODERATE TO OCCASIONALLY HEAVY RAINS AND THUNDERSTORMS WHICH MAY TRIGGER FLASHFLOODS AND LANDSLIDES WILL BE EXPERIENCED OVER THE PROVINCES OF AURORA AND QUEZON. CLOUDY SKIES WITH LIGHT TO MODERATE RAINS AND ISOLATED THUNDERSTORMS IS EXPECTED OVER THE REGIONS OF BICOL, EASTERN VISAYAS, CARAGA AND DAVAO. CLOUDY SKIES WITH LIGHT RAINS WILL BE EXPERIENCED OVER METRO MANILA AND THE REGIONS OF ILOCOS, CAGAYAN VALLEY, CORDILLERA AND THE REST OF CENTRAL LUZON. PARTLY CLOUDY TO CLOUDY SKIES WITH ISOLATED RAINS OR THUNDERSTORMS WILL PREVAIL OVER THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.



MODERATE TO STRONG WINDS BLOWING FROM THE EAST TO NORTHEAST WILL PREVAIL OVER LUZON AND OVER THE EASTERN SECTION OF VISAYAS AND MINDANAO. THE COASTAL WATERS ALONG THESE AREAS WILL BE MODERATE TO ROUGH. ELSEWHERE, WINDS WILL BE LIGHT TO MODERATE COMING FROM THE NORTHEAST WITH SLIGHT TO MODERATE SEAS.

PAGTAYA: MAULAP NA KALANGITAN NA MAY KATAMTAMAN HANGGANG SA KUNG MINSAN AY MALAKAS NA MGA PAG-ULAN AT PAGKIDLAT-PAGKULOG NA MAARING MAGDULOT NG MGA PAGBAHA AT PAGGUHO NG LUPA ANG MARARANASAN SA MGA LALAWIGAN NG AURORA AT QUEZON. MAULAP NA KALANGITAN NA MAY MAHINA HANGGANG SA KATAMTAMANG MGA PAG-ULAN AT PULU-PULONG PAGKIDLAT-PAGKULOG ANG INAASAHAN SA MGA REHIYON NG KABIKULAN, SILANGANG KABISAYAAN, CARAGA AT DAVAO. MAULAP NA KALANGITAN NA MAY MAHIHINANG MGA PAG-ULAN ANG MARARANASAN SA KAMAYNILAA AT SA MGA REHIYON NG ILOCOS, CAGAYAN VALLEY, CORDILLERA AT SA NALALABING BAHAGI NG GITNANG LUZON. BAHAGYANG MAULAP HANGGANG SA MAULAP NA KALANGITAN NA MAY PULU-PULONG PAG-ULAN O PAGKIDLAT-PAGKULOG ANG IIRAL SA NALALABING BAHAGI NG BANSA.

KATAMTAMAN HANGGANG SA MALAKAS NA HANGIN MULA SA SILANGAN HANGGANG SA HILAGANG-SILANGAN ANG IIRAL SA LUZON AT SA SILANGANG BAHAGI NG KABISAYAAN AT MINDANAO. ANG MGA BAYBAYING-DAGAT SA MGA LUGAR NA ITO AY MAGIGING KATAMTAMAN HANGGANG SA MAALON. SA IBANG DAKO, ANG HANGIN AY MAHINA HANGGANG SA KATAMTAMAN MULA SA HILAGANG-SILANGAN NA MAY BANAYAD HANGGANG SA KATAMTAMANG PAG-ALON NG MGA KARAGATAN.

EXTREMES OF TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY FOR THE 24-HR PERIOD ENDING AT 4:00 PM TODAY AND RECORDED AT PAGASA WEATHER STATION, SCIENCE GARDEN, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY:

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE: 4:00 PM TODAY 28.3 °C	MAXIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY: 5:00 AM TODAY 93 %	
MINIMUM TEMPERATURE: 5:00 AM TODAY 23.0 °C	MINIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY: 4:00 PM TODAY 65 %	
TIDAL PREDICTION ALONG MANILA BAY (COURTESY OF NAMRIA)	ASTRONOMICAL INFORMATION OVER METRO MANILA	
LOW TIDE TOMORROW: 1:05 AM 0.18 METER	SUNSET/ SUNRISE	MOONRISE/ MOONSET & ILLUMINATION
HIGH TIDE TOMORROW: 4:47 PM 0.74 METER	SUNSET TODAY: 6:02 PM	MOONRISE TOMORROW: 12:58 AM
	SUNRISE TOMORROW: 8:18 AM	MOONSET TOMORROW: 12:40 PM
	SUNSET TOMORROW: 6:02 PM	ILLUMINATION TOMORROW: 42 %

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND QUERIES, PLEASE CALL AT TELEPHONE NUMBER 927-1335 OR LOG ON TO WWW.PAGASA.DOST.GOV.PH.

PREPARED BY: SFD

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WFPC BIR Road Diliman, Quezon City

Tel/Fax: +6329371541



Republic of the Philippines
 Department of Science and Technology
**PHILIPPINE ATMOSPHERIC, GEOPHYSICAL AND
 ASTRONOMICAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (PAGASA)**
 Weather Division
 ISO 9001:2008 Certified
 Registry No. 01 100 1534769

WFS-02
 Rev. 1/05-06-2016

24-Hour Weather Forecast and Extended Weather Outlook for Selected Cities:

ISSUED AT : 5:00 PM 19 FEBRUARY 2017
VALID BEGINNING : 5:00 PM TODAY UNTIL 5:00 PM TOMORROW

CITIES	24-Hr Weather, Winds and Sea Condition Forecast from 5PM today until 5PM tomorrow		Extended Weather Outlook Duration: 5PM until 5 PM of the following day				
	19 FEB		20 FEB	21 FEB	22 FEB	23 FEB	
Metro Manila	23 °C 29 °C	Moderate: Northeast Manila Bay: Moderate	22 °C 30 °C	22 °C 30 °C	25 °C 28 °C	26 °C 27 °C	
Tuguegarao City	20 °C 28 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast	21 °C 30 °C	20 °C 30 °C	25 °C 25 °C	25 °C 26 °C	
Laog City	24 °C 31 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	22 °C 31 °C	20 °C 31 °C	23 °C 28 °C	24 °C 29 °C	
Baguio City	15 °C 20 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast	12 °C 22 °C	13 °C 22 °C	15 °C 19 °C	15 °C 19 °C	
SBMA(Olongapo) / Clark Zone (Angeles City)	24 °C 29 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast Subic Bay: Moderate to Rough	23 °C 31 °C	23 °C 30 °C	26 °C 29 °C	27 °C 28 °C	
Tagaytay City	19 °C 27 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast	18 °C 27 °C	19 °C 27 °C	20 °C 28 °C	20 °C 28 °C	
Lipa City	23 °C 30 °C	Moderate: Northeast	22 °C 31 °C	22 °C 31 °C	25 °C 29 °C	26 °C 29 °C	
Legazpi City	24 °C 30 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	24 °C 30 °C	24 °C 30 °C	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C	
Puerto Princesa City	24 °C 30 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C	26 °C 30 °C	26 °C 30 °C	
Hilo City / Bacolod City	26 °C 31 °C	Moderate: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 30 °C	26 °C 29 °C	26 °C 29 °C	
Metro Cebu	25 °C 29 °C	Moderate: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate	24 °C 30 °C	24 °C 30 °C	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C	
Tacloban City	24 °C 29 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	24 °C 30 °C	23 °C 30 °C	25 °C 28 °C	26 °C 28 °C	
Cagayan de Oro City	23 °C 29 °C	Moderate: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate	23 °C 29 °C	23 °C 30 °C	24 °C 28 °C	24 °C 28 °C	
Valencia City	19 °C 29 °C	Moderate: Northeast	18 °C 28 °C	18 °C 28 °C	21 °C 25 °C	22 °C 26 °C	
Metro Davao	24 °C 31 °C	Moderate to Strong: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	24 °C 30 °C	24 °C 30 °C	25 °C 28 °C	25 °C 28 °C	
Zamboanga City	24 °C 33 °C	Moderate: Northeast Coastal Waters: Moderate	24 °C 32 °C	24 °C 32 °C	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C	

LEGEND:

	Clear Skies		Partly Cloudy to at times Cloudy with Rainshower and/ or Thunderstorms		Occasional Rains		Rains with Gusty Winds
	Partly Cloudy Skies		Cloudy Skies with Rainshower and/ or Thunderstorms		Monsoon Rains / Rains		Stormy
	Partly Cloudy to at times Cloudy with Rainshower		Light Rains				

PREPARED BY:
 "Tracking the sky... Helping the country"
 WFFC BIR Road Diliman Quezon City

END OF FORECAST

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20 February 2017

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER

Page: A1

AFP BATTALION JOINS WAR ON ILLEGAL DRUGS

STORY BY PHILIP C. TUBEZA

The military plans to field between 300 and 800 soldiers to help the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in intelligence work against drug syndicates

A8

AFP battalion joins drug war

FROM A1

By Philip C. Tubeza
@pctubezaINQ

The Armed Forces of the Philippines is planning to deploy a battalion-size task force to go after drug syndicates—not to engage in street operations—in President Duterte's war against illegal drugs, Gen. Eduardo Año said on Saturday.

The AFP chief of staff told reporters that between 300 and 800 soldiers would be fielded in response to the President's call on the military to take an active role in helping the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) fight the drug menace.

"We have no figures yet, but we are talking about a battalion-size formation," Año said at the Philippine Military Academy Alumni Homecoming in Baguio City.

The task force can be reinforced by additional troops, if the need arises, so that it could help PDEA with intelligence support and going after target, he said.

Human rights groups

Mr. Duterte last month suspended the participation of the Philippine National Police in his campaign following allegations that its senior officials were involved in an extortion racket under cover of his antinarcotics drive in which a South Korean businessman was kidnapped, murdered inside the PNP headquarters, cremated and the ashes flushed down the toilet.

The President has also said

he wants to grant troops powers to arrest "scalawag" police.

Mr. Duterte has brushed aside protests by human rights activists against his drug war, which has claimed more than 6,000 lives, including over 2,000 in police operations, but has reacted sharply to the brutal killing of the Korean businessman.

Año, however, ruled out a bloody operation by the task force, unlike some of the raids conducted by the national police.

"The AFP will not do that, we will not be involved in the street, we'll not be involved in running after street pushers," he said.

"The AFP will help PDEA in running after high-level drug syndicates," he added.

