

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

NEWS CLIPPINGS

07 June 2017

Wednesday

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

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
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BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | JUNE 7, 2017 | WEDNESDAY

INTERTROPICAL CONVERGENCE ZONE AFFECTING SOUTHERN MINDANAO (As of 5:00 PM - June 6, 2017)

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
5:26 AM	6:24 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
4:34 PM	3:43 AM
FIRST QUARTER	FULL MOON
JUN 7 8:51 AM	JUN 9 3:10 PM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH HARBOR	
4:18 PM	6:40 AM
0.15 Meter	1.00 Meter
Partly cloudy to at times cloudy, with rain showers and/or thunderstorms Cloudy to overcast with rain showers and/or thunderstorms	

	JUNE 6	JUNE 7	JUNE 8	JUNE 9	JUNE 10	JUNE 11
METRO MANILA	26 - 35 °C	27 - 34 °C	21 - 31 °C	21 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C	26 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	25 - 34 °C	25 - 34 °C	27 - 32 °C	27 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C
LAOAG	26 - 33 °C	26 - 32 °C	25 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	26 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C
BAGUIO	17 - 24 °C	17 - 22 °C	26 - 32 °C	26 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C
SBMA/CLARK	25 - 33 °C	25 - 32 °C	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C		
TAGAYTAY						
LEGAZPI						
TACLOBAN						
CAGAYAN DE ORO						
METRO DAVAO						
PUERTO PRINCESA						
ILOILO/BACOLOD						
ZAMBOANGA						
METRO CEBU						

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MARAWI PLOTTERS SHOWN IN VIDEO

The military has provided video footage of a terrorists' meeting that offers a rare glimpse into the planning of the Abu Sayyaf-Maute attack of Marawi City

It was an audacious plot sketched out in chilling detail with blue pens on the back of a paper calendar: Islamic militants in the Philippines, including one of the world's most-wanted militant leaders, would take over a key central Mindanao city in their boldest attack to date.

With unsettling calm, the terrorist leaders spoke of taking hostages from a school, sealing off roads and capturing a highway "so the people will get scared."

Video footage and a separate screen-grab image of that secret meeting, obtained exclusively by The Associated Press (AP), offer a rare glimpse into the clandestine operations of the terrorists who followed through two weeks ago with an unprecedented assault on the lakeside city of Marawi, parts of which they still occupy today.

The images also provide the first



TERROR MEETING Terrorist leaders led by Isnilon Hapilon (second, from left) plot the Marawi attack in this video footage obtained by AP.

visual proof that a nascent alliance of local Islamist fighters are not only aligned with the Islamic State (IS) group, but coordinating and executing complex attacks together.

Among those at the table is the purported leader of the IS branch in Southeast Asia, Isnilon Hapilon, who is on Washington's list of most-wanted terrorists and has a \$5-mil-

lion bounty on his head.

The footage is believed to be the first of Hapilon since he and several other Filipino militants pledged allegiance to IS in 2014. The military had said Hapilon was wounded in a January airstrike.

In the video, however, there are no indications that Hapilon is injured. He appears sitting with other militants at a table, wearing a yellow and black headscarf with a pistol beside his folded arms.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, Gen. Eduardo Año, confirmed the identities of those present, including Hapilon, who resembled other images said to be of him, such as those on FBI wanted posters.

The images show that the insurgent alliance "has this intention of not only rebellion, but actually dismembering a portion of

tion: By

LIC AFF

An Army official allowed AP to record the video as it played on a laptop computer.

Año said the insurgents had been planning to attack Marawi on May 26, the start of Ramadan in Mindanao. But the raid cut their preparations short and triggered instant clashes.

Had the assault not been preempted, the militants likely would have seized more territory and inflicted far more damage.

Heartland of Islamic faith

As it stands, the fighting has been unprecedented. While militants have launched major attacks before, never before has any Islamist group occupied territory in the heartland of the Philippines' Islamic faith for this long.

Two weeks after the conflict began, at least 180 people have been killed, and the Army is still battling to regain control of Marawi with airstrikes and artillery.

The militants, who are believed to be holding a Catholic priest and many other hostages, have torched buildings and destroyed at least one church.

Año said the terrorists had occupied 10 percent of the city and had positioned snipers in tall buildings. Much of the city center has been devastated.

The crisis in Marawi, combined with fears that IS is breathing new life into Muslim insurgencies in Southeast Asia, has put the Philippines and the region on edge.

On Friday, when a masked gunman began shooting and burning gambling tables at the Resorts World Manila casino in Pasay City, terrified patrons immediately assumed an IS siege was underway.

The radical group claimed responsibility for the attack, in which dozens of people died of smoke inhalation, but there had been no evidence to back that claim.

Police insist the motive was robbery, and the gunman's family says he was a disgruntled gambling addict.

Still, the episode highlighted what Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez described as the "unsettling inadequacy" of public security in Metro Manila. The at-

tack, he said, should "serve as a wake-up call" to do something about it.

New IS base

A three-day security conference this past weekend in Singapore attended by defense ministers and experts from 39 nations produced a flurry of

alarmed statements.

Among the topics, a fear that places like Marawi City could become a new base for the IS group as it loses territory in the Middle East.

"If the situation in Marawi in southern Philippines is allowed to escalate or entrench, it would pose decades of prob-

lems," Singapore Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen said.

"All of us recognize that if not addressed adequately, it can prove a pulling ground for would-be jihadists," he added.

The southern Philippines already is

Of the 120 militants killed in Marawi so far, at least eight are known to be foreign fighters, including a Chechen, a Yemeni and several Malaysians and Indonesians, according to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Hapilon's pledge of allegiance, meanwhile, may have already paid off. His faction has received a "couple of million dollars" from IS, Lorenzana said.

Abdullah Maute

In the two-minute video clip obtained by AP, a long-haired man identified by the military as Abdullah Maute addresses other militant leaders gathered around a white plastic table.

Pointing to a crude sketch of Marawi's main streets and speaking in Tagalog and Marawi's Maranao dialect,

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Philippine territory by occupying the whole of Marawi City and establishing their own Islamic state or government," Año said.

Interest of military

The military has an interest in allowing AP to make the footage public. On Monday, seven lawmakers petitioned the Supreme Court to nullify President Duterte's imposition of martial law in Mindanao—homeland of minority Muslims in the largely Roman Catholic country—casting doubt on the gravity of the crisis there.

Año said the reality that "a full-blown rebellion" was underway should convince skeptics that this was not just "a small problem."

Government troops discovered the video on a cell phone they seized during a May 23 raid on a Marawi safe house where Hapilon and other militants were believed to be hiding.

The military said the video had been filmed a day or two earlier. It was not possible to independently verify that claim.

But a separate screen grab of the same meeting, obtained by AP from an antiterrorism agent, showed a calendar the militants were writing on that was dated

2017

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Maute declares, "We'll take this first and then here."

"Or," he says, "we can go here first. We seal this off so you'll have a passageway. But we need to capture a highway so the people will get scared." Another militant can be seen videotaping the clandestine meeting.

Maute is the leader of a militant group called IS Lanao—one of about 10 small armed groups that have also pledged allegiance to IS and have forged a loose alliance that now flies IS-style black flags.

Although virtually unheard of a few years ago, IS Lanao contributed over 260 of the fighters who attacked mosque-studded Marawi, according to the military.

Along with Hapilon's group, IS Lanao has been blamed for a night-market bombing in September last year that killed 15 people in Davao City, Mr. Duterte's hometown.

2 Maute brothers

Also appearing in the video clip are two of Maute's brothers—Omarkhayam and Maddi—and another militant known as Abu Humam.

Humam is a member of Khalifah Islamiyah Mindanao, a small group linked to a 2013 bombing that killed eight people at a bar in Cagayan de Oro City, not far from Marawi.

The new armed groups are the latest offshoots of a decades-long Moro separatist conflict fueled by wrenching poverty, weak law enforcement and a surfeit of weapons in Mindanao.

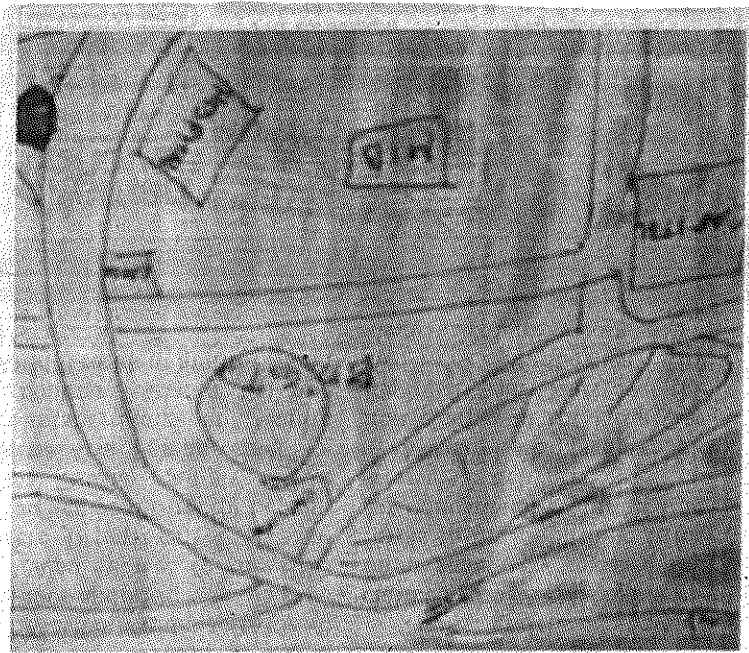
The two biggest Moro rebel groups, which have engaged in peace talks with the government, have not backed the militants who attacked Marawi and offered to help bring the siege to an end.

Hapilon's militant alliance aims to establish a "wilayat," or a provincial territory, which will form part of a caliphate in Southeast Asia, according to experts.

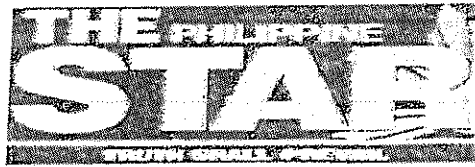
Mr. Duterte has said government forces will never allow them to do that or break away from the Philippines. —AP



ERROR PLOT This image taken from an undated video shows Isnilon Hapilon (second, from left) in a meeting of terrorist leaders in an undisclosed location to plot the seizure of Marawi City (photo below). From left are Abu Aps/Hafid, Hapilon, Owayda Abdulrajid and Abdullah Maute. —AP



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Maute family nabbed; P52 M in cash seized

By EDITH REGALADO and JOHN UNSON

Security forces yesterday arrested the head of the Maute clan after government troops discovered P52 million in cash stashed in his house in Marawi City.

Cayamora Maute, father of the Maute brothers fighting government forces in Marawi City, was apprehended in a Toyota Grandia van that was stopped by Task Force Davao at a checkpoint.

The elder Maute was in a vehicle driven by Aljon Salazar Ismael, along with his daughter Norjannah Balawag, son-in-law Benzarali Tingao and Kongan Alfonso Balawag, believed to be his wife, when it was stopped in Barangay Sirawan, Davao City.

Task Force Davao commander Col. Erwin Bernard Neri said no one had tipped off the military about the trip and the arrest of the elder Maute was incidental.

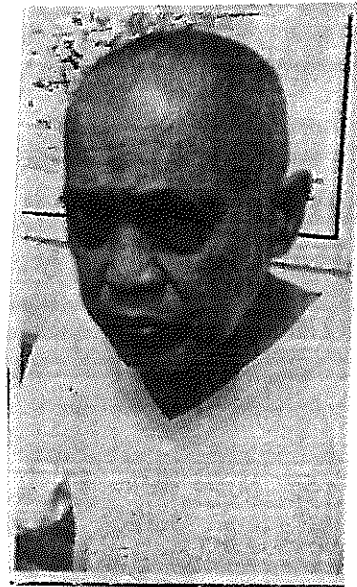
Lt. Col. Nestor Mondia, Task Force Davao checkpoint commander, said they stopped the van when they noticed one of the passengers was wearing a surgical mask and bore a resemblance to Cayamora.

