

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



TEAM ARMY

Serving the people. Securing the land.

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
NEWS CLIPPINGS

23 February 2017

Thursday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land

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24- HOUR PUBLIC WEATHER FORECAST

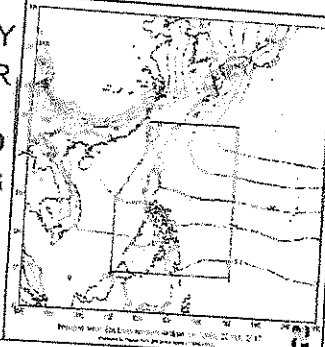
ISSUED AT: 5:00 PM 22 FEBRUARY 2017

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

SYNOPSIS: EASTERLIES AFFECTING THE EASTERN SECTION OF THE COUNTRY.

FORECAST: THE WHOLE COUNTRY WILL EXPERIENCE PARTLY CLOUDY TO CLOUDY SKIES WITH ISOLATED RAINS OR THUNDERSTORMS.

LIGHT TO MODERATE WINDS BLOWING FROM THE EAST TO SOUTHEAST WILL PREVAIL OVER NORTHERN LUZON AND COMING FROM THE EAST TO NORTHEAST OVER THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. THE COASTAL WATERS THROUGHOUT THE ARCHIPELAGO WILL BE SLIGHT TO MODERATE.



PAGTAYA: ANG BUONG BANSA AY MAKAKARANAS NG BAHAGYANG MAULAP HANGGANG SA MAULAP NA KALANGITAN NA MAY PULU-PULONG MGA PAG-ULAN O PAGKIDLAT-PAGKULOG.

MAHINA HANGGANG SA KATAMTAMAN NA HANGIN MULA SA SILANGAN HANGGANG SA TIMOG-SILANGAN ANG IIRAL SA HILAGANG LUZON AT MULA NAMAN SA SILANGAN HANGGANG SA HILAGANG-SILANGAN SA NALALABING BAHAGI NG BANSA. ANG MGA BAYBAYING-DAGAT SA BUONG KAPULUAN AY MAGIGING BANAYAD HANGGANG SA KATAMTAMAN ANG PAG-ALON.

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: 1:00 PM TODAY 33.4 °C		MAXIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY: 6:00 AM TODAY 86 %	
MINIMUM TEMPERATURE: 6:00 AM TODAY 21.0 °C		MINIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY: 1:00 PM TODAY 46 %	
TIDAL PREDICTION ALONG MANILA BAY (COURTESY OF NAMRIA)		ASTRONOMICAL INFORMATION OVER METRO MANILA	
HIGH TIDE TODAY: 6:50 PM 0.84 METER		SUNSET/ SUNRISE	MOONRISE/ MOONSET & ILLUMINATION
LOW TIDE TOMORROW: 3:50 AM -0.07 METER		SUNSET TODAY: 6:02 PM	MOONRISE TOMORROW: 3:23 AM
		SUNRISE TOMORROW: 6:16 AM	MOONSET TOMORROW: 3:07 PM
		SUNSET TOMORROW: 6:03 PM	ILLUMINATION TOMORROW: 16 %

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

PREPARED BY: **BUNE**

CHECKED BY: **GPN**



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 22 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			
	22 FEB		23 FEB	24 FEB	25 FEB	26 FEB
	Metro Manila	22 °C 33 °C	Light to Moderate: East Manila Bay: Slight to Moderate	23 °C 32 °C	22 °C 32 °C	21 °C 32 °C
Tuguegarao City	21 °C 31 °C	Moderate: East to Southeast	21 °C 31 °C	20 °C 30 °C	20 °C 29 °C	20 °C 30 °C
Laoag City	23 °C 31 °C	Light to Moderate: Southeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	23 °C 31 °C	22 °C 30 °C	22 °C 30 °C	22 °C 30 °C
Baguio City	15 °C 24 °C	Moderate: East to Southeast	15 °C 23 °C	14 °C 23 °C	13 °C 22 °C	14 °C 23 °C
SBMA(Olongapo) / Clark Zone (Angeles City)	23 °C 33 °C	Light to Moderate: East Subic Bay: Slight to Moderate	24 °C 34 °C	24 °C 33 °C	23 °C 33 °C	23 °C 33 °C
Tagaytay City	19 °C 30 °C	Moderate: East	20 °C 30 °C	20 °C 29 °C	19 °C 29 °C	19 °C 29 °C
Lipa City	22 °C 32 °C	Light to Moderate: East	22 °C 31 °C	22 °C 32 °C	22 °C 32 °C	22 °C 32 °C
Legazpi City	25 °C 30 °C	Moderate: East Coastal Waters: Moderate	25 °C 30 °C	25 °C 30 °C	24 °C 30 °C	24 °C 29 °C
Puerto Princesa City	25 °C 31 °C	Light to Moderate: Northeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	25 °C 31 °C	25 °C 31 °C	25 °C 32 °C	25 °C 32 °C
Iloilo City / Bacolod City	25 °C 30 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Northeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	26 °C 30 °C	25 °C 30 °C	26 °C 29 °C	26 °C 29 °C
Metro Cebu	24 °C 30 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Northeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	25 °C 30 °C	25 °C 30 °C	25 °C 31 °C	25 °C 31 °C
Tacloban City	24 °C 30 °C	Moderate: East Coastal Waters: Moderate	24 °C 29 °C	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C
Cagayan de Oro City	23 °C 31 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Northeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	23 °C 31 °C	23 °C 30 °C	23 °C 30 °C	23 °C 31 °C
Valencia City	18 °C 30 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Northeast	18 °C 30 °C	18 °C 30 °C	17 °C 31 °C	17 °C 30 °C
Metro Davao	24 °C 32 °C	Moderate: East Coastal Waters: Moderate	24 °C 33 °C	24 °C 33 °C	25 °C 33 °C	25 °C 32 °C
Zamboanga City	24 °C 34 °C	Light to Moderate: Northeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	24 °C 33 °C	24 °C 33 °C	24 °C 34 °C	24 °C 33 °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: **RJNE**

END OF FORECAST

CHECKED BY: **GPN**

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23 February 2017

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER

Page: A1

LETTER TO CARDINAL SIN
**'OUR PEOPLE'S
CRY AND GOD'S
LOVING REPLY'**

NEWS / A11

'Edsa is our people's cry and God's loving reply'

EDSA 31



(Editor's Note: Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Socrates Villegas, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, commemorates the 31st anniversary of the Edsa People Power Revolution with a letter to the late Jaime Cardinal Sin, longing for the wit and wisdom of the former archbishop of Manila amid new uncertainties and terror that wrack the nation, and also promising to keep the "spirit of Edsa" alive to rekindle dimming memories and frustrate attempts to revise the meaning of the "four glorious days in February 1986." As a young priest, Villegas had served as the private secretary of Cardinal Sin, who died in 2005.)