DDB resolution

PDEA Director General Isidro S. Lapeña announced on Saturday that the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) had approved a resolution tapping 1,280 more personnel and modifying the agency's structure to improve its intelligence and investigation divisions.

"The approved modifications in the organizational structure and staffing pattern of PDEA will be endorsed to the Department of Budget and Management for appropriate and immediate action," Lapeña said in a statement.

"Cognizant of the challenges posed by the enormity of the country's drug problem and the suspension of the conduct of antidrug operations by other law enforcement agencies, PDEA has to carry the brunt of all antidrug operations all over the country.

CHIEF

At

ia.army2012@gmail.com – Tel no. (02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

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The situation prompted us to strengthen our organizational structure,” he added.

PDEA workforce

PDEA currently has a “limited workforce” of 2,271 regular personnel deployed in its national services and regional offices.

Of this number, 1,274 are drug enforcement officers, who serve as frontliners of the anti-drug campaign, 761 are administrative personnel, and 236 are technical personnel.

“The approval of the DDB resolution means that an additional 1,280 warm and able bodies will be joining our roster as PDEA braces for a tough grind ahead,” Lapeña said.

The resolution also calls for the creation of a new PDEA counterintelligence service, which will include a financial investigation division (FID).

“The newly formed FID will strengthen our efforts against suspected money launderers, particularly drug syndicates, who ‘wash’ their illegal drug transactions and proceeds being routed through banks and other regulated entities,” Lapeña said.

More with less

Under the resolution, the Maritime Drug Enforcement Coordinating Center will be renamed technical operations support division.

“It is all about doing more with less. These changes will make PDEA sufficiently equipped and numerically upgraded to wage an all-out war against illegal drugs,” Lapeña said. —WITH A

REPORT FROM REUTERS

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WAR RESUMPTION

NPA KEEPS 6 GOV'T TROOPERS CAPTIVE

DAVAO CITY—The New People's Army (NPA) in Mindanao is now keeping captive six government troopers following President Duterte's declaration of an end to peace talks between his administration and rebel leaders.

The number of NPA captives rose to six following the capture of two government militiamen at a rebel checkpoint in Davao Oriental on Feb. 14.

In a statement, NPA Southern Mindanao spokesperson Rigoberto Sanchez said the rebels had set up the checkpoint in the village of Don Mariano in Lupon town, Davao Oriental, where militiamen Rene Doller, 34, and Carl Mark Nucos, 24, had been captured.

The two belonged to the Army's 72nd Infantry Battalion.

Rebels seized handguns from the two who, Sanchez said, are "being treated leniently."

The militiamen, Sanchez added, are also being investigated for "possible crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement."

Rebels, said Sanchez, are also investigating the militiamen's role in counterinsurgency operations.

NPA rebels operating in Central Mindanao have also sought to assure the families of their other captives that the soldiers are being treated well.

Also in captivity are Pfc Samuel Garay and Sgt. Solaiman Calocop who were captured in the town of Colombio, Sultan Kudarat province, on Feb. 1. —REPORTS FROM ALLAN NAWAL, EDWIN FERNANDEZ AND ELDIE AGUIRRE INQ.

20 February 2017



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Army soldier slain in Zambo attack

An Army trooper was killed by three unidentified men who barged into his home in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur on Saturday.

S/Sgt. Geatras Dante Solo was washing clothes at his home in Barangay San Pedro when he was killed at around 9:20 a.m., according to Superintendent Rogelio Alabata, spokesman for the Police Regional Office 9.

Solo died at the scene from gunshots to the cheek, head and leg.

Probers said they covered

three bullet shells for 9mm and .45 caliber pistols at the crime scene.

Witnesses said the gunmen escaped on a motorcycle.

Police believe the attack was in retaliation for the killing of a village leader suspected of supporting the New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

Meanwhile, in Davao City, government security forces thwarted a bombing attempt in a crowded area in Calinan district.

The Armed Forces Eastern Mindanao Command (East-

mincom) said soldiers from the Army's 3rd Infantry Battalion and Explosives and Ordnance Division detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) found in Barangay Inayangan.

The Eastmincom said residents discovered the IED and reported it to the Army.

Brig. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, chief of the Joint Task Force Haribon, said the NPA could have planted the IED.

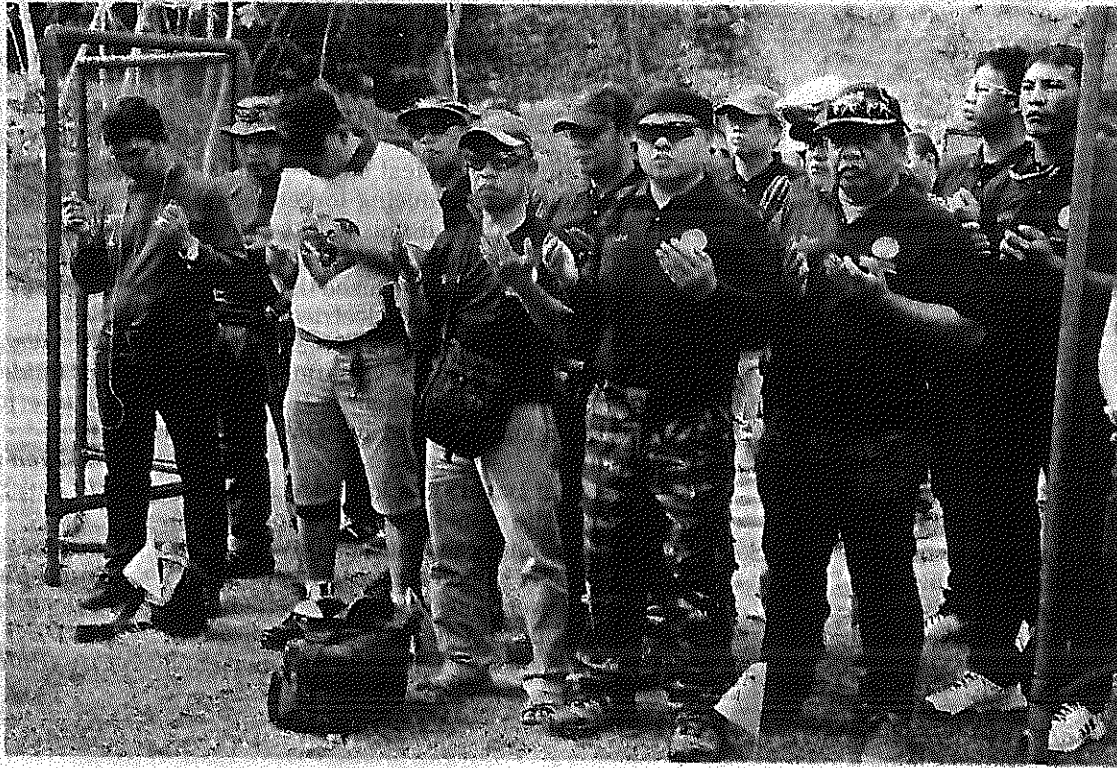
Gapay thanked the residents for their vigilance.

– Emmanuel Tupas, Edith Regalado

20 February 2017

THE TIMES 1911 THE
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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PRAYING FOR PEACE –
Participants from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) join together in prayer before taking part in the 'Shoot for Love' that was hosted by the Sixth Infantry Division in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao, Saturday. Also participating in the shootfest was Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza. (OPAPP)

February 2017



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Año: Military gaining momentum in offensives against terror groups

By Mario J. Mallari

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is claiming momentum in the ongoing offensives against terror groups in Southern Philippines, particularly the Abu Sayyaf Group and Maute Group.

This, despite the killing of two military intelligence operatives, one of them Maj. Jerico Mangalus, in a clash with members of the Maute group in Marawi City last Thursday.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año tagged the group of Otto Maute, one of the leaders of Maute group of Lanao del Sur, as the band encountered by elements of the Military Intelligence Group (MIG-10), led by Mangalus.

Año described Mangalus, a member of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class of 2002, as a good intelligence officer.

"I know him very well because he is a very good officer... when I was chief of the Intelligence Service he was working under me and I can say that he is really a very good intelligence officer," Año said.

Mangalus and his team were on an intelligence operation in Marawi

City when they encountered the group of Maute – resulting in his death and another soldier.

In spite of Mangalus' killing in a firefight with Maute group, Año said that the military has the momentum in the ongoing campaign against terror groups in Sulu, Basilan and Tawi Tawi – citing recent combat scores against enemies of the state that resulted in the neutralization of 10 terrorists.

Año is optimistic that the military is on track with the six-month self-imposed deadline set to significantly defeat all terrorist groups in Southern Philippines, particularly the Abu Sayyaf and Maute Group.

He said operations are being conducted by various military units in Sulu against the group of Radullan Sahiron, in Basilan against the band of Furuji Indama, in Tawi Tawi area against those involved in kidnapping, and in Lanao del Sur against Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute group.

"We are doing these simultaneously not only to put pressure to these groups but to reduce their capacity to fight and their will to fight... there are good developments in the campaign, and

the attitude of our soldiers to fight is also good, they are motivated," Año said.

"The momentum is on our side," he added.

The AFP chief said there is no need to kill all the terrorists as he stressed that strategic victory would come when they lose their will to fight, stop with their terror activities or surrender.

Año also cited the all-out support being provided by the general headquarters and the major service commands to the operating troops, and the additional fund approved by President Duterte.

Duterte ordered the AFP to destroy the terror groups operating in Southern Philippines, particularly the Abu Sayyaf which still holds 27 hostages, mostly foreigners. In response, Año set the six-month deadline for the AFP to defeat the terrorists.

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AFP foils deadly landmine attack in Davao City

By Zaida delos Reyes -Palanca

GOVERNMENT troops has foiled what could have been another deadly explosion when they recovered on Saturday an improvised explosive device (IED) planted by the New People's Army at a populated area in Calinan District, Davao City.

Joint Task Force Haribon Civil Military Operation officer Major Ezra Balagtey said pursuing troops of the 3rd Infantry Battalion and Army Explosive and Ordnance Division (EOD) discovered the IED in Inayangan, Calinan District.

Balagtey was told by residents in the area that the rebels planted a landmine on the road.

Balagtey said the IED they recovered was composed of anti-vehicle land-

mine, explosive blasting machine, improvised blasting cap and electric wire.

Joint Task Force Haribon commander Brigadier General Gilbert I. Gapay condemned the move since the area is being frequented by many civilians.

"Laying of landmines

in busy roads and populated areas by the NPA is a wanton disregard of the safety of the people which is a violation of their human rights," Gapay said.