"Our men were wondering why Cayamora refused to drop the blanket he used to cover himself. No matter what and how our men asked him to do it, he still refused to get the blanket off. That was why our men asked the group for identification cards and they presented different IDs. They had so many IDs," Neri added.

Neri said a pistol and a grenade were seized from those in the van.

Brig. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, deputy commander of the Eastern Mindanao

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Maute family From Page 1

Command, and Southern Mindanao police regional director Chief Supt. Manny Garland said they are checking out why the elder Maute was going to Davao City.

"We really do not know why they came to Davao City. We are looking into it," Gapay said.

Gapay claimed the elder Maute was the owner of the house in Marawi where the huge stash of money and checks were discovered by troops last Monday.

He said Cayamora is an engineer who has business interests in several cities in the country.

He added Cayamora and his first wife Ominta "Farhana" Romato are the brains of the Maute group.

"He planned everything. He organized everything and he established the network of the Maute group. He is their big man," Gapay said.

Gapay said Cayamora and the three were in Marawi when the Maute group attacked the city last May 23.

Cayamora reportedly admitted he was the owner of the house in Marawi but insisted the cash and checks seized there were not his.

Gapay added Cayamora and his companions were able to go to Cotabato City

through Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.

When Cayamora reached Cotabato City, they checked in at the Hotel Filipino where they were fetched by Ismael on the way to Davao City.

Garland added authorities are now looking into other people the five may have contacted in Davao City.

The driver Ismael, on the other hand, denied any link with the Mautes, saying he was only driving the van they rented.

Millions for minions

The arrest came a day after government troops discovered the huge amount of cash and checks abandoned in a house formerly a stronghold of the Maute gunmen in Marawi.

Troops from the 7th Marine Battalion first found P52.2 million in cash in the house in Mapandi area. The soldiers had to knock down a machine gun nest and a sniper guarding the bundle of money inside the house.

Of this amount, P52 million was wrapped in plastic while P200,000 was stashed in envelopes.

The troops then found checks worth P27 million in the same house, bringing the total amount to P79 million.

"The recovery of those

millions of cash indicates that they are running because the government troops are pressing in and focusing on destroying them," Marines operations officer Rowan Rimas told a news conference.

Police said the money would form part of the evidence against the Maute extremists.

"If this cash or funds are being used to support Maute group, (they will have) less resources. We will look into the source of these checks. That is part of the investigation," Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesman Chief Supt. Dionardo Carlos said.

Tracking the source

Lawmakers immediately called on authorities to investigate the source of the money.

"The authorities should milk that cash recovery with all the valuable intelligence information that our troops may put to good use with possibly identifying the financiers of the Maute terrorists that attacked Marawi City and other co-conspirators," Sen. Panfilo Lacson said.

He said the owner of the house where the bundle was discovered should also be investigated.

However, it was also possible that it was part of the loot taken by the Maute terrorists from the banks in Marawi City,

he said.

"Either way, I take my hat off to our soldiers. No matter how battle-weary they are and considering the risk of life they're going through, they were not tempted with the prospect of a comfortable life for themselves and their families," Lacson said.

Sen. Gregorio Honasan said the authorities should "try to trace the origin, the source, the conduit, the pipeline and the recipient or user" of the cash.

Honasan said the probe could help pinpoint the support system and funding for terrorist activities in the Philippines and abroad, assuming the ownership or source has been established.

The military has enlisted the help of Bangko Sentral Pilipinas (BSP) to determine the origin of the stash.

The probe will be jointly conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Armed Forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año said that aside from establishing the money trail, the military and police investigators also want to know the owner of the house where the stash was discovered.

"We are just wondering how come there was that huge amount of money there," Año said.

While not ruling out that the money could be part of the

Maute funding, Año said there are other factors to consider, such as businessmen fleeing the city from the fighting could have abandoned the money.

There were reports that aside from their local supporters, the Maute terrorists have been receiving financial assistance from their foreign backers in preparation for their planned takeover of Marawi City.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella claimed the stash of money had accumulated for the past two years.

Abella cited information gathered from official sources that the P52.2 million in cash was compiled from 2014 to 2016.

"I did inquire and apparently the money has been compiled over from the time of... within 2014 and 2016. Based on the records I think, it has been, it has been slowly accumulated over the past two years," he said.

Abella, however, did not elaborate further why the money stash ended up in Maute's hands.

BSP deputy governor Nestor Espenilla Jr. said the central bank is ready to track down the source of the money and checks taken in Marawi.

Espenilla said experts from the central bank could scrutinize the banknotes and checks.

"You have to first look at the physical evidence. We have experts who can do that so it has

to be looked into. It might be very premature to comment," he added.

Espenilla said the markings in the bank notes would help trace the source of the funds.

"I guess it all depends on the markings that are available. Maybe perhaps where it was sourced from it could be indicative," he said.

Espenilla said the central bank has offices in Mindanao and its officials could look into the physical evidence.

Espenilla explained that all bank deposits and withdrawals amounting to P500,000 or more are subjected to cover transaction reports by banks and other financial institutions.

"These are for regulated financial institutions and other covered parties. I don't know what would be the issue here because these are in the possession of elements who are not covered institutions then they won't be reporting that," he said.

The BSP official pointed out experts would also look into the checks discovered in the house.

"Checks are basically instruments of payment to people that is why it is difficult to comment on it without seeing what is out there in terms of documents or currencies," he said. —Jaime Laude, Christina Mendez, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Roel Pareño, Lawrence Agcaoili, Reuters

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THE DAILY **tribune**
Without Fear or Favor

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OMAR REPORTED KILLED



MAUTE

P79-M terror horde, Maute parents seized

By Mario J. Mallari

Major breakthroughs yesterday including the seizure of more than P79 million in cash and checks believed owned by extremist groups in Marawi City, the reported killing of Omar Maute who leads the group that sought to set up an Islamic State (IS) outpost in Mindanao and the arrest of the parents of the Maute brothers pointed to the likely resolution of the more than two-week-old crisis that led to President Duterte's declaration of martial law in Mindanao.

The money and checks were recovered by security forces from a lair occupied by the Islamic State-inspired terrorists, led by Isnilon Hapilon, in Marawi City, the military said.

Brig. Gen. Rolando Bautista, commander of Task Force Marawi, said Marine units who were conducting house-to-house search in Marawi City, found P52.2 million in cash last Monday from one of the earlier positions taken by terrorists.

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From page 1

The cash was immediately extricated by the Marines, despite constant fire from the enemies, and turned over to the Task Force Marawi headquarters.

Bautista said the cash will be for safekeeping of proper authorities until appropriate investigation is conducted and proper identification of the owner is established.

The military did not say exactly where the money was recovered but other reports said it was somewhere in Barangay Mapandi, one of the last strongholds of the terrorists.

There were also reports stating that there were also checks, amounting to P27 million, recovered from the same area.

"We are proud of our soldiers in the field. Their commendable actions in caring for our people bespeak of the best practices in the AFP," Bautista said.

Authorities early on Tuesday arrested the parents of the Maute brothers, the leaders of an Islamic State-affiliate group fighting with government security forces in Mindanao.

Cayamora Maute, his wife Farhana and two other relatives were apprehended at a military checkpoint in Davao City, said Davao City police chief Alexander Tagum.

The couple and two in-laws were on board a black van when stopped by soldiers manning a roadblock in Sirawan village, Toril district, some 20 kms south of the city.

Tagum said Maute wore a mask in an apparent attempt to conceal his identity as pictures of him, his wife and other relatives tagged as terrorists have been circulated.

He was, nonetheless, identified after being held by soldiers.

Abdullah and Omar, the two Maute brothers founded the armed group that occupied the Muslim city Marawi that triggered an ongoing fighting.

The clashes, which saw Maute gunmen planting IS flags, burning buildings and taking hostages, have left over 180 people dead and most of the city's population displaced.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) also revealed information that Omar Maute, one of the leaders of the IS-inspired Maute group, was killed during a recent air strike in Marawi City.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año, in a broadcast interview, said that this is now the subject of validation by the military.

"We have a report that Omar Maute was killed during one of the air strikes but we have to validate it carefully," said Año.

Año said that as of yesterday there are still about 100 terrorists putting up resistance in Bangolo area in Marawi City.

Omar's brother Abdullah and Isnilon Hapilon, the recognized emir or leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Southeast Asia, were among the remaining terrorists holed up in Bangolo area.

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Mr. Duterte last Monday offered a P10 million bounty for Hapilon and P5 million each for the Maute brothers.

Año said heavy firefight erupted anew on Monday amid the continuing efforts to clear Marawi City of the terrorists.

Government troops, Año said, have taken the positions of terrorist-snipers which have been slowing down the operations.

"We have taken their well emplaced sniper positions, and we recovered their sniper rifles," said Año.

"These have delayed the advancing government troops," he added.

At the same time, the AFP chief said that the military will be pouring in fresh troops in Marawi City to guard areas that had been cleared of terrorists.

He stressed that operating ground troops are now inside the "ground zero" tracking down the remaining terrorists.

"We need to man cleared areas to prevent them from going back here and conduct terroristic activities," he said.

Año said that some affected civilians have started returning homes.

He expressed belief that in a few days, the military can completely clear Marawi City.

Soldiers not looters

"The recovery of the money is proof that our soldiers do not engage in looting and the AFP will not tolerate such. This also breaks the propaganda of Maute/ASG and their sympathizers in peddling twisted data and disinformation accusing our soldiers of every conceivable crime," he added.

Bautista turned the tables on the terrorists and their followers -accusing them of ransacking government buildings and even private facilities.

"In contrast, the Maute/ASG vandalized, looted and burned school buildings, hospital rooms, houses and destroyed many properties in Marawi," said Bautista.

Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., commander of Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), also commended the Marines for a job well done.

Galvez stressed that the military is committed to free all remaining civilians still trapped and being held as human shields by the terrorists.

"Our soldiers are committed to make all possible actions to free all trapped civilians in Marawi even at risk of their own lives," he added.

For his part, Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla Jr., AFP spokesman, said that the military remains open to another humanitarian pause if only to rescue more civilians in Marawi City.

Drug money found?

The chairman of the House Committee on Dangerous Drugs yesterday posited that the P79-million recovered from a house that was used by the Maute Group in Marawi City could be drug money.

According to Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, it is suspicious for the Maute fighters to have such an amount "because these don't have legitimate businesses from where the money could come."

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Barbers, a staunch anti-drugs advocate, bared that he may call for probe to determine just how the Maute group got hold of such cache.

The Maute members have holed themselves up at Marawi, Lanao del Sur for over two weeks now, leading some lawmakers to believe that their siege of the city was well-funded.

Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez shared Barbers' view.

Even President Rodrigo Duterte himself has claimed that those funding the Maute Group are connected to producers of illegal drugs.

Long gestation period

The IS-inspired occupation of Marawi City could have been prepared some three years ago, Malacañang revealed yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella, in a Palace presser, said that the confiscated P80 million worth of funds allegedly owned by the Maute group may have piled up from as early as 2014.

"Apparently the money has been compiled over from the time of... within 2014 and 2016. I mean, all I can say is that, that it's based on the records. I think, it has been, it has been slowly accumulated over the past two years," Abella told reporters.

Marine officials were able to sequester P52.2 million worth of cash and cheques amounting to P27 million in one of Maute's relinquished Marawi safe-house yesterday.

