

*Army Vision: By 2428, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride*



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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
**NEWS CLIPPINGS**

24 January 2017

**Tuesday**

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BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | JANUARY 24, 2017 | TUESDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPECTABILITY (PAR)

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF MINDANAO. NO THREAT OF MONSOON AFFECTING LUZON AND VISAYAS (As of 3:00 PM - Jan. 23, 2017)

<b>SUNRISE</b>	<b>SUNSET</b>
6:25 AM	6:51 PM
<b>MOONRISE</b>	<b>MOONSET</b>
3:04 AM	2:47 PM
<b>LAST QUARTER</b> JAN 20 6:3 AM	<b>NEW MOON</b> JAN 26 3:07 AM
<b>LOW TIDE</b> 3:33 AM 0.01 Meter	<b>HIGH TIDE</b> 7:42 PM 0.88 Meter

Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rain/showers.  
Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rain/showers and/or thunder/thorns.  
Cloudy with rain/showers and/or thunder/thorns.  
Light rain.

	JAN 23	JAN 24	JAN 25	JAN 26	JAN 27	JAN 28
<b>METRO MANILA</b>	22 - 30 °C	23 - 26 °C	19 - 29 °C	20 - 23 °C	24 - 30 °C	25 - 28 °C
<b>TUGUEGARAO</b>	30 - 27 °C	20 - 24 °C	25 - 28 °C	25 - 30 °C	23 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C
<b>LADAG</b>	19 - 29 °C	20 - 28 °C	25 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	25 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C
<b>BAGUIO</b>	13 - 21 °C	13 - 20 °C	25 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 33 °C
<b>SBMA/CLARK</b>	22 - 30 °C	23 - 27 °C	24 - 29 °C	25 - 30 °C	<p style="font-size: x-small;">SUBOT ANG PANDAIGSANG</p>	
<b>TAGAYTAY</b>	19 - 29 °C	20 - 23 °C	24 - 29 °C	25 - 30 °C		
<b>LEGAZPI</b>	25 - 28 °C	25 - 30 °C	25 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C		
<b>PUERTO PRINCESA</b>	25 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C		
<b>ILILO/BACOLOD</b>	25 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C		
<b>METRO CEBU</b>	24 - 29 °C	25 - 30 °C	25 - 30 °C	25 - 30 °C		

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

Page: 1

# Joint truce in peril

## Military, NDF lament armed clashes in

By **ROCKY NAZARENO**

**R**OME, Italy – The prospect of a bilateral ceasefire agreement being signed here between the Philippine government (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) may have been put in peril by clashes between the military and communist insurgents in North Cotabato over the weekend that reportedly left eight soldiers and a New People's Army rebel dead.

This became apparent after NDF leaders, who are engaged in the third round of peace talks with the GRP in this ancient city, expressed dismay over the bloody encounter in Makilala town that happened during the talks that started on January 19.

“Kung walang mapapakitang dahan ang GRP, mas malamang na hindi na ‘to matuloy (If the ►12

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## Joint truce in...

◀ 1

GRP cannot give a compelling reason, it is most likely that it won't push through," said NDF peace panel member Benito Tiamzon with just two more days left on the negotiating table.

In fact, Tiamzon noted, the Makilala encounter only "justified the sentiment of those in the field who have said that the unilateral ceasefire was already untenable."

Another NDF peace panel member Concha Araneta Bocala pointed out that "a bilateral ceasefire is not the answer to violations, and that it cannot deter violent encounters."

"(The Makilala incident) was an indication that (the military) does not follow the ceasefire," she said.

"It is very sad that while the peace talks is ongoing, there are armed groups who continue to use force and violence to terrorize and extort from the people," said 10th Infantry Division (ID) commander Major General Rafael Valencia.

He also denied that there were eight casualties from the side of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, following the encounter.

The 10th ID even challenged members of the NPA to name the said casualties and offer evidence that there were soldiers who were killed in the encounter over the weekend.

"The 10th ID invites the public to scrutinize the records of the Makilala

MPS, interview the people around the encounter site and check on all hospitals and funeral parlors in Regions 11 and 12 to determine who is telling the truth," said Valencia.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza, in a message from New York where he is attending two forums on peace, said that "a bilateral ceasefire, with guidelines and mechanism in place, is becoming all the more needed and imperative, otherwise the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the NPA will have their own reports and accusations favorable to their own version and interest, or propaganda line."

"In a bilateral ceasefire, independent monitors (will be able to) conduct their own independent investigations, submit reports with possible sanctions imposed, if warranted," he said.

Dureza, who is also chairman of the Philippine peace panel dealing with Moro insurgents, said that "the best practices in our peace engagements with the Bangsamoro can be instructive to both sides."

Dureza left for the United Nations in New York Friday, January 20, and is expected to return here in time for the close of the third round of talks on Wednesday, January 25.

GRP peace panel member Hernani Braganza, who heads the government team negotiating for a bilateral, joint

ceasefire with the communist rebels, underscored that, although the existing ceasefires were declared separately and unilaterally by the government and the NDF, "there was no untoward incident that occurred in the five months since the ceasefires were put in place (in August 2016)."

"If ever, this will be the first incident where there was an armed conflict," he averred.

As such, Braganza underscored that it has even become more urgent that the GRP and NDF should "strengthen their promises and commitments by fortifying the unilateral ceasefires and entering into a bilateral ceasefire agreement."

"Bilateral is a negotiated ceasefire agreement where there will be rules of engagements where each side will make sure that no armed conflict transpires," he said.

According to Braganza, among the "concepts" that will be included in the bilateral ceasefire agreement would be the adoption of "buffer zones," a mechanism whereby both parties will have areas from which they cannot cross, and areas where they can only stay.

And despite the deadly skirmish in Makilala, he maintained that there was still hope for a bilateral ceasefire agreement being entered into before the third round of talks end on Wednesday.

"Definitely, both sides will try to forge a deal (before January 25)," Braganza said. (With a report from Yas D. Ocampo)



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# Trump 'gago' like me – Rody

*'Billions and a beautiful wife – must be heaven'*

By ALEXIS ROMERO

He's a billionaire with a gorgeous wife, who can get away with his bad mouth, and now he's president of the United States: it must be heaven to be Donald Trump, according to President Duterte. But at least he sees something in common with Trump: they're both "gago."

The Filipino word normally carries a negative connotation, but it can be used positively, which appears to be what Duterte meant. A possible close translation is "badass."

"Billionaire. Grabeng ganda ng asawa niyan. Inggit ako. Kung magiging bilyunaryo ka, ganyan ang hun-

ganga mo, tapos... ganyan kaganda ang asawa mo. Naging presidente ka na, ang asawa mo, heaven ka na (He has a very beautiful wife I envy him. If you become a billionaire, you have that mouth and then you have such a beautiful wife, you become president and you have that wife, you'll feel like you're in

heaven)," Duterte said at Camp Crame last Sunday.

"Yun ang lamang niya sa akin: (That's his advantage over me)," he added.

The President was referring to US First Lady Melania Trump, a former Slovenian-American model

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## Trump From Page 1

and the third wife of Trump.

Duterte, nevertheless, believes he has a lot of similarities with Trump, who assumed the US presidency last Friday.

"Look at his inaugural speech. He will stop drugs. *Gago din!* We're not different. He will really kill you," Duterte said.

"*Yang si Trump, huwag kang magkumpanyansa, parang bugoy. Pero hindi yan magiging billionaire kung talagang bugoy ang utak niyan* (Do not be complacent that he is stupid. He won't be a billionaire if he were that stupid)," he added.

Duterte has been compared to Trump because both of them are fond of hyperbole and are known for their inflammatory and provocative statements.

Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar, who attended Trump's inauguration, said Trump's protectionist stance is similar to Duterte's independent foreign policy.

"He mentioned that they will not impose their lifestyle on other nations, but then what they will do is prove to the world that they have a good way of running their government for the rest of the world to follow. They will let them be, that's important. The President of the United States believes in protectionism,

America first," Andanar told television station PTV 4 last Saturday.

"The policies of President Donald Trump and President Duterte are similar in that respect. We have an independent foreign policy, and that the President of the Philippines also subscribes to the fact that it is important that we serve the interests of the Filipinos first," he added.

Andanar said it was "very comforting" to listen to Trump's 16-minute inaugural address, which highlighted the need for empowering the "forgotten men and women" of the US.

"And maybe if you go by it, it looks like our President and President Donald Trump would

really get along together. President Duterte mentioned this when they talked for the first time last December," he said.

Aside from Andanar, National Security Adviser Hermogeenes Esperon Jr. also attended Trump's inauguration.

President Duterte riled at the US, including its then president Barack Obama, for calling his attention to reports of rising cases of summary executions in the conduct of the Philippine leader's war on drugs. Duterte took the criticism as interference and declared that the Philippines would veer away from the US.

More than 6,000 people have been killed since July when Duterte assumed office.

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1948 1988  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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• **Lumad PC literacy**

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City – The Philippine Army's Northeastern and Northern Mindanao 4th Infantry (Diamond) Division (4th ID) stepped up their computer literacy program for lumads. The computer literacy training program of the 4th ID is backed by line agencies of the government and various organizations. The 4th ID provided a mobile computer laboratory while the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and Department of Education (DepEd) will provide instructors through the Alternative Learning System (ALS). "This computer literacy training through our mobile computer laboratory program is now implemented in order to reach our lumad communities on basic education" said 4th ID commander Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. Madrigal, Jr. Currently, the 4th ID, TESDA and DepEd are conducting a computer literacy training to 52 Manobo and 'Pulanghion' tribes in Barangay Butong, Quezon, Bukidnon. The 8th Infantry Battalion of the 4th ID, in coordination of the local government unit of Quezon, facilitated the training (Mike U. Crismundo)

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## Soldiers' other roles highlighted

ROXAS CITY – Soldiers are also peace builders, people's protectors and social workers.

Public Affairs Office head Lt. Col. Ericson Rosana of the Philippine Army's 3rd Infantry Division said the troops are focused more on the civil military operations.

"We are now giving emphasis on roles of the soldiers here as peace builders, people's protectors and social workers based on our Development Support and Security Plan-Kapayapaan," Rosana said.

During the meeting of the Capiz Association of Government Public Information Officers, Rosana ex-

plained that the DSSP-Kapayapaan program replaced the six-year Internal Peace and Security Plan Bayanihan that expired last December 31.

He said the thrust of the DSSP "Kapayapaan" is to neutralize terrorists and extremist groups, support the peace process with the communist New People's Army, and back up law enforcement agencies especially in fighting illegal drugs and criminality.

Rosana said four of the 10 provinces in 3ID's area of coverage were still coping with insurgency problems. (PIA)

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## Army major runs amuck, wounded in shootout

A drunken Army major remains in critical condition after he ran amuck and engaged responding policemen in a shootout Sunday night in Pasay City.

The suspect was identified through his identification card as Major Elmer Payot, 44, assigned to the Headquarters Support Service (HHS) of the Philippine Army, and a border at an apartment building on Progreso St., Brgy 20, Pasay. He

sustained two gunshot wounds in the chest.

Senior Supt. Lawrence Coop, Pasay police chief, said Payot was having a drinking session with another border in front of the apartment building at 11:51 p.m. when he suddenly drew his .45-caliber pistol and repeatedly fired shots into the air.

"Lasing na lasing yung suspek kaya ang ginawa ng ilang residente, tumawag na ng barangay at pulis

para-maawat," Coop said.

When Payot learned that elements of Buendia Police Community Precinct were coming, he returned to the apartment building, which houses three rooms, and locked himself along with four other borders, Coop said.

Chief Inspector Rolando Baula, head of Pasay police's investigation and detective unit, said Payot threatened to shoot the borders if

they insist to go out.

"Pinako niya yung pintuan na daanan ng mga border, tapos sumisigaw siya na walang lalabas daw kundi puputukan niya," Baula said.

Members of Pasay City Central Police Station and Special Reaction Unit also responded to the scene and tried to negotiate with the drunken Army officer.

Shortly after, the cops destroyed

the wooden door with a battering ram but Payot fired at them. The lawmer retaliated, hitting Payot in the chest.

Payot was rushed to Adventis Medical Center and transferred to Philippine General Hospital.

When police searched Payot's room, they recovered two heat-sealed plastic sachets with suspected shabu, two plastic sachets with traces of suspected shabu, two pieces of rolled aluminum foils and four pieces crumpled aluminum foils. **(Martir A. Sadongdong)**

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## 2 killed in drug-related attacks

At least two persons were killed in drug-related shootings and encounters with police officers in Metro Manila since Sunday.

In Marikina, drug surrenderee Armando Albarida, 45, died after being shot by three unidentified men in Barangay Fortune at around 8:30 p.m. on Sunday. He was waiting for a ride at a tricycle terminal on

Fortune Avenue when he was attacked.

A pedestrian, Ruel Mangulay, was hit in the back by a stray bullet.

In Quezon City, Jhoney Alcueno, 22, was killed in an alleged shootout with police officers during a sting along Leyte street in Barangay Payatas B at around 4:30 p.m. Sunday.

Police officers were report-

edly able to buy P500 worth of shabu from Alcueno.

Investigators recovered a .45 caliber M1911-A1 Colt pistol, fired cartridge cases, a sachet said to contain shabu and the marked money.

Meanwhile, at least 25 others were arrested in separate anti-narcotics operations in Barangays Kamuning, San Antonio, Tatalon, Pasong Putik,

East Fairview, Doña Imelda, Talipapa and Damayang Lagi.

### Soldier runs amuck

In Pasay, Army Maj Elmer Payot was reported to be in critical condition after he was wounded in a shootout with police officers Sunday night.

Barangay 20 tanod Mark dela Peña sought police assistance after Payot, who was

drunk, allegedly went wild in an apartment and held its occupants hostage.

Police officers tried to negotiate but Payot, who is assigned to the Philippine Army General Headquarters, tried to shoot the lawmen but his gun misfired. The police officers shot him twice in the chest.

Investigators recovered a .45 caliber pistol with several bullets, sachets said to contain shabu and drug paraphernalia from Payot, who is confined at the Philippine General Hospital.

He has been placed under hospital arrest and charges of illegal possession of drugs and illegal detention are being prepared against him. – Non Alquitrán, Romina Cabrera, Perseus Echeminada

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The Manila Times

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## Military says Reds continue extortion amid peace talks

WHILE the third round of the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) was ongoing in Rome, Italy, the military accused the New People's Army (NPA) of continuing its extortion activities in the countryside.

The Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division disclosed that recovered war materials from a series of encounters over the weekend in Barangay Biangan, Makilala, North Cotabato between security forces and the "lawless armed group," belong to the NPA's Guerilla Front 51 of the Southern Mindanao Regional Committee (SMRC).

The military said the encounters happened after the group harassed a truck following a failed extortion attempt from

a construction company.

Capt. Rhyan Batchar, 10th ID spokesman said that the Philippine National Police Scene of the Crime Operatives processed the incident site and examined the recovered cadaver of a man and war items which include three high-powered rifles, improvised explosive devices, 15 backpacks, handheld radios, and subversive documents.