Gapay lauded the residents for their vigilance.

Last Thursday, two soldiers were killed while

15 others were injured after their convoy hit a landmine of the NPA around 4 p.m. along the boundary of Barangay Lacson and Barangay Lamanan in Davao City.

The slain soldiers were identified as Cpl. Michael D. Yadao and Pvt. Virnel M. Damondon.

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Soldier hurt in Zambo gun attack

A SOLDIER washing clothes inside his house was injured after three unidentified suspects shot him Saturday morning in Zamboanga del Sur.

The victim was identified as Sgt. Geatras Dante Solo, 50, a member of Philippine Army and assigned at the Military Intelligence Battalion (MIB)

in Pulacan Labangan, Zamboanga del Sur.

Police said the incident occurred around 9:20 a.m. at the victim's house in Purok Bombel 2, Barangay San Pedro, Duminagas, Zamboanga del Sur.

The victim was washing clothes when the suspects onboard a motorcycle arrived and peppered the victim with bullets.

The victim sustained gunshot wounds in the head, cheek, ear and left leg and was immediately rushed to the nearest hospital.

The police found two empty shells of 9mm pistol, one slug of 45 ammunition and a deformed slug.

Zaida delos Reyes-Palanca

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Army foils another NPA landmine attack

By **ZAIDA DELOS REYES-PALANCA**

GOVERNMENT forces foiled what could have been a deadly landmine explosion following the recovery of improvised explosive device (IED) planted by New People's Army (NPA) rebels in a populated area Saturday afternoon in Calinan District, Davao City.

Joint Task Force Har-

bon Civil Military Operations (CMO) officer Maj. Ezra Balagtey said pursuing troops from 3rd Infantry Battalion and Army Explosive and Ordnance Division (EOD) discovered and recovered the IED along a populated area in Inayangan, Calinan District.

The troops discovered the IED after residents in the area reported that the rebels planted landmine along the road.

In response to the

report, the troops immediately proceeded to the area and rendered safety procedure on the IED.

Balagtey said the IED was composed of anti-vehicle landmine, explosive blasting machine, improvised blasting cap and electric wire.

Joint Task Force Harbon commander Brig. Gen. Gilbert I. Gapay condemned the move of the NPA in laying landmines and IEDs in areas frequented by civilians,

adding that it will jeopardize the safety of the communities.

"Laying of landmines in busy roads and populated areas by the NPAs is a wanton disregard of the safety of the people which is a violation of their human rights," Gapay said.

Gapay also thanked the community for its vigilance and for reporting the incident to their office that led to the safety of everyone.

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Soldier shot, critical

A SOLDIER was critically wounded when three unidentified suspects shot him while washing his clothes inside their house the other day in Zamboanga del Sur.

The victim was identified as SSgt. Geatras Dante Solo, 50, married, member of Philippine Army and assigned at the Military Intelligence Battalion (MIB) in Pulacan Labangan, Zamboanga del Sur.

Reports reaching Camp Crame showed that the incident occurred at around 9:20 a.m. inside the victim's house at Purok Bombel 2, Barangay San Pedro, Duminigas, Zamboanga del Sur.

The victim was washing his clothes when the suspects onboard a motorcycle arrived and peppered the victim with bullets.

The victim sustained gunshot wounds in the head, left cheek, back portion of the left ear and left leg.

Recovered from the crime scene were two empty shells of caliber 9mm pistol, one slug of caliber 45 ammunition and one deformed slug. **Zaida Delos Reyes-Palanca**

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Gov't eyes new pension plan for military, police

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

The government will pitch a new pension system for uniformed men to arrest the ballooning costs of benefits for retired military and police personnel.

Budget Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno said in a forum last week that paying for the pension of military personnel from the annual budget was "not sustainable."

"The day will come that 70 percent of their budget will go to pension and not to those in active service," Diokno said

The Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council during last month's meeting "agreed that there should be a review of [uniformed personnel's] pension," the budget chief said

"We will legislate a new plan for them," he added.

According to Diokno, only the new entrants to the service will be covered by the new pension scheme

"Those paid in the past will continue to be paid [the same way]. That's basic—you don't take that away from them," he said.

The budget chief said that

among the ideas he had to address was transferring police pension to the state-run Government Service Insurance System since the Constitution states that the Philippine National Police is civilian in nature.

Diokno said another proposal was to hire nonmilitary and police for services provided within camps.

The Cabinet-level interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) had flagged the ballooning military pension as a fiscal risk.

"The pension costs of all uniformed services are rapidly

increasing every year. The problem is mainly attributable to the features present in all existing retirement laws of the uniformed services—pension entitlement of a retiree is automatically adjusted based on the prevailing scale of base pay for similarly ranked active personnel; pension is noncontributory in nature, hence budget comes from the annual general appropriations of the government; and early entitlement to pension benefits even before attaining the compulsory retirement age of 56," the DBCC said in its Fiscal Risks Statement report for 2015-2016. INQ

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER

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Reds open to bilateral ceasefire

**By Karlos Manlupig
and Philip C. Tubeza**
@Team_Inquirer

DAVAO CITY—The future of a more stable ceasefire looks bright.

Jesus Dureza, presidential adviser on the peace process, expressed appreciation over the public pronouncement of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to negotiate and craft a bilateral ceasefire agreement.

“We welcome and respect the positive position coming

from the leadership of the CPP, NPA (New People’s Army), NDFP (National Democratic Front of the Philippines),” Dureza said in a statement.

The CPP, in a statement, said the originally scheduled meeting to discuss the details of a bilateral ceasefire agreement in The Netherlands on Feb. 22 to 27 could proceed if President Duterte decides to send the government negotiating panel.

“The Party and the New People’s Army reiterate their support for efforts to forge a bilateral

ceasefire agreement. The revolutionary forces are encouraged by the previous statements of President Duterte that all political prisoners will be released within 48 hours once the bilateral ceasefire agreement is signed,” the CPP said.

But the CPP admitted that negotiating the details of the ceasefire agreement would be challenging.

“We anticipate that negotiations concerning the terms of reference of a bilateral ceasefire agreement will be most difficult. The revolutionary forces

are bound by principle to assert the withdrawal of the AFP’s operating troops from areas under the sway of the revolutionary government,” the CPP said.

As a positive gesture, the CPP directed the New People’s Army to immediately release all captured soldiers and police officers.

President Duterte earlier canceled the negotiations following the NPA’s announcement to end its own ceasefire effective Feb. 10.

The NPA cited the alleged nonrelease of political prisoners and the continuing presence

of government forces in the communities as reasons for terminating its ceasefire.

Over 30 armed hostilities have already been reported since then.

The NDFP and President Duterte recently hinted at the possibility of resuming the peace negotiations, with both working on backchannel talks.

Labor Secretary and chief government peace negotiator Silvestre Bello III on Sunday welcomed the offer of the CPP to negotiate a bilateral ceasefire agreement with the government.

Bello said he would relay the offer to President Duterte and the matter could be taken up during Monday night’s dinner meeting with the three members of the Left in the Cabinet: National Anti-Poverty Commission chair Liza Maza, Social Welfare Secretary Judy Taguiwalo and Agrarian Secretary Rafael Mariano.

“It (the peace offer) is a very good development. If they continue to show goodwill, then the President might reconsider his decision about the peace talks,” Bello said in a phone interview. **INQ**

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Reds ready for truce, want to restart talks

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) yesterday ordered its armed wing the New People's Army (NPA) to release the six soldiers and policemen they are holding captive and called for a bilateral ceasefire agreement with the government.

In a statement yesterday, the CPP said the release of the six "prisoners of war" is their "positive gesture" to continue peace negotiations with the government.

This came days after the peace talks folded as the NPA lifted its unilateral ceasefire. President Duterte responded by terminating the ceasefire and peace talks.

The CPP ordered the release of Pfc. Edwin Salan who was captured in Alegria, Surigao del Norte on Jan. 29; Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and Pfc. Samuel Garay who were

captured in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on Feb. 2, PO2 Jerome Natividad captured in Talakag, Bukidnon on Feb. 9, and paramilitary Rene Doller and Carl Mark who were captured in Lupon, Davao Oriental on Feb. 14.

The CPP said "the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) can cooperate by withdrawing all troops in and around the areas where the prisoners of war will be released to pave the way for their safe and orderly release."

If the AFP will cooperate, all six captives can return to their families before or during the scheduled peace negotiations in the Netherlands next week, the CPP added.

The CPP also ordered the NPA commands in charge of the custodial units "to work closely with third party facilitators."

The CPP said that if Duterte is really "obsessed with peace" as the government peace panel said, "he can heed the people's clamor and reverse his earlier pronouncements terminating peace negotiations."

"The CPP earnestly encourages him to do so. He would surely not want to set aside the achievements attained during the first three rounds of the peace talks and waste the opportunity to leave a legacy of peace," the group added.

The bilateral ceasefire agreement has been an issue in the peace negotiations as Duterte has refused to give in to the call of the CPP-NPA to release 400 political detainees unless the communist group signs a document signifying ceasefire.

The peace negotiations folded just a week after the third round of formal talks

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was concluded in Rome, Italy. The third round ended without any agreement on a bilateral ceasefire.

The CPP-NPA said yesterday that should Duterte decide to send the government negotiating panel and emissaries to the scheduled peace talks, negotiations for a bilateral ceasefire agreement can proceed as scheduled on Feb. 22 to 27 in the Netherlands.

And to ensure success of the negotiations, the National Democratic Front (NDF)-CPP said, the government panel can help facilitate the travel of the NDF's ceasefire committee members and consultants.

"The Party and the NPA reiterate their support for efforts to forge a bilateral ceasefire agreement. The revolutionary forces are encouraged by the previous statements of President Duterte that all political

prisoners will be released within 48 hours once the bilateral ceasefire agreement is signed," the NDF-CPP-NPA said.

"We anticipate that negotiations concerning the terms of reference of a bilateral ceasefire agreement will be most difficult. The revolutionary forces are bound by principle to assert the withdrawal of the AFP's operating troops from areas under the sway of the revolutionary government."

"However difficult, the revolutionary forces are willing to work with government negotiators to hammer out a bilateral ceasefire agreement that will be mutually acceptable and enforceable," they added.

Troops clash anew with NPA

But last Saturday, troops from the 53rd Infantry Battal-

ion clashed with NPA rebels in Zamboanga del Sur.

Police said fighting erupted when troops from the 53rd Infantry Battalion encountered the NPA members shortly before noon at Barangay Gasa, Lakewood town.

