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NEWS CLIPPINGS

26 February 2017

Sunday

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

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | FEBRUARY 26, 2017 | SUNDAY



SUNRISE 6:15 AM
SUNSET 6:09 PM

MOONRISE 6:47 AM
MOONSET 5:48 PM


LAST QUARTER Feb 25 10:34 AM
NEW MOON Feb 26 10:46 PM


LOW TIDE 6:21 AM
HIGH TIDE 10:07 PM

MANILA SOUTH HARBOR
-0.25 Meter / 0.82 Meter

Partly cloudy with a few clouds with showers
Partly cloudy with a few clouds with rain showers and/or thunderstorms
Cloudy skies with sun showers and/or thunderstorms
Light rain

	FEB 27	FEB 28	FEB 27	FEB 28	FEB 27	FEB 28
METRO MANILA	22-31°C	22-31°C	TAGAYTAY	20-29°C / 19-30°C	TACLOBAN	23-25°C / 24-30°C
TUGUEGARAO	22-29°C	20-30°C	LEGAZPI	24-30°C / 24-29°C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	25-26°C / 25-30°C
LADAG	21-32°C	23-32°C	PUERTO PRINCESA	24-31°C / 25-31°C	METRO DAVAO	23-30°C / 23-31°C
BAGUIO	14-22°C	14-23°C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	25-28°C / 25-28°C	ZAMBOANGA	24-32°C / 24-28°C
SBMA/CLARK	23-31°C	23-31°C	METRO CEBU	25-30°C / 24-30°C		



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Page: 1

'Peace under one nation, one flag'

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – President Duterte called for a just and lasting peace by uniting all factions in the nation under one flag.

"I would like to tell you now that, as President, (I want) a just and lasting peace under my term but it must be as one country, one nation and one flag. Under that, understand each other," Duterte said during the launching of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) here on Friday.

Duterte urged the BTC commissioners to craft the enabling law for the Bangsamoro in a bid to have workable peace agreements with the Moro groups in Mindanao.

He said the BTC should "navigate the many obstructions, obstacles" in crafting the enabling law to achieve peace.

"Craft one that is good for the entire Filipino nation," Duterte told the 12 members of the BTC.

"I am a man in a hurry and I want that something will come out of this BTC soon which we can work on," he said.

Duterte added he would like to see the people in the Moro communities craft the new law because they understand the history and the agony of the Mindanaoans, including the "idiosyncrasies" of

Turn to Page 12

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Peace From Page 1

the tribal groups

"If you have a product and it is passed by Congress, we will implement it," he said

Duterte said he does not want to secede any part of the country under the enabling law that would support the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014

"As President, I want peace under one country, one nation and one flag," he stressed

Once a workable agreement is reached, Duterte said he is ready to campaign to pass the enabling law. He added he would not mind cutting short his six-year term just to pave the way to peace

"Maybe in front of the Filipino nation, I will ask every Filipino to vote for it because it will make us a great nation, so I leave it up to you," Duterte told the BTC commissioners during the ceremonies held at the Waterfront Insular Davao Hotel

Extremist threat

Also concerned about the threat of extremism, the President warned his Muslim brothers anew about the dangers of extremism to the country's peace and security

"What they have in the Middle East is different from what we have here," the President said

Duterte has expressed se-

rious concerns of a caliphate being pushed by extremist groups from Arab countries

"Resist extremism. There would be violence. I cannot control it," he said

"If we allow them to come here, even convert some, there will be a bloodbath," Duterte warned

"We must avoid extremism or even entertain them because they will destroy us," he said

Duterte signed an executive order extending the composition of the BTC on Friday

The expanded BTC will craft a new enabling law for the setting up of a more empowered self-governing political entity under the CAB signed by the government and the MILF

The new BTC, chaired by MILF's first vice chairman Ghazali Jaafar, is comprised of

21 members

Among the members of the BTC are Haron Abas, Firdausi Ismail Abbas, Ibrahim Ali, Hussin Amin, Massara Dardamun-Latiph, Samira Gutoc-Tomawis, Hatimul Hassan, Raissa Jajurie, Gatur Kanain, Mussolini Sinsuat Lidasan, Jose Lorena, Abduraof Abdul Macacua, Hussem Muñoz, Romeo Saliga, Susana Salvador-Anayatin, Omar Yasser Sema, Saïd Shiek, Ammal Soliman, Melanic Ulama and MILF peace panel chair Mohagher Iqbal

Besides Jaafar, the MILF has 10 members in the group, while the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the government each have three and seven representatives, respectively

The three MNLF officials in

the expanded BTC are Sema, Abas and Hassan, a former ARMM assemblyman. They belong to the MNLF faction that is not hostile to the MILF.

On the other hand, officials of the ARMM urged Malacañang and the MILF to create an entity before the 2019 elections to replace the present autonomous regional government

"If established amid our elective tenure, we shall willingly step down and turn over to them the ARMM government for the new self-governing political mechanism to take off unhampered," ARMM Gov Mujiv Hataman said

The original BTC crafted an enabling measure to create a political entity under the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law, but this was disapproved by Congress for supposed uncon-

stitutional provisions

Hataman said he wanted voters in areas to be covered by the new political entity replacing ARMM to elect a pioneer set of officials simultaneous with the 2019 midterm elections

"Even if we are already out of the picture, we shall continue to help make the Mindanao peace process succeed," Hataman said

ARMM Vice Gov Haroun Al-Rashid Lucman said he is ready to vacate his post before June 30, 2019 if required by the BTC and Malacañang

"This peace process is good for all people in Mindanao, the Muslims, the Christians and the Lumads. We are ready to do sacrifice," he said.

