

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



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**OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**  
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**16 January 2017**

**Monday**

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

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16 January 2017



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# The Manila Times

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## The Manila Times

### PANAHON TV

### TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST

JANUARY 16, 2017 | MONDAY

**LOW PRESSURE AREA**  
ESTIMATED AT 105 KMS EAST OF  
NORTHEAST OF CATARMAN  
NORTHERN SAMAR  
NORTHEAST MONSOON  
AFFECTING NORTHERN  
AND CENTRAL LUZON  
(As of 3:00 AM - Jan 16, 2017)

**LAOAG CITY**  
22 - 29 °C

**TUGUEGARAO CITY**  
21 - 28 °C

**BAGUIO CITY**  
14 - 22 °C

**SBMA/CLARK**  
22 - 30 °C

**METRO MANILA**  
22 - 30 °C

**TACAYTAY CITY**  
29 - 28 °C

**LEGAZPI CITY**  
24 - 27 °C

**ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY**  
24 - 28 °C

**TACLOBAN CITY**  
24 - 29 °C

**PUERTO PRINCESA**  
24 - 30 °C

**METRO CEBU**  
24 - 29 °C

**CAGAYAN DE ORO**  
23 - 29 °C

**ZAMBOANGA CITY**  
24 - 33 °C

**METRO DAVAO**  
25 - 32 °C

**SUNRISE** 6:25 AM

**SUNSET** 5:47 PM

**MOONRISE** 9:25 PM

**MOONSET** 9:15 AM

**NEW MOON** JAN 12 7:50 PM

**LAST QUARTER** JAN 20 6:15 AM

**LOW TIDE** 7:56 AM  
0:21 Mace

**HIGH TIDE** 2:51 PM  
0:27 Mace

Partly cloudy to stormy clouds with rain showers and/or the occasional heavy rain.  
Partly cloudy to stormy clouds with rain showers.  
Cloudy skies with rain showers and/or thunderstorms.  
Light rains.

	JANUARY 16 TUESDAY	JANUARY 17 WEDNESDAY	JANUARY 18 THURSDAY	JANUARY 19 FRIDAY	JANUARY 20 SATURDAY	JANUARY 21 SUNDAY
<b>METRO MANILA</b>	22 - 29 °C	22 - 29 °C	23 - 30 °C	23 - 32 °C	23 - 21 °C	23 - 21 °C
<b>METRO CEBU</b>	24 - 29 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
<b>METRO DAVAO</b>	25 - 31 °C	24 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 33 °C	25 - 32 °C	24 - 33 °C
<b>BAGUIO</b>	14 - 22 °C	14 - 22 °C	14 - 22 °C	14 - 22 °C	14 - 22 °C	14 - 22 °C
<b>PUERTO PRINCESA</b>	24 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C
<b>BORACAY</b>	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C

**AIR 21**

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# 'Narco govvs' warned of ambush, poisoning

By EDITH REGALADO

**DAVAO CITY** – After warning “narco mayors” of being killed by their police chiefs, President Duterte will meet with provincial governors to warn them they could be ambushed or poisoned if they don’t stop drug deals.

Duterte said he wanted to discuss with all the 81 provincial executives his relentless campaign against illegal drugs even if it would cost him his position, lamenting that more than 5,000 government officials, including some police officers, are identified in a narco list that he keeps.

“I’d be calling the governors next week. I’d really tell them, ‘you tell your barangay captains, you have supervisory powers on cities under you,

those that are not yet charter cities, you tell the mayors.’ ” Duterte told businessmen in this city Saturday night.

While he knew he could not give governors a lecture, he said he would tell them, “Do not be complacent with me, sons of b\*\*\*\*. I will really kill you. Believe me I will find you and ambush or I’ll poison you.”

He showed the businessmen a list of those supposedly involved in the drug trade in

Turn to Page 3

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## 'Narco govs' From Page 1

the country.

"This is the drug industry of the Philippines. Inside are the names of policemen, barangay captains, mayors and a few governors. This is it, complete with pictures. And (former police general Vicente) Loot is there, this g\*\*\* na ito (fool)," Duterte said.

The chief executive feels it is necessary to call on the governors to remind them of their supervisory powers over mayors and barangay captains as he warned government officers who are involved in the illicit trade of death.

Last week, Duterte warned mayors involved in illegal drugs trade that they would

be killed if they do not resign. He said he would continue to protect the nation from illegal drugs even if he goes down in history as a butcher.

The President reportedly threatened and badmouthed mayors linked to corruption and narcotics during their meeting at Malacañang Wednesday.

He confirmed that he cursed at local executives implicated in the drug trade.

"Baka akala ninyo nagbobolahan tayo dito. (Maybe you think I am not serious). I called the mayors in the Philippines, locked them down," the President said, "Sinabi ko talaga sa kanila, totoo iyon (I really told

them, it's true) and I said, pardon my language. . P\*\*\*\* i\*\* ninyo (sons of b\*\*\*\*\*)!"

"What hurts me is I am thinking that you'll protect the people," he added.

In his previous speeches, Duterte said about 2,000 barangay captains, mayors, a few governors and congressmen, and some judges were included in the list of officials with alleged connections to drug syndicates.

He has so far revealed the names of about 160 incumbent and former government officials believed to be involved in illegal drugs and has given the House of Representatives, Senate and Supreme Court copies of the thick drug list, admitting that he cannot put an end to the

problem by himself.

The President emphasized that his war against illegal drugs is without letup even if it would cost him the presidency.

"If it causes my downfall, so be it. If I would be ousted, I'd be glad to go out. Coup d'état? Fine. But I won't backtrack. I will finish this until the very last day. If it takes me six years, six years will be it," Duterte said.

He added that even if he is "just from the province," he is sincere in serving the country.

"I might be really a small time boy. No credentials, impressive ones, no nothing. But what I have is just a basic sense of my love for my country and for my children," Duterte said.

– With Alexis Romero

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1947 1988  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Duterte ready to meet Joma

## GRP, NDF all set for 3rd round talks in Rome

By GENALYN D. KABILING, ANTONIO L. COLINA IV,  
FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD, and CHITO A. CHAVEZ

**P**resident Duterte is willing to meet Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding Chairman Jose Maria Sison in a neutral third country to advance the government's peace initiatives

The President said he would wait for the results of the peace talks between the government and the communist

rebel group in Rome before finalizing a meeting with Sison.