Asked if the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) has been directed to probe the bank records of the signatories of the checks that has been seized by authorities, the senior Palace official said: "I'm sure that will be part of the progression of the investigation."

Mr. Duterte earlier noted that the Maute bandits received financial support both from the international terror network based in the Middle East and from local drug syndicates which likely include politicians.

Meanwhile, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo surmised that Mr. Duterte might stretch his martial law declaration in Mindanao in the government's bid to pin down drugs syndicates that could support the armed Islamic extremists.

"What the President is saying is that the rebellion is funded by drug money. So, if you relate that and the rebel groups expand their assault in the nearby provinces, then there would be a basis for expanding the declaration of martial law," Panelo said in a chance interview. "If the threat to the public has also expanded then under the Constitution, he is duty-bound in order to secure the safety of the public," he added.

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Assemblyman Zia

145-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

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Alonto Adiong, moreover, said that it is not surprising that the terrorists kept their finances in a safe-house instead of depositing it in banks.

"General practice is they keep their money in their houses. They have low trust in banking and excessive interest is not allowed in Islam. Local businessmen tend to keep their money in houses," Adiong told reporters in a briefing in conflict-torn Marawi.

"We only have 3 commercial banks. This is an indication that in general they don't go to bank and deposit money. Sharia law prohibits us to deposit our money in exchange for excessive interest," he added.

Mamasapano also targeted

The IS-inspired militants almost seized a village in Maguindanao a la Marawi City, a local executive said yesterday.

In a Facebook post, Bajah Buayan town Mayor Zamzamin Ampatuan said that if not for the quick response by state forces, Tukanalipao in the municipality of Mamasapano could have been a new lair by radical Islamists on Sunday.

The said village was also the venue where the infamous Mamasapano massacre in 2015 that killed 44 Philippine National Police-Special Action Forces (PNP-SAF) happened.

"On June 4, Tukanalipao, Mamasapano almost turned into another Marawi. Thanks to the valiant defense of the 140th Infantry Battalion soldiers who successfully thwarted around 80 IS-led local affiliates," Ampatuan said.

According to the official, the armed men attacked the 401B detachment along Midsayap-Makar Highway early Sunday morning.

Such a stand-off, says Ampatuan, if ever it had worked is meant to prove to the international terror network that their small gang deserves some sort of recognition.

Mayor Ampatuan identified the soldier gunned down as Cpl. Samsudin Mohammad saying that he was the one "who took the stand, shouting Allahu Akbar to thwart the enemy attack and burst of gunfire on the advancing enemies with his armaite rifle."

Lanao police chief sacked

Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Ronald dela Rosa, meanwhile, ordered the relief of Senior Supt. Oscar Nantes as director of the Lanao del Sur Provincial Police Office.

Nantes was replaced by Senior Supt. Restituto Lacano Jr., who is currently serving as the ground commander for the police deployed in Marawi City.

Earlier, the military leadership also relieved Brig. Gen. Nixon Fortes as commander of the Army's 103rd Brigade which has jurisdiction over Marawi City.

The relief of Nantes and Fortes came amid the ongoing crisis in Marawi City where about 200 terrorists led by Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers have conducted wide scale atrocities.

Put to good use the money recovered from Maute stronghold in Marawi City by identifying the group's financiers and other co-conspirators, Sen. Panfilo Lacson told authorities.

The senator made the recommendation following reports on members of the Philippine Marines recovering P79 million cash and checks in the Maute lair during a house-to-house clearing in the village against terrorists.

"The authorities should milk that cash recovery with all the valuable intelligence information that our troops may put into good use with possibly identifying the financiers of the Maute terrorists that attacked Marawi City and other co-conspirators," the senator said.

For one, the owner of the establishment where the monies were recovered should be background investigated at the very least.

"Or that could be the loot taken by the Maute attackers from the banks in Marawi City. Either way, I take my hat off to our soldiers. No matter how battle-weary they are and considering the risk of life they're going through, they were not tempted with the prospect of a comfortable life for themselves and their families," Lacson said.

"Instead, they stuck to their honor and integrity as professional members of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines)," the chair of the Senate committee on public order and dangerous drugs said. **Angie M. Rosales**
Ted Tuvera, Gerry Baldo

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Armed foreigners sighted in Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani

BY JULMUNIR JANNARAL AND JERRY ADLAW

CENTRAL Mindanao or Soccsargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos) was placed under heightened alert status after the provinces of Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani have been alarmed over the presence of armed men, suspected members of the Maute Group, in at least four towns there.

Arr

Police and military authorities in the region have been strictly enforcing checkpoints in the wake of the Marawi siege, after receiving reports about the presence of Indonesians with 30 armed followers believed to be members of the Islamic State (IS).

The heavily armed groups were reportedly seen in the coastal towns of Maitum, Kiamba, Maasin and Glan in Sarangani.

The 1002nd Brigade Command Headquarters based in Pulatana, Barangay Malandag in Malungon Sarangani under Army Col. Tyne Bafias, however, did not confirm nor deny reports of the presence of the armed group.

On Monday, classes in the towns of Kiamba and Maasin were suspended after unidentified group ambushed soldiers of the 27th Infantry Battalion. Private First Class Gelgian Tafiamor was wounded in the encounter.

About 75 families have fled their homes for fear of the presence of armed men in Glan who reportedly ask for food and money in support of their "revolutionary cause."

Both Christian and Muslim communities in the area fear that Sarangani would be the next target of the Maute terror group after Marawi.

The townfolk in the four coastal towns have confirmed sightings of fully armed men who embarked from a pumpboat (a two-engine

sea craft) on the shorelines of Sarangani last week.

Philippine Coast Guard district commander Rolando Lorenzana has reported the arrest of two Indonesians, identified as Kader and Bansalao, who claimed to be fishermen.

Regional authorities said they have investigated and interrogated several suspected and undocumented men wearing Muslim clothing who arrived in Glan by sailing from Indonesia.

Mohammad Kaharudin, an IS recruit who backed out from his training, told *The Manila Times* that prior to the Marawi siege, Sarangani was among the provinces on their list of training grounds and they have studied the language and culture of the Christians, as well as familiarized themselves with the route map of Mindanao.

Their test mission as IS recruits, he added, was to carry out bombing activities in the region.

He also confirmed that the arrested Indonesians, identified as Bahrun Naim and Muhammad Sholeh Ibrahim, and their two unidentified companions will train the ISIS recruits in bomb making.

Meanwhile, Sarangani Gov. Steve Solon in a public statement aired over local radio in General Santos City, denied reports about the wounded Maute members

pride

2) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

who sought medical assistance at a government hospital in Glan, adding that the military and police have very tight security measures in the province.

Appeal for calmness

Cotabato City Mayor Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi on Wednesday urged residents to remain calm amid circulating text messages that terrorists from Marawi City have mixed with the local residents.

In a public advisory, Guiani-Sayad asked the people to refrain from speculating on the city's security situation that could only trigger panic and sow fear among residents in the 37 barangay (villages) in the city.

One of the many circulating text messages tells of a plan by the Maute terror group to attack peace-

ful areas in central Mindanao, including the cities of Cotabato, Koronadal, Tacurong, and the provinces of Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

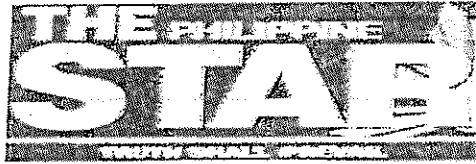
The mayor has ordered the police to enforce stricter checkpoints in all entries to the city, implementing a "No ID, No Entry" policy.

Major Gen. Arnel dela Vega, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, also said the local police and the Office of the Mayor are in close coordination with him to prevent the entry of terrorists into the city.

"The authorities are in control. The present Cotabato City local government is known for its tough posture against lawless elements that could harm its constituents. There is nothing to worry about," he added.

(02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

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Soldiers foil attempt to take over military post

By JOHN UNSON

MAGUINDANAO – Government troops foiled an attempt by armed men to take over a military detachment in Mamasapano and hoist the black flag of the Islamic State as a sign of support for the terrorist group.

Troops clashed with the gunmen, described by local officials as a “mysterious gang” linked to the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf, leaving four people dead, including an Army soldier.

Villagers identified the fatalities as Samir Bantuas, Bona Samsudin and Guiapar Angkay, whose bodies were dragged away by their companions.

The dead trooper was identified as Army Cpl. Samsudin Mohammad.

Local residents said a gunman named Tantung, who was wounded during the clashes on Sunday, died the next day.

Local officials said the group was led by an Indonesian whose plan was to capture the detachment of the Army’s 40th Infantry Battalion in Barangay Tukanalipao, Mamasapano.

The two factions of the out-

lawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters denied involvement in the clashes, saying a “third group” could have carried out the attack.

Officials of the municipal peace and order council in Maguindanao urged authorities to investigate the incident, convinced that a “mysterious gang” linked to the Maute and Abu Sayyaf, now grouped as the Dawlah Islamiya, was behind the attack.

“Their plan was to take over the detachment manned by a platoon of soldiers belonging to the 40th IB and plant their flag there, to be captured on video that would be used for a propaganda hype amid the crisis in Marawi City,” a community elder said.

A local official said he learned of the plot that the militants were to upload a video of the attempt on Facebook to show the presence of Dawlah Islamiya forces in Maguindanao.

“That is something local executives in Maguindanao will never allow to happen. Local officials and their followers will do everything to stop that,” the mayor said.

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NPAs remain active in Mindanao

By **JOSEPH JURELAG**
and **MALU CADELINA MANAR**

GENERAL SANTOS- A soldier was wounded after New People's Army (NPA) rebels ambushed a military vehicle in Kaimba, Sarangani on Monday.

Lt. Col. Benjamin Leander, 27th Infantry Battalion commander, said elements of the 27th Infantry Battalion (27IB) were on their way to Barangay Lomuyon, Kiamba to conduct community immersion when they were waylaid by at least seven NPA rebels.

He said the soldiers were able to return fire which prompted the rebels to withdraw toward the mountaneous area," Leander said.

Col. Tyne Banas, 1002nd Army Brigade commander, said additional troops were dispatched in the area to track down the fleeing rebels.

Meanwhile, in Sta. Maria, Veruela, Agusan del Sur, troops of the 26th Infantry Battalion (26IB) captured three Communist insurgents and recovered improvised bombs, high-caliber rifles, pistols and several rounds of live ammunition.

In his initial report to Col. Cristobal N. Zaragoza, commanding officer of the Army's 401st Infantry (Unity) Brigade, Lt. Col. Rommel Pagayon, 26th IB commander, identified the alleged NPA rebels as Bernie S. Perez, alias "Ka Ariel"; Joel S. Perez, alias "Ka Jo" and Nino S. Perez, alias "Ka Onin"

"Research done by the intelligence operatives and Philippine National Police revealed that Bernie S Perez, alias "Ka Ariel" has a standing warrant of arrest for the crime of murder," Col. Pagayon disclosed.

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Pahina. 2

3 BIFF, 1 SUNDALO PATAY

Isang sundalo ang nagbuwis ng buhay habang tatlong miyembro ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) ang napaslang sa isang sagupaan nang tangkaing kubkubin ng mga huli ang isang detachment ng militar sa Brgy. Tukanalipao, Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

Batay sa ulat ni Captain Arvin Encinas, Spokesman ng Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID), bandang alas-4:30 ng madaling araw nang i-harass ng mga armadong BIFF members ang himpilan ng Army's 40th Infantry Battalion (IB) sa nasabing lugar.

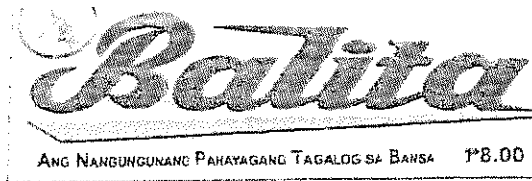
Subalit, nakahanda ang tropa ng gobyerno na dumepensa at binomba ang mga sumusugod na BIFF members.