– With Christina Mendez, John Unson

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

EDSA sparked peaceful change

Destabilization plot vs predecessor

'nonsense' – Noynoy

By ELENA L. ABEN, MARIO B. CASAYURAN, and VANNE P. TERRAZOLA

"Peaceful change is the legacy of EDSA." Senate President Aquilino

Pimentel III stressed this yesterday as the nation marked the 31st anniversary of the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution.

tion.

According to the senator, the historic event that ended the two-decade regime of the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos happened "because of the people's

desire for change."

But he stressed that the struggle for truth, transparency and respect for human rights continues, and that the people's "thirst for change" remains

unquenched.

"I will always be a partner for change. I will never abandon the dream of making life better for every Filipino," Pimentel said.

Pimentel, son of martial law victim and former Senate President Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr, also recalled ▶ 6

EDSA sparked peaceful... ◀1

those who suffered and sacrificed their lives during the Marcos dictatorship for the sake of restoring democracy

Dark, uncertain future

But Sen. Lela de Lima, detained on drug charges, warned yesterday that the country faces a dark, uncertain future if the present Duterte administration continues to trample on the rights of Filipinos.

In a statement marking yesterday's 31st anniversary of the EDSA People Power Revolt, De Lima minced no words in criticizing the Duterte administration over its bloody war on illegal drugs and the continued violation of Filipinos' human rights that dehumanizes and pollutes the spirit of EDSA.

"Kung magpapatuloy ang mala-diktador na pamamahala at paglabag sa ating mga karapatan, anong kinabukasan ang naghihintay sa atin? Walang People Power, walang demokrasya, walang tunay na kalayaan, kung mananahimik at magwalang kibo lamang and sambayanan sa harap ng katiwalian, karasahan, at pagmamalabis sa kapangyarihan (if the Duterte administration continues to violate the human rights of citizens, what future awaits us? No people power, no democracy, no true freedom if we play dumb to widespread corruption, abuses, and abuse of power)," said De Lima, who urged the people to keep the spirit of EDSA alive and not to remain silent in the wake of a "looming dictatorship."

Reacting to De Lima's call, Malacañang said the lady senator is not the kind of voice the Filipinos need

right now

According to Presidential spokesman Juanes Abella, De Lima's call to keep the spirit of EDSA alive is worthwhile but expressed doubt if her voice is what the people needs.

"I would say that her call to keep the spirit of EDSA, of nation building and freedom alive is very worthwhile. However, I doubt if she is the kind of, if hers is the kind of voice that the people need at this stage," he said over Radyo ng Bayan.

"We need people who are truly and sincerely nation patriot, nation builder and, not somebody who takes advantage of political position for their own advancement," he added.

Nonsense

Former President Benigno Aquino III, who joined the EDSA revolution anniversary celebration at the People Power Monument in Quezon City, took advantage of the occasion to deny that his Liberal Party (LP) is plotting to destabilize the administration of President Duterte.

"Nang-aalok kami ng tulong tas magde-destab? Kalokohan naman yun (We are offering help, then we plot destabilization? That's pure nonsense)," he said.

The former chief executive said he even "personally" offered Duterte his help when he stepped out of the Malacañang at noon of June 30 last year.

"Sabi ko, kung kami ma'y maitutulong sa inyo – marami sa bagay dito pinaghirapan namin, literal na blood, sweat, and

tears, gusto naming mahinog lahat ng ito – handa kaming tumulong," Aquino told media, recalling what he told President Duterte.

"Ang tanda kong sinabi niya sa akin, time to time lay tatawag kami sa iyo para humingi ng payo (I recalled that he told me that from time to time he will call up to seek advice)," he added.

But Aquino said Duterte has only called him once, during the National Security Council Meeting in July where he also met former President and now Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Fidel Ramos, and Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada.

Aquino, like his late parents Sen. Benigno Aquino and former President Cory Aquino, said he won't allow a repeat of martial law which paved the way for thousands of human rights violations during the Marcos regime.

"Like I said before, I won't allow it. We will fight for equal rights. If we don't fight for it, who else will fight for us," Aquino, who appeared for the first time in a major event, said.

He also expressed dismay over the hasty decision of the Muntinlupa regional trial court to arrest De Lima, his party-mate. He lamented that De Lima was denied her right to defend herself against the charges.

Don't feel despair

Vice President Leni Robredo, meanwhile, said she firmly believes that Filipinos are capable of fighting another dictatorship by People Power if the situation in the country calls for it.

Robredo said there is no more reason that the people can't hold a similar democratic movement after they toppled late

President Marcos

"If there was one thing EDSA achieved, it is that people power is possible. We can do so much because of people power," she said at the forum organized by Kaya Natin! and Jesse Robredo Foundation, Inc. Network.

Robredo, a former human rights lawyer, said Filipinos should not despair amid the "evil that is happening."

"Don't feel despair because if we were able to do it during the Marcos dictatorship, there is no more reason why we can't do it anymore now," she said.

EDSA rites

The 31st anniversary of the EDSA revolution was celebrated in various areas yesterday.

At the Quirino Grandstand at Rizal Park in Manila, some 15,000 pro-Duterte supporters from Metro Manila and nearby provinces converged to show support for the president's war on drugs, poverty, and corruption.

Sultan Yusoph Impal Gunto of the Muslim Center in San Miguel, Manila, said joined the EDSA celebration at Quirino Grandstand because they are willing to sacrifice their lives for Duterte.

"Wag nating harangan ang pamamalakad niya sa Pilipinas, kundi dapat ay suportahan natin siya."

At the EDSA Shrine, militant groups gathered to urge the government to continue with the peace talks with the rebels to pave the way for a "radical change" in the country.

They also cautioned the Duterte administration not to repeat the same mistakes that define the Marcos regime.

The groups belong to Bayan, Alliance of Health Workers, All UP Workers Union,

Gabriela, Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan-Kilusang Mayo Uno (Pamantik-KMFU) and the Campaign Against the Return of the Marcoses in Malacañang (Carmima) among others. They asked the Duterte government to show them the fruits of his campaign promises.

