

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



TEAM ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
NEWS CLIPPINGS

07 January 2017

Saturday

Army Core Purpose Serving the people. Securing the land.

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PANAHON TV

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | JANUARY 7, 2017 | SATURDAY

LOW PRESSURE AREA
LOCATED AT 466 PMS, EAST SOUTHEAST
OF HINETAJAN, BURGAS DEL SUR

NORTHEAST MONSOON
AFFECTING LUZON AND VISAYAS
Start of 3:00 PM - Jan 6, 2017

SUNRISE
6:23 AM

SUNSET
5:42 PM

MOONRISE
12:57 AM

MOONSET
12:47 PM

FIRST QUARTER
JAN 6 1:47 AM

NEW MOON
JAN 6 7:46 PM


LOW TIDE
10:15 AM

HIGH TIDE
5:04 PM

LADAG CITY 21 - 32 °C	TUGUEGARAO CITY 21 - 27 °C		
SBM 4/CLARK 24 - 30 °C	BAKING CITY 14 - 23 °C		
METRO MANILA 23 - 32 °C	TAGAYTAY CITY 19 - 27 °C		
	LAGAZPI CITY 26 - 29 °C		
ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 26 - 30 °C	IACLOBAN CITY 24 - 31 °C		
PUERTO PRINCESA 26 - 32 °C	METRO CEBU 25 - 30 °C		
	CAGAYAN DE ORO 23 - 29 °C		
ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 32 °C	METRO DAVAO 24 - 29 °C		


☁️ Fully cloudy to heavy clouds with showers and drizzle
☁️ Partly cloudy to mostly cloudy with showers
☁️ Cloudy skies with showers and drizzle
☁️ Light rain
☁️ Rain with heavy winds

City	Jan 6	Jan 7	Jan 8	Jan 9	Jan 10	Jan 11
METRO MANILA	☁️ 27 - 32 °C	☁️ 23 - 31 °C	☁️ 21 - 32 °C	☁️ 18 - 29 °C	☁️ 15 - 25 °C	☁️ 14 - 21 °C
METRO CEBU	☁️ 25 - 30 °C	☁️ 23 - 31 °C	☁️ 25 - 31 °C	☁️ 25 - 32 °C	☁️ 25 - 31 °C	☁️ 27 - 31 °C
METRO DAVAO	☁️ 24 - 30 °C	☁️ 23 - 30 °C	☁️ 25 - 30 °C	☁️ 24 - 30 °C	☁️ 24 - 32 °C	☁️ 24 - 30 °C




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Poll body chief

seeks

deeper

Comeleak probe

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

Commission on Elections Chairman Andres Bautista yesterday asked Congress to conduct a full-blown investigation into the so-called Comeleak as he questioned the findings of the National Privacy Commission (NPC) on the hacking of the Comelec's voter database.

Bautista also suggested that an inquiry should be conducted on the NPC's ruling that he claimed was based on "misappreciated facts, legal principles and contexts."

"We are transparent in the way we operate. We are open to investigation, but perhaps it's also a good idea to have a hearing in aid of legislation so we can get to the bottom of this," Bautista told The STAR.

In its Dec. 28 ruling, the NPC found the Comelec negligent in ensuring the privacy of its database, violating Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

This stemmed from the hacking of its website between March 20 and 27 last year or weeks before the May 9 polls.

The NPC had recommended the criminal prosecution of Bautista for the data breach.

Malacañang yesterday directed the Comelec to release its own findings.

Presidential Communications Operations Secretary Martin Andanar said the data breach in the Comelec should

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Poll

be looked into because it casts doubt on the integrity of the agency and the elections.

"The Comeleak has been described as one of the worst breaches of a government-controlled database. Thus, it is an issue that simply cannot be swept under the rug," Andanar said.

Andanar said the Comelec should be held liable for the data breach that affected millions of voters.

If Comelec conducted any investigation, the results

should be made public, Andanar stressed.

"We exhort that Comelec release a report of an investigation it conducted on the data leak, if any, to maintain the credibility of the constitutional body and uphold the integrity of the electoral process," Andanar said.

"Comelec should come clean and hold itself accountable for the millions of data that became susceptible to risks such as identity theft and fraud," he added.

Andanar also welcomed the decision of the NPC, which recommended the criminal prosecution of Bautista.

"Comelec must not only protect the vote but it must protect the voter as well. The National Privacy Commission is thus commended for taking the side of the people whose privacy has been violated," he said.

Bautista, on the other hand, gave assurance that Comelec has several reports on the issue.

"We will release the results in due time," he said.

According to Bautista, NPC

erred in its decision and did not consider the compliance report they submitted on Dec. 29 a day before the deadline set by NPC.

"On June 21, 2016, they issued an order that we submit a compliance report by Dec. 31. We complied and submitted a report on Dec. 29 which is the last working day (for 2016). But on Dec. 29, we received the decision dated Dec. 28. So it is clear that NPC did not take our compliance report into consideration," he said.

Bautista also questioned the basis of the NPC findings, which were issued in the ab-

sence of any implementing rules and regulations at the time of the investigation.

"The privacy act was enacted in 2012 but the commission (NPC) itself was only constituted in March 2016 and that is also the same time that the hacking happened. It seems that they are making an example out of us. I think this is their first decision," he said.

Bautista added that before March 2016, there have been many hacking incidents but the NPC failed to investigate them.

In an earlier statement, Bautista said the Office of the

Solicitor General, representing the Comelec, will be filing a motion for reconsideration with the NPC.

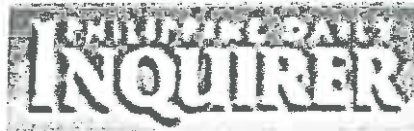
He maintained that the data breach or hacking is not a new phenomenon.

"Many leading private IT companies and government agencies here and abroad were confronted by data breaches despite putting in place security measures," Bautista said.

"Given the foregoing, should the focus not be on apprehending the hackers instead of punishing the hacked?" he asked.

– With Christina Mendez

09 January 2017



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DU30: LONG LIVE, RUSSIA

STORY BY LEILA B. SALAVERRIA

President Duterte toured a visiting Russian warship on Friday and expressed hope that Russia would become the Philippines' ally and protector

FROM A1

By Leila B. Salaverria
@LeilaING

President Duterte on Friday said he wanted more Russian Navy visits to Manila and expressed hope Russia would become the Philippines' ally and protector.

With Cabinet officials in tow, Mr. Duterte toured the Admiral Tributs, a Russian antisubmarine vessel that together with a sea tanker, the Boris Butoma, is on a goodwill visit to Manila.