Several extortion letters signed by a certain Ricardo Fermiza, spokesman of Guerilla 51, Davao del Sur-North Cotabato Operation Command of the NPA Southern Mindanao Region were also recovered.

On the allegation of the SMRC chief propagandist that eight soldiers were killed during the encounter, Maj. Gen. Rafael Valencia, 10th ID commander said his unit is inviting the

public to scrutinize the records of the Makilala municipal police station, interview the people around the encounter site and check on all hospitals and funeral parlors in Regions 11 and 12 to determine who is telling the truth.

On Monday, Rigoberto Sanchez, NPA spokesman, said insurgents killed eight army soldiers in fierce clashes in Makilala town. He claimed soldiers from the 39th Infantry Battalion attacked rebel positions in the town's hinterlands, sparking a running gunbattle that killed the government soldiers in the village of Biangan. One rebel was also killed.

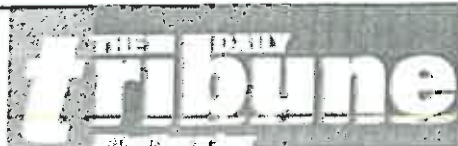
"It is very sad that while the peace talks is ongoing, there are armed groups who continue to use force and violence to terrorize and extort from the people," Valencia said.

**FERNAN MARASIGAN AND AL JACINTO**

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## NPA rebels, soldiers clash amid ongoing peace talks

By Mario J. Mallari  
and Ted Tuvera

While negotiators from the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front are talking peace in Rome, members of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the CPP-NDF, clashed with the military in Compostela Valley province over the weekend.

Capt. Rhyan Batchar, public affairs officer of the Army's 10th Infantry Division (ID), said that series of encounters erupted on Saturday and Sunday between the military and NPA fighters in Barangay Biangan, Makilala in North Cotabato.

Batchar said that the clashes resulted in the killing of at least one NPA rebel while several high-powered firearms were recovered.

According to Batchar, elements of the 39th Infantry Battalion and Makilala Police Station fought with rebels for about one hour on Saturday.

He said the firefight happened after the operating troops pursued rebels who earlier harassed a truck driver in a bid to extort from a construction company.

On Sunday, while the soldiers were scouring the site of the encounter, they were reportedly fired again by the rebels, triggering 30 minutes of firefight.

"The troops recovered three high-powered rifles, several personal belongings and a dead

body of an unidentified man at the encounter site," Batchar said.

The New People's Army admitted that its fighters fought with government troops, adding they have killed eight soldiers. The military, however, denied the casualty claim.

NPA Southern Mindanao spokesman Rigberto Sanchez accused the military of provoking the rebels despite the ceasefire and the ongoing peace talks, but which were denied by the Army.

Meanwhile, presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella told reporters yesterday at the Palace that the cross-fire between NPA guerrillas and elements of the Philippine Army – even if both sides are on a unilateral ceasefire mode – is no big deal as far as the peace process is concerned.

"No, (the incident with the NPA) should not affect any of the ongoing talks," Abella said.

"It won't affect the talks because the talks are ongoing and we intend and are focusing on settling the matters," he added, noting that "cessfires are still on."

Moreover, Abella said that he is convinced that the NPA's claim is a mere hoax, citing the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) assessment that no soldier was killed during the encounter.

"There were no deaths coming from the government side, and that there was one death coming from armed group's side," the Palace official said.

January 2017

**Malaya**  
The National Newspaper

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## 1st clashes with NPA during truce recorded

BY VICTOR REYES

A NEW People's Army rebel died following skirmishes with government troops in North Cotabato on Saturday and Sunday, the first clashes since August when the two sides declared unilateral ceasefires.

Capt. Rhyan Batchar, public affairs officer of the Army's 10th Infantry Division, named the slain rebel as Rojit Estampa Ranara, believed to be a member of the NPA's Guerilla Front 51 of the Southern Regional Committee.

Batchar said Ranara was killed by joint forces of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion and the PNP during a law enforcement operation in Barangay Biangan in Makilala town on Sunday morning.

The fighting also resulted in the recovery of three high-powered firearms, personal belongings, two hand-held radios, medical supplies and documents, including extortion letters.

Batchar said the troops clashed with the same group on Saturday afternoon in the same barangay.

He said the government troops responded to a complaint of the Santos Land Development Corporation that one of its drivers, Delio Tongcos, was harassed by NPA rebels in Barangay Malasita, also in Makilala town, on Saturday morning.

"The driver of the 10-wheeler truck reported that the armed men fired at him and threatened that the management will suffer the consequences if they fail to give in to their extortion demands," said Batchar.

Tongcos was not hurt in the

incident although the rebels took the key of the truck before they escaped.

"These are the first encounters with the NPA but this is not an offensive operation against the NPA. We have a unilateral ceasefire which suspended all our offensive military operations against the NPA," he said.

Batchar said the operation is not a violation of the government-declared truce which he said does not prohibit government forces from pursuing rebels involved in atrocities.

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# Peace talks in peril as Army, NPA clash anew

MAKLALA, North Cotabato (PNA) – Government troops clashed with the New People's Army over the weekend in a communist-infiltrated village here, leaving one rebel dead and five others injured, according to police and the military.

Army Colonel Harold Argamosa,

39th Infantry Battalion commanding officer, in a report, identified the slain rebel as Rojit Ranara of CPP-NPA-NDF Front 51.

In a statement released by the 10th Infantry Division, elements of the 39th IB and Maklala PNP responded to a report that communist rebels

have harassed the driver and cargo truck of Santos Land Development Corporation (SLDC), a banana firm operating in North Cotabato.

The incident is seen as a big blow to the ongoing peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF).

In Rome, NDF leaders expressed dismay over the encounter that took place on the second day of the peace talks with the government peace panel.

"Kung walang mapapakitang dahilan ang GRP (government), mas malamang na hindi na 'to matuloy," said NDF peace panel member Benito Tiamzon.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza said the incident underscores the importance of a bilateral ceasefire.

In a message from New York where he is attending two forums on peace, Dureza said that "a bilateral ceasefire, with guidelines and mechanism in place, is becoming all the more needed and imperative, otherwise the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the NPA will have their own reports and accusations favorable to their own version and interest, or propaganda line."

A spokesperson for the communist movement in Southern Mindanao, Rigoberto Sanchez, said in a statement that eight soldiers and an NPA rebel were killed in the clashes.

But 10th Infantry Division commander Major General Rafael Valencia refutes the rebels' claim regarding the killing of soldiers and even challenged the members of the NPA to name the said casualties.

"The 10ID invites the public to scrutinize the records of the Maklala MPS, interview the people around the encounter site and check on all hospitals and funeral parlors in Regions 11 and 12 to determine who is telling the truth," said Valencia.

The 10th ID said as the soldiers were heading toward Barangay Biangan at 5 p.m., they were fired upon by still undetermined number of rebels. An hour-long firefight erupted.

The next day, clashes erupted anew at 5:30 a.m., leaving one rebel killed and the recovery of three M-16 rifles and personal belongings of the slain rebel. (With reports from Yas D. Ocampo, Francis T. Wakefield and Rocky Nazareno)

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### 8 NAPATAY SA MILITAR, PINABULAANAN

## NPA todas sa sagupaan sa kasagsagan ng peace talks

### Nina FER TABOY at YAS OCAMPO

Napatay ang isang miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) habang sugatan ang maraming iba pa makaraang makipagbakbakan sa mga sundalo sa Makilala, North Cotabato, nitong Linggo ng hapon.

Kinilala ni Senior Insp. Elias Colonia, hepe ng Makilala Municipal Police, ang nasawi na si Rojit Estampa Ranara, 33, may asawa tauhan ng Front 51 ng NPA, at residente ng Barangay Zone 1, Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur.