Though the EDSA people power successfully toppled the dictatorship, things failed to change in the country after 31 years, Renato Reyes, Bayan secretary-general, lamented.

"The same ruling elite of landlords, big business, and foreign interests hold on to power and oppress the people. Now, the ruling elite are engaged in political wrangling, hitting back at each other with scandals and counter-accusations. Both factions abuse the justice system for their own narrow ends. Both are guilty of legal shortcuts and politically motivated prosecution," Reyes said in a statement.

"Ang pagsasampa ng gawa-gawang kaso, panahon pa yan ni Arroyo at Aquino. Sino ang Secretary of Justice noon? Si Leila De Lima (The filing of trumped up charges was practiced by Arroyo, Aquino. Who was the secretary of Justice then? Leila de Lima)," Reyes emphasized in his speech during the rally.

Joms Salvador, Gabriela secretary general, also said De Lima's arrest shows how the Duterte government is becoming authoritarian.

Bayan added that the current administration claims its victory on the promise of change, which it has yet to deliver. (With reports from Raymund F. Antonio, Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos, Jenny F. Manongdo, Jairnie Rose Aberia, and Analou de Vera)

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2 soldiers, 2 rebs wounded in Maguindanao encounter

By **ZAIDA DELOS REYES-PALANCA**

TWO soldiers and two lawless elements were killed when an anti-illegal drug operation of government forces turned into encounter yesterday morning in Datu Paglas, Maguindanao.

This was confirmed by

Philippine Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion (IB) Commander Lt. Colonel Harold Cabunoc.

The identities of the wounded persons were not yet available as of press time.

Cabunoc said the encounter occurred at around 7:46 a.m. in Bgy. Lipao, Datu Paglas, Maguindanao.

Two platoons under B

Company of 33IB led by 1Lt. Marc Fernandez and 2Lt. John Marc Arunday, together with PDEA ARMM forces, were conducting an anti-illegal drug operation when they encountered more or less 15 lawless elements in the area.

The incident resulted in the wounding and arrest of two suspects.

Two soldiers were also wounded in the incident.

Recovered at the encounter site were one M16 rifle and more or less 70 to 80 grams of shabu with an estimated value of P500,000 and various drug paraphernalia.

Cabunoc reinforced the engaged troops and pursued the enemies.

The Army supports the anti-illegal drug operations of the government being spearheaded by the PDEA.

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3 NPA leader, 10 miyembro sumuko

GENERAL SANTOS CITY - Sa kasagsagan ng all-out war ng militar laban sa New People's Army (NPA), tatlong leader ng kilusan at 10 tagasumod ng mga ito ang sumuko sa mga awtoridad sa Malita, Davao Occidental nitong Biyernes.

Sinabi ni Lt. Col. Marion Angco, commander ng 73rd Infantry Batalion, na ang mga sumukong rebelde ay mga dating gerilyang komunista sa kabundukan ng Malita, Davao Occidental at Alabel, Sarangani.

Isinuko rin ng mga rebelde ang apat na automatic rifle.

Ayon sa 13, napagpasyahan nilang sumuko dahil sa matinding hirap na dinaranas nila sa kabundukan, lalo na ngayong tinutugis sila ng militar.

Joseph Jubelag

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2 Maute Group members slain in Iligan operations

Two suspected members of the Maute Group were killed by government security forces shortly after stealing the white Ford Ranger XLT pick-up truck of a businessman in Iligan City Friday morning.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, Western Mindanao Command (WMC) spokesman, said the carjacking took place at 8:45 a.m. along C-3 Road, Barangay Ubaldo Laya, in Iligan.

She identified the businessman as 36-year-old Othelo Adiong, who was with his family when Maute Group members on board a white Elantra stopped their vehicle at gunpoint and forced them out.

Petinglay said Adiong immediately reported the incident to patrolling members of the PNP-Special Action Force (SAF) who then gave chase.

As a security precaution, the

police officers radioed nearby military units for assistance. The latter conducted their own pursuit operations.

The WMC spokesman said the white Elantra was intercepted in Camague Road by the PNP-SAF, who arrested its driver Eyeman Alonto of Marawi City, and turned him over to the Iligan City police.

Meanwhile, the white Ford XLT was blocked near the

boundary of Iligan and Tagoloan, Lanao del Norte by militiamen under the 4th Mechanized Battalion, triggering a short firefight that resulted in the death of the two suspects, identified as Azzam Ampua Tahir and a certain Wowie.

Recovered from the slain suspects were an M-4 rifle with three magazines and 60 rounds of ammunition and a caliber .45 pistol.

PNA

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The Manila Times

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2 jihadists slain in Iligan

BY AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Two suspected members of the local jihadist Maute group were killed in an encounter with police commandos and Philippine Army soldiers in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte on Friday. Another jihadist was captured.

Authorities said the fighting ensued after security forces intercepted the gunmen who stole a pickup truck driven by Othelo Adiong.

Adiong, 36, his 62-year-old mother Elvira, wife Esthephanie and son were onboard the vehicle when flagged down by a group of armed men.

The gunmen released the passengers and drove away the truck. Another getaway car tailed them while the gunmen tried to escape.

Security forces alerted by the incident set up road blocks while policemen and soldiers pursued the gunmen and caught up with them killing the attackers who were later identified as Azzam Ampua Tahir and Wowie. Their companion Eyeman Alonto, a native of Marawi City who was driving the car, was arrested.

Major General Carlito Galvez Jr., commander of the Western Mindanao Command, said recovered from the slain jihadists were M4 automatic rifle and three magazines, including dozens of ammunition and a caliber 45 pistol.

It was unknown whether the gang was planning an attack or plotting to carry out bombings in Iligan City, but the Maute group has been linked by the police and military in the series of deadly attacks over the last two years.