"Dureza and (Silvestre) Bebot Bello are there, nasa Rome sila ngayon. I don't know why they transferred venue. Siguro magpalapit doon sa Pope para magrasyahan." Duterte said in a forum with businessmen in Davao City, referring to Presidential ▶4

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## Duterte ready to...



Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza and Labor Secretary and Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) Chief Negotiator Silvestre Bello III.

"But I said, sige, I will just wait for a while. And when you're ready, it's either I will go to a third country where I can talk to Sison," he said.

Duterte assured that he would announce any substantial outcome of his meeting with Sison afterwards. "And after that, if there's something that is really official and substantial, then we can announce to the world that we have this agreement," he said.

### Round 3 in Rome

Peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) panels are scheduled to resume in Rome this week. Government negotiators reportedly hope to sign a joint bilateral ceasefire pact during the third round of negotiations.

Last December, the President had a telephone conversation with Sison and pressed for the need of ceasefire agreement before allowing the release of more political prisoners. The conver-

sation between Duterte and Sison has been described as friendly and warm by Palace officials. Sison, an asylum seeker in the Netherlands, was the former teacher of Duterte at the Lyceum University.

In his speech before the Davao business community, the President said the communist rebels "gave us a lot of trouble" but he convinced them to return to the negotiating table.

He disclosed that he even went to the mountains to encourage the rebels to lay off vital public installations.

"We go (for) some tete-a-tete in the mountains and we get to agree on so many things, and one of these is really how to help the people and for them not to destroy the equipment of government," he said.

### Major breakthroughs

Bello expressed optimism that major breakthroughs will be achieved during the resumption of the peace negotiation with the NDFP in Rome, Italy on January 19 to 25.

"We are prepared to sign side and other agreements while we are discussing contents and provisions of the major substantive agenda," Bello, who is also labor

secretary, was quoted in a press release issued by Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP).

He added that draft documents will be submitted today to the President before GRP panel members leave for Rome later this evening.

Among these draft documents include draft agreements and principles for social and economic reforms (CASER), comprehensive agreement on political and constitutional reforms and comprehensive agreement on the end to hostilities and disposition of forces.

"We are all set and ready to engage the NDF in the discussion of all substantive agenda including supplemental agreements needed to proceed and arrive at a peaceful negotiated political settlement to end the armed conflict in the country," Bello said.

He emphasized that the GRP panel is doing all it can "in the spirit of true reconciliation and genuine quest for just and lasting peace."

Bello explained that government is all set to sign a supplemental agreement on the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) which will include an expanded role of the Joint Monitoring Committee.

"And we are challenging the NDF to formalize the unilateral ceasefire with a bilateral ceasefire agreement to give our communities and combatants a more secure environment for the peace process," Bello added.

GRP-NDFP peace talks resumed in August 2016 after more than five years of impasse following the election of President Duterte where both panels agreed to reaffirm all previously signed agreements and reconstitution of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the release of NDF leaders and members.

The government is confident it can strike a peace deal with the communist-led NDF, which counts among its member organization the CPP and the New People's Army (NPA).

### Bilateral ceasefire

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana expressed confidence that both the peace panels of the GRP and the CPP-NPA-NDF will soon reach an agreement and sign a bilateral ceasefire agreement during their talks in Rome, Italy, this week.

Lorenzana said the defense department and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año recently met with Presidential Ad-

viser on the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza at the OPAPP headquarters in Pasig City and gave their inputs to the proposed agreement.

"We have inputs there especially some of the gripes of the AFP and we are trying to discuss this. It's just a discussion. We're not saying that there will already be a signing because the process will take a bit longer than we hope it will be. There's a lot of nitty-gritty there."

### Release of political prisoners

Human rights watchdog Karapatan appealed to Duterte to release 392 political prisoners in time for the resumption of peace talks in Rome.

Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay reminded Duterte about his commitment to free the prisoners, which is also an obligation based on previous agreements signed with the NDF.

"Political prisoners have gone into hunger strike and fasting, their families have been crying out for justice, and one of them, peasant organizer Bernabe Ocasla, died recently. Yet, 392 political prisoners are still in jail," Palabay said.

At least 20 political prisoners have been released, based on the merits of their cases and the persistence of their lawyers, families, and human rights organizations.

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## 237 new recruits beef up Army battalions in Mindanao

**CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City** - In line with the campaign of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) under its development support and security plan "Kapayapaan," 237 new recruits in the Army were deployed on Saturday in Northeastern Mindanao (Caraga Region 13) and Northern Mindanao (Region 10).

The deployment of the new soldiers will beef up the strength and capability of the battalions that are conducting Community Support Programs (CSPs) in Caraga region and Northern Mindanao region, according to Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. Madrigal Jr., commanding general of the Northeastern and Northern Mindanao Fourth Infantry (Diamond) Division (4th ID), yesterday.

"Carry out the professionalism of a Filipino soldier and always be guided about our policy - maintain discipline at all times and do not violate human rights," emphatically stressed by the 4th ID, during the send-off ceremony on Saturday.

Several local chief executives and officials from the different provinces, cities and municipalities in two regions also participated in the send-off ceremony, where some of them delivered their respective messages.

"To all our stakeholders, in front of you are the new soldiers that are ready to serve and fulfill their duty with the best of their abilities. They represent the new generation set of soldiers who will serve as partners for positive change and are active partners for the achievement of lasting peace and prosperity for our Country," Madrigal said. (Mike U. Crismundo)

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### • Army ex-soldier gunned down

TANAUAN CITY, Batangas — A retired Philippine Army (PA) soldier and incumbent barangay councilman was gunned down by two motorcycle-riding assailants in Barangay Pantay Matanda, this town, over the weekend. Superintendent Robert R. Baesa, city police chief, said Lauro D. Vicencio, 55, a kagawad (councilman) in Pantay Matanda, was waylaid about 10 a.m. last Friday by the gunman who approached him and introduced himself as an inspector from the Commission on Audit (COA). The suspect asked the victim to go with him in assessing the barangay projects, particularly the pathways constructed by present barangay administration. Vicencio went with the suspect but was later shot dead with a .45 caliber pistol. (Danny J. Estacio)

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1908  
1945  
1988

# MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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**SECURITY FORCE** – Soldiers line the route of the Sinulog festival parade in Cebu City Sunday. Army troopers were part of the security force deployed during the festivity. (Juan Carlo de Vela)

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# AFP Reserve Command wants you, students and workers told

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff General Eduardo Año yesterday urged more professionals and students to join military reservist programs amid the Duterte administration's thrust on attaining peace and security.