Inilagag ang bangkay sa Torreda Funeral Homes at kinilala ito ng kapatid ng rebelde na si Lolita Estampa Ranara.

Ayon kay Lolita, nagtungo sa Cotabato ang kanyang kapatid upang magtrabaho sa isang construction site at hindi niya alam na kasapi ito ng NPA.

### SINO'NG NAGSASABI NG TOTOO?

Itinanggi naman ng 10th Infantry Division ang sinasabi ng NPA na walong sundalo ang nasawi sa sagupaan sa Makilala, at hinamon ang kilusan na pangalanan ang mga nasawi

"The 10ID invites the public to scrutinize the records of the Makilala MPS, interview the people around the encounter site and check on all hospitals and funeral parlors in Regions 11 and 12 to determine who is telling the truth," sabi ni 10th ID commander Major General Rafael Valencia. "It is very sad that while the peace talks is on-going, there are armed groups who continue to use force and violence to terrorize and extort from the people."

Tinugis ng 39th Infantry Battalion ang isang grupo, na kalaunan ay natukoy na mga kasapi ng Guerilla Front 51 ng NPA nitong Enero 21 sa Bgy. Biangan, Makilala, matapos umanong takutin at kikilan ang Santos Land Development Corporation, gamit ang extortion letters na pitnado ni Ricardo

Ferniza at natagpuan ng Scene of the Crime Operations (SOCO) sa lugar ng engkuwentro.

Ayon sa 10th ID, taong 2014 pa sinimulan umanong mangikil ni Ferniza sa mga negosyante at sibilyan sa lugar.

Nasamsam din ang tatlong matataas na kalibre ng baril, tatlong improvised explosive device, 15 backpack ng mga personal na gamit, dalawang handheld radio, medical supplies, at mga dokumento.

### PAGLABAG SA CEASEFIRE

Sa isang pahayag, kinondena naman ng NPA ang pag-atake, lalo na at nagpapatuloy ngayon ang usapang pangkapayapaan ng gobyerno sa National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) sa Rome, Italy.

Iginiit ng Regional Operations Command ng NPA-Southern Mindanao na dumating ang mga tropa 39th Infantry Battalion sa Sitio

Concepcion sa Bgy. Kisante, Makilala at naglunsad ng opensiba sa Sitio Lokatong sa Bgy. Biangan, kung saan nagkakampo ang NPA.

"The war dogs of the 39th IB and the entire AFP cannot wash its hands clean of this flagrant violation of their own ceasefire: Sitio Lokatong in Bgy. Biangan is a remote area that their presence can only mean an offensive operation against the NPA," giit ni NPA Southern Mindanao Spokesperson Rigoberto Sanchez.

Dagdag pa ni Sanchez, ang 39th IB ng Philippine Army "did not abide by the GRP's unilateral indefinite ceasefire."

"The Duterte government must know by now that it is the bullish insincerity of its armed forces to continue its counter-insurgency campaign that is the biggest impediment in the quest for just and lasting peace," sabi pa ni Sanchez.

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Pahina. 6

## 8 sundalo nalagas sa NPA encounter

**NORTH COTABATO** — Patay ang 8 sundalo at isang rebeldeng New People's Army matapos ng halos 12-oras na sagupaan sa bayan ng Makilala sa North Cotabato province sa Mindanao.

Naganap ang sagupaan kamakalawa sa pagitan ng 39th Infantry Battalion at NPA sa Barangay Biangan, ayon kay Rigoberto Sanchez, ang tagapagsalita ng rebeldeng grupo.

Simabi ni Sanchez na inatake ng mga sundalo ang grupo ng mga rebelde sa kabila ng pag-iwas ni to sa mga tropa ng militar dahil sa ceasefire agreement.

Nilabag umano ng militar ang naturang ceasefire at tinawag nitong "sinister combat operation", ang ginawang

atake ng mga sundalo. Hindi agad mabatid kung may epekto ba ang labanan sa peace talks sa pagitan ng pamahalaang Duterte at Communist Party of the Philippines at National Democratic Front.

"The Duterte government must know by now that it is the bullish insincerity of its armed forces to continue its counter-insurgency campaign that is the biggest impediment in the quest for just and lasting peace."

"The war dogs of the 39th Infantry Battalion and the entire Armed Forces of the Philippines cannot wash its hands clean of this flagrant violation of their own ceasefire," ani Sanchez.

Ibinunyag pa ni Sanchez na matagal ng lumalabag sa ceasefire

ang naturang army battalion at panay iwas-sagupaan lamang ang ginagawa ng NPA sa North Cotabato.

"Since August last year it continued to mobilize its troops and paramilitaries in various forms of combat operations such as intelligence gathering, combat and psychological warfare in far-flung areas that resulted in harassments; extra-judicial killings of civilians Rita and Norberto Gascon on September 13 in Arakan town and Rolan Malignan on November 22 and the enforced evacuation of several families in Magpet town on December 6," sabi ni Sanchez.

Walang pahayag ang Philippine Army at government peace panel sa nasabing kaguluhan. (AI Jacinto)

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

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**NORTH COTABATO CLASH – Police Investigators go over the scene of the encounter between government troops and guerrillas from the New People's Army in Makilala, North Cotabato, last Thursday. The clash, in which eight soldiers and an insurgent were killed, cast a dark cloud over government negotiations in Rome with the National Democratic Front. (Photo from Army's 10th Infantry Division)**

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<http://www.inquirer.net/>

## Army denies NPA killed 8 soldiers in North Cotabato clash

Frances Mangosing



*Police scene of the crime operatives process the site in Makilala town in North Cotabato where the Army had an encounter with a group of armed men who turned out to be members of the New People's Army (NPA). The Army on Monday, Jan. 23, 2017, denied the claim of the NPA that eight soldiers were killed in a gunbattle that happened on Saturday, Jan. 21, 2017. 10TH INFANTRY DIVISION PHOTO*

The Army on Monday denied the claim of the New People's Army (NPA) that eight soldiers were killed in a gunbattle in North Cotabato over the weekend.

"There were no casualties in that encounter between the soldiers and the lawless armed men. I don't know where they got that information. It's a hoax," Lt. Col. Harold Argamosa, commanding officer of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion, told INQUIRER.net by phone.

In Manila, Army spokesperson Col. Benjamin Hao also denied the reported casualties. "We did not receive such report. How will the benefits of the soldiers supposedly be processed if there was no report of casualties in the first place?"

NPA Southern Mindanao spokesman Rigberto Sanchez said on Sunday that eight soldiers and one NPA rebel were killed in a firefight in Sitio Lokatong in Barangay Biangan in Makilala town, North Cotabato.

The rebels also claimed that the military was provoking them despite a ceasefire and ongoing peace talks. The supposed incident coincided with the third round of peace negotiations in Rome between the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front, the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Argamosa said they merely responded to reports that a "lawless armed group" harassed a truck driver in a bid to extort from a construction company. An intermittent firefight on Saturday and Sunday between government forces and communist rebels followed, which left one rebel dead.

The soldiers were able to recover three high-powered rifles, three improvised explosive devices, 15 backpacks with personal belongings and two handheld radios.

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A separate statement from the Army's 10th Infantry Division confirmed that based on the investigation of the Philippine National Police, the weapons recovered from the encounter were from the NPA. Argamosa said the claims of the communists were "a total lie."

"Why will we hide that kind of information? Maybe they had more casualties," he said.

He also denied that they were provoking the communist rebels to fight. "We are not singling them out. We are just keeping our mandate to help and maintain the peace in the community," Argamosa said.

Asked if this would affect the peace talks, Argamosa said this was an "isolated incident."