"We welcome our Russian friends. Anytime you want to dock here for anything, for play, for replenish supplies or maybe our ally to protect us," Mr. Duterte said while shaking hands with Rear Adm. Eduard Mikhailov, deputy commander of the Flotilla of the Russian Navy Pacific Fleet.

Mr. Duterte's remarks came a day after Russian Ambassador Igor Anatolyevich Khovaev said his country was ready to supply the Philippines with sophisticated weapons and aimed to become its close friend.

Mr. Duterte has thrown into question the future of the Philippines' relations with its longtime ally, the United States, with angry outbursts over US criticism of human rights violations in his war on drugs and some scaling back of military cooperation with Washington while taking steps to improve ties with China and Russia.

He is due to visit Moscow in April.

The visit by the two Russian warships to Manila was the first official navy-to-navy contact between Russia and the Philippines.

On Tuesday, Mikhailov said Russia wanted to hold maritime exercises with the Philippines to help combat terrorism and piracy.

'From the heart'

"Friends, long live. [That's from the heart," Mr. Duterte told Russian Navy officers, thumping his chest for emphasis, after signing the Admiral Tributs' guest book.

"I hope you can come back more often," he said.

Video footage from Malacañang showed the Russian Navy officers applauding Mr. Duterte's statement.

Mr. Duterte and his Cabinet officials also posed for pictures with the Russian Navy officers, who imitated his signature clenched-fist stance.

"That's a sign of fighting spirit," he said.

Wearing a *barong* Tagalog, Mr. Duterte toured the ship in the company of the Russian Navy officers and Khovaev.

At one point during the hourlong tour, Mr. Duterte looked out from the ship's deck and pumped his fist in the air.

Mr. Duterte was given arrival honors at Pier 15 of the Manila International Harbor before he boarded the Admiral Tributs.

Ship tour

His tour of the ship included visits to the torpedo platform, missile system at the bow and navigation system on the bridge.

Mr. Duterte was also shown AK-47s, a grenade launcher and

a helicopter.

He was seen trying out binoculars.

The Cabinet officials who accompanied Mr. Duterte on the ship tour were Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Special Assistant to the President Christopher Go and Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano also joined the ship tour.

Lorenzana expressed optimism about "the start of a partnership" between the defense establishments of Russia and the Philippines when he met with Russian Navy officials on Thursday night.

"May our common aspirations for regional and global peace and security enable us to become good partners, cooperating and coordinating toward tranquil and safe seas for all," he said.

Lorenzana said that during his trip to Russia in early De-

cember, he agreed with Russian defense officials to finalize a memorandum of understanding that would be the basis of future military engagements, including joint military exercises, so it could be signed during Mr. Duterte's visit to Moscow.

Close relations

On Dec. 30, Lorenzana said Russia was "aggressive" in seeking close relations with the Philippines, but not a military alliance.

"They're very aggressive that we have a military relationship with them. Not an alliance but an exchange of students, personnel, as observers in exercises," he said.

Russia also wants to sell arms to the Philippines, he said. The Russians offered to sell a submarine, but it was too expensive, he said, adding he did not think the Philippines needed it.

But the Philippines may consider acquiring drones from Russia, he said. —WITH REPORTS FROM REUTERS AND AP INQ.

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Soldier nabbed

CAMP GEN. OLA, Albay — An army soldier assigned at the 31st Infantry Battalion (IB) in Sorsogon was arrested for alleged involvement in a holdup at the LBC branch in Irosin town. Sorsogon last Thursday afternoon. Senior Inspector Malu Calubaquib, spokesperson of the Police Regional Office 5 (PRO-5), said Private First Class Allan Hubilla Taierto, 26, of Barangay Old Camp, Camarines Norte, was arrested after being captured on the LBC branch's CCTV as the man who held an LBC teller at gunpoint to force her to turn over ₱7,756 of the LBC branch's cash. (Niño N. Luces)

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

3 soldiers die in Sulu mishap

Three soldiers died and 22 others were injured in a road accident in Talipao, Sulu yesterday.

Maj. Filemon Tan, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command, said the soldiers were in a truck on their way to a military operation against Abu Sayyaf bandits when their truck rolled over in Barangay Upper Kamuntayan at around 5:30 a.m.

The truck was in a convoy of nine military vehicles traveling along Daniag-Bilaan road when the accident occurred.

Tan did not identify the fatalities pending notification of their respective families.

The injured personnel were airlifted to a private hospital in Zamboanga City after being taken to the Camp Teodulfo Bautista Hospital for emergency treatment.

Initial investigation showed the driver lost control of the wheel when the brake malfunctioned.

- Roel Pareño, Michael Punongbayan

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The Manila Times

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3 soldiers die, 22 injured in Sulu road accident

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Three Army soldiers were killed and at least 22 others injured after their truck crashed in the town of Talipao in Sulu.

Officials said the truck's brake system failed and skidded on the wet road before it overturned in the village of Upper Kamuntayan on late Tuesday.

The truck was part of a military convoy returning to base, according to Army Major Filemon Tan, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command.

He said the bodies of the soldiers and 18 of the injured enlisted men were airlifted to Zamboanga City by a military cargo plane.

Tan did not release the names of those who died in the accident but the bodies were sent to their families in Manila.

No other details were made available by the military on the deadly mishap or whether it will launch an investigation of the accident.

AL JACINTO

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THE TIMES BULLETIN SINCE 1858
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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• **Army foils attack**

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Armed men, believed to be Moro rebels, attacked an Army detachment in Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte, Tuesday afternoon that displaced about 150 residents. Sirawai police reported that at about 4:40 pm, an undetermined number of bandits attacked the detachment of the 42nd Infantry Battalion located in San Vicenter Barangay in Sirawai. Investigation disclosed that the suspects were followers of Yusop Jarnaa and Yacob Isnain alias "Bating" and are operating under the command of a certain Hadji Kandatin. But the soldiers were reportedly able to repulse the act. No one was hurt as a result of the attack, the police reported. (Nongy E. Lacson)

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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ON ALERT – Members of Task Force Davao patrol the streets of Davao City Friday as authorities ordered security tightened due to possible retaliatory attacks after the killing of Ansar Al-Khalifa Philippines leader Mohammad Jaafar Maguld in Saranga province early Thursday. (Keith Bacongco)

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Tempo

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SOLDIERS are deployed around the vicinity of the Quiapo Church in Manila to secure devotees of the Black Nazarene. (Ali Vicoy)

||

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THE HISTORY OF THE BULLETIN
1898
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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TIGHT SECURITY – Army soldiers disembark on Hidalgo Street in front of the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila, to provide security for devotees of the Black Nazarene yesterday, the first Friday of the year. They are expected to stay in the area to augment other security personnel for the annual Traslacion during the Feast of the Black Nazarene on January 9. (All Vicoy)

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Army soldiers arrive at the Quiapo Church in Manila yesterday as part of security measures for the Black Nazarene feast. MIKE AMOROSO

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'Año turned down Marcelino plea for help'

By EDU PUNAY

When Marine Lt. Col. Ferdinand Marcelino was arrested by anti-narcotics agents in a shabu laboratory in Sta. Cruz, Manila on Jan. 21 last year, he immediately phoned a superior in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for help.