AFP Public Affairs Office chief Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo said the call was made on the occasion of the promotion and donning of shoulder loops and rank insignias of 11 officers in the Reservist Corps.

In a fitting ceremony, Arevalo said six Colonels were promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, while five Lieutenant Colonels were promoted to Colonels.

Arevalo said the AFP regards highly the role that the Reservists play in the accomplishment of its mission.

"They are not simply force multipliers; they are important component and partners in various non-lethal military operations and activities. It is admirable that, despite the fact that they receive no compensation and leaves the practice of their professions for the period that they serve the AFP, they remain committed, dependable, and ready to be deployed to serve on

call with due notice," Arevalo said.

"These are the qualities of citizen army that the country needs especially in this stage of our country at the threshold of change. We need professionals who shall put premium on national interest and well-being," he added.

## Pay hike

Meantime, the men and women of the AFP expressed its gratitude to President Duterte after receiving the first tranche of their salary increase.

"Our soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines, including civilian personnel were happily surprised when they received their respective increases reflected in their first pay slip for the year 2017," AFP Public Affairs Office Chief Marine Colonel Edgard A Arevalo said.

"For this we thank the Commander in Chief for his manifest regard to the morale and welfare of his men in the AFP," Arevalo added.

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# Professionals, students urged to join AFP reservist programs

As the Armed Forces of the Philippines goes beyond its traditional role of defending the nation against internal and external threats, AFP chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año yesterday urged professionals and students alike to join the various military reservist programs.

The AFP chief's call came in the wake of the promotion of 11 senior officers in the Reservist Corps where six senior colonels were promoted to the rank of brigadier general and five lieutenant colonels promoted a step higher to colonel on Friday.

"The AFP regards highly the role that the Reservists play in the accomplishment of its mission. They are not simply force multipliers; they are important component and partners in various non-lethal military operations and activities. It is admirable that, despite the fact that they receive no compensation and leaves the practice of their professions for the period that they serve the AFP, they remain committed, dependable and ready to be deployed to serve on call with due notice," Año added.

"These are the qualities of citizen

army that the country needs, especially in this stage of our country at the threshold of change. We need professionals who shall put premium on national interest and well-being," he further said.

These attributes of prospective reservists are not easy to come by but not impossible to find. Hence, the call to serve the nation from among the citizenry to be commissioned as Officers or be enlisted in the Reservist Corps.

"The preservation of the state is an obligation of every citizen. The AFP believes that military reservist programs are good training platforms and opportunities for our citizens, particularly the youth to prepare them in a shared role in nationhood and nation building," AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said.

The AFP Reserve Command (AFPRESCOM) is one of the military's major support commands established for the sole purpose of Reserve Force management, procurement, and organization.

Founded in 1998, the AFPRESCOM's major task is to train potential military reservists through different training courses.

The AFPRESCOM's enlistment is through the Military Orientation Training Course and the Basic Citizens Military Training.

Reserve Officers, on the other hand, are directly commissioned based on AFP Policy Circular 30. Those who are commissioned through this method subsequently undergo an Officer Orientation Program.

Elected officials and Presidential Appointees also undergo commissioning to the AFP's reserve force through AFP Circular Number 08. Incumbent politicians such as Davao City Mayor and presidential daughter Sara Duterte-Carpio, Sen. Manny Pacquiao and Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista (who was among those promoted to Colonel) are among notable Reserve Officers of the AFP.

The AFPRESCOM's recruitment is supported by the Reserve Commands of the Philippine Army, Philippine Air Force and Philippine Navy. All of which are also conducting training programs and courses for potential AFP Reservists.

"At present, the AFP has a total of 385,116-strong Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine reservists. Of which,

78,735 are Ready Reserve or on constant alert and training, 292,427 are Standby Reserve or the base for expansion, support and augmentation for the Ready Reserve, and 13,954 are Affiliated Reserve," Arevalo said.

The AFP is also keen on supporting the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) and its drive to instill discipline among the youth.

Currently, there are 1,520,704 ROTC cadets in the Philippines. There are 1,258,32 Army ROTC cadets, 881,520 from the Air Force and 563,352 from the Navy.

"The AFP actively supports the ROTC Program that promotes nationalism and patriotism among the youth. It develops their sense of willingness to render active military and civic duties, during peacetime and national emergency," Arevalo stated.

"We need to train men and women physically, mentally, and psychologically, by instilling discipline and nurturing the values of nationalism and patriotism making them ready to take on the challenge of being at the forefront of nationhood and national well-being," he added.

PHSA

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Pahina. 7

# Propesyonal, estudyante hinikayat maging reservist ng AFP

Hinikayat ni AFP Chief of Staff General Eduardo Afo ang mga propesyunal at mga estudyante na makisali sa military reservist program kasunod ang pagtitiwala na makakamit ang kapayapaan at seguridad ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Duterte.

Ayon kay AFP Public Affairs Office Chief Marine Col Edgard Arevalo, ito ay bunga

ng magaganap na okasyon para sa promosyon at pagsuot ng mga loop sa balikat at ranggo ng 11 opisyal ng Reservist Corps.

Sa seremonya, anim na colonels ang na-promote sa ranggong Brigadier General, habang limang Lieutenant Colonels ay na-promote sa Colonels.

"Malaki ang paggalang ng

AFP sa gagampanan ng mga Reservist sa pagtataguyod ng aming misyon, Hindi lamang simpleng force multipliers, importante rin sila bilang component at partners sa iba't-ibang non-lethal military operations at mga aktibidad," sabi pa nito.

Nakakahanga rin anyan sa kabila ng patunay na hindi sila nakakatanggap ng

anumang kompensasyon at iniwan ang kanilang mga propesyon para sa mga panahon ng kanilang pagsisilbi sa AFP, nanatili silang nakatuon, maasahan at handa upang i-deploy para magiing-kod sa tawag na may angkop na pang-uunawa.