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Pahina. 7

2 NPA rebs todas sa bakbakan

Dalawa sa grupo ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army ang napatay makaraang makasagupa ang tropa ng militar sa liblib sa Barangay Jebaca, bayan ng Maayon, Capiz noong Biyernes ng hapon. Sa ulat na nakarating kay Lt Col Ericson Rosana ng Army's 3rd Infantry Division, bandang alas-3:40 ng hapon nang makasagupa ng Army's 61st Infantry Battalion ang grupo ng mga rebelde sa pamumuno ni Romulo "Ka Rigan" Gangoso. Gayunman, tumagal ng 30-minuto ang bakbakan kung saan napatay ang dalawang rebelde na patuloy na inalam ang pagkakakilanlan. Mabilis na nagsitakas ang mga rebelde patungo sa hindi pa malamang destinasyon na inabandona ang dalawang kasamahang napatay. Walang nasugatan o napatay sa panig ng mga sundalo. Nasamsam sa encounter site ang dalawang shotgun, dalawang hand grenade. **Joy Cantos**

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POLICE FILES

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2 NPA todas sa engkwentro sa Capiz

PATAY ang dalawang miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) sa naganap na engkwentro sa pagitan ng militar at mga rebelde sa Maayon, Capiz.

Inaalam pa ng mga otoridad ang pagkakakilanlan ng dalawang nasawing rebelde.

Sa report na nakarating sa headquarters ng 3rd Infantry Division, dakong 3 40 ng hapon nang maka-engkwentro ng mga elemento ng scout platoon ng 61st Infantry Battalion ang may 7 mga rebelde sa Sitio Maknoy, Brgy. Jeba, Maayon, Capiz.

Nagpapatrulya ang mga sundalo sa pamumuno ni SSG Belarmino nang masabát ang mga rebelde.

Ang bakbakan ay tumagal ng ilang minuto ikinasawi ng dalawang rebelde habang wala naman namatay o nasugatan sa panig ng militar. Narekober ng mga sundalo sa pmangyarihan ng bakbakan ang dalawang shotgun at dalawang ganda.

Patuloy ang isinasagawang clearing operation ng militar sa lugar ng engkwentro at pagtugis sa mga tumatakas na rebelde. (Mark Obleada)

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<http://www.bomboradyo.com>

Vice squad leader at supply officer ng NPA sa Masbate, kabilang sa mga sumuko

Posted By: Bombo Radyo Legazpi

LEGAZPI CITY – (Update) Matinding gutom, konsensiya sa panggipit sa mga mahihirap na kababayan, takot sa pinaigting na kampanya laban sa mga rebelde ang ilan lamang sa mga dahilan kung bakit nagdesisyon ang limang kasapi ng New People's Army (NPA) na magbalik-loob na sa pamahalaan.

Sa panayam ng Bombo Radyo Legazpi kay Capt. Joash Pramis, tagapagsalita ng 9th Infantry Division, nabatid na personal pang nakaharap ng mga ito ang commander ng 9th ID na si Major Gen. Manolito Orense matapos na sumuko sa headquarters ng Philippine Army sa Brgy. Bacolod, Milagros, Masbate.

Naibunyag pa nitong may hinawakang posisyon ang ilan sa mga ito kung saan mayroong vice squad leader at supply officer.

Kinondena naman ni Pramis ang proseso ng recruitment ng kilusan matapos mabatid na 16-anyos pa lamang ng makalahok ang isa sa mga ito na nakapasilbi rin ng dalawang taon sa NPA.

Sa ngayon, pino-proseso na ang pagsailalim ng mga ito sa comprehensive local integration program (CLIP) gayundin ang makukuhang halaga mula sa mga isinukong armas mula sa P45,000 hanggang P60,000.

Bukod pa sa naturang halaga, makakatanggap rin ang mga ito ng P7,000 food allowance habang hinihintay pa ang immediate assistance mula sa local government unit na aabutin umano ng P15,000.

Samantala, umaasa si Pramis na magsilbi sana itong wake-up call sa mga kababayang naliliinlang na pumasok sa kilusan upang magbalik na sa tunay na tungkulin sa lipunan.

<http://www.bomboradyo.com>

Mga rebeldeng NPA na bumaba umano sa 1 bayan sa CamSur nagdadala ng pangamba sa mga residente

Posted By: Bombo Radyo Naga

NAGA CITY – Pinawi ng 9th Infantry Division, Philippine Army ang pangamba ng mga residente sa bayan ng Siruma, Camarines Sur dahil sa presensiya umano ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA).

Ito'y kaugnay ng lumabas na mga balitang bumaba umano sa naturang bayan ang mga miyembro ng NPA mula sa bayan ng Tinambac.

Sa panayam ng Bombo Radyo Naga kay Capt. Joash Pramis, chief ng Division of Public Affairs Office (DPAO) ng 9th Infantry Division Philippine Army, sinabi nito na mayroon silang natanggap na mga impormasyon hinggil sa nasabing mga report ngunit tumanggi muna itong magbigay ng detalye.

Ito'y upang hindi aniya maapektuhan ang ginagawang operasyon ng mga militar.

Ayon kay Pramis, nagpapatuloy pa ang kanilang mga military operations upang mapigilan ang anumang planong pang-aatake ng makakaliwang grupo.

Samantala, sa hiwalay naman na panayam sa isang elected official sa bayan ng Siruma, sinabi nito na natatakot ang mga tao na lumabas sa kanilang bahay at pagbyahe dahil sa pangamba na madamay sa anumang plano ng rebeldeng NPA.

Nabatid na nitong nakaraang araw, nagpalabas nang kautusan ang mismong alkalde ng naturang bayan na maagang pauwiin ang mga empleyado at estudyante upang matiyak ang seguridad at kaligtasan ng mga ito matapos matanggap ang nasabing impormasyon.