Dear Cardinal Sin,

It is you I miss most these

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days.

I do not mean to disturb your peace. You already have passed from this valley of tears to the House of the Father, but please, Cardinal Sin, do not forget us in our present travails as a nation. I know you can receive this message. I believe. Nothing can separate you from us in the Lord. You love this country so much. You will not let us lose our hope.

I know you can hear me and I know you are here. As I know your love for this country, I also believe that in heaven your heart pleads to the heart of God to embrace this beautiful land. Cardinal Sin, embrace us and ask God to embrace your God-loving people. Do not look at the blessings we have squandered and the heroism we have ridiculed. Do not look at the news we have faked and the people we have cheated. Do not look at our uncaring attitude about the victims of extrajudicial killings now exceeding the number of victims during martial law.

Look at us in our fears and

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EDSA SHRINE MASS Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin (center) and then Msgr. Socrates Villegas (right) celebrate Mass at the Edsa Shrine during the Edsa II People Power Revolution after the impeachment trial of then President Joseph Estrada in 2001. The majority of senator judges had just voted not to open a second envelope containing the bank accounts of Jose Velarde. —INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

pray for us to God to heal our land. Give us courage. Give us hope. Shake us up from our timidity.

Thirty-one years after Edsa 1986, I hear our people ask: What shall we celebrate? What is there to celebrate? By the corner of Edsa and Ortigas, I want to sit and weep as I remember the four glorious days of February 1986 now dimmed. The glory now flickers in the darkness of fear and terror again. The songs of peace now drowned by the cuss words of hate that invite murder. The bloodless revolt now stained by the blood in our streets and gutters. The statistics of unresolved murder continues to rise and not a single one has been investigated and brought to justice.

Four days of bloodless revolution! Wow!

Now eight months of relentless killings of the poor in the name of "change"! It is a nightmare. Your Eminence! It is a shame

The dictator ousted by people power is now buried among heroes. The lady of 1,200 pairs of shoes is now a representative in Congress. History books are rewritten. Historical memory is revised. The hero is now a villain. The plunderers are now heroes. Thank God, Eminence, you did not see these days we are going through.

Tears flow. Uncertainties choke us. It is hard to choose silence and take the blows. How long can we endure? It is hard to fight for the right without question or pause and be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause. You remember that song, Eminence? That was your favorite line. I remember. Singing it again makes me smile and makes me cry.

Did you also cry quietly in the dark years of the dictatorship? Were you ever discouraged and did you also question yourself if what you were doing was right? Were you ever afraid or did you ever feel the urge

to stay in your zone of comfort instead of fighting the unbeatable foe?

Cardinal Sin, I feel the same and you know that. I know many feel this way. Teach us how to cope. Teach us your courage. Teach us your humor. Teach us your faith. Teach us righteous indignation. Wake us up from our pacifism and pull us into the fire of passion and courage again.

They are looking for you but you are not here. They are waiting for your voice but they cannot hear. They want to see you again but you seem so far away now. Is it wrong to miss you?

Can we still celebrate Edsa people power? I asked you that years ago and you said, "Yes, we must celebrate because Edsa is people! Please celebrate even when Cory and I are gone."

For as long as there is a child willing to right the unrightable wrong; for as long as there is a young man willing to reach the unreachable star

even if his hands have grown weary; for as long as there is a war weary soldier willing to smile at a *colegiala* who bravely puts a flower into the muzzle of his gun; for as long as there is a priest willing to offer the Mass for the healing of this broken and bleeding land—this land may be ruled by tyrants and killers, murderers may win in elections, plunderers may grin at the ignorant voters they had cheated, trolls may keep hurling invectives at their peace-loving countrymen, commanders may prostitute the meaning of Edsa—we will still celebrate.

For Edsa is not about the enemies of peace and democracy but the faith and bravery of a people who called upon the Lord in their distress and whose cry the Lord has heard from heaven. Edsa is our people's cry and our God's loving reply.

In your final years, Your Eminence, you saw how that spirit was diluted and some even wanted it reversed. But you were firm to remind me even from your sickbed that Edsa is heroic courage and will always be. What the pimps of that spirit have done cannot remove the purity of Edsa's valor and the nobility of its lesson. The Edsa spirit is pure and worth celebrating always. It is people who have raped it.

Against all odds, Cardinal Sin, we will remember. We will give thanks. We will challenge ourselves to live for God and to live for country as you did.

Rest now, Cardinal Sin. You have left us lessons to last us many lifetimes. All we must do is to keep on remembering and to keep the fire aglow. You have passed on that torch to us and we will not fail you. Promise!

Hug me in my dreams. Embrace me in my prayer. Guide me by your memory. Please hug my parents for me in the Father's House.

Lovingly,
Soc

23 February 2017



Page: 1

AI blames Rody, Trump for rights pushback

By ELIZABETH MARCELO

Amnesty International says "toxic" fear-mongering by anti-establishment politicians, among them President Duterte, US President Donald Trump and leaders of Turkey and Hungary, is contributing to a global pushback against human rights.

Releasing its 408-page annual report on rights abuses around the world in Paris yesterday, the watchdog group described 2016 as "the year when the cynical use of 'us vs them' narratives of blame, hate and fear took on a global prominence to a level not seen since the 1930s," when Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany.