Dagdag ng opisyal, ang mga ganitong kalidad ng isang citizen army ang kailangan ng ating bansa lalo na ngayon ang ating bansa ay nasa estado ng pagbabago. Kailangan natin ang mga propesyunal na maglalagay ng premium sa pambansang interest at pagiging mahusay.

Ang mga katangian ng mga inaasahang reservists ay hindi madaling dumating, pero hindi imposibleng mahanap. Kaya ang panawagan na maglingkod sa bansa mula sa mga mamamayan na maging commissioned bilang Officers o maging enlisted sa

Reservist Corps.

Ang AFP Reserve Command (AFPRESKOM) ay isa sa major support command ng military na itinayo para sa isang layuning ng Reserve Force management, procurement, at organization. Itinatag noong 1993, ang pangunahing tungkulin ng AFPRESKOM na sanayin ang potensyal na military reservists sa pamamagitan ng iba't-ibang training courses. (Ricky Tulipat)

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# PH poised to shun foreign military tieups

By GENALYN D. KABILING

**T**he Philippines is inclined to cease forging military alliances with other countries in line with President Duterte's desire to free the country of foreign

military forces

"I want the country freed of foreign – foreigners soldiers, ayaw ko," Duterte said in a business forum in Davao City Saturday night.

"Time for the Philippines so sibat na kayo. We are good enough. We are good

now. So hindi ko na kailangan 'yang mag-patrolya-patrolya," he said.

The President also said there was no talk of military alliances when he met Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during his recent two-day official visit.

Duterte also rejected Japan's offer

of missiles for the Philippines, hoping there won't be another world war.

"Actually, sinabi ko kay Abe, hindi ko na kailangan 'yang mga missile-missile," he said.

Meantime, Duterte has described North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un

crazy and unpredictable, saying his death would be good for everyone.

The President said the North Korean leader, not Russian President Vladimir Putin, was the "wild card" amid the nuclear and missile development by Pyongyang.

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## 35 cops killed in drug war

By CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE

A total of 35 policemen have been killed in anti-illegal drug operations in the past six months, the Philippine National Police (PNP) said yesterday.

The PNP said the 35 policemen were killed while pursuing drug personalities as part of President Duterte's campaign to end the drug problem in the country.

The PNP also reported a

total of 79 policemen were wounded during anti-drug operations throughout the country.

The PNP, however, clarified that the cases of 13 policemen killed and 10 others wounded are still being validated.

Police said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) also recorded three soldiers killed

and eight others wounded in the campaign against illegal drugs. The AFP is assisting the PNP in law enforcement operations.

The PNP-National Operation Center also reported that 2,239 suspected drug offenders were killed by police in alleged gunfights from July 1, 2016, to Jan. 14, 2017 under Project

Double Barrel Alpha

During the same period, the PNP said 45,194 drug users and pushers were arrested in 41,676 police operations in the country's 18 regions.

The PNP added there were a total of 1,025,473 drug personalities - including 75,648 pushers and 949,825 users - who surrendered after police visited 6,309,617 houses nationwide.

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## Duterte orders troops to blast militants, hostages

President Duterte said he has ordered his troops to bomb extremists who flee with their captives in a bid to stop a wave of kidnappings at sea, calling the loss of civilian lives in such an attack "collateral damage."

Duterte has previously stated that he had told his Indonesian and Malaysian counterparts their forces can blast away as they pursue militants who abduct sailors in waters where the three countries converge and bring their kidnap victims to the southern Philippines. He said in a speech late Saturday that he had given the same orders to Filipino forces.

In what seemed to be a joke or yet another hyperbole, he said he instructed the navy and the coast guard that "if there are kidnapppers and they're trying to escape, bomb them all."

"They say 'hostages.' Sorry, collateral damage," he said in a

speech to officials of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry in his southern hometown.

He said such an approach would enable the government to get even with the ransom-seeking militants. "You can't gain mileage for your wrongdoing, I will really have you blasted," he said.

His advice to potential victims? "So, really, don't allow yourselves to be kidnapped."

Duterte's remarks reflect the alarm and desperation of the Philippines, along with Malaysia and Indonesia, in halting a series of ransom kidnappings primarily by Abu Sayyaf militants and their allies along a busy waterway for regional trade.

Duterte reiterated that he is ready to be tough against kidnapppers and other criminals, and that sometimes it was necessary to be a rascal to deal

with rascals.

He also warned wrongdoers that cameras and drones can monitor their activities. "We have their faces, so it was very easy for us to catch them," he said.

On Saturday, ransom-seeking Abu Sayyaf gunmen freed a South Korean captain and his Filipino crewman who were abducted three months ago from their cargo ship.

The gunmen handed skipper Park Chul-hong and Glenn Alindajao over to Moro National Liberation Front rebels, who turned them over to Philippine officials in southern Jolo town in predominantly Muslim Sulu province.

The Moro rebels, who signed a 1996 peace deal with the government, have helped negotiate the release of several hostages of the smaller but more violent Abu Sayyaf, which is blacklisted by the US as a terrorist organization for kidnappings, behead-

ings and bombings.

Duterte's adviser dealing with insurgents, Jesus Dureza, said he was not aware of any ransom being paid in exchange for the freedom of the sailors. At least 27 hostages, many of them foreign crewmen, remain in the hands of different Abu Sayyaf factions, he said.

There have been persistent speculations, however, that most of the freed hostages have been ransomed off.

Without a known foreign source of funds, the Abu Sayyaf has survived mostly on ransom kidnappings, extortion and other acts of banditry.

A confidential Philippine government threat assessment report seen by *The Associated Press* last year said the militant's pocketed at least P353 million (\$7.3 million) from ransom kidnappings in the first six months of 2016.

-- AP, Alexis Romero

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DEFINING THE NEWS

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## Blast Abu, military ordered

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte said Saturday night he has ordered the military to “blast” the Abu Sayyaf bandits who have been on a kidnap-for-ransom spree, even if hostages would also be killed.

“They say, ‘What about the hostage?’ Sorry, collateral damage,” Duterte said in a speech before the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

He added that if the bandits were “blasted everyday” the kidnappings might stop.

“So better not get yourselves kidnapped,” he told the Davao businessmen.

On Saturday, officials said the Abu Sayyaf freed a South Korean ship captain and his Filipino crewman who were abducted from their vessel off the coast of Tawi-Tawi in October. *Next page*

## Blast...

From A1

Sources said Capt. Park Chul Hong and Filipino crewman Glenn Alindajao were released after the payment of a P25 -million ransom with the mediation of former Sulu governor Abdusakur Tan but Peace Secretary Jesus Dureza maintained the government stuck to its no-ransom policy.