Tumagal ng 45 minuto ang palitan ng putok na kung saan napatay ang tatlong miyembro ng BIFF at iniwan ng mga nagsitakas na kasamahan.

Isa namang sundalo ang nasawi sa insidente matapos na masapul ng mga tama ng bala na tumanggi muna ng tukuyin ang pagkakakilaulan dahil kailangan pang impormahan ang pamilya nito.

Narekober rin sa encounter site ang apat na cal. 45 pistol, isang 9 MM caliber pistol, Improvised Explosive Device (IED), sari-saring magazine, mga bala - *Joy Cantos, Rhoderick Beñez*

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5 pa sa Abu Sayyaf sumuko sa Sulu

Sumuko sa militar ang limang kasapi ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa Sulu, iniulat ng Philippine Marines kahapon.

Batay sa ulat ni Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander ng Joint Task Force Sulu, ang mga sumukong bandido ay mga tauhan ng Abu Sayyaf sub-leader na si Alhabsy Misaya, na una nang napatay sa isang military operation.

Kasama ring isinuko ng mga bandido sa tropa ng Philippine

Marine Ready Force-Sulu ang tatlong long firearms at isang short firearm.

Tumangging kilalarin ang mga sumukong bandido, na isasailalim sa processing at documentation.

Ginawa ang pagsuko ng mga bandido matapos na matakot ang mga ito sa walang tigil na operasyon ng militar, lalo na umano nang mapatay ang leader ng mga ito na si Misaya.

Batay sa record, umaabot na sa

72 ang kabuuang bilang ng mga sumuko mula sa Abu Sayyaf simula noong Enero ngayong taon.

Patuloy pa ring nananawagan ang Joint Task Force Sulu sa mga miyembro ng teroristang grupo na sumuko na lang habang may panahon pa upang makapagbagong-buhay.

Hunyo 3 nang tatlong miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf ang sumuko sa Tipo-Tipo, Basilan.

Fer Taboy

GO NEGOSYO KAPATIDS SEND HELP TO MARAWI



Philippine army troops were also given food and drinks from the #KapatidForMarawi initiative (left); Saguiran Mayor Macmod Muri (in blue) and Go Negosyo volunteer Joseph Castillo (in orange) led the distribution of goods to all evacuees (right)

Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion led the call for support for the people of Marawi. #KapatidForMarawi is an initiative created to gather donations for the people of the displaced members of the Marawi community. Right after Concepcion asked for the help of the Go Negosyo Kapatid community, relief goods started pouring in. Donations came from the following: Concepcion's RFM Corporation, LBC led by Santi Aranea, Asia Brewery of Mike Tan, LandRover Club, SM Foundation led by Tessie Sy-Coson, Century Pacific of Chris Po, SL Agritech led by Henry Lim Bon Liang, and CDO Foodsphere of Corazon Davro-Ong

Aside from private companies, business organizations also supported the initiative. Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by its President, George Barcelon, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry led by Rex Daryaman, and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by Domingo Yap also gathered support from their members.

Other organizations who are members of the recently launched Alliance Towards Prosperity for All like Management Association of the Philippines, Financial Executives of the Philippines, Bankers Association for the Philippines, Makati Business Club, and other members are all supporting the Kapatid for Marawi initiative as well.

The distribution and transportation of products would have not been possible without the help of Joseph Castillo, Corporal Maglaum PA, Asec. Shalimar Candao, Operation Blessing, Angel Brigade, 4th ID Army Brigade Commander Major General Madrigal, COS Col. Andres Centino, CDO Mayor Oscar Moreno, Office of the CDO City Engineer and Paul Dominguez.

These efforts are part of the Go Negosyo initiatives to bring peace and prosperity to areas experiencing extreme poverty and conflict. Go Negosyo's Kapayapaan para sa Sulu has been successfully bringing development programs to the province since January 2017. Concepcion added, "With the support of our Kapatids, we aim to help our brothers in Marawi suffering from the distress they are experiencing right now. We are one with the government in providing peace and comfort in the area."

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INQUIRER

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Marawi house yields P79M in cash, checks

By Julie S. Alipala
and Jeffrey Maitem
@inquirermindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Marines on Monday found bundles of banknotes and checks worth about P79 million inside a house in Marawi City, where government forces are battling Islamic State-inspired local terrorists.

Brig. Gen. Custodio Parcon, commander of Task Group Marawi, told the Inquirer that troops found the banknotes and checks during a clearing operation in a house that served as a sniper's nest for the terrorists on Saklot Street in Barangay Saduc.

Parcon said the platoon led by 1Lt. Frederick Savellano of the 37th Marine Company found P52.2 million in banknotes and "stale checks worth P23,776,386.71" inside a vault in the house.

The soldiers also recovered an M16 rifle from the house.

Businesswoman's house

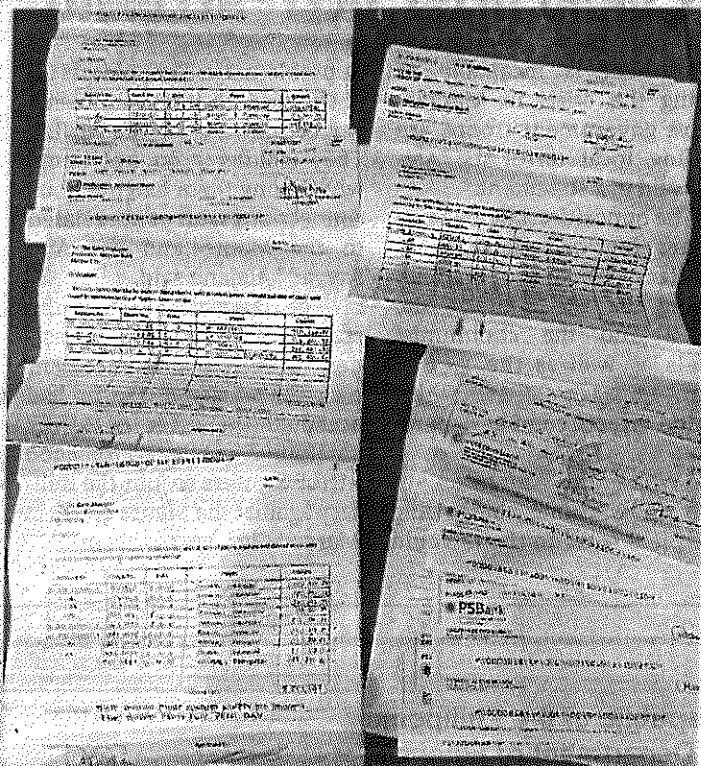
Parcon said the house was owned by Mariam Kouzbary Batara Dimaacor, owner of GM ROL-MAR Construction and Development.

But it was unclear whether Dimaacor had links to the terrorists from the Maute group, Parcon said.

"We cannot tell her relationship with the Maute. It is still under investigation," he said.

Marine Maj. Rowan Rimas, the operations officer, said the recovery of the stash indicated that the terrorists were "running because the government troops are pressing in and focusing on destroying them."

The Philippine National Police said the banknotes and



MYSTERIOUS CHECKS Government troops found old checks issued by municipal officials in a house in Barangay Raya Saduc in Marawi City. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

checks would be used as evidence in cases that would be brought against the terrorists.

"That's recovered evidence right now. It's going to be investigated and later on can be used in a criminal case against the suspects involved here," said Chief Supt. Dionardo Carlos, spokesperson for the PNP.

Carlos said the recovery of the banknotes and checks by government forces was a blow to the terrorists because it meant "less resources" for them.

Carlos said that besides providing reinforcements to the military, the PNP was also conducting an investigation in preparation for the filing of charges against those responsi-

ble for the terrorist siege of Marawi.

Praise for the Marines

Brig. Gen. Rolando Bautista, commander of Task Force Marawi, commended the Marines for their "honesty," adding that their action showed that government troops were not looting homes and businesses in Marawi.

"In contrast, the Maute [and Abu Sayyaf] vandalized, looted and burned school buildings, hospital rooms, houses and destroyed many properties in Marawi," Bautista said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson also commended the Marines for the recovery as he urged the

government to identify and pursue the financiers of the Maute group.

"I take my hat off to our soldiers," Lacson said in a statement.

He said the authorities should check the background of the owner of the house where the banknotes and checks were found.

He noted, however, that the banknotes and checks could be "loot taken by the Maute attackers from the banks in Marawi City."

US help

Meanwhile, the military said US troops have been helping Filipino soldiers in the operation against the Maute group in Marawi.

But Lt. Col. Jo-Ar Herrera, spokesperson for the Army's 1st Infantry Division, told reporters that the Americans were not engaged in actual ground operations but only providing technical assistance to Filipino troops.

"Some of them visited here for technical assistance," Herrera said.

He did not say whether the Americans were providing drones to locate the exact positions of the Maute and Abu Sayyaf fighters.

Herrera said the enemy force had weakened.

"Most of them have fled and blended with civilians as evacuees. They left their weapons in houses where they had been hiding," he said.

"This is an indication that they are already weak," he added. —WITH REPORTS FROM PHILIP C. TUBEZA, CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND REUTERS INO

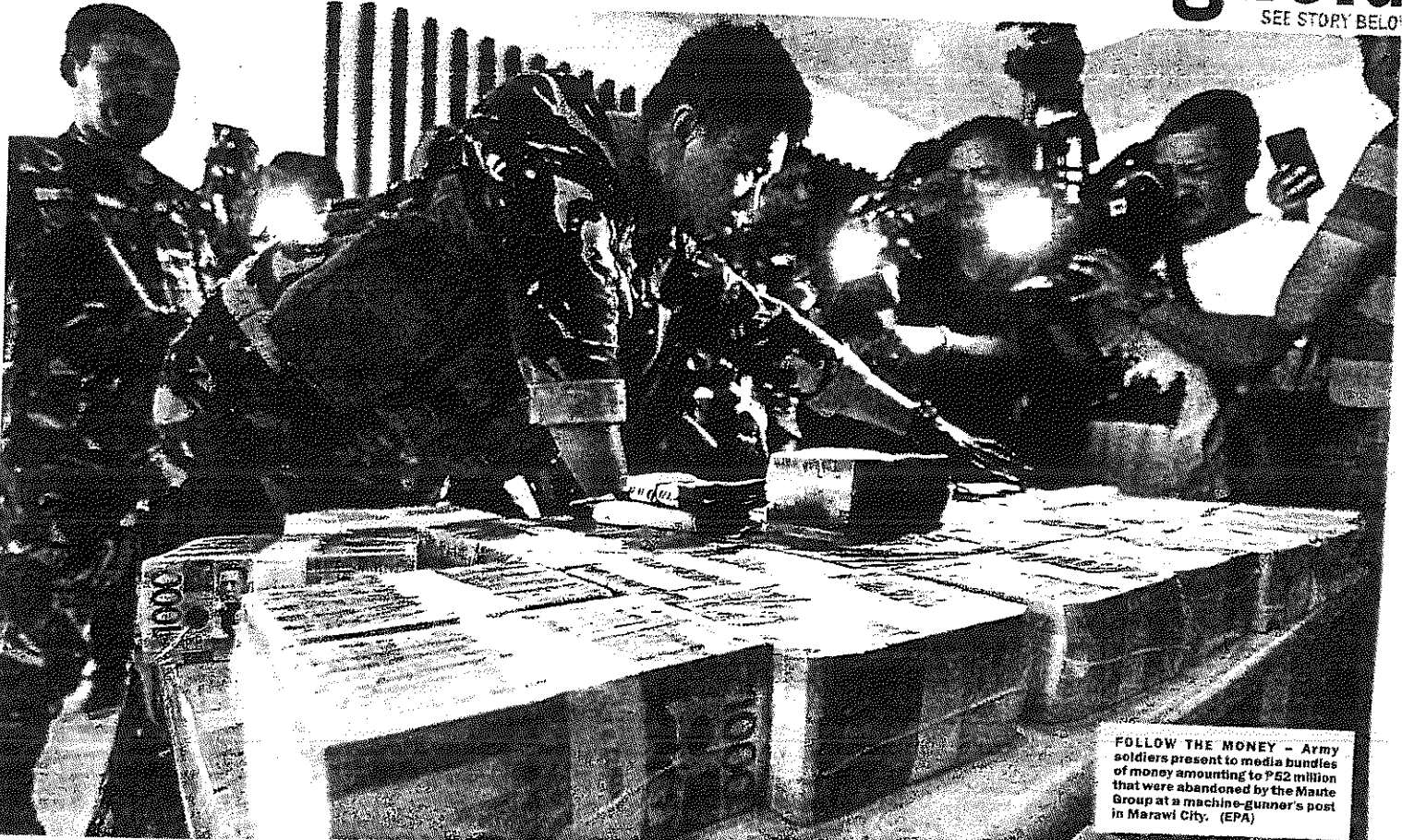
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MANILA BULLETIN
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₱79 M found in Maute stronghold