Amnesty named Duterte, Trump, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan among leaders it said are "wielding a toxic agenda that hounds, scapegoats and dehumanizes entire groups of people."

The Philippines was among five countries mentioned in the report's foreword as having serious human rights abuses.

"Poisonous" rhetoric employed by Trump in his election campaign exemplified "the global trend of angrier and more divisive politics," Amnesty said.

"The limits of what is acceptable have shifted. Politicians are shamelessly and actively legitimizing all sorts of hateful rhetoric and policies

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AI blames From Page 1

based on people's identity: misogyny, racism and homophobia. The first target has been refugees and, if this continues in 2017, others will be in the crosshairs."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment on the report.

Amnesty's annual report, "The State of the World's Human Rights," documented what it called "grave violations of human rights" in 159 countries in 2016.

It said governments "turned a blind eye to war crimes, pushed through deals that undermine the right to claim asylum, passed laws that violate free expression, incited murder of people simply because they are accused of using drugs, justified torture and mass surveillance and extended draconian police powers."

The report added that "the big question in 2017 will be how far the world lets atrocities go before doing something about them."

Exceptionally, London-based Amnesty chose to launch its report in Paris.

In top 5

In a press conference in Quezon City yesterday, AI Philippines head of office Jose Noel Olano bared that out of the 159 countries included in the AI report, the Philippines was among five countries cited due to the gravity of human rights abuses, aside from extrajudicial killings.

"Amnesty International, in relation to all other countries (in the report), is worried about the particular situation in the Philippines. In fact, (the) Philippines is mentioned as a country where there is possible crimes against humanity," Olano said.

The four other countries were the United States, Hungary, India and Turkey.

Olano said it is the first time since the martial law years that the Philippines was cited in the foreword of the AI's annual

human rights report.

In an interview after the briefing, AI Philippines campaign coordinator Wilnor Papa said the AI gave emphasis on the Philippines in its worldwide report because "the situation here is getting alarming."

"The cases of summary killings continue to increase. And aside from being widespread, we have a previous report showing that the killings are systematic, planned and organized. It is very alarming. It is very concerning for Amnesty International," Papa said.

"If you will look (at) the report, Duterte is among those heads of state called out by the Amnesty International for dehumanizing certain groups and using them as scapegoats for their actions," Olano said.

The AI specifically cited the rising cases of summary killings in the Philippines in connection with Duterte's war on drugs as well as the administration's supposed lack of serious investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators of these crimes.

“However, the erosion of human rights values was perhaps most pernicious when officials blamed a specific ‘other’ for real or perceived social problems in order to justify their repressive actions. One variant of this was demonstrated by the escalation, with enormous loss of life, of President Duterte’s ‘war on drugs’ in the Philippines,” the foreword read.

“State-sanctioned violence and mass killings by vigilantes claimed more than 6,000 lives following repeated public endorsements by the President for those allegedly involved in drug-related crimes to be killed,” it added.

The group also hit the excessive use of force by the military and the police in suppressing activism such as the violent dispersal of protesters holding a rally at the US embassy in November last year.

The protesters belonging to indigenous organizations were at that time calling for the end of militarization and encroachment of their ancestral lands, when a van driven by a police

officer ran over them.

Another instance of human rights abuse cited by the AI was the shooting and violent dispersal of farmers holding a rally in Kidapawan City in April last year, under the Aquino administration, who were calling for agricultural assistance from the local government.

“If there is no serious investigation from the government, the prosecutors of the International Criminal Court must make preliminary investigation,” Olano said, citing the recommendatory portion of the report.

Earlier this month, the AI also released a report on summary killings in the Philippines in connection with Duterte’s campaign against illegal drugs.

In its report, the group said police officials and some enlisted personnel are getting instructions from “the very top of government” to kill suspected drug offenders in exchange for financial incentives.

Malacañang and the Philippine National Police denied the report, noting that extra-

judicial killings are not state-sanctioned.

Emergency powers

Salil Shetty, the group’s secretary-general, said France has used emergency powers introduced in 2015 in the wake of terror attacks in an abusive and “deeply discriminatory” manner, confining more than 600 people, mostly Muslims, under house arrest and banning more than 140 protests.

“Even states that once claimed to champion rights abroad are now too busy rolling back human rights at home to hold others to account,” Amnesty said. “The more countries backtrack on fundamental human rights commitments, the more we risk a domino effect of leaders emboldened to knock back established human rights protections.”

France’s government has repeatedly defended the emergency powers as a necessary safeguard against the severe terror threat it says is facing the country, and parliament has repeatedly voted to extend those powers. – With AP

23 February 2017

The Manila Times

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Army soldier, Cafgu slain in attacks

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: An Army sergeant and a militiaman belonging to the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) were killed in separate attacks in Central Mindanao on Tuesday.

Senior Supt. Agustin Tello, director of the Maguindanao provincial police office, identified the victim as Sgt. Zaldy Caliman of the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion, who died instantly from multiple bullet wounds.

Tello said Caliman was with his wife and 11-year-old son who were riding a motorcycle on their way to Guindulungan town in Maguindanao when attacked by suspected members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) along the Maguindanao-Sultan Kudarat Highway.

Police investigators said two gunmen, suspected to be BIFF members riding the motorcycle, were following Caliman and flagged them down and shot the soldier with caliber 45 pistols.

"It seems the attack was a 'liquidation mission' because only the off-duty Sgt. Caliman was targeted," Tello said.

Caliman was reportedly on a two-day vacation leave from his battalion headquarters in Ampatuan

town to visit his farm in Guindulungan.

During the last two years, more than a dozen off-duty soldiers in Central Mindanao have been killed in separate incidents by suspected BIFF gunmen.

Similarly on the same day, Cafgu member Eliseo Sicao was reportedly shot dead by New People's Army (NPA) rebels in an encounter in Barangay Basak in Magpet, North Cotabato.

Sicao and his companions were ambushed by NPA rebels while on their way to Sitio Buay-Buay in Barangay Basak to verify the reported presence of rebels collecting protection money from villagers there.