The Abu Sayyaf released Park and Alindajao to Moro National Liberation Front members Abraham Joel and Adon Adak in Indanan town and they were later turned over to Dureza at the residence of the former Sulu governor.

The abduction on board the 11,400-ton heavy load carrier Dong Bang Giant 2 occurred Oct. 20 just off the southern entry of the Sibutu Passage, a 29-kilometer wide channel used by merchant shipping in transit between the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. The cargo ship was heading for South Korea from Australia.

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## DU30 ORDERS AFP: BOMB ABUS, EVEN WITH CIVILIANS

President Duterte has ordered government troops to bomb Moro extremists who flee with their captives in a bid to stop a wave of kidnappings at sea, calling the loss of civilian lives in such an attack "collateral damage."

Mr. Duterte previously stated he had told his Indonesian and Malaysian counterparts that their forces could blast away as they pursued extremists who abducted sailors in waters where the three countries converged and brought their kidnap victims to southern Philippines.

In a speech to businessmen in Davao City on Saturday, the President said he had instructed the Navy and the Coast Guard that "if there are kidnapers and they're trying to escape, bomb them all."

"They say 'hostages.' Sorry, collateral damage," he said.

Mr. Duterte said such an approach would enable the government to get even with the ransom-seeking Moro extremists.

"You can't gain mileage for your wrongdoing, I will really

have you blasted," he said.

His advice to potential victims? "So, really, don't allow yourselves to be kidnapped."

Mr. Duterte's remarks reflect the alarm and desperation of the Philippines, along with Malaysia and Indonesia, in halting a series of kidnappings primarily by Abu Sayyaf bandits and their allies along a busy waterway for regional trade.

On Saturday, ransom-seeking Abu Sayyaf gunmen freed a South Korean captain and his Filipino crewman who were abducted three months ago from their cargo ship.

The gunmen handed skipper Park Chul-hong and Glenn Alindajao over to Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) rebels, who turned them over to Philippine officials in the Jolo island capital.

The MNLF rebels, who signed a 1996 peace deal with the government, have helped negotiate the release of several hostages of the smaller but more violent Abu Sayyaf, which is blacklisted by the United States as a terrorist organization for kidnappings, be-

headings and bombings.

Mr. Duterte's adviser dealing with insurgents, Jesus Dureza, said he was not aware of any ransom being paid in exchange for the freedom of the sailors.

At least 27 hostages, many of them foreign crewmen, remain in the hands of different Abu Sayyaf factions, Dureza said.

Speculation, however, has persisted that most of the freed hostages had been ransomed off.

Without a known foreign source of funds, the Abu Sayyaf has survived mostly on kidnappings, extortion and other acts of banditry.

A confidential government threat assessment report seen by The Associated Press (AP) last year said the Abu Sayyaf bandits pocketed at least P353 million (\$73 million) from kidnappings in the first six months of 2016.

The bandits have mostly targeted slow-moving tugboats in the busy sea bordering Mindanao, Malaysia and Indonesia. —AP

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## Girl, 12, killed in Basilan blast

ZAMBOANGA CITY -- A 12-year-old girl died while her mother was wounded when an improvised bomb exploded in a remote village in Lamitan City, Basilan yesterday afternoon.

Police identified the fatality as Saibi Haddalun while Neneng Haddalun was injured. The victims were harvesting root crops, reports said.

The Lamitan City police reported the improvised explosive device went off on the roadside of Barangay Sabong about 4 p.m.

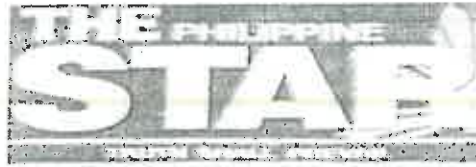
Police tagged the Abu Sayyaf as the ones responsible for the attack, saying it was a tactic to divert the military operation against the bandits in the mountains of Sumisip town.

The Abu Sayyaf is holding several hostages. An Army junior officer was killed and four other troopers were wounded in the operation at Barangay Cabcaban Thursday.

– Roel Pareño

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## Rody ready to talk with Joma

DAVAO CITY - President Duterte is ready to talk to Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison in a third country to finalize a peace agreement with the group.

The President said the negotiating panels of the gov-

ernment and the CPP-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (NPA-NDF) were set to resume the third round of peace talks in Rome from Jan. 19 to 25 despite hitches.

Last month, Duterte said he would not free 130 political

Turn to Page 10

## Rody ready From Page 1

prisoners unless he would receive a signed bilateral ceasefire agreement between the government and the communists witnessed by a third party facilitator from the Norwegian government, claiming he "conceded to the communists too much too soon."

The government facilitated the release of 22 political prisoners serving as NDF peace panel consultants shortly before the start of the first round of formal peace talks in Oslo, Norway in August of last year.

"I will just wait for a while," the President said with regard to a possible meeting with Sison, who lives in exile in the Netherlands.

"And after that, if there's something that is really official and substantial, then we can announce to the world that we have this agreement," the President said during the induction of officers of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. here Saturday night.

Chief government negotiator Silvestre Bello III said they would submit to the President the draft documents that would be tabled for discussion during the resumption of the peace talks in a courtesy call at Malacañang before leaving this evening.

Bello said the government panel is ready to engage the NDF in the discussion of all substantive agenda, including supplemental agreements needed to proceed and arrive at an agreement to end the armed conflict in the country.

Among the documents to be submitted to the President are draft agreements and principles for social and economic reforms, comprehensive agreement on political and constitutional reforms and the same on end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

"We are doing this in the spirit of true reconciliation and genuine quest

for just and lasting peace," Bello said.

Bello expressed confidence major breakthroughs would again be achieved in the Rome talks.

"We are prepared to sign side and other agreements while we are discussing contents and provisions of the major substantive agenda," he added.

Bello, who is also labor secretary, explained the government is set to sign a supplemental agreement on the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), which would include an expanded role of the Joint Monitoring Committee.

"And we are challenging the NDF to formalize the unilateral ceasefire with a bilateral ceasefire agreement to give our communities and combatants a more secure environment for the peace process," Bello added.