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

www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

Iglesia says army to stand down for captive's safe release

From the Sun Star-Cagayan de Oro

IGLESIA Filipina Independiente bishop Felixberto Calang said the 4th Infantry Division (4ID) of the Philippine Army is open to suspending military operations or to issuing a stand-down order to soldiers when captive Police Officer 2 Anthony Natividad is released by the New People's Army (NPA).

"Actually, we already had meetings with Major General Benjamin Madrigal, the 4ID commander, where he agreed to suspend temporarily their operations where Natividad will be freed," Calang said.

Calang added that the NPA asked for a stand-down order on where Natividad will be released.

Captain Krisnen Peter Sarsagat, 4ID acting spokesperson, said negotiations are still ongoing but said they are open to granting the request of the third party facilitators but with the guidance from Army higher headquarters.

"We will let the crisis management committee decide for that proposal and we will also be guided from higher headquarter for the suspension of military operations. As of now ongoing pa ang negotiation (negotiation is ongoing) but we are grateful for the efforts of the third parties for the benefit of releasing the captives," he said.

Sarsagat said they remain in condemning the atrocities by the NPA rebels, such as holding captive law enforcement officers.

Ka Cesar Renerio, spokesperson of the National Democratic Front-North Central Mindanao Region said they are "very eager" to start the negotiations and fast-track the release of Natividad. Renerio also assured Natividad's family that he is safe and well-taken care of.

"Among ipasalig kanila ang maayo namong pag-atiman kaniya subay sa mga lagda sa Geneva Conventions kalabot sa mga lagda paglunsad og pakiggubat ug sa bag-o palang naoperasyunalisa nga Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, (We guarantee that he is being treated well and in accordance to both the Geneva Conventions and the newly operational Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law)," Renerio said.

Renerio added that they also empathize with the longing of the families of their detained colleagues who have been in the prison for trumped up criminal charges.

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6 more NPA rebels yield in Davao region

From the Philippine News Agency

A total of six rebels of the New People's Army (NPA) in the Davao region have surrendered to authorities, the Philippine Army has reported.

One of the NPA rebels yielded to the Army in Compostela Valley last Thursday, and another five gave themselves up to authorities on Friday morning in Davao Occidental, 10th Infantry (Agila) Division chief information officer, Capt. Rhyan Batchar, said.

Batchar identified the rebels by their aliases -- Jany, 23; Rudy, 20; Richard, 25; Brix, 18; Bunso, 18; and Egan, 18.

"We need to keep their identities as of the moment for security reasons. They are also being processed for possible assistance from the government," he said.

Batchar added that Jany, a resident of Calinan, Davao City, had served as squad leader of guerrilla front 33.

He turned himself in to the 25th Infantry Battalion and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Montevista town, Compostela Valley.

Rudy, a team leader, and Richard are from Datal Anggas, Alabel, Sarangani province; Brix and Bunso, both residents of Pinalpalan, Malita, Davao Occidental, had served as team leader and vice-team leader, respectively; and Egan, a resident of Pangaleon also in Malita town, was a squad political guide, who also turned over an M-16 Armalite rifle.

The five, all members of guerrilla front 71 operating in the provinces of Sarangani and Davao Occidental, gave themselves up to troopers of the 73rd Infantry Battalion in Malita.

Batchar said they decided to return as their families and communities all shared the difficulties they experienced while in the Communist movement.

"The Communist leaders failed (to keep) their promises. Hardships and fear prompted them to return to the fold of the law. They are now in their respective custodial units for interview," he added.

Maj. Gen. Rafael Valencia, 10th ID commander, said NPA members are encouraged to return to the fold of the law and avail of the government's program.

"The NPA, which is never a people's army, has become a nuisance propaganda army of the Communists, hence their members have become unwitting pawns of the aging CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines) leaders wallowing in the comforts of foreign lands," Valencia pointed out.

Batchar said a total of 33 NPA rebels have already left the Communist movement since February 1.

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SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN DUTERTE'S FIRST 7 MONTHS

Back to square

one?

BY RENE ACOSTA

IN July last year President Duterte launched his bloody war against illegal drugs, a campaign that human-rights advocates claimed has resulted in the systematic killings of lowly drug peddlers and suspected drug users, especially in Metro Manila.

Even before that, Duterte has also unofficially jump-started the peace talks with communist rebels through the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), which continued months into his official Palace term without a hitch.

These major initiatives, which even buoyed the President's popularity, at least at the home front, were later followed up by Duterte with equally important undertakings, but still in the areas of security, law enforcement and even diplomacy.

Among others, these events were the President's campaign against terrorism in Mindanao, with an explicit order to the military to lick the problem the soonest possible time; and the diplomatic shift toward the East, with China and Russia at the center.

However, several months later—seven months to be exact—nearly all of these unprecedented initiatives, which are on top of the Duterte administration's thrust of governance, appear to have crumbled, if not ebbed to their lowest.

All but one—the steer toward China and Russia—remain on an uphill Meantime, the fight against terrorism, under the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen.

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Eduardo M. Año, is still painstakingly attempting to punch a hole.

It was not a joke to borrow the phrase of the President, who had admitted two in every five statements he issues are wisecracks—to see the administration's core programs lose traction and wither.

After all, these historic developments could have assured Duterte a place in the country's history—the popular leader who has ended the decades-old communist insurgency, put back law and order in the country and ended the pestering problem of terrorism.

Peace talks with the Left

UNLESS the government and the NDFP, the umbrella organization of democratic forces and all left-leaning groups in the country, goes back to the negotiating table—for which the latter must also do its share—the country's security landscape will remain in tatters.

As it is now, the conflict with the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), will revert the military to its original three internal campaign focus—the Moro rebellion, terrorism in the South and the communist-inspired insurgency.

Never mind the territorial issue with China, as the Commander in Chief has already lost interest in it.