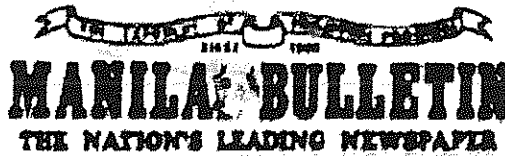
Although outnumbered, the Cafgu men returned fire, wounding four rebels.

The NPA rebels immediately withdrew when they sensed that responding personnel of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion were closing in on them.

Witnesses said the rebels fled to the hinterland of Barangay Basak carrying with them their four wounded comrades, two of them identified only as Romeo and Warlito.

Meanwhile, Army soldiers were on red alert for more NRA attacks. **JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL**

23 February 2017



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Student killed, 3 others wounded in Zamboanga school explosion

By NONGY ELACSON

ZAMBOANGA CITY — A grade 7 student was killed, while three others were wounded after a bomb they were toying with exploded yesterday morning inside the Comprehensive National High School campus in Lakewood, Zamboanga de Sur.

Zamboanga Peninsula Police Direc-

tor Chief Supt. Billy Beltran said Rodolfo Halius, 17, died while undergoing treatment at the Zamboanga del Sur Provincial Medical Center (ZSPMC), while three of his classmates were wounded after an “unknown explosive device (UXO) went on in the campus at around 7:30 a.m.

Jonny Daluyon, 13, was listed in serious condition while his classmates

Alona Fe Clarabal, 14, and Treshea Mae Clamonte, 13, suffered slight physical injuries, according to Beltran.

All the students were residents of Lakewood town.

Lt. Col. Virgilio Hamos Jr., commander of the 53rd Infantry Battalion, said his men facilitated the evacuation of the four victims to the ZSPMC located in the village of Dao in Pagadian City.

Hamos said the UXO was found by Halius last February 21 and brought it to school.

He and his classmates even played with it before they hid it in a secluded portion of the school premises.

However, yesterday, the students took out the UXO to play with it again, but one of them dropped it that reportedly triggered the explosion, Hamos said.

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Student killed, 3 hurt in Zambo grenade blast

ZAMBOANGA CITY – A high school student was killed while three others were wounded when a grenade exploded at their school in Lakewood town, Zamboanga del Sur yesterday morning.

Rodolfo Halius, 13, died while being treated at the Zamboanga del Sur Medical Center, where his class-

mates – Crishamae Repute, Jhonny Daluyon and Alonafe Clarabal – were also taken for treatment.

Reports said that a day before the incident, Daluyon found a grenade near his home in Barangay Poblacion.

Daluyon took the grenade to the Comprehensive National High School and showed it

to his classmates, according to Chief Superintendent Billy Beltran, town police chief.

Beltran said Daluyon buried the grenade at the back of their classroom but he and his classmates dug it up.

The victims were reportedly toying with the grenade when it exploded at around 7:30 a.m.

– Roel Pareño

23 February 2017



Pahina. 3

Grenade blast: Stude dedo, 3 kritikal

Patay ang isang high school student habang tatlo naman kamag-aral ang malubhang nasugatan makaraang sumabog ang M203 grenade launcher na kanilang napulot sa loob ng paaralan sa Mt. Sirongan, Lakewood, Zamboanga del Norte kahapon ng umaga.

Ayon kay P/Supt. Rogelio Alabata, spokesman ng Police Regional Office 9, namatay sa naganap na pagsabog si Jhony Daluyon na sinasabing nakapulot ng M203 ammunition sa

paglalakad nito sa madamong bahagi ng Mt. Sirongan.

Isinugod naman sa paggamutan ang mga kamag-aral na sina Rodolfo Halius, Crishame Repute at si Alonafe Clarabal, mga 13-anyos na nasa Grade 7.

Sa imbestigasyon, dinala at ibinaon ng estudyante ang nasabing rifle grenade sa likuran ng Grade 7 classroom sa Comprehensive National High School sa Brgy. Poblacion.

Bandang alas-7:30 ng uma-

ga, sumabog ang granada sa nasabing eskuwelahan matapos na hukayin ni Daluyon ang eksplosibo sa likuran ng kanilang klasrum.

Nabatid na pinaglaruan at kinalikot ito hanggang sa mabitawan na tumama sa semento.

Kasunod nito, isang malakas na pagsabog ang narinig sa lugar kung saan napuruhan sa insidente si Daluyon habang isinugod naman sa paggamutan ang mga sugatang mag-aaral. (Joy Cantos)

23 February 2017

BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

Page. 48

Soldier wounded in military clash with ASG in Sulu

By RENE ACOSTA
@reneacostaBM

A SOLDIER was wounded on Tuesday as government troops searching for captives of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) clashed with members of the local terrorist group in Indanan, Sulu.

The Armed Forces Western Mindanao Command said elements of the Army's 69th Infantry Battalion under the Joint Task Force Sulu were on operations when they encountered at least 20 terrorists under Aldin Bagadi at Barangay Paligi, Indanan.

After 10 minutes of firefight, the ASG members escaped, reportedly bringing along with them their casualties. One government soldier was wounded.

"Our troops are currently on the ground to pin down the Abu Sayyaf who are on the run and are evading military forces," said Armed Forces Western Mindanao Command commander Major General Carlito Galvez Jr. of the operation.

"It is obvious that the corridors of the bandits have already been constricted due to their inability to hide

in populated areas after the locals themselves resisted their presence within the communities," he added.

The military is currently undertaking intensified operations in Sulu in line with its six months deadline of beating the ASG, not only in the province, but even in Tawi-Tawi and Basilan.

The offensive was heightened by the government's effort to rescue kidnap victims in the hands of the local terrorist group.

Among those held by the ASG was 70-year-old Jurgen Kantner, whom the ASG threatened to behead if its ransom demand of P30 million is not paid by February 26.

The German and his partner were abducted in November last year while they were sailing on a yacht in Sabah.

Last Sunday suspected members of the ASG intercepted and boarded a Vietnamese vessel in Sulu, where they killed one of its crewmen and snatched seven others.