SEE STORY BELOW



FOLLOW THE MONEY – Army soldiers present to media bundles of money amounting to ₱82 million that were abandoned by the Maute Group at a machine-gunner's post in Marawi City. (EPA)

Palace to mobilize AMLC in probing source of funds

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Government troops conducting house-to-house clearing operations stumbled on ₱52-million cash and checks worth ₱27 million in an abandoned

Maute Group stronghold in Mapandi, Marawi City, last Monday.

Marine forces seized the huge amount of cash stuffed in four half-sacks and the checks, all stale, while under constant fire from Maute snipers.

The cash and checks were ▶ 9

₱79-M found in Maute... ◀1

later turned over to Task Force Marawi for safekeeping while investigation will be conducted to identify its source.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said records showed that the money has been "slowly accumulated" over the past two years.

"I did inquire and apparently the money has been compiled over, from the time of... within 2014 and 2016. Based on the records I think, it has been slowly accumulated over the past two years," Abella said.

He said the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) would be mobilized to probe the suspected terror funds found by the military.

"I'm sure that will be part of the progression of the investigation," Abella said in a Palace news conference, when asked about the government's order to the AMLC to probe the source of the funds. "I suppose that they can also ascertain the particular banks," he added.

Drug money?

Surigao del Norte (2nd District) Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, House Committee on Dangerous Drugs chairman, floated the possibility that the huge cash and checks found were drug money.

"Yes, it could be drug money," the lawmaker said.

Barbers noted that it's suspicious for the Maute fighters to have such an amount "because they don't have legitimate businesses from where the money could come from."

Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez, the commander of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom), lauded the troops for a splendid job and vowed to make every possible step to safeguard the properties of the people of Marawi and take all actions to free remaining trapped civilians inside terrorists' stronghold.

"I commend and salute our troops for keeping the highest standard of discipline, valor and commitment in safeguarding Marawi and defending the community from terror elements," Galvez said.

"We will persevere in taking steps to minimize the hardships of our people in Marawi when they come back home.

"Our soldiers are committed to make all possible actions to free all trapped civilians in Marawi even at risk of their own lives," Galvez added.

At the moment, however, the Maute Group still controls the business district in Marawi, which is on the western part of the Agus River.

He also noted that the militants also vandalized houses and raided the National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse and the Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Lasureco).

Honesty of troops lauded

Brig. Gen. Joselito Rolando Bautista, commander of Task Force Marawi, also commended troops for their act of honesty as he pointed to the destruction done by terrorists.

"We are proud of our soldiers in the field. Their commendable actions in caring for our people bespeak of the best practices in the AFP," Bautista said.

"This is a proof that our soldiers do not engage in looting and the AFP will not tolerate such. This also breaks the propaganda of Maute and Abu Sayyaf Groups and their sympathizers in peddling twisted data and disinformation accusing our soldiers of every conceivable crime," he added.

In contrast, Bautista said the Daesh-inspired Maute and Abu Sayyaf Groups vandalized, looted, and burned school buildings, hospital rooms, houses, and destroyed many properties in Marawi City.

Sen. Panfilo M. Lacson doffed his hats off yesterday to the battle-weary soldiers who found and turned over the cash and checks.

"No matter how battle-weary they are and considering the risk of life they're going through, they were not tempted with the prospect of a comfortable life for themselves and their families. Instead, (they) stuck to their honor and integrity as professional members of the AFP," Lacson said.

"The authorities should milk that cash recovery with all the valuable intelligence information that our troops may put into good use with the possibility of identifying the financiers of the Maute terrorists that attacked Marawi City and other co-conspirators," the senator said.

"For one, the owner of the establishment where the monies were found should be background-investigated at the very least. Or, that could be the loot taken by the Maute attackers from the banks in Marawi City," he added.

Earlier, reports stated that members of the Maute Group took over an armored van of the Land Bank of the Philippines office in Marawi City on the first day of the attack. On the second day, they allegedly raided a PNB bank branch.

Humanitarian pause

Meanwhile, AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, said the implementation of the humanitarian pause (HP) was very productive in saving innocent civilians trapped in war-torn Marawi City.

"The four-hour HP was very productive. Any opportunity that allows for saving lives is a matter we support," Padilla said.

"We go by certain protocols to protect and ensure the safety of our humanitarians," he added.

Padilla also said that measures or procedures were put in place to ensure that Maute terrorists won't be able to escape the area by joining rescued civilians.

He said screening was done on rescued residents.

AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief Marine Col. Edgard Arevalo said there

may be members of the Maute-ISIS who could have blended with civilians and took advantage of the "peace corridor."

He said the "peace corridor" was a risk the AFP had to take for the sake of the taking civilians to safe grounds.

"But we have some safeguards (put) in place though. While we cannot reveal them, we hope to keep the terrorists' design in check," Arevalo said.

'Destroy the enemy'

Meanwhile, President Duterte said the country might break apart if the government is unable to crush the rebellion funded by illegal drug money in the south.

The President has directed troops "to destroy the enemy," including terrorists and their cohorts in drug syndicates, assuring he will support them all the way.

"If we allow to overcome them, then this country will end something like minus the island of Mindanao. There will be breakage," Duterte told soldiers at Camp Lucero, North Cotabato.

"We will have a problem because, again the Christians will arm themselves and make a counter revolt and it would throw our country to the dogs," he added.

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**Manila
Standard**

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Troops find P79.2m in Maute's lair

Drug money, other sources eyed

By Florante S. Solmerin and Sandy Araneta

MARINES recovered P79.2 million in cash and checks from a fallen Maute group house in Marawi City as fighting raged on, military officials said Tuesday.

The troops first found P52.2 million in cash wrapped in plastic bundles and in envelopes inside a house near the Maute group's machine gun nest in the Mapandi area, said Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla.

The troops then found checks worth P27 million in the same house, all paid to cash.

"The money and checks were duly secured and turned over to Headquarters Task Force Marawi," Padilla said.

Investigators are looking into the cash and checks to determine

if the Maute terrorists were being funded by foreign groups or "narco-politicians," an intelligence

official who spoke on condition of anonymity said.

Earlier reports said the terrorists ransacked several banks, including the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Philippine National Bank during the course of fighting, which entered its 15th day on Tuesday.

The intelligence official said the terrorists had been using the cash to recruit civilians into their fold to fight the government troops. *Next page*

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS – Email add: oacpa.army2012@gmail.com – Tel no. (02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

Troops...

From AI

“That’s why their numbers suddenly grew, because they used the money to recruit others into joining their fight against us,” the intelligence official said.

As of June 4, based on a military report obtained by the **Manila Standard**, 115 terrorists—including three foreigners—had been killed, contradicting earlier reports that 10 foreigner fighters had died in the fighting.

A total of 38 government troops and policemen have been killed in action and 143 others were wounded. The military said 19 civilians were killed in the clashes, while 1,236 were rescued from the hands of the terrorists.

Government forces have

seized 95 high-powered firearms from the Maute and Abu Sayyaf terrorists.

AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año said they were on track to finishing the battle for Marawi City in three days.

In Congress, a House leader said Tuesday that the cash and checks recovered from the Maute group house could have come from narco-politicians.

“It could be drug money,” said Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, chairman of the House committee on dangerous drugs. “The Maute fighters do not have legitimate businesses.”

Barbers said his panel intends to conduct a congressional probe to find out how the Maute group got hold of such money.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said it would try to identify

the source of the Maute loot.

Incoming Bangko Sentral Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr., who will succeed outgoing Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. on July 3, said the central bank has experts who can help trace the source of the funds.

“You have to first look at the physical evidence. We have experts who can do that so it has to be looked into,” Espenilla said.

Presidential Spokesman Ernesto Abella said the recovery of the funds debunked some claims that troops were involved in looting in the war-torn city.

“The AFP clearly shows it’s doing its job with honor and integrity and stands on moral high ground,” Abella said.

Senator Panfilo Lacson said the authorities need to move quickly to identify the financi-

ers of the Maute terrorists that attacked Marawi City and other co-conspirators.

The owner of the house where the money was found should be investigated, he added.

He also raised the possibility that the loot could have been taken by the Maute attackers from the banks in Marawi City.

“Either way, I take my hat off to our soldiers,” Lacson said.

“No matter how battle-weary they are and considering the risk of life they’re going through, they were not tempted with the prospect of a comfortable life for themselves and their families. Instead, and stuck to their honor and integrity as professional members of the AFP,” he added.

With Maricel V. Cruz, Macon Ramos-Araneta and Julito G. Rada

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Pahina. 2

Maute financiers tutumbukin sa P79M

Naniniwala si Senador Panfilo Lacson na maraming mapipigang impormasyon ang gobyerno sa narekober na P79 milyong cash at tseke mula sa lugar na pinagkutaan ng Maute Group sa Marawi City.

Dahil sa narekober na pera, tiwala si Lacson na mabubunyag na ang mga taong posibleng nasa likod ng teroristang grupo.

"My snappy salute to our battle-fatigued soldiers for turning over Php79M recovered in Marawi. I'm sure there's useful info in that recovery," ayon sa Tweet ng senador.

Nitong Linggo ay nagbabala na si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na ipakukulong niya habambuhay ang mga protektor at financiers ng Maute Group.

Naniniwala pa ang Pangulo na mga drug personalities at pulitiko ang tumutustos sa operasyon ng Maute Group sa Marawi City.

Kahapon ipinakita ng militar ang bultu-bultong salapi na nakabalot pa sa plastic at P27 milyong halaga ng tseke na natagpuan sa bahay na pinamumugaran ng mga terorista.

Kaugnay nito, ipinahayag ng Malacañang na tututukan nito ang imbestigasyon sa narekober na mga pera at tseke.

"It has been duly secured and turned over to the headquarters Task Force Marawi for safekeeping. This debunks the claim that troops have been involved in looting as alleged by some quarters. The AFP clearly shows it's doing its job with honor, integrity and stands on high moral high ground," pahayag ni Presidential Spokesperson Ernesto Abella sa press briefing sa Malacañang kahapon.

Ayon kay Abella, tiyak na kasama sa mangunguna sa isasagawang imbestigasyon ang Anti-Money Laundering Coun-

cil (AMLC).

"I'm sure that will be part of the progression of the investigation," sabi ni Abella.

Nang usisain kung posibleng ma-lift ang Bank Secrecy Law, tumanggi si Abella na magkomento rito at sinabing huntayin na lamang na umusad ang imbestigasyon.