Probers of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and Philippine National Police Anti-Illegal Drug Group (PNP-AIDG) found that at around 1:30 a.m., Marcelino called the AFP official with code name "Perseus" to ask for a mission order to justify his presence in the townhouse where nearly 77 kilos of shabu, with a street value of P380 million, were seized.

After checking the phone number of Perseus, it was found that the same number was owned by then Intelligence Service of AFP (ISAFP) chief Lt. Gen. Eduardo Año, who is now AFP chief of staff.

Also yesterday, Judge Daniel Villanueva of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 49 ordered the transfer of Marcelino and informant Yan Yi Shou, a PDEA informant who was arrested along with Marcelino, to the city jail.

Earlier this week, Marcelino surrendered to the AFP Provost Marshal and Yan to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

"Yan is being transferred to the Manila City Jail in compliance with the order stated in the warrant of arrest issued against him and Marcelino for them to be committed to the said jail facility," said Moises Tamayo, who heads the NBI's Special Task Force.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa yesterday welcomed Marcelino's surrender, but said the "military should submit him to the custody of the court that issued the warrant of arrest."

However, he also said he sees no problem if Marcelino is in AFP custody.

"Whether it's the military, police or the court, there is no problem as long as he is under custody and available



Año

to face the charges against him," Dela Rosa said.

Recorded conversation

The probers cited the phone conversation between Marcelino and the AFP official that was recorded in Marcelino's confiscated mobile phone, which was submitted to the court as evidence in the drug charges against him and Yan.

In the conversation – a copy of the transcript of stenographic notes was obtained by **The STAR** from a source privy to the investigation of the

case – Marcelino informed his superior of his ordeal and that he was being arrested by PDEA and PNP-AIDG men after then AFP chief of staff Gen. Herlando Iriberry informed them that his supposed intelligence operation had no authority.

Marcelino admitted that he did not have the written mission order or authority to conduct his supposed intelligence operation.

Marcelino told Perseus he assumed that the "special project" had the go signal from the AFP leadership as allegedly relayed to him by Iriberry's aide, identified only as "Joel."

Perseus told Marcelino that a written order from the head of his designated unit is necessary for such an operation.

On his own

Marcelino is designated as a commandant at the Philippine Navy.

The former PDEA official, who was key to major anti-narcotics accomplishments in previous administrations, begged Perseus to call Iriberry and inform PDEA chief Arturo Cacdac about his supposed intelligence operation.

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But the AFP official suggested to Marcelino to instead ask for help from Joel because he could not issue the authority since the arrested Marine officer was not under his command.

“Wala naman akong authority kase hindi ko naman hawak yan. What I can only do for you is only kung ano pagkakakilala ko sa iyo (I don’t have authority because that’s not under me. What I can only do for you is to bat for your reputation),” Perseus told Marcelino.

“Ang kailangan mo ay (What you need is) authority from chief of staff. I will just try my best effort. But as far as authority, wala akong (I don’t have) authority,” he stressed.

At the end of the conversation, the AFP official said he was not aware of the operation and that given the circumstances, it appeared that Marcelino was on his own.

“Kasi parang nag operate ka ng solo dyan eh. Tawagan mo si Joel (It seems that you’re operating on your own there. Just call Joel),” Perseus suggested.

During preliminary investigation in the Department of



Justice, prosecutors asked Marcelino for his mission order.

But what Marcelino submitted was a certificate from the Philippine Army Intelligence and Security Group dated Jan. 22, 2016 showing Marcelino was tapped for intelligence sharing in November and December last year for an operation against Army personnel suspected to be involved in the illegal drugs trade in the country. It was signed by then ISG commander Col. Marlo Gulcy.

Marcelino and Yan were then indicted for possession of illegal drugs – **With Ghio Ong, Emmanuel Tupas**

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100% pay hike for soldiers, cops in 2018

The administration would be able to fulfill President Duterte's promise to double the salaries of soldiers and policemen one-and-a-half years after he repeatedly promised it last year.

In radio and television interviews this week, Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno said delivering on the promise is "doable" in 2018.

He projected the uniformed personnel of the military and the police would receive approximately double their pay starting in January next year.

Shortly after assuming office in June, the President visited military and police camps. He repeatedly assured soldiers and policemen that they would receive a 100 percent increase in pay by last month.

"You look at your pay envelope in December, you will have double what you are receiving," Duterte told them.

When it became obvious that Malacañang could not deliver on Duterte's promise, Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV said the President raised false hopes among soldiers and policemen.

"He's just a big talker who makes empty promises,"

By JESS DIAZ

Trillanes said.

But Diokno said the 100-percent doable increase in 2018 would be a combination of an adjustment in basic salary and additional allowances.

He said the increase would include the pay increments uniformed personnel would receive under the government's four-year salary adjustment program, and incentives the President ordered granted toward the latter part of 2016, including additional combat pay.

Diokno said one reason the 100-percent pay hike would be in the form of allowances is to avoid increasing the pension of military and police retirees.

He explained that under the law, pension goes up once the basic pay of those in the active service is increased.

Diokno pointed out the government wants to discontinue this practice, since pension benefits are now eating up a huge chunk of the military budget.

He projected that if the practice continues, up to 70 percent of the military budget would go to pensioners.

This would be unfair to those in the active service,

Diokno said.

Another reason the budget chief did not disclose is if a large part of the 100-percent increase is in the form of an adjustment in basic pay instead of allowances, it would trigger a demand for a similar hike from other state workers like teachers.

Already, public school teachers, who comprise the single biggest sector in the bureaucracy, are clamoring for an increase in allowances, saying they too, like soldiers, are doing a noble mission.

The four-year salary upgrading covers all state officials and employees.

The lowest-paid teacher, who holds Salary Grade 11, now receives an adjusted basic monthly salary of P19,620 and will have a total of P2,205 in annual increments by 2019, when the upgrading program ends. His or her basic pay will go up to P20,754.

The lowest-paid soldiers and policemen will get less, since they are lower in pay grade than teachers. They get the equivalent pay for Salary Grades 8-9, or between P16,000 and P17,000. They receive more than P20,000, including allowances.