The attack on Vietnamese vessel MV *Giang Hai* happened at 17 nautical miles, north of Pearl Bank, Sulu.

Troops are still searching for the abducted crewmen.

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Bandits slain, trooper wounded in Sulu clash

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Government security forces clashed with Abu Sayyaf bandits, killing several militants in Indanan, Sulu on Tuesday.

The military said a soldier was wounded in the encounter that occurred in Barangay Paligi at around 8:45 a.m.

The firefight erupted days after the military stepped up its operation against the bandit group to save a German captive from execution.

Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson for the West-

ern Mindanao Command (Westmincom), said the military could not determine the number of fatalities as the bandits escaped, bringing with them their dead and wounded comrades.

Westmincom chief Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said the fighting indicated that the militants' movements had been restricted due to the military's stepped up operations.

"Our troops are on the ground to pin down the bandits who are fleeing from the offensive," Galvez said.

At least 14 battalions of soldiers are pursuing the bandit group, he added.

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Abu Sayyaf now constricted in the Sulu outskirts

Abu Sayyaf terrorists are now constricted in the outskirts of Sulu as focused military offensives are continuing in an effort to destroy the bandit group and rescue the remaining hostages, mostly foreigners.

Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., commander of Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom), cited the growing support of the civilian populace to the military in pursuing the Abu Sayyaf terrorists.

"Our troops are currently on the ground to pin down the Abu Sayyaf who are on the run and are evading military forces," said Galvez.

"It is obvious that the corridors of the bandits have already been constricted due to their inability to hide in populated areas after the locals themselves resisted their presence within the communities," he added.

On Tuesday, elements of the Army's 69th Infantry Battalion (IB) clashed with the band of Alden

Bagadi in Barangay Paligi, Indanan town resulting in one soldier wounded.

The encountered bandit group was composed of around 20 fully-armed terrorists.

After 10 minutes of firefight, the ASG members escaped, reportedly bringing along with them their casualties. On the other hand, one soldier was also wounded.

The military is currently undertaking intensified operations in Sulu in line with its six months deadline of beating the ASG, not only in the province, but even in tawi-tawi and Basilan.

The offensive was heightened by the government's effort to rescue kidnap victims in the hands of the local terrorist group.

Among those held by the ASG was 70-year-old Jurgen Kantner, whom the ASG threatened to behead if its ransom demand of P30 million is not paid by February 26.

Mario J. Mallari

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The Manila Times

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Top NPA leader falls

CAMP MIGUEL MALVAR, Batangas City: A top officer of the New People's Army (NPA) – Ernesto Samarita – was arrested in a combat patrol operation in Nasugu, Batangas on Tuesday morning.

Senior Supt. Leopoldo Cabanag, police provincial director, said Samarita, 3rd highest in the NPA's Komiteng Rehiyon Timog Katagalugan (Southern Luzon Regional Committee) and head of the Tactical Center of the 2nd Congress of the Komiteng Sentral held in Mindanao in January 2017.

Samarita is also believed to be an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-NPA.

Cabanag said members of the 730th Combat Group of the Philippine Air Force were conducting combat patrol operation at Barangay Munting Indang in Nasugbu when they accosted the suspect.

He was carrying a backpack loaded with an improvised explosive device (IED) and identified himself as Jojo Dimayacyac.

Samarita is detained at the Nasugbu Police Station. **ROSELLE AQUINO**

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Army arrests top Red leader in S. Tagalog

By **PAUL M. GUTIERREZ**
(Exclusive)

THE military yesterday announced the arrest of one of the highest ranking communist leaders in Southern Tagalog who is also believed to be behind the successful January 29 raid of the New People's Army (NPA) at the exclusive 'Pico de Oro' resort in Nasugbu, Batangas owned by billionaire Henry Sy.

Second Infantry Division commander, MGen. Rhoderick Parayno, in his report to higher headquarters, identified the arrested rebel leader as Ernesto 'Ka Mel' Samarita, who initially gave his name as Jojomar Dimayacyac from San Pablo City, Laguna.

Samarita, of legal age, was brought in for questioning by elements of the 730th Combat Group, 202nd Brigade, at the Nasugbu police station last February 21 after accosting him during a routine combat operation in the area.

The soldiers claimed they noticed a length of "detonating cord" protruding from the bag he was carrying.

At the police station, Samarita's cover was blown after military records disclosed his true identity.

Aside from participating in the raid last January 29 at the Pico de Oro resort in Nasugbu where its entire security force was disarmed by the guerillas and a building was torched, Samarita also allegedly participated at the second congress of the CPP central committee held only last month in Mindanao representing the STRPC executive committee.

Samarita is also alleged-

ly the head of the STRPC finance staff and helps supervise all guerilla operations in the provinces of Batangas, Laguna, Cavite and the central part of Quezon province.

In Laguna, Samarita allegedly took over the tasks left behind by Rosemarie 'Ka Solly/Ka Intsa' Domanais, who was killed in an encounter in Mauban, Quezon in 2011.

Domanais was the wife of CPP spokesman, Grego-

rio 'Ka Roger' Rosal, who died from illness a few months later.

Aside from commending the operating troops of the 202nd brigade under Col. Arnulfo Burgos for the accomplishment, Parayno also enjoined the remaining NPA in the region to return to the fold of the law "to be productive citizens and enjoy the company of their loved ones without fear."

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AFP vows to save German hostage

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Public Affairs Office (AFP-PAO) said that the military leadership is confident that government troops can rescue German hostage Jurgen Kantner before his reported execution at 3 p.m. Sunday.

Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo said that government troops are working doubly hard to find the location of the kidnapers and the kidnap victim.

"We are still confident, the Chief of Staff (General Eduardo Año) says, we are still confident that we will be able

to do it (rescue him)," Arevalo said.

November of last year, Kantner was sailing with his wife Sabine Merz near Tanjong Luuk Pisuk in Sabah, Malaysia when they were first abducted. His wife's body was found inside the abandoned light sky blue yacht "Rockall" bearing a German flag, with a gunshot wound that led to her death.

Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Muamar Askali "Abu Rami" on Tuesday announced that if the ₱30 million demand won't be given, Kantner is scheduled to be beheaded this weekend.