Angeles City Mayor Edgardo Pamintuan, who is joining the talks, said the Philippine government and the communists mutually agreed to change the venue of the negotiations

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due to the harsh winter in Oslo.

Pamintuan, also chairman of the Central Luzon Regional Development Council (RDC) and national president of the League of Cities of the Philippines, is an adviser of the Philippine government panel.

"Hopes are high that there will be major agreements on substantial issues. The matters concerning joint/bilateral ceasefire will also be taken up and I am very optimistic that there will be meeting points on this, if not a formal agreement," Pamintuan said.

The ceasefire between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the NPA has been holding even if it is only covered by unilateral declarations from both sides but like Bello, Pamintuan said a formal bilateral ceasefire agreement would make the environment for the talks more stable.

"So far so good. The staccato of gunfire has been replaced by singing of songs and conduct of peace fora throughout the country. The Christmas season even paved the way for joint events punctuated by

joint singing of AFP soldiers and NPA guerrillas, and boodle fights," Pamintuan said.

Peace negotiations with the NDF were resumed in August after more than five years following the election of Duterte.

In the August round where the negotiations were reopened, both panels agreed to reaffirm all previous signed agreements and reconstitute the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and release of NDF leaders and members.

In the second round also in Oslo, negotiators exchanged outlines and agreed to accelerate the peace talks.

– Edith Regalado, Ric Sapnu

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## Gov't ready for 3rd round of peace talks

By Jerome Aning  
@JeromeAningINQ

Chief government negotiator Silvestre Bello III will submit today to President Duterte the draft documents that will be tabled for discussion in the third round of peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in Rome, Italy, from Jan. 19 to 25.

"We are all set and ready to engage the NDFP in the discussion of all substantive agenda, including supplemental agreements needed to proceed and arrive at a peaceful negotiated political settlement to end the armed conflict in the country," Bello said in a statement issued by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).



Silvestre Bello III —RAFFY LERMA

The peace panelists will go to Malacañang for a courtesy call on Mr. Duterte before leaving this evening, the OPAPP said.

The main group of government delegation will leave for Rome tomorrow in time for the opening of talks on Thursday.

The OPAPP said among the

documents to be submitted to the President are drafts and other documents for the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms and other agreements on political and constitutional reforms, and on the end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

### Supplemental agreement

Bello said he was confident that major breakthroughs would again be achieved in the Rome talks, adding, "We are prepared to sign side and other agreements while we are discussing contents and provisions of the major substantive agenda."

Bello, who is also labor secretary, explained that the government was also set to sign a supplemental agreement to the

Comprehensive Agreement on Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law which will include an expanded role of the joint monitoring committee.

### Genuine quest for peace

"We are doing this in the spirit of true reconciliation and genuine quest for just and lasting peace. We are challenging the NDFP to formalize the unilateral ceasefire with a bilateral ceasefire agreement to give our communities and combatants a more secure environment for the peace process," Bello said.

The NDFP, an umbrella group of progressive social and economic justice organizations, acts as the representative of the Communist Party of the Philip-

pines (CPP) and its paramilitary wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

The CPP-NPA-NDFP has been waging a nearly 40-year-old Maoist insurgency in the Philippines.

Peace negotiations with the NDFP resumed in August last year after more than five years of impasse.

During the round of talks held that month in Norway, both panels agreed to reaffirm all previous signed agreements and reconstitution of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Agreements and release of jailed NDFP leaders and members.

In the second round, also held in Norway, negotiators exchanged outlines and agreed to accelerate the negotiations. INQ

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# MNLF leader's son jailed in Malaysia for Davao bombing

By GENALYN D. KABILING and CHARISSA M. LUCI

The son of a Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leader and former Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema has been arrested and detained in Malaysia for his alleged involvement in a Davao night market bombing.

Datu Mohamad Abduljabbar Sema, 26, an Islamic scholar, was reportedly arrested at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport upon his arrival from Bangkok aboard Air Asia flight AK 891 on November 24, 2016.

President Duterte said the culprits of the bombing "have been all accounted for" including the son of former Cotabato City mayor Muslimin Sema.

"Kayong nagputok diyan sa Maute, they have all been accounted for. Nahuli ko na lahat iyan. Iyong isa diyan anak ni Sema, mayor ng Cotabato. He is now detained diyan sa

Malaysia [On the Maute group that launched the bombing, they have all been accounted for I caught all of them. One of them is the son of Sema, mayor of Cotabato. He is now detained in Malaysia], Duterte said in a forum with the business community in Davao City

## 'Bring him back to PH'

As this developed, Muntinlupa City Rep. Ruffy Biazon, vice chairman of the House Committee on National Defense and Security, said Sema should be deported back to the country to face trial.

"It is imperative that the Philippine government exert efforts to bring the suspect into the country and face Philippine justice in order to show our resolve to pursue and prosecute agents of terror who have attacked Filipinos and our way of life," Biazon said.

## Maute group

The dreaded Maute group has been implicated in the powerful bombing at the Davao City night market last September that left several persons dead.

The President declared a state of

national emergency on the basis of lawless violence shortly after the blast

## High-tech surveillance

Duterte said the government was able to catch the suspected bombers with the help of advanced surveillance systems.

Grateful for the support of the Americans, Duterte admitted that a drone was flown over local airspace to take pictures of suspected criminals.

"You know one thing with this drone, anak ka ng .. Sa gabi hindi mo makita, nandiyan lang pala sa tuktok ng Marco Polo. They can take pictures. So we have their faces. So it was very easy for us to catch them," he added.

## Malaysia, Indonesia connection

Duterte also attributed the swift apprehension of the bombing suspects to the country's close maritime security cooperation with Malaysia and Indonesia.

Part of the security arrangement, Duterte said, is allowing Malaysian and Indonesia naval forces to chase and arrest criminals who escape to the country's territorial waters.

"If we do not have any available sea assets there around, you can go ahead and blast them off," Duterte said (with a report from Yas D. Ocampo)

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# Malaysia renews support for MILF-GPH peace process

By ALI G. MACABALANG

**C**OTABATO CITY – Malaysia reiterated its full support for the peace process between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine government (GPH), citing it as a potential stepping stone towards ending decades of Muslim rebellion in Mindanao.