A platoon of soldiers engaged the NPA rebels under the Samahang Yunit Propaganda of Western Mindanao Regional Party Committee (SYP-WMRPC) for about 10 minutes at Sitio Lanayan, according to Supt. Rogelio Alabata, spokesman of Police Regional Office 9.

Alabata said the rebels were forced to retreat after one of its members was killed in the encounter. The troops recovered the slain rebel, who was not immediately identified but was tagged as member of the SYP-WMRPC – **Edith Regalado, Roel Pareño**

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CPP wants truce, peace talks

By ANTONIO L. COLINA IV
and FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

DAVAO CITY – The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) reiterated yesterday its call on President Duterte to reverse his previous order calling

off peace talks with the communist insurgents, and expressed willingness to return to the negotiation table on February 22 to discuss a bilateral ceasefire between the two parties.

In a statement, it said “(the CPP) and the New People’s Army (NPA) reiterate their support ▶13

CPP wants truce...

for efforts to forge a bilateral ceasefire agreement.”

“The revolutionary forces are encouraged by the previous statements of President Duterte that all political prisoners will be released within 48 hours once the bilateral ceasefire agreement is signed,” the CPP added.

The Philippine Government (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF), the CPP-NPA’s political arm, were supposed to meet on February 22 to 27 in Utrecht, Netherlands to discuss the proposal for a bilateral ceasefire that was formally submitted by the government to the communist side in the last round of talks in Rome, Italy last January 25.

The two parties were also supposed to oversee the deposit of the list of NDF-CPP-NPA consultants, who are participating in the talks and are protected by the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), in a safety deposit box.

The fourth round of formal talks was also set on April 2 in Oslo, Norway.

The communists added that the GRP can help facilitate the travel of the NDF’s ceasefire committee members and consultants to ensure success of the negotiations in Utrecht, which is only two days away.

NPA may release 6 ‘prisoners of war’

As a gesture of goodwill, the CPP called on the NPA to expedite the release of the six prisoners of war (POWs) who were captured in different parts of Mindanao ever since the communist group abruptly cancelled its unilateral ceasefire.

Those in NPA custody are PFC Edwin Salan, who was captured in Alegria, Surigao del Norte on January 29; Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and Pfc Samuel Garay, captured in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on February 2; PO2 Jerome Natividad, captured in Talakag, Bukidnon on February 9, and alleged “paramilitary” members Rene Doller and Carl Mark, both captured in Lupon, Davao Oriental on February 14.

“The NPA commands in charge of

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the custodial units can work closely with third party facilitators. The AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) can cooperate by withdrawing all troops in and around the area where the POWs will be released to pave the way for their safe and orderly release," it added.

The POWs can be allowed to return to their families before or during the scheduled GRP-NDFP peace talks in The Netherlands, the CPP added.

Terms of reference

The leftist group also said it was anticipating that the talks on the "terms of reference" of a bilateral ceasefire document will be difficult, but pledged to work with GRP negotiators to forge a bilateral document "that will be mutually acceptable and enforceable."

"The revolutionary forces are bound by principle to assert the withdrawal of the AFP's operating troops from areas under the sway of the revolutionary government," it said.

Top officials favor talks

President Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza and GRP Peace Panel Chairman Silvestre Bello III welcomed the CPP position as both hoped that this would be the "compelling reason" that President Duterte had cited as the only reason why he will turn back on his order to call off the talks.

"We share the same commitment to work for just and lasting peace in the land," said Dureza.

"It is now up to the President, whatever he orders, we will follow," said Bello, who added that setting the February 22 meeting in Utrecht was "still very feasible."

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año said the military was not totally closing its door on peace negotiations with communist rebels.

In an interview during the media fellowship night at the Pine Breeze Hotel in Baguio City Saturday night, Año said the 125,000-strong military force was very supportive of the peace process, but nevertheless maintained that they will not allow communist NPA guerrillas from conducting atrocities and

hamper the lives of people in various communities around the country.

"The Armed Forces, more than anyone else, it is the soldiers who want the peace talks to succeed," Año told reporters. "But we will not allow the CPP-NPA to conduct atrocities and similar activities and imperil the lives of the ordinary people in the community."

Meanwhile, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon said that he is one in favor of peace negotiations getting back on track.

"Well, I, myself, am in favor of resuming the peace talks. You know who, where I came from. I was in OPAPP (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process) before. I was a combatant and the first people who would want this are the combatants," Esperson said.

"I was also a frontline officer from the time I was a lieutenant until I was a battalion commander in Agusan and Brigade commander in Jolo, Zamboanga, Cotabato, and Basilan. So who doesn't want peace especially if you see your own men part of the casualties? My life was also put in danger many times," he said.

However, Esperson said that peace will not be attained "if the other group is doing war."

"While we are doing war, we cannot attain (or) have a modicum of progress in the area," Esperson said.

NDF consultant's motion

As this developed, Rafael Baylosis, one of the NDF consultants who were ordered freed by the government but is now being sought for recommitment to jail, filed a motion with the Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) to defer the resolution on the government's motion seeking their rearrest.

In a manifestation filed on February 14, Baylosis, through his legal counsel, asked the Manila RTC Branch 32 to defer ruling on the motion of the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) to revoke the bail granted to him.

Baylosis asked the court to defer the resolution on the motion "so as not to render moot and academic the efforts toward the resumption of the peace negotiations." (With reports from Yas D. Ocampo and Cris Odronia)

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Clashes with NPA increasing, says AFP

BY VICTOR REYES

BAGUIO CITY. – Armed Forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año said government forces have been engaging New People's Army rebels twice a day since February 4 when President Duterte terminated the peace talks with the communists.

"Since February 4 to February 18, there were about 30 encounters already. So if you compute, it's like having two encounters a day," Año told reporters on Saturday night.

Año said the armed engagements with the insurgents have resulted in the death of 12 rebels while 22 rebels have been arrested or surrendered during the same period.

"We have neutralized around 40 NPAs (since February 4) - 12 body count, 15 captured and about 17 surrendered. It's 40 plus, that is so far the statistics (in the fight against the communists)," said Año.

Duterte lifted the government's unilateral truce and terminated the peace talks in the wake of a series of NPA attacks in various parts of the country that had claimed that lives of several soldiers, including a junior officer, and abduction of three others.

"We are intensifying our operations more on the CPP-NPA. We need both military pressure on our side and social pressure from the non-military side so that they will be forced not only to go back to the negotiation table but probably choose the path of peace," said Año.

Año said the military is open to the resumption of peace negotiations with the communists. Latest military estimates indicate that the NPA has more than 3,000 men, mostly in the northeastern Mindanao area.

Año said one of the "compelling reasons" for the Duterte administration to revive the peace talks is for the communists to stop their extortion activities or revolutionary tax, a major source of funds for the rebels.

National Security adviser Hermogenes Esperon, for his part, said he has supported the peace process with the communists but the recent excesses of the NPA justify the termination of the talks.

"You know where I came from," said Esperon, referring to his military background. He said combatants, like him, are for peace because they are the ones sent to the frontlines to address insurgency.

Esperon served as the Army chief and later Armed Forces chief during the Arroyo administration. After his retirement from military service, he was appointed as presidential adviser on the peace process.

"I'm a combatant and the first people who would want this (peace) are the combatants. I was a frontline officer, starting from my lieutenant days," said Esperon, who commanded a battalion in the Agusan provinces and headed two Army brigades, one in North Cotabato and the other in Basilan.

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The Manila Times

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'Reds' release govt men, seeks resumption of talks

COMMUNIST rebels on Sunday announced the release of six uniformed government personnel it had held as "prisoners of war," in a show of goodwill to convince the Duterte administration to return to peace negotiations.

In a statement, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), said they remained optimistic negotiations for a bilateral ceasefire agreement would proceed as scheduled on February 22 to 27

► TalksA2

TALKS FROM A1

'Reds' release 6 govt men, call for resumption of peace talks

in the Netherlands

The CPP said that if the President was "obsessed with peace" as his peace negotiators had claimed, "he can heed the people's clamor and reverse his earlier pronouncements terminating peace negotiations."

"The CPP earnestly encourages him to do so. He would surely not want to set aside the achievements attained during the first three rounds of GRP-NDFP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines-

National Democratic Front of the Philippines) peace talks and waste the opportunity to leave a legacy of peace," it said.

To show goodwill, the CPP said it had directed all concerned NPA units to release three soldiers, a police officer and two militiamen the rebels seized during a series of attacks against security forces that prompted Duterte to cancel the peace talks on February 4.

The CPP identified the captives as Pfc. Edwin Salan, Sgt. Solaiman

Calucop and Pfc. Samuel Garay, Police Officer 2 Jerome Natiridad, and militiamen Rene Doller and Carl Mark.

The men were held hostage during the series of attacks in Sultan Kudarat, Bukidnon and Davao Oriental. Most of the attacks happened at the height of peace negotiations and the NPA's unilateral ceasefire, which infuriated the President.

"Assuming the cooperation of local AFP commands, all [prisoners of war] can return to their fami-

lies before or during the scheduled negotiations in The Netherlands," the CPP said.

To ensure success of the negotiations, the CPP said the GRP should help facilitate the travel of the NDFP's ceasefire committee members and consultants.

"However difficult, the revolutionary forces are willing to work with the GRP negotiators to hammer out a bilateral ceasefire agreement that will be mutually acceptable and enforceable," it said.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo

Año had said the military was willing to support the resumption of peace talks.

But the military chief reiterated that the AFP has a duty to stop atrocities of rebel groups, particularly attacks on private and public installations, extortion and killings.

"We are not closing our doors on peace negotiations. The Armed Forces, more than anyone, wants peace. The soldiers want peace," he pointed out.

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Reds dangle bilateral truce, 'POWs' release

By Gerry Baldo

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP-CC) offered yesterday a possibility of a bilateral ceasefire on top of the release of six soldiers and paramilitary men it has abducted if President Duterte agrees to the resumption of the peace negotiations between the communist group and the government.

President Duterte can send his negotiating panel to The Netherlands for talks on a bilateral ceasefire agreement from February 22 to 27,

the CPP said in a statement.

"If President Duterte decides to send his negotiating panel and emissaries to the upcoming scheduled talks between the ceasefire committees, negotiations for a bilateral ceasefire agreement can proceed as scheduled on February 22 to 27 in The Netherlands. To ensure success of the negotiations, the GRP can help facilitate the travel of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) ceasefire committee member and consultants," the CPP said in a statement released on Sunday morning.