Guarded by four heavily armed men believed to be members of the

Abu Sayyaf Group in a two-minute and 19-second video, Kantner was seen kneeling and airing his appeal in his native German language while an unidentified man was aiming a jungle bolo to his neck.

Army Colonel Cirilito Sobejana, said that they have enough forces to rescue the kidnap victim but admitted that they cannot do it alone.

Honestly, we need the support also of the civilians particularly the communities where the victim was taken. Understandably they have a very, so many friends in the community so we are trying to find a way on how to recover him safely," said Sobejana.

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Pahina. 2

AFP: Destab vs PDU30, wala pa!

“Wala pa.”

Ito ang deretsong sagot ni AFP Public Affairs Office chief Col. Edgar Arevalo nang tanungin ng mga mamamahayag kaugnay sa planong pagpapataalik kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na inilutang ng Malacañang.

Ayon kay Arevalo, wala pa silang namonitor na anumang destabilization plot laban sa administrasyong Duterte.

Salungat ito sa pahayag ni Communications Secretary Martin Andanar na ang mga pahayag ni retired SPO3 Arturo Lascañas ay bahagi lamang ng mas malaking plano ng pagbuwag sa administrasyon.

Pero maaring may hawak na impormasyon sina Andanar na hindi pa umaabot sa kanila (BJ)

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Pahina. 3

Mandatory ROTC itinulak ng AFP

Napapanahon nang maibalik ang mandatory ROTC sa mga paaralan.

Ito ang naging pahayag ni Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Ano sa ginanap na national summit sa mandatory ROTC na idinaos sa Commission Officers Club sa Camp Aguinaldo.

Ayon kay Ano, mahalaga na maibalik ang mandatory ROTC para mahubog ang mga es-

tudyante sa patriotism at pagmamahal sa bansa.

Layon din ng mandatory ROTC na mapalakas pa ang national security sa panahong nasa giyera o krisis ang bansa.

Idinagdag ni Ano na malaking tulong din ito para sa mga kabataan para masanay sa disaster and risk rescue operation at maging sa pagtulong sa socio economic development ng bansa. (Betchai Julian)

23 February 2017



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EU approves P200-M aid for peace process

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO and PIA LEE-BRAGO

The European Union (EU) recently approved a P200-million new contribution for the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Louis Dey, acting chief for EU's development cooperation delegation, said the P200 million would support the Philippine government's efforts in monitoring the situation, defusing tension and creating an inclusive political platform

that will unite the people of Mindanao.

Dey said the EU developed a comprehensive program to promote peace and development in the region.

"The EU and its member-states have been supporting the peace and development efforts between the Philippine government and MILF for over a decade. We will continue to be part of the journey until peace is achieved in Mindanao," Dey said.

A team of EU officials witnessed how the peace efforts benefited more than 1,000 residents of Barangay Capbangi in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato, one of the MILF's base commands.

Dey recently witnessed the turnover of a rice mill, a solar dryer and a warehouse to the village.

The turnover was part of the Mindanao Trust Fund, wherein the EU is one of the major contributors.

The EU has so far provided P1.17 billion to the fund.

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ONLINE NEWS

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Defense deputy leads simple rites to commemorate EDSA at LNB

From the Philippine Information Agency (Feb 22):

Department of National Defense Undersecretary Cardozo M. Luna led this morning's wreath laying rites at the Libingan ng mga Bayani to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the People Power Revolution.

Today marks the start of the People Power Commemoration Week (Feb. 22-25), which enjoins all Filipinos to remember and ponder on the principles and values that the peaceful revolution stands for.

It can be recalled that through EDSA, the Filipino nation has gained the respect and admiration of the world with its feats of valor and demonstration of people's solidarity in transforming a society.

It also restored democratic institutions and ushered in meaningful political, social and economic reforms in the country, which serves as a national inspiration until today.

In his speech, Cardozo emphasized the need to promote national unity in order to face the challenges of nation building.

He said unity and solidarity happened during EDSA, hence the need to perpetuate and propagate the spirit of the historic event.

<http://news.pia.gov.ph>

Ex-AFP-PAO chief now heads Army battalion in Mindanao

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 22):

A former chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Public Affairs Office (AFP-PAO) now heads the 33rd Infantry Battalion based here and vowed Wednesday he will make the "Makabayan" battalion excel in many aspects.

Lieutenant Colonel Harold M. Cabunoc assumed post as the commanding officer of 33rd Infantry (Makabayan) Battalion on Tuesday, replacing Lieutenant Colonel Ricky P. Bunayog in a Change of Command Ceremony presided over by Brig Gen. Arnel dela Vega, 6th Infantry Division commander at 33IB Headquarters in Barangay Tual, President Quirino, Sultan Kudarat.

Bunayog will serve full time as the assistant chief of staff for operations.

Prior to his assignment as 33rd IB battalion commander, Cabunoc was head of the AFP's special project concerning Indigenous Peoples in Davao region.

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Cabunoc resigned as AFP-PAO chief after then Lt. Gen. Hernando Iriberry assumed as AFP chief in July 2015. He assumed his post as the PAO chief of the AFP in October 2014.

Cabunoc told his subordinates the battalion should excel in all military operations, including peace advocacy to tow the line of 6th ID direction.

He said the battalion, under his leadership, must give priority to the peace process in southern Philippines without abandoning its duties of securing and assuring the safety of Filipinos.

Based in President Quirino, the 33rd IB includes in its area of operations the towns of Quirino, Isulan, Lambayong, Tacurong City in Sultan Kudarat province and the towns of Buluan, Datu Paglas, Mangudadatu, Paglat and SK Pendatun.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph>

Troops, ASG clash anew; soldier slightly wounded

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 22):

Government troops are tracking down a group of Abu Sayyaf bandits dragging along with them their casualties following a firefight in the hinterlands of Sulu.

Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief, on Wednesday said the object of pursuit operations is the group of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Aldin Bagadi based in Indanan town, Sulu.