Until the moribund talks with the NDFP was resuscitated by the Duterte administration, the AFP listed the CPP-NPA-NDFP as the No. 1 threat group in the country, followed by the Moro rebellion and terrorism in Mindanao in that order.

Both Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana and Año have expressed readiness by the government to reengage the NDFP in peace negotiations, but without preconditions from the latter. They said rebels must also stop their attacks.

Lorenzana even said the government could start back-channeling talks with NDFP negotiators.

The Left has taken up the challenge by ordering the release of its six prisoners of war that it snatched in various operations around the country, days after and even before the collapse of the talks.

And in response to the call of Lorenzana for a cease in their attacks, the rebels also called for a halt to the military's massing of troops or at least their presence un-

der the pretext of civil-military operations in areas where the rebels are located.

But Malacanang said the talks cannot be continued unless the Commander in Chief sees any reason.

While anticommunist hawks in the military maintained that the AFP could fight a three-pronged conflict, of which it has been doing for the longest time, it could not be denied that the "silencing of the guns" by the rebels could free it up from the main bulk of its operational focus, just like in the case of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

When the government notched the mutual peace agreement with the MILF, soldiers were given the opportunity to principally focus on running after terrorist groups in Mindanao, including the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Maute Group.

While these terrorist groups were solely contained in Mindanao, NPA rebels are scattered across the country.

Before the collapse of the talks with the rebels, both the government and the Left were so optimistic the negotiations would finally show the exit of the region's longest insurgency movement.

In fact, Duterte, who has built a good relationship with top communist leaders, even exclaimed the rebels will die for him, as some of their legal groups were joining and spearheading rallies and protests over issues they could not agree with the government.

In the AFP, its campaign plan for internal security operations under the six-year term of its current Commander in Chief, the Development Support and Security Plan (DSSP) Kapayapaan, which replaced the IPSP Bayanihan, was geared toward the peace negotiations and shifted the soldiers' focus to the security problem in Mindanao.

It was the first time the insurgency plan of the military was given less emphasis in the campaign plan of the military.

Principally, the DSSP Kapayapaan mandated the AFP to carry out sustained operations in order to neutralize foreign and local terrorist organizations, actively support the Philippine National Police in the war against illegal drugs, chip in to the promotion of peace and contribute to nation building.

"The leftists have nothing to worry about. In fact, we expect them to cooperate with us, so that we can work out the attainment of a permanent and lasting peace," Año even said then.

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COMMUNIST rebel negotiator Fidel V. Agcaoili (left) and chief Philippine negotiator Silvestre H. Bello III shake hands after signing a joint statement on what has been achieved in the third round of talks in Rome on January 25. AP/ALESSANDRA TARANTINO

The termination of the talks with the NDFP led to the increase in the number of encounters with the NPA, which not too long ago was already on its way to being considered as a spent force by the military.

Lorenzana said the lull in the negotiations has been used by the NPA to recruit and increase its armed members to 5,000, although the military leadership has pegged it at 3,700.

On the other hand, Año said at least 30 firefights with rebels have also occurred since the talks were terminated on February 4.

Antiterror drive

THE government's resumption of hostilities with communist rebels now raises

skepticism whether it could end the terrorism problem with the ASG, the BIFF and the Maute Group, which are all now working under an ISIS flag under Commander Isnilon Hapilon, since forces would be spread thinly and distract the military's operational focus.

The AFP has a six-month deadline to "strategically" defeat all the terrorist groups, with the self-imposed time frame having been sketched before the termination of the negotiations with the communists.

But military public-affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said the deadline was drawn by the military, regardless of the outcome of the talks with the communist rebels.

In fact, Arevalo said that, when the DSSP Kapayapaan was crafted and unveiled, it factored in any possibilities, any contingencies over the negotiations with the Left.

Over the past few weeks, the military killed ASG members in Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, but the terrorist group responded by threatening to behead its 70-year-old German captive by February 26 unless a P30-million ransom is met.

Early this week a Vietnamese vessel was also attacked by armed men, believed to be ASG members, and killed one of its crewmen and abducted seven others.

Drug campaign

OF all the initiatives that were initiated by the government, it was the drive against illegal drugs by the PNP, which occupies the core focus of the Duterte administration, that received the most beating.

Literally, it did not only raise criticisms, but it was dropped in an instant by Duterte after it was implemented for seven months.

Last July the President set a deadline of six months to lick the country of its narcotics problem through the PNP, but he extended it for another six months.

The campaign, however, had been mired by police scalawags, prompting Duterte to declare it will cover his entire term.

In the meantime, the antidrugs drive has been solely given to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, with the military tasked to support the effort.

As the President goes back to square one in all of his initiatives, the country spins into a declining "Philippine team," as former President Fidel V. Ramos has declared.

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AFP troops bolster Cebu City security

By MARS W. MOSQUEDA JR.

CEBU CITY - If you see uniformed military men armed with long firearms on patrol here, don't be alarmed. They have been deployed to help the police maintain peace and order.

At least 88 members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are now visible in Cebu City's public areas such as major roads, terminals, ports and malls,

including barangays with high concentration of reported illegal activities.

Cebu City Councilor Dave Tumalak, the city's deputy mayor for police matters, urged the public not to be alarmed by the presence of the uniformed soldiers because the purpose of the deployment is mainly for public safety and order.

The soldiers will hold joint operations with the police, such as foot patrol, police-military visibility, and various community outreach activities.

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AFP: No letup vs Abus to rescue German

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – There is no letup in military operations against Abu Sayyaf bandits to prevent them from executing their German captive and rescue the other hostages, an official said yesterday.

“Ground operations are relentless to keep the Abu Sayyaf on the run and neutralize them,” said Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Western Mindanao Command chief.

The bandits gave the family of Juergen Kartner until 3 p.m. today to pay P30 million in exchange for his freedom.

Kartner, 70, and his partner Sabine Merz, 50, were taken in November. The body of Merz was later found on his yacht, *Rockall*,

about off Mindanao.