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The Manila Times

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New 6-yr plan seeks to crush jihadists

TOP military and defense officials on Friday discussed the "Development Support and Security Plan Kapayapaan," a new military strategy that aims to defeat enemies of the state and address threats to national security.

In a high-level command conference at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año said the military's top priority would be the destruction of terrorist groups like the Abu Sayyaf Group, the Maute Group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and other foreign and local terrorist groups.

The new six-year security plan replaces the Internal Peace and Security Plan IPSP "Bayanihan" that was implemented in January 2010 and expired on December 31, 2016.

Put into operation by the previous Aquino administration, IPSP Bayanihan has been the subject

> Jihadists A2

■ JIHADISTS FROM A1

New 6-yr plan seeks to crush jihadists

of criticism by leftist groups seeking a peace deal with the government.

The new military strategy, presented to military top brass, defense officials led by Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and key national security officials, will serve as the "blueprint" of how the AFP will conduct its campaigns, said Col. Edgard Arevalo, chief of the AFP Public Affairs Office.

The plan was crafted by a technical working group from the AFP in consultation with various government agencies.

Top military field commanders,

major service commanders, Wide Support and Separate Unit commanders, and key staff of the AFP were in attendance at the security meeting presided by Lorenzana.

Arevalo said that during the meeting, the AFP chief "was clear, concise, and direct in his pronouncement that the top priority of the AFP under his leadership shall be the destruction of the terrorist groups."

To achieve this, Año disclosed that besides the conduct of focused combat operations employing the resources of the AFP, "I desire that we enhance stakeholder engage-

ment to ensure robust participation of the religious sector and local government."

"From our end, I want everyone here to exercise the highest degree of commandship. After all, the most important element of combat power is leadership. Do and give your best and together we will create a winning team and get the job done," Año pointed out.

The AFP chief also vowed to give priority to frontline units in the assignment of the best officers, enlisted soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines.

"And as such, we must take care of them. While we endeavour to give them the fighting edge, it is as essential that we increase their survivability rate," he emphasized.

At the same time, the AFP must look out for the welfare of its personnel and their loved ones, especially those who were combat casualties, by expediting the processing of the benefits due them; streamlining the process and rationalizing the requirements for promotion, schooling, and awards; as well as the disposition of cases, Año said.

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AFP replaces Oplan Bayanihan with Oplan Kapayapaan

By Mario J. Mallari

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday officially launched its new campaign plan that will serve as “blue print” of military operations during the entire Duterte administration.

Dubbed Development Support and Security Plan Kapayapaan, the new military campaign plan was presented to senior officials of the AFP during the first command conference for 2017 in Camp Aguinaldo.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana presided over the high-level meeting of the AFP top brass.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, AFP Public

Affairs Office chief, said that in attendance were top military field commanders, major service commanders, Wide Support and Separate Unit commanders, and key staff of the AFP.

“The military top brass, and panel chairman of Government Implementing Panel for Bangsamoro, and Peace accords were invited to attend the caucus,” Arevalo said.

Arevalo said that the command conference served as venue for the launching of the new AFP campaign plan Development Support and Security Plan Kapayapaan that replaces Internal Peace and Security Plan Bayanihan that expired on December 31, 2016.

“The document will serve as the

‘blueprint’ as to how the AFP shall conduct its campaigns,” Arevalo said.

Another highlight of the conference was the issuance of the Command Guidance by AFP chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año.

“He was clear, concise and direct in his pronouncement that the top priority of the AFP under his leadership shall be the destruction of the terrorist groups of the ASG, Maute Group, BIFF and other foreign and local terrorist groups,” Arevalo said.

Arevalo said that aside from defeating all terror and threat groups, Año also called on the military to “enhance stakeholder engagement to ensure robust

participation of the religious sector and local government.”

“From our end I want everyone here to exercise the highest degree of commandership. After all, the most important element of combat power is leadership. Do and give your best and together we will create a winning team and get the job done,” Arevalo quoted Año.

“Under my watch, the AFP will be fully committed to the primacy of the peace process guided by the President’s Roadmap to Peace. We will support fully the government’s war on drugs and shall extend full support to the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies both in terms of personnel and intelligence,” Año concluded.

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The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

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AFP unveils security plan

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines launched on Friday its Development Support and Security Plan "Kapayapaan" to replace Internal Peace and Security Plan "Bayanihan" which expired last Dec. 31.

Under the new security plan, AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año said the top priority of the AFP will be the destruction of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf, Maute Group, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and other foreign and local terrorist groups.

Año unveiled the new plan during the Department of National Defense's First Quarter

Command Conference at the Tejeros Hall of the AFP Commissioned Officers Club in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

"Apart from the conduct of focused combat operations employing the wherewithals of the AFP, I desire that we enhance stakeholder engagement to ensure robust participation of the religious sector and local

government," Año said.

"From our end, I want everyone here to exercise the highest degree of Commandership. After all, the most important element of combat power is Leadership. Do and give your best and together we will create a winning team and get the job done," he added.

"We will give priority to front-line units in the assignment of the best Officers, Enlisted Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, and Marines—our most important resource. And as such, we must take care of them. While we endeavor to give them the fighting edge, it is as essential that we increase their survivability rate," Año stressed.

"We will, as we must, look at the welfare of our men—and loved ones—especially those who were combat casualties. Expedite the processing of the benefits due them; streamline the process and rationalize the requirements for promotion, schooling, and awards as well as disposition of cases," the AFP chief added.

Año said the AFP will be fully committed to the primacy of the peace process guided by the President Rodrigo Duterte's roadmap to peace.

The military will support fully the government's war on drugs and shall extend full support to

the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies both in terms of personnel and intelligence.

"Finally, I say there is no letter 'I' in the word 'TEAM.' We shall all aspire for the collective accomplishment above individual fulfillment. Again, I urge the men and women of the AFP to work with me as we continue our journey together with our actions embed with the AFP Core Values of Honor, Service, and Patriotism," Año said.

The AFP launched IPSP Bayanihan in 2010 and aimed to focus on "non-combat" operations to "win the peace."

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MANILA BULLETIN

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Duterte meets top police, military brass

By ELENA L. ABEN

President Duterte yesterday held a joint command conference with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Malacañang, with the country's top police and military officials in attendance.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa was expected to brief the President on the PNP's campaign against illegal drugs under "Oplan Double Barrel." **▶6**

Duterte meets top...