Galvez said the group of Bagadi figured in a firefight Tuesday in Barangay Paligi, Indanan town with the troops of the Army's 69th Infantry Battalion.

Galvez said the troops were conducting focused military operations when they clashed against 20 Abu Sayyaf bandits led by Bagadi.

He said the group fled, dragging along with them their slain and injured companions following a 10-minute firefight.

He said a soldier was slightly injured and was taken to a hospital for treatment.

"Our troops are currently on the ground to pin down the Abu Sayyaf bandits who are on the run and are evading military forces," Galvez said.

"It is obvious that the corridors of the bandits have already been constricted due to their inability to hide in populated areas after the locals themselves resisted their presence within the communities," he added.

He said the troops of the Joint Task Force Sulu continue to intensify the conduct of focused military operations to contain the ASG and to possibly rescue the hostages in Sulu.

The ASG is still holding captive 27 people, including 21 foreigners, who were separately seized.

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The hostages included a Dutch; a German; a Korean; seven Indonesians; five Malaysians; six Vietnamese; and, six Filipinos.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph>

AFP denies destabilization plots against Duterte administration for umpteenth time

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 22):

For the umpteenth time, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Wednesday said it is still to monitor any destabilization attempts or plots against the Duterte administration.

This was stressed by AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año who said that the military is not keen to participate in such activities.

"So far, we have not monitored any destabilization plot. The AFP's morale is high. The AFP is solid and shall continue to do its mandate of protecting the people and the state," he stressed.

~~The military's refusal to participate in such unconstitutional activities can be attributed to the fact that all officers and enlisted personnel of the AFP are now feeling the full support of the national leadership, Año added.~~

"We can feel the full support of the national leadership as we perform our tasks," he said.

Also, the gestures made President Rodrigo Duterte, which include visiting wounded troops in hospital, personally condoling with the families of slain soldiers, and dropping by in faraway camps and bases, despite his hectic schedule, are all appreciated by military personnel from top to the bottom, the AFP chief said.

Año issued this statement despite earlier claims by Presidential Communications Office Secretary Martin Andanar who said that revelations made by SPO3 Arturo Lascañas, claiming he (Lascanas) and other police officers were paid to do vigilante killings in Davao City, are part of this plot.

The AFP added that they may not have yet the information possessed by Andanar but stressed it is ready to respond decisively against such threats.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph>

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Military now targeting ASG kidnapping infrastructure

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 22):

To fully eliminate the Abu Sayyaf Group threat, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is now targeting the infrastructure making up its kidnapping network.

By infrastructure, AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo was referring to the bandit group's spotters, kidnappers, caretakers, financiers and negotiators.

This was demonstrated by the recent neutralization of three ASG spotters in Tawi-Tawi, he added.

Arevalo said efforts are still ongoing to further unravel this infrastructure so that ASG will lose its capacity to generate funds, hereby losing their capability to acquire weapons, equipment, food and support from the communities they are embedded with.

Earlier, the AFP public affairs office chief said no efforts will be spared to rescue ASG captive Juergen Kantner whom the bandits threatened to behead this coming Feb. 26 if their PHP30 million ransom demand are not paid.

He also said that troops on Monday have started conducting intensified operations in a bid to locate and rescue the German captive.

Arevalo declined to give the locations on where the operations are being conducted for security and operational reasons.

The AFP official also said these operations are also aimed at recovering other hostages still in the hands of the terrorist group.

"We are still confident that we will be able to do it, rescue Kantner alive, and we are doing all level best to do this," he added.

Kantner was kidnapped by the ASG bandits while his yacht "Rockall" was cruising off Sulu waters last November.

His companion, 56-year-old Sabine Mertz, was shot and killed by the bandits and allegedly raped.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph>

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Militiaman killed as Army clashes with NPAs in North Cotabato

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 22):

The military is pursuing a band of communist rebels who killed a government militiaman during an encounter in Sitio Boay-boay, Barangay Basak here.

Lt. Silver Belvis, spokesperson of 39th Infantry Battalion identified the casualty as Eliseo Sicao, a member of the militia force under the Army's 72nd Infantry Battalion stationed in the area.

Belvis said government troopers were conducting a combat patrol operation in the area on Tuesday afternoon when they encountered some 15 rebels belonging to the New Peoples Army (NPA) Guerilla Front 54.

The firefight lasted for an hour and only stopped after the rebels withdrew to a forested section of the village.

Belvis said bloodstains were found on the rebel position after the encounter.

Authorities here raised alert status while pursuit operations are ongoing against the rebels.

The incident was the second encounter between government forces and NPA rebels here in North Cotabato after President Rodrigo Duterte and the NPA separately lifted their respective unilateral ceasefire recently.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph>

Woman injured in Basilan ambush

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 22):

Troops are tracking down the gunmen behind the ambush on Wednesday that injured a woman while her nephew escape unscathed in Basilan province, a top military official said.

Col. Juvymax Uy, newly-installed commander of the Army's 104th Infantry Brigade, disclosed the incident occurred around 10 a.m. Wednesday in the boundary of Sumisip and Maluso towns.

Uy identified the wounded victim as Satarian Jaber, while her nephew, Ahamad Jaber, emerged from the incident unscathed.

Uy said the Jabers were traversing the Cabcaban-Canas road aboard a motorcycle when waylaid by five unidentified gunmen.

Troops from the Army's 68th Infantry Battalion, upon receipt of report, rushed to the ambush site and provided first aid to Jaber.

From there, Uy said the troops took the elder Jaber to the hospital in Isabela City, the capital of Basilan

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province.

He said troops from the Alpha Company of the 68th Infantry Battalion conducted clearing operation to ensure safe passage along the Cabcaban-Canas road that links the town of Sumisip to Maluso.

He said investigation is ongoing while troops are pursuing the ambushers who fled to a forested area.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph>

NPA stages 'lightning checkpoint' in MisOr

From MindaNews (Feb 21):

Around 50 communist rebels staged a "lightning checkpoint" along the Butuan-Cagayan de Oro national highway in Medina town, Misamis Oriental Tuesday morning, stopping all vehicles to look for soldiers and policemen, the military said.