Batay pa sa tagapagsalita ng Malacañang, hindi pa matukoy kung ano ang posibleng implikasyon ng pagkakadiskubre sa multi-milyong pera at mga tseke.

"I don't know exactly the direct, the direct implications of this. Although, I did inquire and apparently the money has been compiled over from the time of within 2014 and 2016. So it, I mean, all I can say is that, that it's the, based on the records I think, it has been, it has been slowly accumulated over the past two years," paliwanag ni Abella. (Boyet Julde/Aries Cano)

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Maute brothers' patriarch arrested



CAPTURED Cayamora Maute, father of the Maute brothers who founded the terror group, was arrested along with four others at a security checkpoint on the way to Davao City yesterday. Photo shows him before and after his arrest.

By F. Pearl A. Gajunera

DAVAO CITY—The father of the Maute brothers, Cayamora Maute, 67, along with four others were arrested by the Task Force Davao and police at a checkpoint in Sirawan, Toril, at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

Police identified the four others as Norjannah Balawag Maute, daughter of Cayamora; Kongan Alfonso Balawag, second wife of Cayamora; Bengali Tingao, husband of Norjannah; and Aljon Salazar Ismael, driver.

The martial law spokesman for the Eastern Mindanao Command, Brig. Gen. Gilbert Gapay said the five suspects tried to enter Davao City through the Sirawan entry point using a Black Toyota Grandia.

“At the checkpoint Cayamora’s body was covered with a blanket and his face was also wrapped in cloth. This raised the suspicion of the authorities,” Gapay said.

Gapay said that when they were asked for identification, the

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Maute...

From A1

suspects presented various ID cards, but they recognized Cayamora as the patriarch of the Maute clan.

Under questioning, he admitted to being the father of the Maute brothers, said Chief Supt. Manuel Gaerlan, police regional office director.

“When we asked him about his real identify he admitted that he was Cayamora Makaraya Maute, the father of the Maute brothers and he broke down after that [and] he cried a lot,” Gaerlan said.

Gaerlan said that Cayamora claimed that he went to Davao City for a medical checkup because he had some health problems.

“To the Maute brothers in Marawi, there will be no swapping, only swapping of treatment. Take good care of your hostages and we will take care of your patriarch,” Gaerlan said.

Cayamora has a standing warrant of arrest together with 89 others for five counts of kidnapping and serious illegal detention.

Norjannah, on the other hand, has a warrant of arrest for illegal possession of blasting caps and triggering devices.

The suspects will also be charged with rebellion.

Police said they seized a .45 caliber pistol, a grenade and P363,000 from the suspects, who will be detained at the Davao City Police Office.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año on Tuesday announced that they are now validating reports

that Omar Maute, one of the founders of the Maute group, was killed during an airstrike in Marawi City on May 28.

“The report is still not confirmed and we are still validating it. There is still the possibility that he is alive,” he said.

Omar, the brother of Abdullah Maute, was earlier reported killed in February 2016 during the military offensive against them in Butig, Lanao del Sur.

President Rodrigo Duterte has offered a P10-million reward for information leading to the arrest or killing of Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, and P5 million for each Maute brother.

The amount is on top of a \$5-million bounty for Hapilon offered by the US government.

Meanwhile, a Catholic bishop condemned the destruction of a cathedral inside Marawi City.

Marawi Bishop Edwin de la Peña said the destruction of religious symbols by the terrorists revealed the true intention of the attackers, saying the militants went on a sacrilegious rampage and destroyed the St. Mary’s Cathedral.

“We are angered by what happened. Our faith has really been trampled on,” the bishop said.

The prelate said he had seen the video of Islamist militants destroying the cathedral.

Islamic State news agency Amaq released the video, as the crisis in Marawi entered its second week.

The video also showed some members of the Maute terror group, which claims affiliation with ISIS, yelling “Allahu Akbar” while smashing religious icons, tearing up images

of Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and burning the church.

“That is blasphemy! It’s unacceptable. It’s obvious that their actions are really out of this world. It’s demonic,” the bishop said.

“The bandits really planned to destroy and burn the church. That’s really their plan even before the attack the city,” he said.

“But we didn’t take it seriously because for us it was unthinkable that it’s going to happen in Marawi,” the prelate added.

The militants also abducted Fr. Chito Suganob, the vicar general of the Marawi prelature, and some staff of the cathedral and churchgoers.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the Cagayan de Oro City Regional Trial Court would hear all cases against members of the Maute terrorist group arising from their attack in Marawi City.

Court spokesman Theodore Te also said the Court of Appeals in Mindanao would handle terrorism cases under the Human Security Act.

The order was in response to an earlier request from the Justice Department for the creation of special courts outside Mindanao to handle the Maute cases.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II said they would appeal the order.

“It’s not okay with us because CDO is too near to the Lanaos and Marawi City. We will file a motion for reconsideration,” he said in a text message.

Aguirre reiterated that the special courts should be in Luzon or Visayas in order to protect the judges and the judicial system from possible threats and acts of violence.

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Maute patriarch, wife nabbed in Davao City checkpoint as children fight troops in Marawi

By ANTONIO L. GOLINA IV and AARON B. REQUENCO

DAVAO CITY – Cayamora Maute, the 67-year-old patriarch of the dreaded Maute clan and his second wife, Kongan Alfonso Balawag were arrested in a checkpoint laid out ▶9

Maute patriarch, wife...



by Task Force Davao in Sirawan, Toril yesterday morning

The arrest came as Cayamora's sons – Omar and Abdullah who joined forces with Abu Sayyaf kidnap leader Isnilon Hapilon continue to fight government troops in Marawi on its 15th day today.

In a press conference, Brig. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, martial law spokesperson of the Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom), said Cayamora confirmed his identity as the father of Omar and Abdullah.

Also nabbed in the checkpoint were Cayamora's daughter Norjannah Balawag Maute, her partner Benzarali Tingao, and the driver, Aljon Salazar

Ismael

Lt. Col. Nestor Mondia, detachment commander of TF Davao in Sirawan, told newsmen the group were on-board a black van that was headed for Davao City where Cayamora was supposed to have a medical check-up.

At the checkpoint, authorities found an old man wearing a surgical mask, his body wrapped in a blanket that covered partially his face, and laying on a passenger seat.

When asked to remove his mask, Mondia said the old man closely resembled the Maute patriarch and was immediately brought to the Davao City Police Office (DCPO) for investigation.

The Task Force recovered a .45 pistol and a grenade under the passenger seat of the van.

Recovered from Cayamora were several identification cards bearing different names but Cayamora confirmed his true identity during interrogation at the DCPO.

Kidnapping, rebellion charges

Ismael denied he was a member of the Maute Group. He told investigators he picked up Tingao, a friend from college and Norjannah at the Hotel Filipino in Cotabato City. The two told him they would pick up passengers in Sultan Kudarat before going to Tagum City.

Ismael said upon reaching Sultan Kudarat municipality they picked up Cayamora and Balawag and told him to proceed instead to

Davao city instead of Tagum.

Sources said Cayamora was a former senior official of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Police Regional Office (PRO) 11 director Manuel Gaerlan said Cayamora's arrest is a big blow to the Maute Group because he is considered to be one of the brains of the terrorist group. Cayamora will be charged with rebellion while Kongan will be charged with illegal possession of blasting caps and triggering devices under Presidential Decree 1866.

Gaerlan said there is also a standing warrant of arrest against 89 other Maute groups that included Cayamora for five counts of kidnapping and serious illegal detention in Lanao del Sur.

"There are various information being confirmed. They are attempt-

ing to enter the city. As to the exact identifies we cannot ascertain it. We are assuming they have sympathizers here," he said.

Ring of security

Prior to the arrest of Cayamora's group, police forces in Maguindanao tightened security measures to prevent militants from joining the flow of evacuees seeking refuge in Maguindanao and prevent sympathizers from reinforcing the Mautes in Marawi City.

"Not only do we have checkpoints, our police forces are conducting aggressive patrol every day," Chief Supt. Reuben Theodore Sindac, director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) regional police said. (With reports from Genalyn D. Kabiling and Ellson A. Quismorio)

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MEDICAL TREATMENT?

FATHER OF MAUTE GROUP LEADERS ARRESTED AT DAVAO CITY CHECKPOINT

By Joselle Badilla
@inquirermindanao

DAVAO CITY—The father of the leaders of the Maute group that has been fighting government forces in Marawi City since May 23 was arrested here on Tuesday morning.

Police said Cayamora Maute and his second wife, Kongan Alfonso-Maute, were arrested as their vehicle was stopped at a security checkpoint in Sirawan, in Davao's Toril district.

Maute is the father of Omarkhayyam and Abdullah Maute, leaders of the Maute

group that had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group in Iraq and Syria.

Three others arrested

Lt. Col. Nestor Mondia, Task Force Davao detachment commander, said driver Aljon Salazar Esmael, Bensarali Tingao and his wife, Norjannah, daughter of the Maute patriarch, were also arrested.

Recovered from the Mautes were several identification cards and P363,000 in cash.

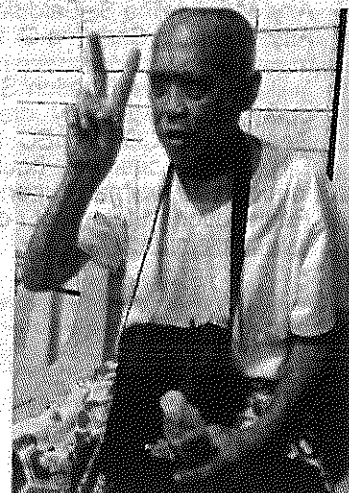
Esmael, the driver, said Tingao hired him in Cotabato City to transport Maute to Tagum City, where the terrorists' fa-

ther was going to seek medical treatment.

"I really did not know they were Mautes. Had I known, I would not have agreed," Esmael said, adding that he was paid P5,000 for the use of his van.

Mondia said the Maute patriarch would be detained in the Davao City Police Office pending the filing of rebellion charges against him.

"The arrest of the patriarch of the Maute clan is a big blow to the Maute-[IS] terrorist group," said Brig. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, spokesperson for the military's Eastern Mindanao Command. INQ



Cayamora Maute —JOSELLE BADILLA

7 June 2017

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THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

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Father of Maute leaders, 4 others nabbed in Davao

BY VICTOR REYES

MILITARY and police operatives yesterday arrested the father of Maute Group leaders Omar and Abdullah Maute at a checkpoint in Davao City.

With Cayamora Maute were four others – his second wife Kongan Alfonso Balawag, his daughter Norjannah Maute, Norjannah's husband Benzarali Tingao, and driver Aljon Salazar Ismael.

The five were arrested at around 10 a.m. at a checkpoint in Barangay Sirawan in Toril District. The checkpoint was manned by forces from the military's Task Force Davao and the Davao City police.

Omar and Abdullah Maute are leading the attack in Marawi City. On Monday, President Duterte offered a bounty of P5 million each for information leading to the neutralization of the Maute brothers. He also put up a P10-million reward for the neutralization of Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon who are with the Maute Group in Marawi.

Military officials believe the Maute brothers are holed up in a built-up area of Marawi City. The military earlier said it was investigating a report that one of them had been killed in the fighting.

Maj. Mario Tena, Task Force Davao spokesman, said the five

were aboard a van on their way to a hospital in Davao City for a check-up. They came from the "Cotabato area."

Tena said the group yielded P300,000 in cash.

He said the group was intercepted after one of them, which later turned out to be Cayamora, acted suspiciously while the vehicle was approaching the checkpoint.

"He covered his face (with a mask) so our personnel became suspicious of him," said Tena. He said initial check showed that the man resembled one of those listed in a poster of local terrorists.