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Joining Dela Rosa in the conference are PNP regional directors and heads of its national support units

Data released by the PNP show that a total of 1,017,375 drug personalities have surrendered to the police from July 1, 2016 to January 4. Of this total number, 942,276 were drug users and 75,099 were drug pushers

Anti-narcotics operations conducted during the period also resulted in the killing of 2,174 drug suspects and the arrest of 40,557 others.

A total 5,998,848 houses were also visited to encourage those believed involved in illegal drugs to surrender for rehabilitation

Meanwhile, the AFP was to present to the President updates on their operations and a threat situation report, particularly on local terror groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Maute Group, and the Ansar Al-Khilafah Philippines (AKP) group whose leader, Jaafar Maguid alias "Tikboy," was killed by government forces on Thursday.

The command conference also comes three days before the annual Feast of the Black Nazarene where millions of devotees are expected to attend.

For his part, Duterte will give his Commander-in-Chief's Guidance.

As of press time, the command

conference was still held behind closed doors.

Big blow

The AFP said the death of Maguid serves as a "big blow" to the group.

AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief Marine Col. Edgard Arevalo said that Maguid, based on military intelligence reports, is a known "bomb maker" who managed to train other bomb makers in the past.

Aside from this, Maguid is also a notorious extortionist said to be behind the bombing incident in General Santos City.

"This operation is an effort by the Philippine National Police (PNP) and supported by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and we treat his (Maguid) death as a big blow to their group," Arevalo said.

Despite Maguid's death, Arevalo assured that the AFP and the PNP will not stop until all the AKP's members have been neutralized.

"Both the AFP and the PNP won't stop until all of their members are neutralize," Arevalo said.

"The AKP are just one of the groups who have professed their sympathy or allegiance to ISIS although our belief is that up to this time, those are mere profession. There are still no clear information that they have been admit-

ted or acknowledge by the ISIS as their members," he added.

Reports had earlier said that Maguid was killed at about 1 a.m. Thursday at Angel Beach Resort in Barangay Kitagas, Kiamba, Sarangani.

It was learned that joint operatives of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency or (NICA), Sarangani Police Provincial Intelligence Branch, 3rd Company Regional Public Safety Battalion-12, Sarangani Police Provincial Support Company, Regional Intelligence Division-12 and Kiamba Municipal Police Station, were the ones who conducted the operation that led to the neutralization of the terrorist leader.

The military and police said that Maguid is a notorious bandit leader with affiliation to ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)

Maguid's three cohorts – Matahata Dialawe Arboleda, Ismael Sahak alias "Mael," and Morhaban Veloso alias "Bugoy" – were arrested during the operation.

Prior to his death, Maguid and his group had escaped several government operations

It was recalled that on November 26, 2015, eight members of the AKP, including an Indonesian, were killed in a joint law enforcement operation by the PNP and the Philippine Marine Corps in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat. (With a report from Francis T. Wakefield)

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Military monitoring Maute personalities in Metro

Story on Page 5

By JAIME LAUDE

A senior anti-terrorism official yesterday confirmed the presence of several members of the Islamic State-inspired Maute terror group in Metro Manila, who are suspected of plotting bombing runs during the Feast of the Black Nazarene.

The anti-terror official assured the public that government intelligence agents are

closely monitoring the activities of the Maute group.

“Indeed, there are Maute group personalities already here but they re not bombers. For now we don’t have any monitoring that they are plotting to launch any terroristic activities,” he said

There are reports that the Maute and their cohorts from the Bangsamoro Islamic Free-

dom Fighters are plotting to conduct bombing runs in Manila to disrupt the Traslacion, the traditional procession of the Black Nazarene

Philippine National Police chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa said the police force has put in place the necessary security adjustments to ensure threats are thwarted.

This includes the deployment of augmentation forces from Central Luzon and Calabarzon police regional offices and from the national police headquarters in Camp Crame. Dela Rosa did not give the specific number of personnel involved

“We have our actions taken but we cannot really divulge to the public all our plans because

it will become ineffective if we reveal everything,” Dela Rosa explained.

National Capital Region Police Office chief Director Oscar Albayalde earlier said each police district in Metro Manila would deploy 319 personnel to augment the forces of the Manila Police District

On Thursday, Dela Rosa also imposed a gun ban in

Manila a day before and after the Traslacion.

The suspension of all permits to carry firearms outside of residence will be in effect from 8 a.m. of Jan. 8 until 8 a.m. of Jan. 10.

Around 12 million devotees of the Black Nazarene are expected to flock to Manila for the annual Traslacion.

– With Emmanuel Tupas

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Grupo ni Maguid, posibleng maghiganti

Nakaalerto ang Philippine National Police (PNP) sa posibleng paghihiganti ng grupong Ansar Al Khalifa para sa pagkakapatay ng pinuno nitong si Mohammad Jaafar Maguid sa Sarangani Huwebes ng madaling araw.

Nag-utos si PNP chief Ronald Dela Rosa sa kapulisan na paigtingin ang pagbabantay sa posibleng pag-atake ng teroristang grupo bilang ganti sa pagkakapatay kay Maguid.

Sinabi ni Dela Rosa na malaking kawalan si Maguid sa mga Ansar al-Khalifa at ibang grupong nakikisimpiya sa Islamic State.

Aniya, tiyak na hihina ang kakayahan ng Ansar Al khalifa na maghasik ng terorismo, subalit 'di magtatagal ay may mahahanap dito itong kapalit ni Maguid.

Si Maguid ay isang eksperto sa paggawa ng bomba. Wanted sa napakaraming kaso at itinuturong nasa likod ng Rizal Day bombing at pambobomba sa General Santos City.

Binigyan naman ng P300,000 pabuya ang mga sibilyan natumulong sa mga tauhan ng pulisya upang mapatay si Maguid at madakip ang tatlo niyang tauhan.

Napatay si Maguid nang makipagbarilan siya at ang kanyang mga tauhan sa mga pulis na nagbabantay sa isang checkpoint sa Kiamba, Sarangani noong Huwebes.

Inaresto rin ang apat niyang tauhan.

Sang-ayon si Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesman ng Armed Forces of the Philippines sa sinabi ni dela Rosa na malaking kawalan sa Ansar al-Khalifa ang pagkamatay ni Maguid, na pinaghihinalaan din sa pambobomba sa General Santos City kamakailan.

Fer Taboy

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Duterte visits Russian ship: 'Come back often'

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

After President Duterte declared the country's move toward an independent foreign policy away from its longest ally the United States, Russian officials immediately gave the Chief Executive a preview of what Moscow could provide during a tour of the Russian anti-submarine ship *Admiral Tributs* in Manila yesterday.

Officers of the Russian Navy and other officials welcomed the President during his tour, where the Russians displayed their firepower.