"This does not represent the situation of the entire Philippines. It just so happened that this occurred while the peace talks are ongoing," he said.

But the military officer said that while he believed in the peace negotiations, there were incidents in other areas in the recent past that must be tackled, such as the burning of buses and construction equipment by suspected communist rebels.

"Of course there is no other way than to talk peace. It has hindered peace and progress (for) almost five decades now," he said. *CBB/rga*

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# Seized rifles in N. Cotabato clash from NPA -- 10th ID

Philippine News Agency

The three automatic rifles captured during Sunday's encounter in Makilala, North Cotabato, which also resulted in the death of one suspect, are reportedly from the New People's Army (NPA).

This was confirmed by 10th Infantry Division public affairs office chief Capt. Rhyann Batchar in a statement.

"The confirmation came after the PNP SOCO (Scene-of-the-Crime Operatives) processed the incident site and examined the recovered cadaver of a dead man and war items which include three high-powered rifles, three improvised explosive devices, 15 backpacks loaded with personal belongings, two handheld radios, assorted medical supplies and several subversive documents," he added.

The clash which took place 5:30 a.m. Sunday in Barangay Biangan, Makilala town, of the above-mentioned province, stemmed from alleged NPA harassment of a truck driver from the Santos Land Development Corporation on Saturday afternoon.

The harassment stemmed from the company's refusal to give in to the rebels' extortion attempts. This prompted troops from the 39th Infantry Battalion and the Makilala Police Station to conduct operations, resulting in an hour-long firefight with inconclusive results.

Succeeding operations, 5:30 a.m. Sunday, also resulting in another encounter, only this time, a suspected rebel was killed and three automatic rifles seized in the a 30-minute gun-battle.

Several extortion letters signed by a certain Ricardo Fermiza, spokesman of Guerilla 51, Davao del Sur-North Cotabato Operation Command of the NPA, Southern Mindanao Region were also recovered.

Per reports, Fermiza had been extorting from business owners and ordinary civilians since 2014. The said items were brought by PNP SOCO at the Provincial Crime Laboratory in Kidapawan City for further evaluation and proper disposition.

On the other-hand, the recovered body was identified as Rojit Estampa Ranara, 33, married, resident of Sito Patulangon, Brgy Zone 1, Sta Cruz, Davao Del Sur.

The cadaver was claimed by his sister Lolita Estampa Ranara.

Ranara's remains are now at Torreda Funeral Homes, Makilala, North Cotabato.

"It is very sad that while the peace talks is on-going, there are armed groups who continue to use force and violence to terrorize and extort from the people," 10th Infantry Division head Major General Valencia said.

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines together with the PNP as mandated by law, will always take actions to secure and protect the people against these wanton attacks," he added.

<http://dwdd.com.ph/>

## 39IB Kasama ang ilang Makilala MPS, naka-sagupa ang isang LAG sa North Cotabato

Lui Claudio



Nagkapalitan ng putok ang tropa mula sa 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion kasama ang ilang pulis mula sa Makilala Municipal Office, North Cotabato laban sa isang LAG o lawless armed group noong Sabado ng hapon.

Sinasabing nangingikil umano ang naturang grupo mula sa isang truck driver na si Delio Tongcos at pinagbantaang pagsisisihan ng kanilang kumpanya kung sakaling hindi sila makakapag-bayad sa LAG.

Matapos nakawin ang truck, humingi ng tulong si Tongcos sa Makilala Municipal Police Station na siya namang humingi ng assistance sa 39IB na agad namang inaksyunan.

Kaya naman nang maabutan ng otoridad sa Brgy. Biangan, nakipagbarilan ito laban sa pwersa ng pamahalaan bandang alas-singko ng hapon na tumagal ng halos isang oras.

Sa sumunod na araw bandang alas singko y media ng umaga, ay iniinspeksyon ng mga sundalo ang lugar kung saan naganap ang insidente at muli silang pinaputukan ng naturang grupo.

Matapos tumagal ng kalahating oras ang barilan, narecover ng tropa ang tatlong high-powered rifles, at ilang personal na gamit at isang hindi pa nakikilalang bangkay. Patuloy pa rin ang isinasagawang follow-on pursuit operations laban sa LAG. -EPJA

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The National Newspaper

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# Defense dep't refutes COA on misuse of funds

BY VICTOR REYES

THE Department of National Defense yesterday justified its use of its Quick Reaction Fund (QRF) for the repair of facilities damaged by typhoons.

In a statement, DND public affairs service chief Arsenio Andolong said the DND's QRF can be used to rehabilitate and repair military and other government facilities involved in disaster response.

He issued the statement in response to a report of the Commission on Audit which said, among others, the DND's "utilization of funds amounting to P73,929,934.91 for repairs/reconstruction, using the QRF, was not in accordance with the intended purpose of QRF as authorized in the DND's budget."

Andolong said: "For the repairs, reconstruction of facilities which were noted by COA to be not in accordance with the purposes of the QRF, we maintain that these were undertaken to ensure that the facilities and equipment utilized

by humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) personnel affected by calamities may be normalized as quickly as possible."

Andolong said the construction and repair of military camps and facilities "were undertaken to address the damage sustained during calamities such as typhoons 'Santi,' 'Glenda,' and 'Yolanda,' among others."

"It was necessary that certain offices and facilities of the AFP be immediately rehabilitated or repaired so as not to hamper their response to HADR missions," Andolong also said.

Andolong also said the COA report was transmitted to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana last January 10. He said the department has "replied and clarified the issues with COA. Nonetheless, Andolong also said, Lorenzana has "issued guidance for relevant offices to conduct a review on the items raised in the COA consolidated report."

As to the release of QRF to various implementing agencies with unliquidated fund transfers, Andolong said the

DND "saw the need to urgently transfer funds given the extraordinary circumstances at that time."

"There was a need to strike a balance between policy and urgency of requirements in order to restore public service and provide support to damaged facilities in disaster-affected areas," he said.

Citing as an example, Andolong said the DND has to support the petroleum, oil and lubricant (POL) requirements of various AFP equipment out of its QRF. He noted that the POL requirements for HADR are not included in the regular budget of the AFP.

"On the items procured out of the QRF that were marked by COA as overpriced, we reiterate our position that the use of retail prices, instead of wholesale prices, was necessitated by the fact that the procurement was on a small scale, thus big companies did not show interest in joining the bidding process."

Furthermore, the urgency of the situation required that the items related to disaster re-

sponse and relief, such as personal protective equipment, medicines, medical supplies, and purified water be made available immediately," added Andolong.

COA's 2015 Consolidated Report on the Audit of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management said local government units and the DND were the biggest violators of rules on the utilization of disaster funds under the Philippine Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Act.

The report released on January 19 is the first of its kind to be released by COA which noted the "absence of a single/consolidated report on financial data on disaster management, particularly on the receipt and utilization" of such funds. It covered the last full year of the Aquino administration and is intended as a reference for national government, related agencies, and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council to provide "an overall picture of the management of the DRRM funds."

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The Manila Times

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## AFP chief: Military vital in war vs terror groups

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año highlighted the participation of the battle-tested Marines, the Philippine Navy and the Air Force in the military's quest to finish off the extremist Abu Sayyaf and other terrorist groups in southern Philippines.

In his recent visit to the headquarters of the Navy and the Air Force, Año cited the two AFP branches' accomplishments both in internal security and in territorial defense operations.

"Sailors and Marines, you guard the many isolated and distant posts on the islands and features in the West Philippine Sea [South China Sea]. I would like you to know that I am inspired by your dedication, missing important occasions and happy moments you could have spent with your families. Once more, your AFP needs your support in this quest to end the Abu Sayyaf Group and other terrorist groups in Mindanao. Be prepared to render service, which requires your energy, time and personal sacrifices," the AFP chief said during his visit to the Navy headquarters in Naval Station Jose Andrada on Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

He reiterated the same when he visited the Air Force headquarters at Villamor Air Base in Pasay City (Metro Manila) over the weekend.