Capt. Peter Sarsagat, acting public affairs officer of the 4th Infantry Division, said the rebels captured no soldiers nor policemen.

He said two platoons of the "Sandatahang Pangpropaganda" of the New People's Army Guerilla Front 4B set up a checkpoint along the highway in Purok 4, Barangay Pahindong, Medina town.

"The checkpoint lasted for only 30 minutes. They wanted to show their forces," Sarsagat said.

He said the rebels also talked with Barangay Pahindong Chairman Roel Cabanos and even ate their breakfast at the basketball of the barangay hall.

Sarsagat said the rebels also stopped all vehicles asking those who were wearing military and police uniforms to step down.

The rebels left soon after going to the general direction of Barangay Macopa, also in Medina town, he said.

"Even if the entire event lasted only for 30 minutes, it was enough to put a chill on our tourism industry," said Misamis Oriental Gov. Yevgeny Emano.

He said the publicity of the rebel presence is enough to drive away the tourists from the province.

The governor said he is now thinking of putting on hold the plans to develop resorts around several waterfalls and beaches in the province.

"So long as there is a shooting war, no tourists will come to the province," Emano said.

The NPA has a strong presence in Misamis Oriental. The rebels celebrated the 48th foundation anniversary of

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the Communist Party of the Philippines in barangay Mananom-Bago, Medina town, Misamis Oriental last Dec. 26, 2016.

<http://www.mindanews.com>

NPA denies conducting Davao Death Squad killings

From ABS-CBN (Feb 22):

The New People's Army denied Wednesday that some communist rebels committed extrajudicial killings as part of the so-called Davao Death Squad.

"We are firm and certain that the New People's Army only takes orders from its commanders under the direct guidance of the Communist Party," said the NPA's Melito Glor Command.

"Never will the NPA take orders from people outside the CPP-NPA, especially political personalities in the reactionary government."

The communist rebels issued this statement following the claims made by retired SPO3 Arturo Lascañas that he, along with some cops and rebel returnees, was paid by then Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte to kill criminals and other political enemies.

Lascañas' admission is a recantation of his earlier testimony in a Senate hearing where he said that the DDS only a product of media hype.

Lascañas' testimony also backs the earlier admission of another self-confessed DDS hitman Edgar Matobato that rebel returnees were commissioned by the group.

'Davao Death Squad composed of cops, rebel returnees'

In a September 2016 Senate hearing, Matobato said there were about 300 rebel returnees in the death squad.

"Ang pinapatay nila yung mga nasasangkot sa gang war, rugby boys, mga bata pa ma'am. Mga 15, 17. Ganyan ang trabaho nila," he said.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com>

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300 Senior reservist officers attend summit to restore ROTC

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 22):

Around 300 senior military reservists commanders gathered at the Armed Forces of the Philippines Commissioned Officers' Club in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City to discuss the proposal to restore the Mandatory Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) Wednesday.

This is in line with President Rodrigo Duterte's approval of the proposed restoration of the mandatory ROTC Grades 11 and 12 of the country's public and private schools.

"The ROTC is a key component of the AFP's Reserve Force Development program. Through this summit, we are able to connect the ROTC Corps Commanders with the Senior Reservist Commanders of the AFP to discuss common issues on the ROTC and its role in the Reserve Force," AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said.

Among the speakers were Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian who tackled the restoration of mandatory ROTC, and Retired Navy Capt. Diononce F. Tuñacao of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific who discussed the institutional measures to prevent hazing and corruption in the ROTC.

The summit was anchored on the theme "Building the ROTC as a Strong Foundation of the AFP Reserve Force".

It also featured focus group discussions and a plenary session where ROTC graduates can interact with reservist commanders of the Brigade-level Ready Reserve Units.

As the summit's output, a manifesto was signed by the ROTC Corps Commander inking their pledge to act to address hazing and corruption in the ROTC, and to commit themselves to greater participation in nation-building.

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines believes it is time to bring back mandatory ROTC in schools to ensure that the youth are shaped with a deep sense of patriotism and love for country," AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año said.

"The Mandatory ROTC Program will strengthen national security since the country will have trained men and women who can defend their country in times of war and crises; undertake disaster, relief and rescue operations and; assist in socio-economic development," he added.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph>

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OPAPP welcomes CPP/NPA/NDF's call to proceed with the bilateral ceasefire negotiations

From the Philippine Information Agency (Feb 22):

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus G. Dureza welcomes the CPP/NPA/NDF's call to proceed with the bilateral ceasefire negotiations.

"We welcome and respect the positive position coming from the leadership of the CPP/NPA/NDF," Secretary Dureza said in a statement.

He added that "On the part of the Philippine government, we share the same commitment to work for just and lasting peace in the land."

"When 'compelling reasons,' as President Duterte earlier announced, are present, then we in government will take the next necessary steps," Secretary Dureza concluded. (OPAPP)

<http://news.pia.gov.ph>

NPA rebel surrenders

From the Mindanao Times (Feb 22):

AN ALLEGED member of the New People's Army (NPA) surrendered to the 25th Infantry Battalion and the Monkayo police on Saturday.

Capt. Rhyon Batcher, spokesperson of 10th Infantry Division, said alias Mar sought the assistance of Monkayo Mayor Ramil Gentugaya upon his surrender.

He was said to be a squad leader of NPA's Pulang Bagani Company (PBC) 8 and resident of Agusan Del Sur. He claimed that constant fear and hardship due to the relentless combat operations of the military forced him to lay down his arms.

Mar also claimed that they were duped into thinking that once they surrender, they will be tortured to death by the military.

"I have proven false the indoctrination of the NPA leaders," he said. "The soldiers took good care of me."

He also revealed that some of his comrades are also thinking about surrendering if given the chance.

Alias Mar is now undergoing debriefing and validation for enrolment to the comprehensive local integration program (CLIP) for rebel returnees.

In his statement, Brig. Gen. Macairog Alberto, commander of 1001st Infantry Brigade, appealed to communist rebels to come down and return to their families, and live a productive life rather than lead a life of violence.

<http://mindanaotimes.net>

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