Malaysian Deputy Defense Minister Johari Baharom conveyed his government's optimism in the implementation of the MILF-GPH peace accords, particularly the Comprehensive Agreement of Bangsamoro (CAB) of 2014.

"The peace agreement secures the right of the Bangsamoro people and the sovereignty of the Philippines. It is our hope that Bangsamoro people will work alongside the Government of the Philippines and the MILF to assure its success," Baharom told MILF officials

and soldiers he visited last week at their Camp Darapanan in Sultan Kudarat, Masguindanao.

"This commitment to peace is binding. It must be honored and protected. All parties must stand by the spirit and letter of the agreement. We should work to ensure respect for religion and live by the principle of non-violence," he added.

MILF First Vice Chair Ghadzali Jaafar personally welcomed Baharom and 30 other officials of the Malaysian Armed Forces in their visit, following the visitors' brief stint at the headquarters here of the International Monitoring Team (IMT). The IMT is a Malaysian-led multi-nation body overseeing the MILF-GPH ceasefire arrangements.

In his speech at Camp Darapanan, Baharom pointed out that "after so many years of conflict, and so many

lives lost, it is a momentous act of courage for the MILF and the government of the Philippines to sit together in conjuring up a peace agreement that

will change the Moro Nation's history forever"

Baharom's itinerary last Thursday included a military honor parade ten-

dered for him by the Philippine Army's Sixth Infantry Division led by Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao.

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## Mandaya tribesmen ask gov't protection from NPA attacks

MATI CITY, Davao Oriental (PNA) - After one of their leaders last December 30 was killed in an attack by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Caraga, Davao Oriental, members of the Mandaya tribe have appealed to the government for protection, fearing more atrocities from the insurgents.

"We are a peace-loving people. We don't like violence. We don't want the violent culture of the NPA rebels - that

is why we shooed them away from our peaceful communities," Mandaya leaders said in a statement released Saturday.

The Mandaya tribesmen rued that they have always been "caught in the crossfire, and our communities are not, and should not be the battleground of government and rebel forces."

Tribal leader Copertino Banugan, his brother, and nephew were killed in a

reported NPA attack last December.

Mandaya leaders said the attack "signified the dark intention of the NPAs to dominate and eventually grab their ancestral domains protected by Banugan and other leaders."

"We know the rebels are out to grab our ancestral domains. We will die for it no matter what. United, we will be able to repulse them from our tribal communities," said Kristine Banugan, daughter of Banugan, in the same statement.

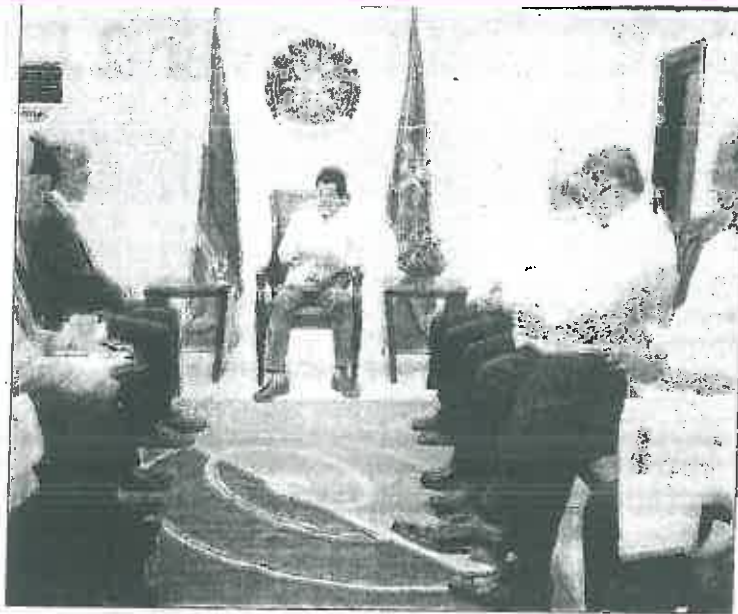
In a meeting earlier this week, Mandaya leaders, together with the Provincial Tribal Council of Davao Oriental, passed a resolution urging the national government to look into their plight.

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**President Duterte meets with US Ambassador Sung Kim at the Presidential Guest House in Panacan, Davao City yesterday. Also at the meeting were Secretaries Perfecto Yasay Jr. of foreign affairs, Carlos Dominguez of finance and Delfin Lorenzana of defense.**

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<http://www.update.ph/>

## **Filipinos urged to join AFP reservist programs**

PNA

As the Armed Forces of the Philippines goes beyond its traditional role of defending the nation against internal and external threats, AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año on Sunday urged Filipino professionals and students alike to join the various military reservist programs.

The AFP chief's call came in wake of the promotion of 11 senior officers in the Reservist Corps where six senior colonels were promoted to the rank of brigadier general and five lieutenant colonels promoted a step higher to colonel on Friday.

"The AFP regards highly the role that the Reservists play in the accomplishment of its mission. They are not simply force multipliers; they are important component and partners in various non-lethal military operations and activities. It is admirable that, despite the fact that they receive no compensation and leaves the practice of their professions for the period that they serve the AFP, they remain committed, dependable, and ready to be deployed to serve on call with due notice," Año added.

"These are the qualities of citizen army that the country needs especially in this stage of our country at the threshold of change. We need professionals who shall put premium on national interest and well-being," he further said.

These attributes of prospective reservists are not easy to come by but not impossible to find. Hence, the call to serve the nation from among the citizenry to be commissioned as Officers or be enlisted in the Reservist Corps.

"The preservation of the state is an obligation of every citizen. The AFP believes that military reservist programs are good training platforms and opportunities for our citizens, particularly the youth to prepare them in a shared role in nationhood and nation building," AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said.

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

<http://www.philstar.com/>

## Duterte orders troops to blast militants and their hostages

Jim Gomez



*President Rodrigo Duterte, right, and Philippine Armed Forces Chief Gen. Eduardo Ano, left, switch positions as they review the troops during flag-raising ceremony to commemorate the 120th death anniversary of the country's National Hero Dr. Jose P. Rizal Friday, Dec. 30, 2016 in Manila, Philippines. Détente remains popular as shown by recent surveys despite international concerns about his war on drugs that has so far killed more than 6,000 drug suspects since he took office June 30. AP Photo/Bullit Marquez*

MANILA, Philippines — President Rodrigo Duterte said he has ordered his troops to bomb extremists who flee with their captives in a bid to stop a wave of kidnappings at sea, calling the loss of civilian lives in such an attack "collateral damage."