The poster was released by the military and the police following

the May 23 attack in Marawi City by members of the Maute Group. The fighting has so far resulted in the death of 120 Maute members, 38 soldiers and policemen and 20 civilians.

Tena said the suspects were turned over to the local police.

Norjannah is also included in the list of wanted local terrorists. Several other members of the Maute family are in the list, including Maute leaders.

AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año said Omar Maute was reportedly killed in an air strike in Marawi City last May 28 but the information is

See FATHER ► Page B3

FATHER

still being verified.

Asked why the President still offered a P5-million reward for Omar, Año said: "The report is not yet confirmed. That's still for validation and there is also a big possibility that he is still alive."

Año expressed confidence the bounty will facilitate the arrest of the three terrorist leaders. He said the military has been receiving a lot of information on the whereabouts of the three after the bounty was announced.

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WANTED – Isnilon Hapilon (center) is shown in this image taken from an undated video at a meeting with militants, offering a rare glimpse of the purported leader of the Islamic State (IS) in Southeast Asia and the terrorist group's operations. A P10-million bounty offered by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte hangs over Hapilon's head. (AP)

Video shows Hapilon, other Islamic militants plotting Marawi attack

By **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

It was an audacious plot sketched out in chilling detail with blue pens on

the back of a paper calendar: Islamic militants in the Philippines, including one of the world's most-wanted militant leaders, would take over a key southern

city in their boldest attack to date.

With unsettling calm, they spoke of taking hostages from a school, sealing off roads, and capturing a high- ▶9

Video shows Hapilon...

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way “so the people will get scared.”

Video footage and a separate screen-grab image of that secret meeting, obtained exclusively by the Associated Press, offer a rare glimpse into the clandestine operations of insurgents who followed through two weeks ago with an unprecedented assault on the lakeside city of Marawi, parts of which they still occupy today.

The images also provide the first visual proof that a nascent alliance of local Muslim fighters are not only aligned with the Islamic State group, but are coordinating and executing complex attacks together.

Among those at the table was the purported leader of the Islamic State’s Southeast Asia branch, Isnilon Hapilon, who is on Washington’s list of most-wanted terrorists and has a \$5-million bounty on his head.

The footage is believed to be the first of Hapilon since he and several other Filipino militants pledged allegiance to IS in 2014. The military had said he was wounded in a January airstrike, in the video, however, there are no indications of any injuries. Hapilon appears sitting with other militants at a table, wearing a yellow and black headscarf with a pistol beside his folded arms.

Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año confirmed the identities of those present, including Hapilon, who resembles other images said to be of him, such as those on FBI wanted posters. The militants have no spokesman and do not generally issue statements.

The images show that the insurgent alliance “has this intention of not only rebellion, but actually dismembering a portion of the Philippine territory by occupying the whole of Marawi City and establishing their own Islamic state or government,” said Año.

The military has an interest in allowing the AP to make the footage public. On Monday, six lawmakers petitioned the Supreme Court to nul-

lify President Duterte’s imposition of martial law in the south – homeland of minority Muslims in the largely Roman Catholic country – casting doubt on the gravity of the crisis there.

Año said the reality that “a full-blown rebellion” is underway should convince skeptics that this is not just “a small problem.”

Government troops discovered the video on a cellphone they seized during a May 23 raid on a Marawi safe house where Hapilon and other militants were believed to be hiding. They said the video had been filmed a day or two earlier.

It was not possible to independently verify that claim. But a separate screen grab of the same meeting, obtained by the AP from an anti-terrorism agent, showed a calendar the militants were writing on that was dated 2017.

An army official allowed the AP to record the video as it played on a laptop computer.

Año said the insurgents had been planning to attack Marawi on May 26, the start of Ramadan in the south. But the raid cut their preparations short and triggered instant clashes. Had the assault not been pre-empted, the militants likely would have seized more territory and inflicted far more damage.

As it stands, the fighting has been unprecedented, while militants have launched major attacks before, never before has any group occupied territory in the heartland of the Philippines’ Islamic faith for this long. Two weeks after the conflict began, at least 178 people have been killed and the army is still battling to regain control with airstrikes and artillery.

The militants, who are believed to be holding a Catholic priest and many other hostages, have torched buildings and destroyed at least one church. Año said they occupy 10 percent of the city and have positioned snipers in tall buildings. Much of the city center has been devastated.

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The Manila Times

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ELDER MAUTE NABBED IN DAVAO AFP TO VALIDATE REPORTS ON DEATH OF OMAR MAUTE

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will validate information that one of the two Maute brothers was killed by air strikes on Marawi City, military chief Gen. Eduardo Año said on Tuesday.

This came as police and the military nabbed the father of the Maute brothers, Cayamora, at a checkpoint in Davao City Tuesday morning.

Año said information on the incident where Omar Maute was reportedly killed circulated on May 28.

"The report is still not confirmed. It was in Marawi City," he told reporters.

The AFP chief said there was a "big possibility" Omar is still alive.

In a radio interview, Año said the military still faced at least a hundred Maute members, mostly in the Bangolo area, citing a report from the ground commander.

Aside from the remaining Maute, Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon needs to be "neutralized" by government troops.

"We are seeing the loss of their (Maute) snipers, so our troops were able to hasten their moves and it may also lead to the surrender of some remaining Maute members," Año said.

➤ValidateA2

AFP to validate reports

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF

June 2017

Omar, the brother of Abdullah Maute, was earlier reported killed in February 2016 during the military offensive against them and their cohorts in Butig, Lanao del Sur.

Earlier, President Rodrigo Duterte offered a P20-million reward for any information that could lead to the capture of Abu Sayyaf leader Hapilon and the Maute brothers.

A P10-million bounty was placed on Hapilon's head, and P5 million each on the Maute brothers.

Fighting in Marawi City started last May 22 when government troops tried to arrest Hapilon. The siege forced President Duterte to declare martial law in Mindanao on May 23.

The P10-million bounty on Hapilon is on top of the \$5 million earlier offered by the US government for information on the Abu Sayyaf leader. He also has a standing P7.4-million bounty from the Philippine government.

Hapilon is wanted for kidnapping with ransom and serious illegal detention.

Maute father arrested

The elder Maute, Cayamora, and three of his family members were arrested by the combined Task Force Davao and police under Joint Task Force Haribon, after they were intercepted on board a black Toyota Grandia at the Sirawan checkpoint in Davao City Tuesday morning.

The arrest was confirmed by Brig. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, deputy commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command, in a news conference at the Davao City Police Office.

Cayamora was nabbed along with his second wife Kongan Alfonso-Maute, daughter Norjanna Balawag-Maute, son in law Bensarali Tingao, and van driver Aljon Salazar Esmael, who was released by authorities. Norjanna and Bensarali are husband and wife.

Authorities said Cayamora concealed his identity by shaving his beard and covering his body and face with *malong*.

Sirawan commander Lt. Col. Nelson Mundia said Cayamora's

companions introduced themselves as Bensarali and Norjannah Tingao. Cayamora presented several identification cards, further raising suspicion.

Mundia said they were told by the family that Cayamora would undergo medical treatment in Davao City. Cayamora was lying on the back seat when authorities conducted a search.

In an interview, the van driver Salazar said he was hired by Bensarali to drive to Tagum in Davao del Norte for the medical check-up of two old persons.

He picked up Bensarali from Filipino Hotel in Cotabato City and drove toward Sultan Kudarat. They were waiting on the highway in Barangay Simuay, Sultan Kudarat town when a D4D pick-up arrived with two old persons on board.

The two, later identified as Cayamora and Farhana, transferred to the van.

Barangay Simuay is the crossroads to Marawi and to Davao.

Upon reaching Amas, North Cotabato, Salazar said Bensarali told him they would get off in Davao City instead of Tagum.

Authorities confiscated P363,000 cash, the van, several IDs, personal belongings and other pieces of evidence.

Gapay said Cayamora would be detained at the city police office. Cayamora faces rebellion charges in connection with the Marawi incident.

"His arrest is a big blow to the Maute and [Islamic State] because he is the patriarch of the Maute," Gapay said.

During his younger days, Cayamora led the Maute group. Gapay claimed.

The Davao regional police director, Chief Supt. Manuel Gaerlan, said Cayamora had four warrants of arrest for kidnapping and serious detention issued by the Regional Trial Court in Lanao del Sur.

Cayamora's wife also has a warrant of arrest for illegal possession of firearms and blasting caps, also issued by a court in Lanao del Sur, Gaerlan said.

Davao City police chief Sr. Supt. Alexander Tagum said authorities would further step up security in Davao City and deploy more police.

DEMPSEY REYES AND PNA

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Top inset shows Cayamora Maute, head of the Maute clan, following his arrest at a checkpoint in Davao City yesterday. The suspect is the father of Abdullah and Omar Maute (above), founders and wanted leaders of the terror group.

Maute founder killed in air strike? AFP checking

By JAIME LAUDE

A military airstrike in Marawi City last week reportedly killed local terrorist leader Omar Maute.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año, however, said ground forces were still validating Omar's reported death in an airstrike last May 28.

Año said another Maute sibling was killed in an airstrike in Butig last February.

Until reports of Omar's death are confirmed, Año said he would continue to assume that the terrorist leader is alive.

Año stressed that AFP troops are gaining ground on the Maute gunmen as the offensive in Marawi enters the third week.

Officials said the defense put up by the Maute terrorists in the city is crumbling and it will just be a matter of time before they are decimated.

Turn to Page 10

Maute founder From Page 1

Last week, Defense Secretary Delin Lorenzana said there are around 200 to 250 Maute gunmen still putting up a good fight.

But as the fighting entered its 15th day yesterday, military commanders on the ground reported only around 100 were left of the local terrorists.

"We are talking of about at least a hundred Maute-IS remaining terrorists in Bangolo area," Año said.

The Bangolo district is located in the commercial center of the city still occupied by the Maute group, named after their founders, the brothers Omar and Abdullah.

Año said the troops are tightening their grip around the area, not leaving room for terrorists to maneuver and escape.

He said government troops have confined the Maute in the area with less protection from their already dislodged snipers.

Government forces have been trying to dislodge the terrorists from their well-entrenched sniper nests in mosques and buildings.

Año said the gunmen are running out of food and ammunition with their supply line plugged as troops

encircled Barangay Bangolo.

He said the troops have cleared some of the sniper nests in last Monday's fighting, paving the way for troops to sustain the ground assault.

"Our forces have captured some of the buildings previously occupied by terrorist snipers and we have recovered some of these rifles," Año said.

When fighting started on May 23, around 500 to 700 Maute gunmen occupied almost the entire city of Marawi, but as fighting raged their number started to dwindle.

Lawmakers are monitoring the progress of the fighting and they want to ensure the needs of the troops are met in order to continue the offensive.

Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez designated Zamboanga City Rep. Celso Lobregat to coordinate with the military's Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) and the regional police to facilitate the needs of the ground forces.

Lobregat said Westmincom chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. and Region 9 police director Chief Supt. Billy Beltran have submitted their recom-

mendations on the troops' needs.

The Supreme Court (SC), on the other hand, has designated the Cagayan de Oro City regional trial court to handle all cases against the Maute terrorists.

SC spokesman Theodore Te said the high tribunal has also directed the lower courts to help in handling the Maute cases.

Te said the high tribunal has tapped the Court of Appeals in Cagayan de Oro to handle terrorism cases under the Human Security Act.

The SC has directed Court Administrator Jose Midas Marquez to "coordinate with the commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division stationed also in Cagayan de Oro to determine appropriate security measures for court personnel, prosecutors, lawyers and the accused."