According to *Radio-TV Malacañang*, Duterte was shown the *Admiral Tributs*' 2x4-container launchers of Rastrub Rocket Torpedo System.

This was followed by a visit to the bow of the ship where Duterte witnessed a demon-

stration of the ship's missile system.

Duterte also got to see various military hardware including the 100-mm AK-100 gun mounts, six-barreled 30-mm AK-630m machine guns and RBU-6000 anti-submarine rocket launchers.

Russian Ambassador Igor Khovaev, the ship's Commander Artem Kolpaschikov and other Russian delegates accompanied the President during his ship tour.

At the *Admiral Tributs*' Ward Room, Duterte signed the ship's guestbook and wrote a short message for the ship's commander and crew.

"*Mabuhay kayo. From the heart. I hope you come back more often,*" Duterte wrote in the guestbook.

The President's tour of the warship came barely a month after Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. visited Moscow to look into possible procurement of Russian military hardware.

Prior to this, Duterte met with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Lima, Peru last November. Duterte is set to visit Moscow this year.

During yesterday's tour, Duterte and his delegation also witnessed a demonstration by Russian divers and went up to the ship's bridge where the Russian Navy demonstrated its navigation system.

On his way out, Duterte also

viewed the Russian Navy Ka-27 helicopter.

Apart from Yasay and Lorenzana, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Eduardo Año and other officers of the Philippine Navy, Air Force and Army accompanied the President on the ship tour.

Lorenzana said the Russian government is intent on boosting bilateral ties with the Philippines.

They have also expressed interest in providing the Philippine military with equipment, including submarines and drones, in case it wants to procure modern equipment for its arsenal.

The Russian military is

hoping to establish further exchange in training and exercises between the two countries, Lorenzana said.

Japanese ships

Meanwhile, two Japanese ships that arrived in Olongapo City on Wednesday left Subic Bay yesterday while the public was focused on the visit of a Russian anti-submarine vessel in Manila.

Philippine Navy personnel held a Passing Exercise with the visiting Japanese sailors off Corregidor Island prior to their departure from Subic.

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Escort Division with two ships arrived in Subic Bay on Jan. 4 for a three-day port visit.

The division that consists of the *JS Inazuma* and *JS Suzutsuki*

is headed by Capt. Atsushi Minami, commander of Escort Division Four.

The JMSDF Escort Division Four stayed in the country to replenish supplies, conduct maintenance work and crew rest before returning to Japan after conducting counter piracy operations at the Gulf of Aden.

The visit is expected to enhance the already strong relationship between the Philippine Navy and its Japanese counterpart.

The Philippine Navy said the visit also gave its officers and enlisted personnel a chance to interact with the Japanese sailors to promote camaraderie and naval diplomacy. – With Michael Punongbayan, Jaime Laude

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Japan naval force enjoying Subic

By **JONAS REYES**

Subic Bay Freeport may be a lot of things to a lot of people, but is certain of one thing – a great place for rest and relaxation.

This purview comes no less than from visiting Japanese Naval Fleet Commander Atsushi Minami, who expressed the overall pleasure of the crew members of the "JS Inazuma" and "JS Suzutsuki" in Subic as their current site for RNR (rest and recreation).

During their three-day port visit, the Commander of the Escort Division, Four of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and the 360 crewmembers (160 JS Inazuma crewmembers, 200 JS Suzutsuki crewmembers) of the two ships toured the ins and outs of the area and found great food here.

"I have tried a stew that is salty, is it Adobo? It was very delicious," Minami said. The commander and his entourage also went out for some seafood at one of the local restaurants in Subic Freeport.

"We had a very nice dinner last night at the Seafood by the Bay. In Tokyo, fresh seafood is very, very expensive. Here, we enjoyed the fresh red snapper (Mayamaya) and trout," he added.

"This is my first time in Subic. Subic is a very big port and the quality here is very good," Minami said. When asked about having routine port calls, the commander pointed out that JMSDF would like to have more port visit not only in Subic, but in Manila. "But the details and schedule hasn't been decided yet."

Views on Russia

When asked about the port visit of the Russian Navy in Manila, the commander replied: "Interesting." But he added that

when they conducted counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, both the Japanese and Russian Navy cooperated in the security of the area.

"Not only Russians, but also People's Liberation Army (PLA) navy, we cooperated with each other in terms of counter piracy. Not only with the US Navy, Royal Navy, Indian Navy, Pakistani Navy, and PLA Navy, we cooperated with each

other. Naval ships from other countries cooperated with each other for the same purpose of countering piracy in the Gulf of Aden," he said.

Value of PH

The commander pointed out that the Philippine port visit is very important for Japan in terms of having interaction with the Philippine Navy. Aside from demon-

strating the "Freedom of Navigation" in the South China Sea, it is important for the JMSDF to have interaction with their Philippine counterparts.

"This is also due to Japan Defense Minister's agreement with the Philippines to enhance disaster management operations and humanitarian operations since both countries are hit hard by typhoons," Minami said.

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President Duterte leads the flashing of his signature fist gesture during a tour of the visiting Russian anti-submarine ship. Admiral Tributs of the South Harbor in Manila yesterday. He was joined by Rear Admiral Eduard Mikhailov, deputy commander of the Russian Navy's Pacific fleet; Russian Ambassador Igor Novozay; Lieutenant Commander Artem Khibashticov and other ship officers. A photo are National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esporon, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Foreign Affairs Secretary Panteco Tassy, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, president's assistant Bong Go, Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano and AFP chief Lt. Gen. Eduardo Año. Story on Page 4.