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Reds dangle bilateral truce, 'POWs' release

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"We anticipate that negotiations concerning the terms of reference of a bilateral ceasefire agreement will be most difficult. The revolutionary forces are bound by principle to assert the withdrawal of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) operating troops from areas under the sway of the revolutionary government," CPP added.

NPA units have said that soldiers and paramilitary forces continued to occupy 500 communities nationwide and operate against guerrillas despite the ceasefire declared by Duterte, forcing the NPA to move to avoid clashes until a spate of firefights ensued starting in December 2016.

"However difficult, the revolutionary forces are willing to work with GRP negotiators in hammering out a bilateral ceasefire agreement that will be mutually acceptable and enforceable," CPP stressed.

Prisoners of war?

As a gesture of goodwill, the CPP said it has instructed all units of the New People's Army (NPA) currently holding six prisoners of war (POWs) to expedite the release of these POWs.

CPP said the six POWs under NPA custody are: Private First Class (Pfc) Edwin Salan, captured in Alegria, Surigao del Norte on January 29; Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and Pfc Samuel Garay, captured in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on February 2; PO2 Jerome Natividad, captured in Talakag, Bukidnon on February 9; paramilitary Rene Doller, and; paramilitary Carl Mark, captured in Lupon, Dayao Oriental on February 14.

"The NEA commands in charge of the custodial units can work closely with third party facilitators. The AFP can cooperate by withdrawing all troops in and around the area where the POWs will be released to pave the way for their safe and orderly release. Assuming the cooperation of local AFP commands, all POWs can return to

their families before or during the scheduled negotiations in The Netherlands," CPP-CC said.

"The Party and the New People's Army (NPA) reiterate their support for efforts to forge a bilateral ceasefire agreement. The revolutionary forces are encouraged by the previous statements of GRP President Duterte that all political prisoners will be released within 48 hours once the bilateral ceasefire agreement is signed," the party leadership stressed.

"According to the GRP peace panel chair, GRP President Duterte is 'obsessed with peace.' If so, he can heed the people's clamor and reverse his earlier pronouncements terminating peace negotiations," the party said.

"The CPP earnestly encourages him to do so. He would surely not want to set aside the achievements attained during the first three rounds of GRP-NDF peace talks and waste the opportunity to leave a legacy of peace," CPP-CC said.

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AFP launches new operation vs Abus

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

The military has launched a new operation against the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan led by Isnilon Hapilon, who is also considered as the leader of the Islamic State (IS) in the country.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año said the Western Mindanao Command (West- uncom) is acting on President Duterte's orders to neutralize the terrorist group.

"The operation has started. We will intensify it. Our target is still Hapilon, who is still in the area," Año said.

He said the six-month target to defeat the Abu Sayyaf is a self-imposed timeline, noting

the AFP assesses its campaigns every six months.

"But our order to our troops is to intensify operations and as soon as possible we should reduce or eliminate the Abu Sayyaf," Año said.

Duterte has ordered the military to hunt down Hapilon.

"The Sulu-based Abu Sayyaf is focused on kidnapping activities and the Basilan group under Hapilon

on assimilating the IS. As I predicted, the IS would find its way to the Philippines," Duterte said during a gathering of the Philippine Military Academy Alumni Homecoming on Saturday.

He said Hapilon was wounded during a recent encounter with government security forces.

"I have directed the AFP and the PNP to continuously contain the IS threat through intensified operations using all available assets and resources. This is the only way to secure Mindanao," Duterte said, referring to the Philippine National Police.

Año said the military's con-

tinuous operations against the Abu Sayyaf and Maute group was meant to pressure the enemy and reduce their capacity and will to fight.

Two months into the six-month timeline to defeat the terror group, Año said troops on the ground are making progress.

"They are motivated and they are really doing their job even beyond the call of duty," he said.

Año said the support given by the general headquarters to the operating units, including the additional funds approved by the President, is boosting the AFP's morale and capability.

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Rogue cops won't be tasked to hunt down ASG – Año

The 300 errant cops who will be sent to Basilan tomorrow can now heave a sigh of relief after no less than the military chief of staff assured that they would not be tapped to hunt down the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

Gen. Eduardo Año, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), also disclosed that the deployment of the 311 cops from Metro Manila will not be concentrated in Basilan alone.

"Our discussion with the PNP (Philippine National Police) is not only Basilan but they will beef up forces in priority areas," said Año.

"Their main job is to take care of the town centers, urban centers so that the AFP will concentrate on the hinterlands," he added.

Año admitted that the arrival of 311 policemen in conflict-torn areas in Mindanao is a big boost in terms of augmentation of the existing police and military forces.

He said the police deployment means more than 300 pairs of eyes watching out for threats against civilians in urban centers.

The 311 policemen from five police districts in Metro Manila, headed by an official with a rank of superintendent (lieutenant colonel in the military), who are facing various offenses from habitual tardiness to involvement in illegal drugs, will be flown to Zamboanga City on Tuesday on board a C-130 cargo plane.

They will then be immediately shipped to Basilan as instructed by President Duterte.

"They are of big help in urban centers especially in manning checkpoints and in the conduct of civil military operations," said Año.

Año earlier disclosed that they have conducted another wave of operation against the Abu Sayyaf after the latest seriously wounded Basilan-based commander Isnilon Hapilon.

"They are important additional manpower in some areas. And it means some of the soldiers will be freed of their duties (in urban centers) and then we will have more warm bodies to run after Abu Sayyaf," said Año. (Aaron Recuenco)

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DEFINING THE NEWS

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ASG-backed alien jihadists regrouping

By Francisco Tuyay

DOZENS of foreign jihadists were among the Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf members under Isnilon Hapilon who left their home base in a bid to establish an Islamic State (ISIS) stronghold in southwestern Mindanao, a military source said Sunday.

The terrorists composed of Indonesians, Malaysians, and Middle-Eastern nationals were sighted in the rugged terrain of Lanao del Sur last month, the source added.

The area where Hapilon and his men have sought sanctuary lies within Camp Busra, the main camp of the Moro Islamic

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Liberation Front. The area is being used by jihadists for training, the source said.

Meanwhile, Armed Forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año said security forces are applying "intense pressure" on the group of Hapilon to carry out President Rodrigo Duterte's order to decimate the ASG.

Hapilon was critically wounded in an artillery attack while four of his companions, including an Indonesian identified only as Mohisen, were killed during the skirmishes with Army troopers on the outskirts of Butig, Lanao del Sur two weeks ago.

Mohisen brings to three the number of Indonesian jihadists killed in Mindanao in separate clashes with security forces in Lanao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat last year.

Several military operations are also taking place in Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu to neutralize the ASG, the Maute group and other terrorists groups, Año said.

"The ongoing operations in Lanao del Sur, targeting Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers are being done simultaneously not only to put pressure on this group, but to reduce their capacity to fight and their will to fight," Año said.

So far, the ASG has suffered 10 members killed in fierce fighting with Marines troops on Capual Island, Omar town in Sulu last week.

An estimated 14 battalions of composite troops are currently deployed in Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu in a search and destroy operations against the group of Hapilon and its sub-leaders.

The Armed Forces expects to defeat the ASG in six months, Año said.

"We are at the stage of strategic victory. The momentum is on our side, and they will lose their will to fight and eventually some of them will lie low, [while] some of them [will] surrender," Año said.

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AFP sa Abu Sayyaf: Konti na lang!

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City - Kumpiyansa si Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año na tamang landas ang finatahak ng militar sa paggapi sa Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) at sa iba pang grupong terorista sa Mindanao.

Sa isang panayam sa media fellowship night sa Pine Breeze, Baguio City nitong Sabado ng gabi, sinabi ni Año na dalawang buwan pa lamang ang nakalipas simula nang ilunsad ang all-out war laban sa mga teroristang grupo ngunit marami na silang napagtagumpayan upang tuluyang madurog ang mga kaaway.

Aniya, determinado at motivated ang mga sundalo na magapi ang Abu Sayyaf bago ang anum na buwang deadline sa kanila, o hanggang Hulyo 31, 2017, dahil na rin sa suportang ipinagkakaloob ni Pangulong Duterte sa AFP.

"We still have four months to go but if we can finish the job earlier that's okay," sabi ni Año. "We call that strategic victory. The momentum is on our side and they will lose their will to fight and eventually some of them will lie low, some of them will surrender and we will convince even more the community to support our operating troops."

Una nang sinabi ng AFP na bagamat tutupad sila sa "no ransom" policy ng gobyerno sa kaso ng German na bihag ng ASG na si Jurgen Kantner, gagawin ng militar ang lahat upang mailigtas ang dayuhan.

Kasabay ng panghihingi ng P30 milyon ransom, nagbanta ang ASG na papatayin si Kantner sa Pebrero 26 kung hindi maibibigay ang hinilungi nilang halaga.

Francis T. Wakefield

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500 soldiers to join war on drugs

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

About 500 soldiers will soon join the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in the war against illegal drugs waged by President Duterte

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año, speaking to reporters in Baguio City Saturday night, said the 500 would initially form the anti-illegal drugs task force.

He said the soldiers would have to undergo further training to carry out the job and they would have their own strike force.

"I already met with PDEA director Isidro Lapena. We already have a MOA (memorandum of agree-

ment) with PDEA even before the President stopped the PNP (Philippine National Police) from conducting anti-drug operations," Año explained.

"We will just renew this MOA because based on the President's pronouncement, we will implement adjustments. We are just waiting for the EO (executive order) and we are ready to operate with

PDEA," he said.

He noted that PDEA would still be the main operating agency with the AFP just providing support in anti-illegal drug operations.

Año said the military would not carry out the war on drugs in the same way Oplan Tokhang was implemented by the PNP, as he gave assurance that "we will not be involved

in the street, we'll not be involved in running after street pushers."

"The Armed Forces will help PDEA in running after high-level drug syndicates," he said.

The AFP chief said the number of soldiers in the task force would also be adjusted depending on the necessity or level of threat.

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AFP task force to help PDEA in anti-drugs war

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City —
Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)
Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año

said that a military task force will soon be created to help the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in the war against illegal drugs

Año also assured that the ►13

AFP task force...

AFP-PDEA anti-illegal drugs operations will not be bloody and will not target small time drug pushers but high-level drug syndicates.

In an interview during the media fellowship night at the Pine Breeze Hotel here, Año said the creation of the task force will greatly help PDEA in going after big-time illegal drugs traders and suppliers.

Año said he will deploy soldiers that will comprise the task force depending on the threat. "A task force is very flexible and will depend on the available threat. The task force could reach up to 5,000 or as low as 500 men," he added.