After meeting with top Air Force officials led by Lt. Gen. Edgar Fallorina, Año addressed the guardians of Philippine skies and civilian employees of the Air Force and dwelt on their accomplishments and many personal experiences and anecdotes he related to the PAF leadership.

"I remember how the pilots conducted close air supports and medical evacuations above and beyond the call of duty, of selfless devotion to duty of the pilots and crew, and how they offered the ultimate sacrifice just to save other people's lives. I now summon you to join the charge against the Abu Sayyaf Group and other terrorist groups that I, as your Chief of Staff, committed to significantly defeat in six months," he noted.

Año earlier ordered the decimation of the ASG, the Maute Group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and other terrorist groups within six months as ordered by President Rodrigo Duterte.

To achieve this difficult task, according to Col. Edgard Arevalo, chief of the AFP Public Affairs Office, necessary adjustments in tactics and strategy, and in the approaches to neutralize the ASG, including changes in the leadership and composition of the team that will execute Año's plans, will have to be made.

"And this is part of the dynamism of the military profession," Arevalo said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana had disclosed that the AFP would be employing fresh approaches in dealing with terrorists.

One of them, according to him, is to designate new officers to make sure these new strategies would be carried out against terrorist and other lawless elements.

The AFP recently designated Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. as the new commander of the AFP Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom).

**FERNAN MARASIGAN**

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## AFP, NPA clash amid peace talks

Saturday's clash between soldiers and NPA rebels in Makilala town, North Cotabato, will be tackled at the peace talks in Rome. It happened while a unilateral ceasefire was in effect. Secretary Jesus Dureza said this underscored the importance of forging a bilateral ceasefire agreement to avoid future skirmishes. —STORY BY INQUIRER MINDANAO **A2**

### Impact of North Cotabato encounter to be tackled by gov't, NDFP panels; NPA hits AFP for 'insincerity'

By Carlo Agamon  
and Karlos Manlupig  
@inqmindanao

MAKILALA, NORTH COTABATO—While the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) panels are talking peace in Rome, a clash between soldiers and communist rebels erupted here on Saturday.

A rebel was killed in the encounter in the remote village of Biangan, said Lt. Col. Harold Argamosa, chief of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion (IB).

In Rome, the government and NDFP peace panels have agreed to discuss the clash as they resume talks today.

Fidel Agcaoili, NDFP chief negotiator, said: "It is now clear to us that it was an attack despite the unilateral ceasefire. The military admitted that it was a legitimate military operation against a lawless armed group."

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza said this incident underscores the importance of a bilateral ceasefire agreement.

"I have to verify first what actually happened but from initial reports reaching me here in New York City, a bilateral ceasefire with guidelines and mechanisms in place are becoming all the more needed and imperative, otherwise each side (the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the New People's Army) will have their own reports and accusations favorable to their own version and interest or propaganda line," Dureza said in a statement.

Communist leaders Benito and Wilma Tiamzon said the incident would affect the "increasingly problematic" unilateral ceasefire.

The Tiamzons said communities were complaining about the presence of military forces



A policeman marks the site where firearms were recovered after a clash in Makilala, North Cotabato. —CARLO AGAMON

in villages "where threats, surveillance and interventions" are allegedly happening.

Ernesto Abella, President Duterte's spokesperson, on Monday said the unilateral ceasefire announced by the President would not be lifted

despite the encounter.

Asked if it would have any effect on the peace negotiations, Abella said: "No. It should not affect any of the ongoing talks."

"(It's) simply because the talks are ongoing and we are intent on focusing on settling the

matter,” he added.

Argamosa said the soldiers were in the village of Biangan to back up the police in its law enforcement operation against NPA rebels.

On Friday afternoon, communist rebels allegedly commandeered a 10-wheel truck of the Santos Land Development Corp. in the village of Malisala.

Chief Insp. Elias Colonia, town police chief, said he sought the 39th IB’s assistance in their pursuit operation.

An hourlong firefight ensued in Sitio Lukatong in Barangay Biangan on Friday. On Saturday morning, fighting again erupted, leaving a rebel, identified as Rojet Ranara, dead.

The NPA earlier announced that eight soldiers were killed in the clash but the military denied this information.

Rigoberto Sanchez, NPA Southern Mindanao spokesperson, in a statement, said soldiers

launched an offensive in Barangay Biangan where an NPA unit was encamped.

“The war dogs of the 39th IB and the entire AFP cannot wash its hands clean of this flagrant violation of their own ceasefire: Sitio Lokatong in Barangay Biangan is a remote area that their presence can only mean an offensive operation against the NPA,” Sanchez said.

“They fool no one by claiming that their operation was merely in response to reports on the presence of lawless groups: for the entire day, they actively maneuvered to engage the evading unit of the NPA,” he added.

“The Duterte [administration] must know by now that it is the bullish insincerity of its armed forces to continue its counterinsurgency campaign that is the biggest impediment in the quest for just and lasting peace,” Sanchez said. —WITH A REPORT FROM MARLON RAMOS. INQ



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## Bilateral ceasefire, nanganganib dahil sa engkuwentro sa Cotabato

NI ROCKY NAZARENO

ROME, Italy - Nanganganib ang pag-asa na malagdaan ang bilateral ceasefire agreement sa pagitan ng Philippine Government (GRP) at National Democratic Front (NDF) bunga ng sagupaan ng mga militar at rebelde sa North Cotabato na ikinamatay ng walong sundalo at isang New People's Army noong Enero 20.

Lumutang ito matapos magpahayag ang mga lider ng NDF na kasama sa ikatlong serye ng peace talks sa GRP, ng pagkadismaya sa madugong engkuwentro sa Barangay Biangan, Makilala, North Cotabato noong Sabado ng hapon. Nataon ito sa ikalawang araw ng mga pag-uusap sa Rome na nagsimula noong Enero 19.

"Kung walang mapapakitang dahilan ang GRP, mas malamang na hindi na 'to matuloy," sabi ni NDF peace panel member Benito Tiamzon sa dalawang araw na nalalabi sa negotiating table.

Sa katunayan, ayon kay Tiamzon, ang engkuwentro sa Makilala "justified the sentiment of those in the field who have said that the unilateral ceasefire was already untenable."

Ipinunto naman ni NDF peace panel member Concha Araneta Bocala na hindi sagot ang bilateral ceasefire sa mga paglabag at hindi rito mapipigilan ang mga madugong sagupaan.

"(The Makilala incident) was an indication that (the military) does not follow the ceasefire," aniya.

Ngunit iginiiit ni President Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza, sa isang mensahe mula sa New York kung saan siya dumadalo sa peace forum ng United Nations na "a bilateral ceasefire, with guidelines and mechanism in place, is becoming all the more needed and imperative, otherwise the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the NPA will have their own reports and accusations favorable to their own version and interest, or propaganda line."

"In a bilateral ceasefire, independent monitors (will be able to) conduct their own independent investigations, submit reports with possible sanctions imposed, if warranted," aniya.

Babalik si Dureza sa Rome bago magtapos ang ikatlong serye ng mga pag-uusap sa Miyerkules, Enero 25.

Binigyang-diin din ni GRP peace panel member Hernani Braganza, namumuno sa government team na nagsusulong ng bilateral ceasefire, na dahil sa nangyari ay higit na kallangan ngayon ng GRP at NDF na sikaping magkaroon ng bilateral ceasefire agreement.