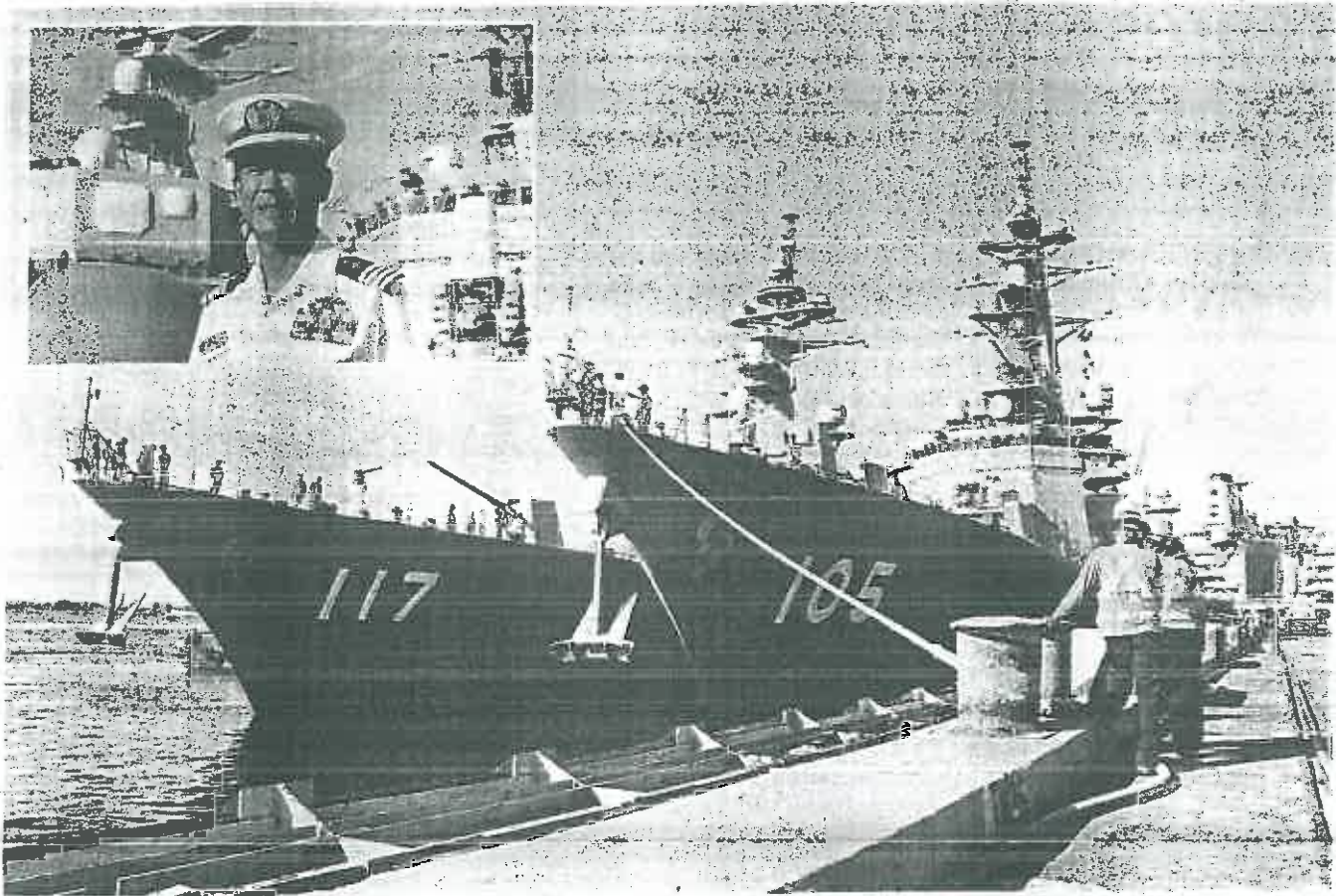
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FRIENDLY FORCES – The JS Suzutsuki (left) and the JS Inazuma are docked at the Alava Wharf of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone yesterday, a few moments before their departure. Inset is Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Commander of the Escort Division Four Captain Atsushi Minami. (Jonas Reyes)

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RUSSIAN WARSHIP TOUR President Duterte checks out the Admiral Tributs, a Russian anti-submarine vessel on a goodwill visit to Manila, at Pier 15, Port Area in Manila. Joining him is Lt. Cmdr. Artem Kolpashchikov, Russian Ambassador Igor Khovaev, Lt. Gen. Glorioso Miranda and Vice Adm. Ronald Joseph Mercado. —JOAN BONDOC

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VOLLEYBALL

DAQUIS WEIGHING FREE AGENCY OPTIONS

By Marc Anthony Reyes
@marcreycsINQ

Rachel Anne Daquis, one of the biggest names in free agency, is being sought after by practically all the teams in the Philippine Superliga.

The very popular 5-foot-10 open spiker bared that she's "still weighing her options" after several teams reportedly expressed her interest in her services.

The one-time PSL Most Valuable Player joined several other players in the free agency after their contracts expired last Dec. 31.

Her old club, Philippine Army, is still not sure of putting up a team this season as most of its players—including main girl Jovelyn Gonzaga—are set to undergo an eight-month off-

cers' training.

Other big-name stars like Jaja Santiago, Aby Maraño and Ara Galang are expected to be included in their respective team's "protect 10" list.

Sources said Foton, F2 Logistics, Generika, Cignal and Petron are trying to woo the 29-year-old Daquis mainly because of her leadership skill being one of the league's veterans.

But the Daquis camp is reportedly looking for a team that is willing to give her a bigger role both on and off the court.

She helped steer Petron to a historic 13-0 sweep and the 2015 All Filipino Conference title where she emerged MVP.

She was also a part of two of Army's three conference championships.

Daquis' biggest break came when she was named part of the Philippine team to the Asian Volleyball Confederation and FIVB Women's Club World

Championship last year.

Daquis has always been among the most popular poster girls of the sport ever since she took the UAAP by storm as the anchor of Far Eastern University.

Daquis is the second star to come out saying she will explore every avenue in free agency.

Late last year, Mika Reyes also said she would look at every available choice on the table as she looks to expand her endeavors outside the court.

"As of now I want to consider all opportunities," said Reyes. "I don't want to completely stop volleyball. But there are other things I may consider outside volleyball."

Reyes had a banner year that included a UAAP championship with La Salle, Philippine Superliga All Filipino Conference title with F2 Logistics and a stint with the national team in the FIVB Women's Club World Championship. INQ



ONLINE NEWS 07 JANUARY 2017

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Defense Chief sees improved defense relations with Russia

Lui Claudio



Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana expressed optimism for improved defense relations with his Russian counterparts in line with the independent foreign policy thrust of President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

Speaking aboard the Russian anti-submarine ship Admiral Tributs docked at Pier 15 in the Manila South Harbor, Secretary Lorenzana said that he sees this latest goodwill visit of the Russian Navy as the 'start of a partnership' between the defense establishments of Russia and the Philippines.

"We thank you sincerely for this cordial gesture and we hope that this will be the start of a partnership between the One Defense Team – Philippines and its counterpart in the Russian Federation," he said.

Lorenzana also mentioned his trip to Russia in early December when he met with Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov and Director Alexander Fomin of the Federal Service of Military Technical Cooperation to discuss mutual concerns such as terrorism and illegal drugs. They also talked about the possibility of future military to military engagements.

The Secretary also said that he conveyed to the same Russian officials his agreement to continue the long pending Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two Defense organizations which was initiated in 2014. Both sides agreed that the MOU should be finalized in time for signing during the forthcoming visit of President Duterte to Russia. Once signed, the MOU becomes the basis of all future military to military engagements which may include visits, exchange of students, conferences, joint exercises, among others.