Duterte has previously stated that he had told his Indonesian and Malaysian counterparts their forces can blast away as they pursue militants who abduct sailors in waters where the three countries converge and bring their kidnap victims to Mindanao. He said in a speech late Saturday that he had given the same orders to Filipino forces.

He said he instructed the Navy and the Coast guard that "if there are kidnappers and they're trying to escape, bomb them all."

"They say 'hostages.' Sorry, collateral damage," he said in a speech to business people in Davao, his southern hometown.

He said such an approach would enable the government to get even with the ransom-seeking militants. "You can't gain mileage for your wrongdoing, I will really have you blasted," he said. His advice to potential victims? "So, really, don't allow yourselves to be kidnapped."

Duterte's remarks reflect the alarm and desperation of the Philippines, along with Malaysia and Indonesia, in halting a series of ransom kidnappings primarily by Abu Sayyaf militants and their allies along a busy waterway for regional trade.

On Saturday, ransom-seeking Abu Sayyaf gunmen freed a South Korean captain and his Filipino crewman who were abducted three months ago from their cargo ship.

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

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

The gunmen handed skipper Park Chul-hong and Glenn Alindajao over to Moro National Liberation Front rebels, who turned them over to Philippine officials in southern Jolo town in predominantly Muslim Sulu province.

The Moro rebels, who signed a 1996 peace deal with the government, have helped negotiate the release of several hostages of the smaller but more violent Abu Sayyaf, which is blacklisted by the US as a terrorist organization for kidnappings, beheadings and bombings.

Duterte's adviser dealing with insurgents, Jesus Dureza, said he was not aware of any ransom being paid in exchange for the freedom of the sailors. At least 27 hostages, many of them foreign crewmen, remain in the hands of different Abu Sayyaf factions, he said.

There have been persistent speculations, however, that most of the freed hostages have been ransomed off.

Without a known foreign source of funds, the Abu Sayyaf has survived mostly on ransom kidnappings, ~~extortion and other acts of banditry.~~

A confidential Philippine government threat assessment report seen by The Associated Press last year said the militants pocketed at least P353 million (\$7.3 million) from ransom kidnappings in the first six months of 2016.

The militants have mostly targeted slow-moving tugboats in the busy sea bordering the southern Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.

[www.interaksyon.com/national](http://www.interaksyon.com/national)

# Militant, church groups: Rome round of peace talks with Left must tackle hard issues

By: **Diego Mora**, [InterAksyon.com](http://InterAksyon.com)  
January 15, 2017 4:00 PM



The government and NDF panels face each other in an earlier round of the peace talks in Oslo.

MANILA - Militant and church groups expressed support at the weekend for the third round of peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF) in Rome.

The talks starting January 19 will center on socio-economic reforms, considered the "meat" of the peace talks. Bagong Alyansang Makabayan said it hopes there will be serious negotiations on issues as poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, economic sovereignty and other social and historical factors at the root causes of the armed conflict.

More than the ceasefire declarations, negotiations on substantive agenda, such as economic reforms, will be the real indicator of sincerity in the peace talks, the alliance said.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) has urged the Filipino people and the global community to support the forthcoming third round of formal peace talks.

One of the country's largest religious alliances, PEPP brings together Roman Catholic priests and nuns, United Methodist ministers and deaconesses, and bishops from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). The Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) and bishops and pastors of a number of evangelical churches are also part of the alliance.

Signatories to the PEPP statement were: Archbishop Antonio J. Ledesma, S. J. of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and co-chairperson of the PEPP; Rev. Fr. Rex RB Reyes Jr. of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and co-chairperson of PEPP; Bishop Deogracias S. Iniguez Jr. of the Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF) and head of PEPP Secretariat; Bishop Noel A. Pantoja of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), and; Sr. Mary John D. Mananzan, OSB, of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP.)

"The third round of the GRP-NDFP formal peace talks will be held on January 18-23, 2017 in Rome, Italy. May the Holy Spirit guide all those involved as they discern ways to end the decades-old armed conflict in our country. We pray that the positive atmosphere that was present in the first two rounds of talks continue and that both panels put the interests of the people, especially the most vulnerable, at the center of the



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

discussions. Our prayer goes with the hope that the negotiations on the second substantive agenda on social and economic reforms that aims to address the roots of the armed conflict, rebound to a peaceful future where all the basic requirements for all Filipinos to live an abundant life, as the Lord promised, is fulfilled," PEPP said. It urged both parties "to show their fidelity to previously signed agreements especially on the Comprehensive Agreement for Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). May this fidelity also manifest as the two parties work on a possible bilateral ceasefire agreement."

### Release of prisoners

Meanwhile, the alliance of religious leaders from various sects supported the call for the release of political prisoners, especially the sick and the elderly. "This is a very important confidence boosting measure that prepares the ground for even more progress to be made on reaching common understanding between the two sides," PEPP stressed.

For its part, Bayan through Renato Reyes Jr. said it supports "the draft agreement on socio-economic reforms being advanced by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines panel which takes into account the People's Agenda for Change that was submitted to both the GRP and NDF panels last year."

Bayan supported as well the NDF's prioritization of land reform, rural development, national industrialization, economic sovereignty, environmental protection, the rights of the working people, social services and pro-people fiscal reforms as submitted in the People's Agenda. "We also appreciate the extensive consultations that were conducted to ensure that the interests of the oppressed and exploited would be included in the proposed Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reforms (CASER)," he added.

Bayan said the Rome talks should also be an opportunity to address several outstanding issues that continue to undermine the peace talks.

"Political prisoners should be released as a matter of justice and compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) as well as the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig)," Reyes stressed.

He sought a stop to "militarization of the countryside, especially civilian communities," whether it's called Oplan Bayanihan (OPB) or Development Support Plan Kapayapaan (DSPK) or OPK.

"Operating troops of the AFP must leave the civilian communities and discontinue psywar and intelligence activities disguised as development activities. The continuing military operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) undermine the Duterte government's own ceasefire declaration," Reyes noted.

"The Duterte government must move to create a favorable climate for the advance of the talks. The rising body count in the war on drugs, continuing threats of Martial Law, violations of sovereignty and neoliberal economic impositions all undermine the peace process," Reyes said.