"Depending on the requirement we can increase or we can decrease depending on the situation," he added.

When asked if the joint PDEA and AFP anti-illegal drugs operations will be

similar to the Philippine National Police (PNP) "Oplan Tokhang" campaign, Año said that will not be the case.

He also said that their anti-illegal drugs operations will not be bloody and will not target small time drug pushers.

"No, the AFP will not do that. We will not be involved in the streets. We'll not be involved in running after street pushers. The Armed Forces will help PDEA in running after high-level drug syndicates," Año said.

The AFP said initially they are looking for a battalion size unit that will compose the task force.

Año, at the same time, said that he has already met with PDEA chief Director General Isidro Lapeña to renew their existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to better help in fighting illegal drugs.

◀1

"I already met with PDEA director Isidro Lapeña even before the President announced that he is putting a stop to the PNP's anti-drug operation because PDEA and the Armed Forces already have a MOA even before. We will just renew it because based on the pronouncement of the President, we need to make certain adjustments," Año said.

"Even with the absence of an EO (Executive Order) we are ready to operate with PDEA – PDEA as the main and we are just support. We also discussed that we can start actually do operations if there is a target package," he said.

Año reiterated that the Armed Forces will always be on the support role and once the EO is approved, part of that will be a training package for personnel which will be attached or will be placed under the operational control of PDEA," Año said.

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Battalion eyed to aid PDEA

BY VICTOR REYES

BAGUIO CITY – The Armed Forces is organizing a battalion-sized task force to help the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in going after high-profile drug traffickers.

“It has yet to be created but we are talking about a battalion-sized (force),” AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año said on Saturday night.

A battalion is composed of around 500 officers and men.

Año said the task force, which will have its own “strike force,” will be placed under the operational control of PDEA.

Año said he has made initial coordination with PDEA director general Isidro Lapena even before President Duterte told the PNP to stop its operations against drugs last month.

Año said the AFP is waiting for Malacanan to issue an executive order formally tasking the military to aid the PDEA in the war on drugs. He said soldiers are ready to assist the anti-drug body in anti-narcotics operations.

He said that while the military task force

will be composed of 500 personnel, its number can be increased to as high as 5,000 “depending on the situation.”

Año also said soldiers will not be involved in Tokhang operations, or house-to-house operations targeting ordinary drug users.

“The AFP will not do that. We will not be involved in the street; we’ll not be involved in running after street pushers. The Armed Forces will help PDEA in running after high-level drug syndicates,” he said.

SUSPECTED PUSHER KILLED

A suspected drug pusher was shot dead by two unidentified motorcycle-riding men in Pasig City on Saturday night.

Senior Supt. Orlando Yebra, local police chief, said Crispolo Cruz, 43, of Barangay Kalawaan died on the spot.

Yebra said Cruz was in the barangay drug personality watch list as a pusher and user.

DRUG TESTS FOR HS STUDES

The Department of Education has issued a memorandum directing high school stu-

dents, elementary and secondary teachers, and school division personnel to undergo drug testing this year.

Education Secretary Leonor Briones said a three-day orientation will be conducted nationwide from March to April before the actual drug testing.

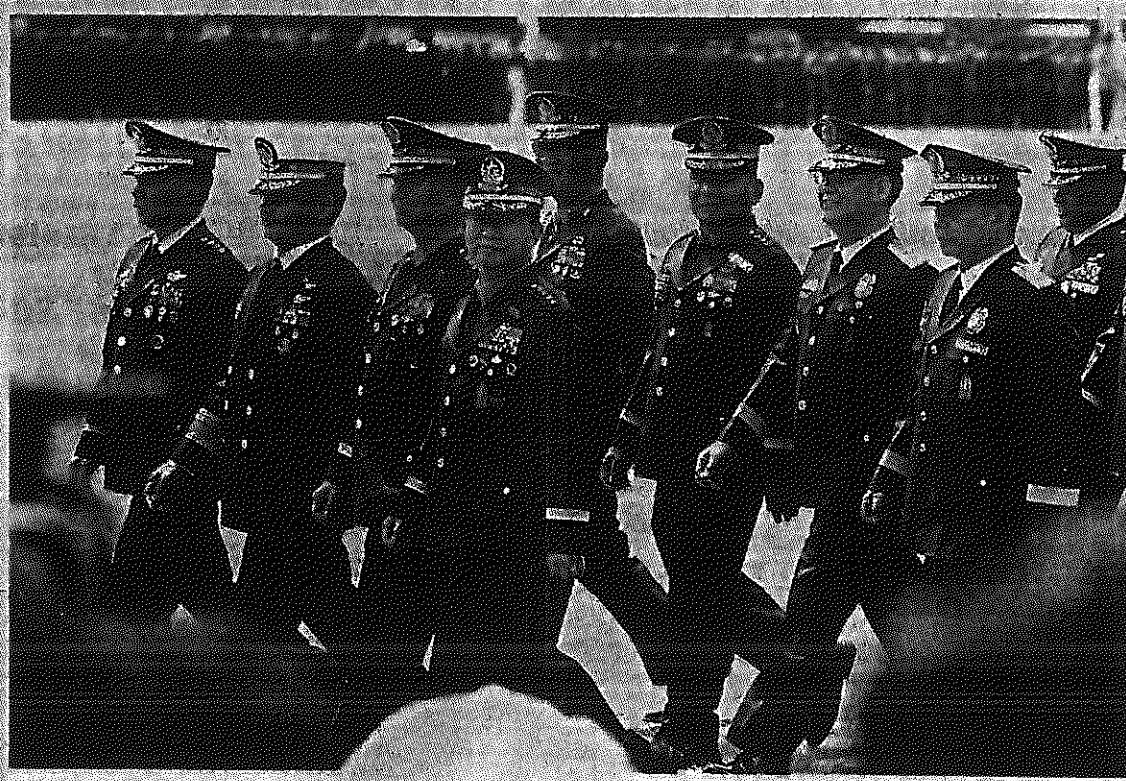
The program also aims to train school personnel on specimen collection and validity testing, train participants on documentation and recording of drug testing process, discuss the intervention for students found to be positive for drugs, and formulate an action plan for the conduct of the random drug testing.

The orientation for students and teachers in Cagayan Valley and Central Luzon will be held from March 1 to 3; Calabarzon and Mimaropa from March 7 to 9; Western and Central Visayas from March 14 to 16; Bicol and Eastern Visayas from March 21 to 23; Zamboanga Peninsula, Davao, and Soccsargen from March 28 to 30; Northern Mindanao and Caraga from April 4 to 6; ARMM from April 19 to 21; and Ilocos and Cordillera from April 26 to 28. – *With Evan Orias and Christian Oinera*

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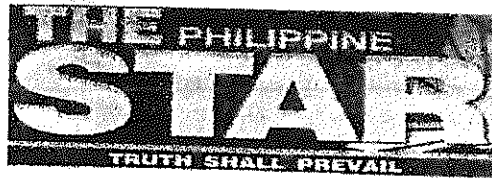
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MARCHING BRASS – Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año (in front row, facing left) joins other high-ranking military officers during the Philippine Military Academy alumni homecoming parade in Baguio City Saturday. Año said he is open to resuming talks with communist rebels. (Richard Viñas)

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Gov't, MILF reaffirm commitment to Mindanao peace, dev't

By CZERIZA VALENCIA

The Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday reaffirmed their commitment to support peace and development work in Mindanao through the World Bank-administered Mindanao Trust Fund (MTF)

The World Bank said the development arm of MILF and the main partner of the fund, the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), has committed to pursue development efforts in the region under the trust fund in support of the peace process.

The MTF team turned over yesterday

a rice mill, solar dryer and warehouse to the 1,704 residents of Barangay Cabpangi in Cotabato City as part of the Bangsamoro Advance program. The initiative provides livelihood and infrastructure projects in 50 conflict-affected communities in the areas under the 25 MILF base camps.

The World Bank said the projects will help improve livelihood and access to basic services, build local capacity in project planning, implementation and management, and strengthen social cohesion among communities.

"These community projects highlight what we can achieve if we work together. It's one of the

many examples that we see every day resulting from the continued commitment of both the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the government of the Philippines to pursue peace and development in the Bangsamoro and Mindanao in general," said Ustadz Mohammad Yacob, BDA executive director.

More than 650,000 people in 316 conflict-affected communities situated in 75 municipalities have benefited from the trust fund through the construction of new roads, classrooms, health clinics and community centers and improved access to electricity and water supply, said the World Bank.

— With John Unson

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Dureza lauds MILF, UNICEF in ending use of minors in conflict

By **ROCKY NAZARENO**

"We are moving from a climate of conflict, to a climate of peace."

This was how Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza described the stage of the ongoing peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which entered a "big transition" with the release of the first batch of 1,858 children who are formally or informally associated with the Moro group's military arm Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF).

In a ceremony held in Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat Friday, the MILF and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) presided over the release of 53 children, who comprised the first batch of children released by the Moro group.

"We are already signaling a big transition from a climate of conflict to a climate of peace with this disengagement of our children from a feeling of being in conflict," Dureza said.

"It's a big, big change from what it was before and thanks to UNICEF, the MILF and other partners for making this happen," he added.

Dureza believed that the parents' participation in the UNICEF activity was also a sign of their confidence that the fruits of their struggle is already coming to a fulfillment.

Lotta Sylwander, UNICEF Country Representative for the Philippines said that the MILF was the first rebel group in the world to commit and work with the United Nations, through UNICEF, to stop the recruitment and use of children in conflict.

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EMANCIPATED –
The first batch of children, who were 'formally' or 'informally' used in the armed conflict by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), awaits formal release by the Moro group, as facilitated by the United Nations Children's Fund, Saturday, in Camp Darapanan in Sultan Kudarat. (OPAPP)

MILF and the UN signed the Action Plan in August 2009 to ensure that civilians affected by conflicts are well protected. The MILF committed itself to a concrete and time bound activities to unimpeded access by the monitoring teams, prevention of recruitment and awareness and capacity-building of its men on the child protection protocol mechanism.

"Children affected by armed conflict are some of the most vulnerable children in the world. They can be recruited as soldiers engaged in direct combat or as aides with seriously harmful consequences to their

lives and well-being. Let children be children-let them play, go to school and live healthy and happy," Sylwander said.

Dureza also noted that children, who grew up with their parents engaged in armed conflict, will most probably also volunteer to fight.

"It is by nature that the children of a combatant will sympathize and help protect their family. We must provide the enabling environment to make this process easier for everyone."