"May our common aspirations for regional and global peace and security enable us to become good partners, cooperating and coordinating towards tranquil and safe seas for all," Secretary Lorenzana said.

The Admiral Tributs is accompanied by another Russian ship, the Boris Butoma which serves as a tanker and supply ship.

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AFP Holds First Command Conference

Lui Claudio

CAMP AGUINALDO, Quezon City – Key national security stakeholders and officials of the Defense Department held the First Quarter 2017 Command Conference 06 January 2017 at the Tejeros Hall of the AFP Commissioned Officers Club here.

Marine Colonel Edgard A Arevalo, AFP Public Affairs Office Chief disclosed that top military field commanders, major service commanders, Wide Support and Separate Unit commanders, and key staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines were in attendance at the high-level meeting presided by the Department of National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

“The military top brass, and Panel Chairperson of Government Implementing Panel for Bangsamoro, and Peace accords were invited to attend the caucus,” Col Arevalo said.

“It was in that venue that the new AFP campaign plan officially named Development Support and Security Plan Kapayapaan — the one that replaces IPSP Bayanihan that expired on 31 December 2016— was presented to the conferees. The document will serve as the ‘blueprint’ as to how the AFP shall conduct its campaigns.

“The highlight of the conference was the issuance of the Command Guidance by the newly promoted four-star General and AFP Chief of Staff Eduardo Año.

“He was clear, concise, and direct in his pronouncement that the top priority of the AFP under his leadership shall be the destruction of the terrorist groups of the ASG, Maute Group, BIFF, and other foreign and local terrorist groups,” reports Col Arevalo.

To achieve this, General Año declares, “Apart from the conduct of focused combat operations employing the wherewithals of the AFP, I desire that we enhance stakeholder engagement to ensure robust participation of the religious sector and local government.

“From our end, I want everyone here to exercise the highest degree of Commandership. After all, the most important element of combat power is Leadership. Do and give your best and together we will create a winning team and get the job done.

“We will give priority to frontline units in the assignment of the best Officers, Enlisted Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, and Marines — our most important resource. And as such, we must take care of them. While we endeavor to give them the fighting edge, it is as essential that we increase their survivability rate.”

“We will, as we must, look at the welfare of our men —and loved ones—especially those who were combat casualties. Expedite the processing of the benefits due them; streamline the process and rationalize the requirements for promotion, schooling, and awards as well were disposition of cases.

“Under my watch, the AFP will be fully committed to the primacy of the peace process guided by the President’s Roadmap to Peace. We will support fully the government’s war on drugs and shall extend full support to the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies both in terms of personnel and intelligence.

“Finally, I say there is no letter ‘I’ in the word ‘TEAM’. We shall all aspire for the collective accomplishment above individual fulfillment. Again, I urge the men and women of the AFP to work with me as we continue our journey together with our actions embed with the AFP Core Values of Honor, Service, and Patriotism,” General Año concluded.

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

DND chief: Improved military relationship with Russia in line with President Duterte's independent policy thrust

By Priam F. Nepomuceno

MANILA, Jan. 6 (PNA) -- Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana is optimistic about having improved defense relations with Russia which is in line with President Rodrigo Duterte's independent foreign policy thrust.

The DND chief made this statement aboard the Udaloy-class large anti-submarine ship/destroyer Admiral Tributs which he visited Friday.

The naval vessel, which is accompanied by tanker and supply ship Boris Butoma, is presently docked at Pier 15, Manila South Harbor.

Both arrived last Jan. 2 and will depart on Jan. 7 after their six-day goodwill visit.

Lorenzana said he sees this latest goodwill visit by the Russian Navy, the third time in the country, as the "start of a partnership between the defense establishments of Russia and the Philippines."

"We thank you (Russia) sincerely for this cordial gesture and we hope that this will be the start of a partnership between the One Defense Team -- Philippines and its counterpart in the Russian Federation," he said.

The DND chief also mentioned his trip to Russia in early December when he met with Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov and Director Alexander Fomin of the Federal Service of Military Technical Cooperation to discuss mutual concerns such as terrorism and illegal drugs.

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"May our common aspirations for regional and global peace and security enable us to become good partners, cooperating and coordinating towards tranquil and safe seas for all," Lorenzana said. (PNA)

LGJ/PFN

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Duterte visits Russian warship docked in Manila

Updated January 6, 2017, 7:54 PM

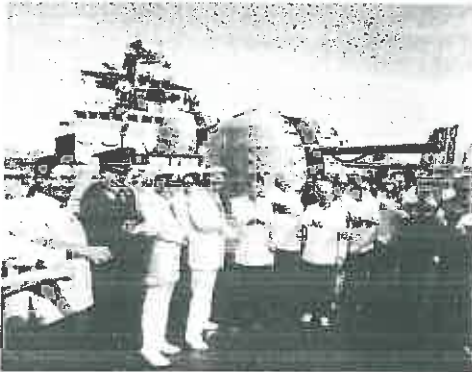
By Genalyn Kabiling

President Rodrigo Duterte has moved to enhance to the country's military ties with Russia with his visit to the Russian anti-submarine destroyer Admiral Tributs now docked at the Manila South Harbor.

The president emerged from his holiday break to take a tour inside the massive ship currently on a five-day goodwill visit to the Philippines along with the large sea tanker Boris Butoma.

Duterte appeared impressed with the modern warship and its weaponry while being briefed by Russian navy officials.

Senator Alan Peter Cayetano, executive secretary Salvador Medialdea, defense secretary Delfin Lorenzana, foreign affairs secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. and national security adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. accompanied the president during the tour of the ship.



President Rodrigo R. Duterte visit Russian Large Anti-Submarine Ship "Admiral Tributs" at Pier 15, Port Area in Manila on January 6, 2017. (Richard V. Viñas / MANILA BULLETIN)

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella recently said the goodwill visit of the Russian naval ships would contribute to the strengthening of friendship between the two nations.

"It also is an indication that our maritime cooperation can further be enhanced to enable diplomacy and camaraderie," Abella said.

He said the president was open to holding of joint military drills with Russia to enhance maritime security cooperation, but that the president remains opposed to any permanent stay of foreign troops in the country.

The president's visit to the Russian ship was his first public engagement for the New Year. He was last seen in public last December 30, when he led the Rizal Day celebration and checked on the condition of the blast victims in Hilongos, Leyte.

Abella explained that the president took some "quiet time, personal time" in Davao City during the holidays.

The president's ship tour was limited to photo opportunity. Photographers and television crews were allowed to shoot the president's arrival at the pier but were prohibited from joining the tour.