Galvez declined to elaborate on the status of their operations even as he gave assurance they are determined to stop the bandits from committing more atrocities, including kidnapping.

The bandits are also holding a Dutch man, a Korean, seven Indonesians, five Malaysians, six Vietnamese and six Filipinos.

The police and military are also verifying if the Abu Sayyaf were behind the attack on a Vietnamese cargo vessel in the waters off Tawi-Tawi on Sunday last week.

The gunmen shot and killed one of the crewmembers and seized six others, including the captain and chief officer.

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PHILIPPINE Marines prepare for the change-of-command ceremony for new Armed Forces chief Lt. Gen. Eduardo M. Año at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City on December 7, 2016. AP/BULLIT MARQUEZ

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

AFP chief joins wreath-laying ceremony in People Power Monument

By Priam F. Nepomuceno

MANILA, Feb. 25 (PNA) – Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año participated in the wreath-laying ceremony at the People Power Monument in Quezon City Saturday.

This was one of the activities held to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the first EDSA People Power revolt.

Año was the host of the ceremony, while former executive secretary Eduardo Ermita was the honoree representing former president Fidel V. Ramos.

"The AFP will continue to play a major part in commemorations like this of the EDSA People Power Revolution, not only during ceremonial activities and in securing the venue but in imbibing the lessons of unity, nationalism, patriotism and fortitude. These are the very same values that make the AFP a dependable institution and a force to reckon with," AFP public affairs chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said.

To ensure the safety and security of the EDSA anniversary activities, the AFP through the Joint Task Force National Capital Region (JTF-NCR) has activated the Joint Task Group EDSA (JTG EDSA), which is responsible for security operations during the national celebration.

"The Joint Task Group EDSA is composed of about 200 security personnel from the JTF-NCR and Major Services. The task group actively coordinated with the NCRPO (National Capital Region Police Office) and MMDA (Metro Manila Development Authority) to cover the security aspect of the ceremonies and ensure the safety of our people who joined," Arevalo said.

The JTG EDSA included civil disturbance management, K-9 and explosive ordnance disposal, medical, and mobility teams.

A quick response force was on standby to respond to any disruptive activity.

The AFP also provided the ceremonial elements and medical teams for the pre-anniversary activities that began Wednesday. The military's participation is in support of the EDSA People Power Commission and the Spirit of EDSA Foundation.

Among the activities provided with manpower and security were the wreath-laying ceremony at the Libingan ng mga Bayani on Wednesday, and anniversary Mass and awarding ceremony in Camp Aguinaldo on Friday.

(PNA)

CVL/PFN

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2 suspected Maute men killed, another captured in Lanao del Norte

By: Jaime Sinapit, InterAksyon

February 25, 2017 4:37 PM



MANILA - Reports reaching Manila indicated that government troops on Friday killed two suspected Maute terrorist group gunmen, and captured another, in two separate checkpoint operations, after the suspects attempted a carjacking incident at Iligan City in Lanao del Norte.

Captain Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), said Azzam Ampua Tahir and a certain "Wowie" were killed in a shootout with soldiers and members of civilian auxiliary unit at a checkpoint near the city limits of Iligan City.

The shootout was followed by the arrest of another suspect in a dragnet operation along Camague Road. Petinglay identified the suspect as Eyeman Alonto, a native of Marawi City.

"Alonto was intercepted on board a white Hyundai Elantra. The car was used by his group in flagging down a white Ford Ranger XLT pick-up. Tahir and Wowie were on board the Ranger when intercepted by our soldiers," Petinglay disclosed.

The Adiongs were on their way to their store when stopped by the gunmen.

At around 8:45am, along C3 road in Barangay Ubaldo Laya, Iligan City, the armed suspects on board an Elantra forced the Ranger to a stop, and at gunpoint forced businessman Othelo Adiong, 36, who was driving the car to step out from the car, Petinglay said.

Adiong's mother, Elvira Adiong, 62, his wife Esthepanie Adiong, and their son were also ordered to disembark. After divesting their victims of personal belongings, two of the suspects escaped on board the Ford Ranger while another one headed in the opposite direction on board the Elantra.

"The prompt response of the government forces, as well as the quick coordination made by the police with the military, led to the successful neutralization and arrest of the suspects and the recovery of their firearms," Petinglay said.

She said that, in the encounter with the two dead suspects, the troops recovered from them an M4 rifle with three magazines and 60 rounds of ammunition and a caliber .45 pistol.

"I assure the public that the government forces will continue to look after cities and communities so that these bad elements will not be able to freely conduct any atrocities," said Westmincom commander Major General Carlito Galvez Jr.

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7 NPA members surrender in Palawan

Published February 25, 2017 3:29pm

Seven members of the New People's Army surrendered to the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Western Command (Wescom) in Puerto Prinsesa, Palawan last Friday.

Wescom said in a statement on Saturday that the seven rebels were members of the Sub-Regional Military Area-Guerrilla Unit 5 (SRMA-GU 5).

Four of them came from Batak Tribe, whose members were allegedly hounded by the NPA to join their ranks.

Wescom said that according to the rebels, their unit was responsible for attacking various government projects and business establishments, and that they engaged in extortion activities.

According to Wescom, the rebels decided to surrender because of alleged corruption among their leaders.

"May kasama po kami na itinakas po ang pera ng rebolusyon at ilan-ilan lamang sila ang nakikinabang sa mga pinagpaguran ng marami sa amin," the military quoted one of the rebels as saying.

They also said that the ceasefire gave them room to think about whether to return to war.

The rebels who surrendered underwent a medical check-up at Camp General Artemio Ricarte Station Hospital.

They will also benefit from the Local Social Integration Program and Comprehensive Local Integration Program organized by the local government and Wescom.

Wescom Commander Lt. Gen Raul del Rosario said that the military is open to helping the "returnees" start new lives.