"The significance today is that we are now at the right time, the time has come as what our President said

– may forever na ang peace. Today is a very significant day and thank you for helping us arrive in this very significant milestone in our quest for lasting peace," he added.

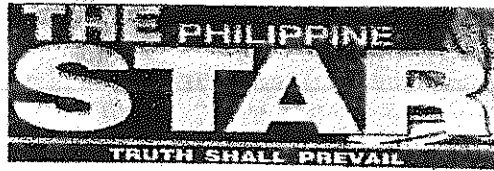
Dureza promised that the government will be doing an immediate profiling of the 1,858 children to know how government can effectively intervene.

"We will try our best to get the government to assist you."

"The government and the Filipino people should already embrace and take care of you now for you will be the next leaders of the Filipino people," Dureza added.

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40 cops spared Basilan reassignment

At least 40 Metro Manila police officers will not be reassigned to Basilan after all, but 278 of their colleagues will not be as lucky, an official said yesterday.

Director Oscar Albayalde, National Capital Region Police Office chief, said he will call the roll at 8 a.m. in Camp Crame today before sending them off before dawn tomorrow to a waiting Philippine Air Force C-130 plane to Zamboanga City, where a ship waits to ferry them to Basilan province.

Director General Ronald dela Rosa, Philippine National Police chief, earlier warned that those who would be absent in today's

roll call will automatically be listed as absent without official leave, a grave offense that may merit dismissal.

In sparing the 40 officers, Albayalde said the 40 police officers were cited for absenteeism and texting on their mobile phones while on duty.

The reassignment, he added, "should serve as a lesson to everybody, including erring personnel who are not following simple directives from higher-ups."

Dela Rosa said the 278 police officers would be deployed in the war against the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf.

– Non Alquitran

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Pahina. 2

AFP 'di magsasagawa ng Oplan Tokhang

Hindi magsasagawa ng Oplan Tokhang ang Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) kaugnay ng pag-arangkada ng operasyon nito kontra ilegal na droga sa bansa.

Ito'y sa gitna na rin ng pag-ani ng kontrobersya ng Oplan Tokhang at Oplan Double Barrel ng PNP kung saan nasa 2,700 ang nasawing drug pushers sa lehitimong operasyon habang mahigit 4,000 ang itinumbang drug personalities ng umano'y mga vigilantes at kanilang mga kalaban sa sindikato ng droga.

Ayon kay AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año, binubuo na ng AFP ang Special Task Force o ang strike force na sasabak sa anti-drug campaign katuwang ang PDEA.

Aniya, maaring maglagay ng isang batalyon o 500 sundalo hanggang 5,000 depende sa pangangailangan.

Sinabi ng heneral na hindi sila magsasagawa ng Oplan Tokhang dahil hindi nila tatargetin ang mga street level drug pushers.

"The AFP will not do that, we will not be involved in running after street pushers, we will help PDEA in running after high level drug syndicates," ani Año.

Idinagdag pa nito na hindi magiging madugo ang kanilang operasyon.

Magugunita na pansamantalang tinanggalan ng kapangyarihan ni Pangulong Duterte ang PNP sa giyera kontra droga bunga ng pagkakasangkot ng ilang scalawag na pulis sa pagdukot at pagpatay sa Korean trader na si Jee Ick-joo. (Joy Cantos)

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Trillanes presses AMLC on Du30 bank accounts

By Christine O. Avendaño and Marlon Ramos @Team Inquirer

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV will call President Duterte's bluff by asking this week the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) to disclose amounts of money it flagged in the bank accounts of the President from 2006 to 2015.

Trillanes made this statement in a radio interview on Sunday. Contacted by the Inquirer, he said he would write the AMLC to make the request using the President's directive for the council to reveal how much he was worth.

Rehashed charges

The President gave the directive in front of the members of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1967, which adopted him as member, in Baguio City on Friday, as he denied he and his family had hidden wealth as al-

leged by Trillanes.

Describing Trillanes' latest allegations as mere rehash of his previous accusations, Mr. Duterte called the opposition senator a "bandit" and vowed to quit as President if Trillanes would be able to prove his claim.

Last week, the senator urged anew Mr. Duterte to open his bank accounts and show he did not have P2.2 billion in transactions between 2006 and 2015 in three bank branches Trillanes made the same call to the then presidential candidate in last year's election campaign.

Trillanes said he would resign as senator if proven wrong.

The senator last week also showed documents indicating that the President's common-law wife, Honeylet Avanceña, had almost P200 million in bank transactions from 2004 to 2009 and that she and his children received P120 million from Sammy Uy, Mr. Duterte's close

friend and a campaign financier, from 2011 to 2013.

Verbal waiver

Trillanes yesterday described the President's directive to the AMLC as "verbal waiver."

Asked if Mr. Duterte would release the transaction history of his three bank accounts between 2006 and 2015, presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said, "That's his call. But I suppose he will."

"Everything depends on the AMLC, I suppose, to do what they need to do," Abella added.

Trillanes said he would ask information from the AMLC about the President's every transaction of at least P500,000 that it had reported or "flagged."

Flagged bank transactions

"The President gave the directive on national TV and if he backs down, then you see he is fooling again the people," Tril-

lanes told the Inquirer.

The senator said if the AMLC responded that it was not allowed to do so, "then I will go back to the media and say the really do not want it to be known."

"I will call his bluff. I will keep on pressing," he added, underscoring the need for people to really get to know Mr. Duterte.

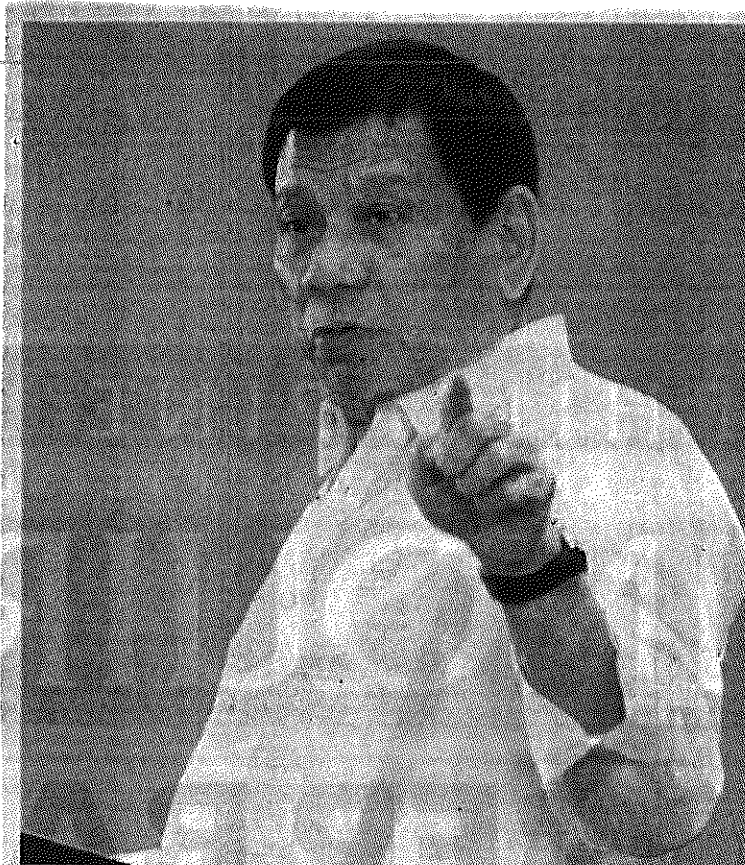
In the radio interview, the senator said he would still request the AMLC to give him a list of flagged bank transactions of the President even if everybody knew that the council has a "limited mandate."

AMLC mandate

Trillanes said that the AMLC was a repository of information on bank deposits reported to it and that it could investigate suspicious bank transactions.

But the AMLC has no mandate to determine a depositor's worth and cannot see bank

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BLUFFING? President Duterte has said he is directing the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) to reveal how much he was worth. –MALACAÑANG PHOTO

transactions below half a million pesos, according to Trillanes.

"The way I understand it, the AMLC is prohibited from divulging information and will

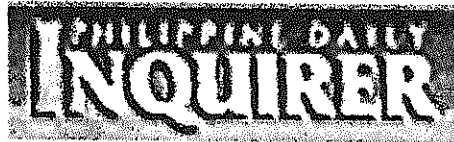
only do so when the subject is for litigation," he said.

The senator said he would disclose more scandals involving the President soon. INQ

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US carrier strike force patrols South China Sea

BANGKOK—A US aircraft carrier strike group has begun patrols in the South China Sea amid growing tension with China over control of the disputed waterway and concerns it could become a flash point under the new US administration.

China's foreign ministry on Wednesday warned the United States against challenging its sovereignty in the South China Sea.

The US Navy said the strike force, including Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, began routine operations in the South China Sea on Saturday. The announcement was posted on the Vinson's Facebook page.

The strike group's commander, Rear Admiral James Kilby, said that weeks of training in the Pacific had improved the group's effectiveness and readiness.

China exercises

"We are looking forward to demonstrating those capabilities while building upon existing strong relationships with our allies, partners and friends in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region," Kilby was quoted as saying by the Navy News Service.

Friction between the United States and China over trade and

territory under US President Donald Trump have increased concerns that the South China Sea could become a flash point.

Three Chinese warships on Friday wrapped up a week of scheduled training exercises in the South China Sea shortly after China's sole aircraft carrier tested its weapons in the disputed region.

The flotilla of warships, including a destroyer that can launch guided missiles, had been conducting drills since Friday last week and were now sailing to the eastern India Ocean and the Western Pacific, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Exercises by the Chinese ships, in particular the aircraft carrier Liaoning, have unnerved its neighbors in recent months, especially given long-running territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

'Unchangeable trend'

The training, which included sudden attack drills, had been carried out successfully in poor sea conditions, Xinhua said.

The drills were "without an arranged script" and "as close as possible to real combat," military affairs expert Yin Zhuo told the state broadcaster

China Central Television.

Regular exercises by the Chinese Navy in the high seas were an "unchangeable trend," Yin said, though he added that China's long-range naval capabilities were not sufficient to secure its interests in open waters.

Beijing's warning to Washington against challenging its sovereignty in the South China Sea came amid reports that the US Navy was planning fresh patrols in the region.

The United States has criticized China's construction of man-made islands and its buildup of military facilities in the area, expressing concern they could be used to restrict free movement.

The US Navy has conducted several "freedom of navigation" patrols through the waters.