"Bilateral is a negotiated ceasefire agreement where there will be rules of engagements where each side will make sure that no armed conflict transpires," aniya.

At sa kabila ng nangyari sa Makilala; pinanindigan niya na may pag-asa pa para sa bilateral ceasefire agreement bago ang Miyerkules.

"Definitely, both sides will try

to forge a deal (bago ang Enero 25) Maganda pa rin ang situasyon," ani Braganza.

Sinabi naman ni Wilma Tiamzon, ang pinuno ng committee on the end of hostilities and disposition of forces ng NDP peace panel, na "people on the ground are very supportive of the peace process."

Naniniwala rin ang mag-asawang Tiamzon na hindi sapat na dahilan ang insidente sa Makilala para umurong ang NDF sa mga pag-uusap.

"We believe there is enough strong basis to push the peace talks," ani Benito.

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## Palace: AFP-NPA clash won't affect peace talks

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Malacañang is optimistic that the clash between the military and communist rebels in North Cotabato over the weekend would not affect the ongoing peace talks.

At least one member of the New People's Army (NPA) was killed during a 30-minute encounter with soldiers in Makilala town on Saturday. The rebels claimed eight soldiers died during the gun battle, an allegation denied by the military.

The firefight happened while negotiators from the government and the National Democratic Front, political arm of the rebels, are holding the third round of peace talks in Rome.

"No, it should not affect any of the ongoing talks," presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella told reporters yesterday. "The talks are ongoing and we are intent on focusing on settling the matter."

He added that the unilateral ceasefire declared by the government still holds despite the incident.

President Duterte met with Armed Forces

chief Gen. Eduardo Año, Philippine National Police chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa and the heads of the military's major services yesterday in Malacañang.

Abella said the agenda of the meeting was the peace and order situation in Mindanao but did not elaborate.

Senior Insp. Elias Colonia, chief of the Makilala municipal police, said soldiers and policemen shot dead rebel Rojit Ranara and wounded five others when they foiled an attempt to burn a cargo truck in a mountainous barangay in Makilala town.

The police and the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion were dispatched to Barangay Biangan to check on reports that a group of NPA rebels seized and were about to torch a hauling truck to force its owner, Santos Land Development Corp., to give "protection money" on a regular basis.

Intelligence sources said Santos Land owns several heavy equipment units that are being used for the some projects in the province.

– With John Unson

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<http://dwdd.com.ph/>

# General Año: WesMinCom, lipulin ang ASG sa loob ng anim na buwan

Lui Claudio



Hinimok ni Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff General Eduardoang mga military personnel na nasa Western Mindanao Command na sundin ang panawagan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na lipulin ang Abu Sayyaf Group sa loob ng anim na buwan.

Matatandaang noong January 18, bumisita si General Año kasama ni Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana sa Simunul at Sibutu Island noong umaga at dumiretso naman ito sa Jolo, Sulu noong hapon.

Ayon kay AFP Public Affairs Office Chief, Marine Col Edgard Arevalo, historic umano ang naturang pagbisita ni General Año sa frontline units sa Western Mindanao dahil hindi lamang nito sinama si Secretary Lorenzana kundi halos ang buong AFP.

Sinabi ni General Año na satisfied ito sa kanilang preparasyon lalong lalo na sa personnel, equipment, intelligence, psychological operation at support units.

Dinagdag pa niyang sa pamamagitan ng mga bagong plano, mas mapapadali ang pag-supil sa ASG dahil gagamitin nila umano ang mga lumang operation plans at imomodify ang mga ito para mas lalo itong maging epektibo.

Sa huli ay hinikayat ni General Año ang mga sundalo na tatagan ang kanilang loob, at ibigay nila ang kanilang makakaya para sa kanilang laban sa ASG at iba pang mga teroristang grupo.— EPJA

[www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com](http://www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com)

## Pres. Duterte meets AFP, PNP top brass

Philippine News Agency

President Rodrigo Duterte met on Monday with top officials of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) following an encounter between government troops and New People's Army (NPA) in Makilala, North Cotabato over the weekend.

"I'm sure it's going to deal with peace situation in Mindanao," Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said when asked by Palace reporters about President Duterte's scheduled meeting with AFP and PNP top brass on Monday.

President Duterte met with AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Ano, Philippine Army Lt. Gen. Glorioso Miranda, Philippine Navy Vice Admiral Ronald Joseph Mercardo, Philippine Air Force Lt. Gen. Edgar Fallorina and PNP chief of Director General Ronald Dela Rosa.

The Makilala encounter took place five months after the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) declared indefinite ceasefire to give way to an ongoing peace talks in Oslo, Norway.

Abella said the encounter that resulted to the death of a communist rebel will not affect the ongoing peace negotiations.

"It should not affect any of the ongoing talks. Ceasefire holds," Abella said.

He explained that the ongoing peace talks are focused on settling the disputes between the government and the communist rebels in the country.

Contrary to the NPA's claim that eight soldiers were killed in Makilala clash, Abella repeated an official statement from the AFP that there was no casualty from the government side.

Aside from the communist rebels, the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte is talking peace with the Moro rebels in Mindanao particularly with Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

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# COA slams LGUs, DND on use of disaster funds

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*Commission on Audit (INQUIRER FILE PHOTO)*

Local government units (LGUs) and the Department of National Defense (DND) were the biggest violators of rules on the use of disaster relief funds in 2015, according to the Commission on Audit's (COA) first-ever audit report on such allocations.

According to state auditors, 22 LGUs failed to allocate at least P124.95-million funds for the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF). One such LGU in the National Capital Region failed to allocate P93.79 million.

The COA said LGUs failed to conform with Section 21 of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act of 2010, which requires that 5 percent of revenue be set aside for disaster preparedness and mitigation.

"Thus, there was no assurance that the DRRM projects and programs of the concerned LGUs have been fully and effectively implemented," the report stated.

The report, which covered the last full year of the Aquino administration, was submitted on Jan. 10 to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, chair of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

The COA said 183 LGUs did not transfer their unused balances totaling P3.05 billion to the Special Trust Funds, a standby sum meant to support relief aid for up to five years.

Three Metro Manila LGUs accounted for a bulk of this finding, at P1.993 billion, followed by 23 LGUs in Calabarzon with P220 million and nine LGUs in Central Luzon with P208 million.

## Misused funds

The COA said P244.997 million was spent by 124 LGUs on activities unrelated to disaster mitigation, in violation of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Memorandum Circular No. 2012-73. Five LGUs, three of them in Calabarzon, were found to have failed to use P92.2 million, representing the 70-percent share of the LDRRMF that the DILG circular said may be used to procure early warning systems and preparedness equipment.

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The COA said the use of P19.36 million by 12 LGUs had no supporting documents.

The agency also observed the failure of 57 LGUs—10 of them in the Cordillera Administrative Region—to set up DRRM offices, leaving them unprepared when disaster strikes.

The COA said 112 LGUs—22 of them in Bicol region—failed to prepare or submit their annual LDRRMF Investment Plans. Another 278 LGUs—37 of them in Eastern Visayas—were found not to have complied with a COA requirement for a report on the source and use of the DRRM funds.

#### **DND funds**

State auditors also reported that of the DND's P572.9 million available funds for DRRM services, only P236.31 million was used. Of that amount, P128.63 million was actually paid by the end of 2015, with the rest still pending approval of the purchase orders.

The COA observed that the use of P73.93 million in Quick Response Funds was not in accordance with its purpose as a standby fund during calamities.

The DND used the funds for rehabilitation and repair of its offices and buildings, a function that actually falls with the Department of Public Works and Highways. The transactions include the construction of Office of Civil Defense facilities in Cagayan Valley and Zamboanga Peninsula, as well as the repair of various Armed Forces of the Philippines buildings.