He also called on other members of the communist group to cooperate with the government.

"Tuloy po ang ating panawagan sa mga kasama nila, na iwanan na ang pakikibaka at magbalik-loob na. Huwag po kayong matakot. Huwag po kayong maniwala sa mga pananakot ng inyong mga kasamahan. May magandang simula po ang naghihintay para sa inyo," he said. —**Jessica Bartolome/ALG, GMA News**

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AFP to add another battalion to guard Davao's perimeters

From the oftentimes pro-CPP online publication the Davao Today



Col. Bernard Neri, commander of Task Force Davao during the City Peace and Order Council meeting held in Davao City last Thursday, Feb. 23 says terrorism threat in the city remains high at level 3. (Paulo C. Rizal/davaotoday.com)

The Armed Forces would detail another battalion here to guard its perimeters, the Davao City Public Safety and Security Command Center here has announced.

Retired Army general and current DCPSSCC chief, Benito de Leon admitted that the recent skirmishes between soldiers and the communist rebels at the city's outskirts have raised important concern to the city's security forces.

"We have certain skirmishes that have happened as a result of the suspension of the peace talks and this is challenging the government. It is just sad to note that this is happening in the city," De Leon referring to the armed encounter with the New People's Army in two districts here, Calinan and Paquibato, on February 16.

The encounter claimed the lives of two government troops and three guerrilla fighters. Meanwhile, 15 government soldiers were also injured in a landmine allegedly set-off by the NPAs in Barangay Lamanan in Calinan district.

"The city has a very big area far from the metropolitan area but it is still the city. So we have skirmishes and that is part of our security concerns perpetrated by, shall we say members of the NPA," De Leon said.

De Leon clarified that they are dealing also with other armed groups, but "not as urgent as the NPA".

Meanwhile, Col. Bernard Neri said there was no problem as far as the security of the downtown area is concerned, but clarified that the terrorism threat level remains "high" at level 3.

Neri said the security in the city is "very manageable" given the number of security personnel deployed.

"It will not only be Task Force Davao that will be involved in the security of the celebration of the 80th Araw ng Dabaw. It will be an Armed Forces [effort] headed by the Joint Task Force Haribon," Neri said.

Apart from the army component, some 3,000 police personnel will also be deployed in key points of the city to secure the festivities.

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2 Maute members killed in Iligan City

Carmela Fonbuena



SUSTAINED OPERATIONS VS TERROR. Military sustains operations against local terrorist groups in Central Mindanao. File Photo by Pat S. Roque/Rappler

MANILA, Philippines – Two suspected members of the local terrorist group Maute were killed and one was arrested in Iligan City on Friday, February 24, after state forces foiled a carnapping attempt in one of Mindanao's industrial hubs.

Major General Carlito Galvez Jr, the newly appointed chief of the Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom), highlighted the effective police and military coordination in stopping atrocities in the area where armed groups linked with the foreign terrorist group Islamic State (ISIS) operate.

The members of the local terrorist group on Friday slipped to the nearby city in a Hyundai Elantra from their lair in neighboring Lanao del Norte, flagged down an Iligan-bound Ford Ranger XLT pick up along C3 Road in Barangay Ubaldo Laya, and forced an entire family out of the car.

The victims, including a 62-year-old woman, reported the incident to the police, which promptly coordinated with the military on the ground.

A shootout ensued as the Maute members in the pick up – identified as Azzam Ampua Tahir and a certain "Wowie – fired at soldiers manning checkpoints as they headed to their lair in Lanao del Norte.

They were intercepted and killed in the boundary of Iligan City and Tagoloan by the 4th Mechanized Battalion of the Army's Mechanized Infantry Division. An M4 rifle with 3 magazines and 60 rounds of ammunition and a Caliber .45 pistol were recovered, according to the military.

Meanwhile, the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (SAF) chased the Elantra which continued its way to Iligan City, and was able to arrest the driver, identified as Eyeman Alonto from Marawi City, along Camague Road.

"The prompt response of the government forces, as well as the quick coordination made by the police with the military, have led to the successful neutralization and arrest of the members of the terror group and the recovery of their firearms," said Galvez.

"I am assuring the public that the government forces will continue to look after cities and communities so that these bad elements will not be able to freely conduct any atrocities," the Wesmincom chief added.

The military intensified operations in Central Mindanao as it aims to significantly reduce the capacity of two of the ISIS-linked terror groups, the Maute Group in Central Mindanao and the Abu Sayyaf Group in Southern Mindanao.

The military claimed Abu Sayyaf senior leader Isnilon Hapilon has joined the Maute Group in Central Mindanao. He was reported to be severely wounded in one of the air strikes conducted in the area.

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'Successes' vs terror group

The military and the police claimed several other successful operations against the Abu Sayyaf this week. They claimed to have "narrowed" the movements of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu after Joint Task Force Sulu recovered a high-powered firearm abandoned after a clash in Barangay Paligi in Indanan, Sulu, on Thursday, February 23.

The 16th Infantry Battalion recovered in a clearing operation an M16A1 Armalite rifle with 8 magazines and 123 rounds of ammunition.

On Wednesday, February 22, the Navy reported that it foiled the Abu Sayyaf's sea-jacking attempt against the Panamanian-flag *MV Dong Hae Star*.

The crew of the Panamanian ship monitored black speedboats pursuing them off the waters of Pearl Bank. They supposedly desisted from chasing them after Navy patrol ships appeared in response to the distress call.

On Monday, February 20, Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi also claimed to have killed Abu Sayyaf spotter Al Abdullah in a firefight off the waters of Bakungan, Turtle Island in Tawi-Tawi.

Abdullah reportedly hosted Abu Sayyaf members in his house in the remote island. Galvez said his death is a "big setback" for the terrorist group that is notorious for kidnapping foreigners in those waters. – Rappler.com