China claims most of the South China Sea, while Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei claim a portion of the waters that command strategic sea lanes and contain rich fishing grounds as well as with oil and gas deposits.

Even so, China says it is committed to freedom of navigation in the strategic waterway through which about \$5 trillion worth of trade passes each year. —REUTERS

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US carrier group patrols South China Sea

WASHINGTON – A United States aircraft carrier strike group has begun patrols in the South China Sea amid growing tension with China over control of the disputed waterway and concerns it could become a flashpoint

under the new US administration.

China's foreign ministry on Wednesday warned Washington against challenging its sovereignty in the South China Sea.

Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting in Boracay began yesterday top-level discussions on a code of conduct framework that regional leaders hope to finish this year to help de-escalate tensions in the disputed sea.

The framework has been in the works for years since China and ASEAN agreed in a 2002 declaration to "undertake self-restraint" and "refrain" from occupying islands and other features in the disputed areas.

"There's still a long way to go but ASEAN is really working hard to have this code of conduct concluded very soon," foreign affairs spokesman Charles Jose told reporters.

The US Navy said the force, including Nimitz-class aircraft carrier *USS Carl Vinson*, began routine operations in the South China Sea on Saturday. The announcement was posted on the *Vinson's* Facebook page.

The strike group's commander, Rear Admiral James Kilby, said that weeks of training in the Pacific had improved the group's effectiveness and readiness.

"We are looking forward to demonstrating those capabilities while building upon existing strong relationships with our allies, partners and friends in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region," he was quoted as saying by the *Navy News Service*.

Friction between the US and China over trade and territory under President Donald Trump have increased concerns that the South China Sea could become a flashpoint.

China wrapped up its own naval exercises in the South China Sea on Friday. War games involving its own aircraft carrier have unnerved neighbors with which it has long-running territorial disputes.

China lays claim to almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion worth of trade passes each year.

Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also claim parts of the waters that command strategic sea lanes and have rich fishing grounds, along with oil and gas deposits.

The US has criticized Beijing's construction of man-made islands and build-up of military facilities in the sea, and expressed concern they could be used to restrict free movement.

Phil 'lost its victory'

Murray Hiebert, senior adviser of

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the American think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), said the Philippines lost its victory in the arbitral tribunal that found China's "nine-dash line" historical claim "illegal" when the government put the issue on the back burner.

Hiebert, also the deputy director of the Southeast Asia Program at the CSIS, said raising the South China Sea ruling and mentioning the favorable decision more often could give the Philippines "stronger cards in the hands to play."

"You pretty much lost what you won in the tribunal. The Chinese just put that in their pocket," Hiebert told Filipino journalists during a discussion on Philippines-US relations at the CSIS headquarters here recently.

He said the Obama administration had all kinds of plans on how they would respond to China not honoring the ruling but in the end did not do very much.

In a landmark ruling on July 12, the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) found no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to a "nine-dash line" in the South China Sea and said Beijing had breached the sovereign rights of the Philippines, which brought the case.

The court also ruled that many purported islands controlled by China are not, in fact, islands, but instead reefs or rocks, which do not generate territorial rights.

China has refused to honor the ruling and accused the judges of the tribunal of taking bribes from the Philippines in exchange for invalidating Beijing's expansive and excessive claims in the South China Sea.

The ruling, according to Hiebert, was a "hallmark" that also defines what the situation is in the South China Sea.

When there are other disputes involving China, he stressed that the ruling can be brought out "but it's going to be tough for the Philippines to walk us back."

Former foreign affairs secretary Albert del Rosario, the top diplomat of the Aquino administration and the brains behind the arbitration case, criticized the Duterte administration for not protesting China's deployment of missile systems in the South China Sea and for declaring that it would set aside the arbitral ruling.

"If a new Aquino and Del Rosario come to power in the future, how do they suddenly raise this again? I think the Philippines could have used this without rubbing the Chinese noses in it too much," Hiebert said, referring to former president Benigno Aquino III.

"In some ways by starting to engage immediately was a good idea but may be not totally forgetting about the ruling. I think the Philippines would have had few stronger cards in their hands if they play, mention a little bit more," he added.

Not engaging immediately after the arbitral tribunal ruled on the Philippines' case against China, Hiebert said Manila missed the time and "China has already assumed that the Philippines has moved on."

With its rebuilding of the islands in the South China Sea, he said China has made it clear that it is determined to keep its position as a dominant player in the South China Sea and there is not much to negotiate even if there is a talk, in light of the ruling, of possible joint exploration – Reuters, Pia Lee-Brago

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Aquino girded for war over sea dispute

BY VICTOR REYES

BAGUIO CITY. — National security adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said the Aquino administration wanted to go to war with China over the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea dispute.

At the sidelines of the Philippine Military Academy homecoming on Saturday, Esperon said the government cannot afford a war with China with only three capable ships in the inventory of the Philippine Navy.

Esperon's predecessor, Cesar Garcia, once told a congressional hearing that the South China Sea dispute has "over-taken all security issues in our hierarchy of national security issues."

Garcia cited the then massive

land reclamations by China in several reefs in the South China Sea. Last month, China was reported to have installed weapon systems in the seven reclaimed reefs, prompting Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay to send a note verbale to China.

"Biggest threat? Kasi gusto nilang lumaban sa China noon. Ano'ng ilalaban mo, tatlong Coast Guard cutter na 1965 model? Biggest threat kung ang idea is to fight it out," said Esperon.

Esperon was referring to the three former US Coast Guard cutters that were given to the Philippine Navy over the past several years. One of them, the now BRP Andres Bonifacio, was actually transferred to the Navy during the Duterte administration.

Esperon said Philippines and China can be friends, adding that the relations of the two countries should not be based on the territorial dispute alone. The Duterte administration is seeking improved relations with China and with Russia.

He said there is "so much trade" between US and China despite their being military rivals. Also, he said Russia and Japan are also trade partners while they are also involved in a territorial dispute.

"So what really would you want to prefer, go to war or improve the lives of our citizens, citizenry, improve our economies, make it a better world? War is not our instrument of policy," said Esperon.

He said improving Philippine relations with China and Russia

is "sort of a win-win situation." "If you are going to always see is the South China Sea, that's not the sum total of our relations with China. As you can see now, much of our relations are on economic, in economic field, trade," said Esperon.

China has pledged P240-million in assistance to the Philippines during the Duterte administration to fight terrorism and address illegal drugs. The defense department has already submitted a list of equipment to be acquired from China using the fund offered by the Chinese.

Last week, President Duterte met with Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev in Davao City to discuss various issues, including possible defense cooperation between the two countries.

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Geraldine Roman supports ROTC

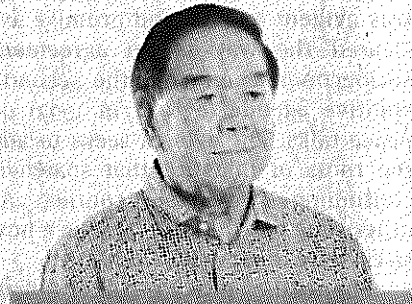
In a commencement address delivered before the ROTC graduates of the University of the Philippines on March 20, 1941, Brig Gen. Vicente P. Lim, the first Filipino West Pointer, declared: "Our country has such an extensive shoreline in proportion to our revenues that we cannot sustain a standing army big enough to defend it. We must therefore educate every citizen to be prepared to fight at a moment's notice. You will be the officers of this citizen army. I urge you, therefore, to enhance the military training that you have acquired. It is not only for your benefit but for the protection of your country."

After World War II, the mandatory ROTC program remained part of college education. In 2002, however, the National Service Training Program Act was passed, giving college students three options in place of mandatory military training: Civil Welfare Training Services, Literacy Training Services, or ROTC. In effect, the latter became optional and voluntary, leading to a decline in participants in the program, and the resulting loss of potential leaders for our military force.

Last week, President Duterte approved the return of mandatory ROTC for students enrolled in Grades 11 and 12, making it part of the basic curriculum for a senior high school education in all public and private educational institutions. The President certified as "urgent" Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana's proposal to amend Republic Act No. 7077, to revive mandatory ROTC in our schools.

The rationale for bringing back ROTC as a mandatory course is to inculcate among the youth of the land love of country, leadership qualities, and character development. It aims at "enhancing consciousness in the ethics of service, patriotism and nationalism, respect for human rights, the importance of discipline, and an appreciation of the role of national heroes in the historical development of the country."

There are a few examples of the practical use of ROTC-trained elements. In the 1953 presidential contest that saw Ra-



REVEILLE

RAMON J. FAROLAN

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for hours can develop love of country. This is understandable. Marching under the hot sun does entail sacrifice involving personal comfort and convenience.

But marching in step with others helps instill a sense of discipline, a sense of teamwork—for the common good. It is this mindset that will contribute in the long term to national security and development. Wars have never been fought under the shade of trees with cool winds blowing around. Attending to natural disasters that cause so much damage and loss of lives is never an easy task. It requires a disciplined and dedicated citizenry, particularly among the youth. The idea of “white side walls” (crew-cut) for a hairstyle has never been attractive for many young people. More significant for its negative impact have been the past cases of abuse and corruption in the implementation of the ROTC program, owing to improper supervision and lack of attention to detail by irresponsible officials.

In building a large citizen army for his nation, Singapore's founding father, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, once said: “We had to reorient people's minds to accept the need for a people's army and overcome their traditional dislike for soldiering. We set up a national cadet corps and a national police cadet corps in all secondary schools so that parents would identify the army and the police with their sons and daughters. Only if we changed people's thinking and attitudes could we raise an effective citizen army.” He went on to say that even if an enemy could subdue our armed forces, they would have a difficult time dealing with a population well-trained in the use of arms, fighting for their country.

Last week, support for the ROTC program came from a sector of society not often identified with the military. Rep. Geraldine Roman (first district, Bataan), the first transgender woman elected to Congress, expressed her strong support for the return of the ROTC. She said this would prepare them for the country's defense and for typhoon and earthquake rescue operations. Roman, who won 62 percent of the vote in her recent election campaign, also commended President Duterte, Defense Secretary Lorenzana, and the AFP chief of staff, Gen. Eduardo Año, for allowing the entry of members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community into the military organization. Roman is the daughter of former Batasan assemblyman and deputy finance minister Antonino Roman Jr., a respected colleague in the defunct ministry of finance during the martial law years.

Also speaking up in support of a revived ROTC is Commission on Election Chair Andres Bautista, who said that the program “could help inculcate the importance of exercising the constitutional duties and rights of suffrage, emphasizing that democracy is not a spectator sport.”

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