The COA said the DND should have withheld the release of P120.27 million to its various implementing agencies, because they still had pending unliquidated fund transfers totaling P456.12 million from 2008 to 2014.

#### **Aid to fishermen**

The report flagged the delays in the distribution of fishing gear and boats to fishermen affected by Super typhoon "Yolanda" (international name: Haiyan), due to delayed procurement, limited manpower and transportation, and the poor quality of motorized bancas. It said 55.73 percent of the fishing equipment was yet to be distributed.

The COA also scored the low use of funds by the Local Water Utilities Administration for water districts and by the Department of Health.

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## DND maintains facilities repairs, reconstructed by QRF needed for HADR missions

Philippine News Agency

The Department of National Defense (DND) on Monday maintained that repairs and reconstruction of military facilities, which were earlier said by the Commission on Audit as not in accordance with the purpose of the Quick Reaction Fund (QRF), was done to ensure that these installations can be utilized by humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions (HADR) personnel affected by calamities.

In the same vein, DND public affairs chief Arsenio Andolong added that these activities are aimed at normalizing areas severely affected by disasters.

"The construction/repair of AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) camps and facilities were undertaken to address the damage sustained during calamities such as Typhoons Santi, Glenda, and Yolanda, among others. It was necessary that certain offices and facilities of the AFP be immediately rehabilitated or repaired so as not to hamper their response to HADR missions," he added.

"As to the release of QRF to various implementing agencies with unliquidated fund transfers, the DND saw the need to urgently transfer funds given the extraordinary circumstances at that time. There was a need to strike a balance between policy and urgency of requirements in order to restore public service and provide support to damaged facilities in disaster-affected areas," Andolong stressed.

An example is supporting the petroleum, oil, and lubricant (POL) requirements of various equipment of the AFP out of the DND QRF, he added.

Andolong noted that POL for HADR missions is not included in the regular AFP budget.

"On the items procured out of the QRF that were marked by COA as overpriced, we reiterate our position that the use of retail prices, instead of wholesale prices, was necessitated by the fact that the procurement was on a small scale, thus big companies did not show interest in joining the bidding process. Furthermore, the urgency of the situation required that the items related to disaster response and relief, such as personal protective equipment, medicines, medical supplies, and purified water be made available immediately," Andolong pointed out.

"Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana nonetheless issued guidance for relevant offices to conduct a review on the items raised in the COA consolidated report," he added.

Earlier, the auditing body said the DND made improper charges in QRF and non-observance of regulations regarding fund transfers to offices with unsettled cash accountabilities.

"The utilization of funds amounting to PHP73,929,934.91 for repairs/reconstruction, using the QRF, was not in accordance with the intended purpose of the QRF as authorized in the DND's budget," the COA said.

It also clarified that the QRF is strictly earmarked for immediate needs for relief and rescue during calamities.

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# Navy, Air Force to play key role in defeating ASG threat -- Año

Philippine News Agency

The Navy and Air Force will play a critical role in defeating the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) threat and lawless elements.

This was stressed by Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año in a statement Monday.

He made this pronouncements during recent visits to Philippine Navy (PN) headquarters in Roxas Boulevard, Manila and Philippine Air Force (PAF) headquarters in Villamor Air Base, Pasay City.

"Sailors and marines, you guard the many isolated and distant posts in the islands and features in the West Philippine Sea. I would like you to know that I am inspired by your dedication – missing important occasions and happy moments you could have spent with your families. Once more, your AFP needs your support in this quest to end the Abu Sayyaf Group and other terrorist groups in Mindanao. Be prepared to render service which requires your energy, time, and personal sacrifices," Año said.

He also lauded the 21,000-strong PN for their accomplishments and its many contributions to the accomplishment of the AFP mission – both in internal security and in territorial defense operations. Año said the same thing to the PAF whom he said conducts close-air support, medical evacuations to hard-pressed troops.

"I remember how the pilots conducted close air supports and medical evacuations above and beyond the call of duty, of selfless devotion to duty of the pilots and crew, and how they offered the ultimate sacrifice just to save other people's lives," he added.

"I now summon you to join the charge against the Abu Sayyaf Group and other terrorist groups that I, as your Chief of Staff committed to significantly defeat in six months period," Año said.



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## **AFP chief urges troops participating in anti-ASG campaign urged to give their all**

Philippine News Agency

Officers and troops tasked to participate in the ongoing offensive against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) are urged to give it their all to finish the bandit threat once and for all.

This was stressed by Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año during a recent visit to the frontlines in Western Mindanao Command.

"I urge you to trail all your thoughts, focus all your efforts, muster all your courage, summon all your energy and give it all to this fight. So that once and for all, we will neutralize the Abu Sayyaf Group, the other terrorist groups, and their infrastructures," he stressed.

In line with this, Año directed the members of Joint Staff to make good his prior commitment to put the best officers, enlisted personnel, and equipment in this campaign.

"I am satisfied with your preparations especially personnel and equipment readiness of your combat, intelligence, psychological operations, and support units," he added.

"We are advancing in our campaign to finish the Abu Sayyaf Group within six months with renewed and modified plans derived from the strength of our past operational plans and the renewed vigor of the Defense and AFP leaderships," Año disclosed.

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## **Bilateral ceasefire with mechanisms needed after Makilala incident - peace adviser**

Philippine News Agency

A bilateral ceasefire with guidelines and mechanisms have become vital after the armed confrontation in Makilala, North Cotabato on Saturday involving the 39th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and an armed group believed to be members of the New People's Army (NPA).

This was the statement issued by Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza, who said that based on reports about the Makilala incident a bilateral ceasefire is more needed otherwise each side, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the NPA will have their own reports and accusations favorable to their own version and interest or propaganda line.

Although he still need to verify the report, Dureza, who is still in New York attending meetings with United Nations officials, said that in a bilateral ceasefire independent monitors conduct their own independent investigations, submit reports with possible sanctions imposed, if warranted.

Dureza cited the best practices in the government's peace engagements with the Bangsamoro that can be instructive to both sides.

There are concerns that the Makilala incident could affect the ongoing peace talks between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDFP) and may prompt the communist revolutionaries to lift its unilateral ceasefire especially that there is an ongoing pursuit operations against an armed group allegedly involved in harassment and extortion activities in the area.

Soldiers of the 39 Infantry Battalion and operatives of Makilala Municipal Police Station in North Cotabato are now conducting manhunt operations against the lawless armed groups involved in extorting a driver of a construction company.

In a report from the 10th Infantry Division, at about 5:30 a.m. of Jan. 22, the military and operatives of Makilala Municipal Police Station were fired by unidentified armed groups.

A 30-minute firefight ensued. Troops recovered from the site three high-powered rifles, several personal belongings and a body of an unidentified man.

On Jan. 21, the police and soldiers were conducting a joint operation to arrest the groups behind the harassment and extorting a truck driver from a construction company around 5:00 p.m.

While on their way, an armed group fired upon the operatives that resulted in an hour-long exchange of gunfire.

Earlier at around 2:10 p.m. of Jan. 20, the office of Santos Land Development Corporation reported to the Makilala Police Station that a company driver, Delio Tongcos, was harassed by four armed men riding in tandem on-board two motorcycles at Purok Pili Nut, Malasila, Makilala, North Cotabato.

The driver of the 10-wheeler truck reported that armed men fired at him and threatened the management will suffer the consequences if they fail to give in to their extortion demands. The armed men forcibly took the key of the said truck and escaped immediately.

The Makilala PNP immediately responded and requested the assistance of 39th Infantry Battalion for the pursuit of the armed extortionists who escaped towards Barangay Biangan, Makilala, North Cotabato.

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