Meanwhile, Philippine National Police chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa ordered the relief of Lanao del Sur provincial police director Senior Supt. Oscar Nantes for his failure to fortify efforts of government forces to secure the areas occupied by Maute gunmen in Marawi. — **With Edu Punay, Roel Pareño, Cecille Suerte Felipe**

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HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS

DUTERTE URGED TO OPEN TALKS FOR RELEASE OF 200 HOSTAGES

By Ryan D. Rosauro
@inquiremindanao

ILIGAN CITY—Amid the suspension of a humanitarian ceasefire in war-torn Marawi, civil society organizations are urging President Duterte to open negotiations with Islamic State (IS)-inspired terrorists for the release of more than 200 hostages and the grant of safe passage to more than 2,000 civilians trapped in the besieged city.

On Tuesday, rescue missions by volunteers from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) were suspended, temporarily shutting the “peace corridor,” Agakhan Mangondato Sharief, a volunteer rescuer, said.

A joint initiative of the government and the MILF peace implementing panels, the peace corridor was set up on Saturday and was formally launched on Sunday.

Four-hour ceasefire

It allowed a four-hour ceasefire, from 8 a.m. to 12 noon, with rescuers going around homes and buildings and evacuating 134 civilians.

“We would like to make clear that any negotiation with the militants should be strictly on humanitarian grounds,” said Maranao woman leader Samira Gutoc-Tomawis.

Tomawis said the peace corridor was established because both the military and the Maute terror group besieging the city had agreed to it.

“So here, we see an opening for talking to the militants on humanitarian reasons,” she said.

“There is no reason why this opportunity should not be optimized. We are talking here of the lives of more than 2,000 people,” she added.

Nothing new

Pendatun Disimban of the Bangsamoro Solidarity Network said opening negotiations for the release of hostages was nothing new for the government.

“Why is it that in the case of captives of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu and Basilan, [the] government has a track record of negotiating for their release, even to the extent of suspending the military’s pursuit operations,” Disimban said.

“Here in Marawi, we have more than 2,000 lives at stake, plus the possibility of wreaking massive devastation on a city filled with history, heritage,” he added.

According to Dickson Hermoso, a retired military officer who is now an assistant secretary in the Office of the Presi-

dential Assistant on the Peace Process, contact with the Maute group was established through an emissary on Saturday to negotiate the setting up of a peace corridor.

Hermoso added that the peacemakers were in direct contact with Abdullah Maute, younger brother of Omarkhayam Maute.

The brothers are the leaders of the terror group that reportedly has submitted to the leadership of Abu Sayyaf chieftain-Isnilon Hapilon, who has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State terror group in Iraq and Syria.

Irene Santiago, chair of the government's peace implementing panel, said the emissary was respected by both the military and the Maute group.

"He has been involved in the peace process, doing monitoring work, and peace education. We know him, we know his work. And we trust him and the MILF has confidence in him," Santiago said, adding that the emissary was jointly selected by the implementing panels.

Hermoso said the Maute group asked that those who would serve in the rescue teams "should be Muslims, preferably Maranao [and] who know the Quran verses."

No conditions

Santiago said the Maute group's consent to the peace corridor had no conditions.

"This is a process, I guess, of negotiations. When you're negotiating, you try not to offer anything, and we didn't," she said.

The government panel negotiated with the Maute group on purely humanitarian grounds, she said.

"We are not negotiating anything political," she added.

In a press briefing in Marawi on Monday, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza said the peace corridor was being evaluated, including its impact on the military operation against the terrorists.

Dureza said a ceasefire was a "double-edged sword," providing an "opportunity for saving lives and for the enemy to take advantage."

The government, however, is putting a premium on saving as many civilians as possible, he said.

Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez, chief of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said more than 2,300 civilians remained trapped in their homes and in buildings in sections of the city where government forces and terrorists were locked in combat. INQ

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Marawi bishop slams destruction of cathedral

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

Marawi Bishop Edwin dela Peña yesterday condemned the “demonic” destruction of a cathedral and religious icons by the Maute group.

Dela Peña branded as “blasphemous” the destruction of several religious icons of the church as shown in the video released by the Islamic State’s *Amaq* news agency, which was taken in Marawi City as the siege entered its second week.

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Marawi From Page 1

“We are angered by what happened. Our faith has really been trampled on,” Dela Peña said.

The 1:36-minute video also showed some militants yelling “Allahu Akbar” while smashing religious icons, tearing up images of Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and burning the St. Mary’s Cathedral in the city.

“That is blasphemy! It’s unacceptable. It’s obvious that their actions are really out of this world. It’s demonic,” Dela Peña said.

According to Dela Peña, they received information that the militants are planning to destroy and burn the church, in the same method as IS extremists destroyed historical sites in Syria and Iraq.

“That’s really their plan even before according to the raw intelligence report that we’ve been receiving. But we didn’t take it seriously because for us it was unthinkable that it’s going to happen in Marawi,” he said.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año said the Maute group is trying to spark a religious war in desecrating the church

in Marawi.

He said the video, which was traced to have come from the Middle East, was a carefully plotted but failed propaganda aimed to further inflame hatred among Muslims and Christians in the Philippines.

“We don’t want to have a religious war. This propaganda was created to foment anger among the Christians and I appeal to our people to remain calm,” he said.

Año gave assurance that the AFP is exerting all efforts to finish the conflict in Marawi City the soonest as well as to rescue Fr. Chito Suganob, the priest held hostage along with an undetermined number of people.

Appealing for public understanding, Año said the presence of trapped civilians in the city is keeping government forces from launching a full-scale attack to drive out the terrorists from Marawi.

A week ago, the militants abducted Suganob, the vicar general of the Marawi prelature, and some staff of the cathedral and churchgoers.

A video circulated online showed Suganob appealing to President Duterte to stop the military offensives in Marawi City.

– With Jaime Laude

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END AIRSTRIKES, SAVE CIVILIANS, GROUPS URGE DUTERTE, MILITARY

By **Ryan D. Rosaura**
@ingmindanao

ILIGAN CITY—When Islamic State (IS)-inspired militants besieged Marawi City two weeks ago, 75-year-old Meno Manabilang, a former guerrilla of the Moro National Liberation Front, was trapped with his wife in their home in Kapantaran in Barangay Upper Marinaut.

He was able to send text messages that he and his wife were OK. But he had one request: urge the government to stop the aerial bombings, which started on the third day of the siege.

On May 26, the text messages stopped coming, raising worries among relatives especially as the government was poised to launch a massive offensive against militants.

For the sake of Manabilang and thousands of trapped civilians, civil society leaders are urging President Duterte to order an end to the airstrikes.

"These airstrikes have proved destructive to public infrastructure and private properties in our beloved city, properties that took families so much pains to establish," said Maranao leader Samira Gutoc-Tornawis who resigned from the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) partly because of her protest against the airstrikes.

"Until now, the military cannot give us good assurance that the bombing runs spared civilian targets. Just look at what happened to the 10 soldiers who were killed by a so-called friendly fire," Tornawis added.

"We have been calling for an end to the airstrikes since the early part of the crisis. We have been bothered by the thought of Marawi reduced to a collection of debris," she said.

Early this year, President Duterte appointed Tomawis to

the BTC, the body tasked to draft the charter of a future Bangsamoro autonomy with expanded powers than the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Tomawis is confident that Mr. Duterte will hear their plea, saying the President has "a deep humanitarian sense."

"We cannot allow an Aleppo in Southeast Asia," said Amerodin Cali, a development worker, drawing parallels on what happened to an ancient and historic Syrian city ravaged by a long-running war against IS militants.

More troops and war materiel were sent to Marawi last week.

"If the siege happened in, say, Cebu, will government do what it did to Marawi, so far?" asked Pendatun Disimban, convener of Bangsamoro Solidarity Network.

In a statement issued last week, the leaders of 15 Lanao del Sur organizations asked the President to put greater premium on saving Marawi from being ruined in deciding on how to deal with the militants.

"Please spare Marawi from a similar fate, Mr. President. The best measure of the success of government's security operation should be how civilians and their communities are being protected instead of being made collateral damage," they said.

Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez, Western Mindanao Command chief, said they were looking at some 2,300 civilians who still needed to be evacuated, holed up in homes and buildings in sections of the city that government forces continued to wrestle with militants.

Mopping up operations by the police and military are slowed down by snipers, officials said. —WITH A REPORT FROM

JEFFREY MAITEM INQ

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MARAWI CRISIS

TROOPS CAN DO IT SANS REBS' HELP-ALEJANO

By Nikko Dizon
[@NikkoDizonINQ](#)

Magdalo party-list Rep. Gary Alejano on Monday said the military and the police could end the Marawi City siege of the Maute group even without the help of the New People's Army (NPA) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Alejano said enlisting the help of these rebel groups was not tantamount to forging peace and cooperation.

It would only show that the

government is incapable of ending the crisis in Marawi, where government troops are battling local terrorists, Alejano said in a statement.

The opposition lawmaker, a former Marine officer, cited the lack of interoperability among the the military, the MNLF and the communist rebels as well as the lack of trust in each other, which could affect combat operations.

"While the intention to help is welcome, bestowing complete trust on them would

be problematic. The soldiers do not know each and every member of the NPA or the MNLF. They (soldiers) do not know who among them had previous connections with or are related to the Maute and the Abu Sayyaf," Alejano said.

The lawmaker issued the statement in reaction to President Duterte's announcement over the weekend that he had accepted the offer of MNLF chieftain Nur Misuari for 2,000 MNLF fighters to join the military against the Maute group in Marawi City. INQ

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EDITORIAL

Bounties abound

"THERE ain't no such animals."

At least the true, certified kind.

Indeed, we have yet to see a real ideologically, religiously-bent terrorists in the country.

Most of them are simply armed and dangerous extortionists.

Isnilon Hapilon is a surviving leader of the Abu Sayyaf, a notorious kidnap-for-ransom group.

Hapilon has teamed up with the Maute brothers to lay siege on Marawi City and engage state security forces in an urban terror campaign after word got out that government troops were sent to arrest him.

What is the best way to capture such an armed extortionist?

By offering money—wads of it—to informants who can point where he is and lead to his arrest.

And so President Duterte offered large bounties Monday for the leaders of Islamist fighters holding parts of a southern city as the military warned its recapture may take longer than expected.

Hundreds of gunmen loyal to the Islamic State group are battling air strikes, artillery and ground forces in Marawi. Up to 2,000 civilians are believed to have been trapped for two weeks in districts held by the militants, the government said.

The fighting has killed at least 178 people and caused nearly a quarter of a million others to flee, according to government officials.

Fresh rewards totalling 20 million pesos are on offer from Duterte for the "neutralization" of Hapilon, Abdullah Maute and his brother Omarkhayam Maute, a military statement said.

"We hope that this will bear significant accomplishments leading to the eventual arrest and neutralization of Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers," military chief Eduardo Año said in the statement.

Half the amount would be for Hapilon, whom Año described as the "amir" or top leader of the IS in the country.

The US government also has a \$5 million bounty on Hapilon's head for the kidnapping and killing of US citizens, as well as a standing bounty of 7.4 million pesos by the Philippine government.

Manila said it was fighting up to 250 gunmen holed up in central Marawi, the largely Catholic nation's most important Islamic City and home to 200,000 people.

The gunmen are a combination of Hapilon's ASG, blamed for the country's deadliest bombings as well as kidnappings, and militants led by the Mautes and based in the Marawi region.

More than 224,000 residents of the city and nearby towns have fled the fighting, the provincial government said Monday.

Shortly after the violence erupted Duterte imposed martial law in Mindanao, home to 20 million people, to quell what he said was an IS bid to establish a base in the country.

The military warned Monday that defeating the militants, who are also believed to include several foreign fighters, was proving "difficult" even though 120 of them had been killed.

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On security

The breach in security at the Resorts World Manila last week that resulted in the death of 38 people, mostly employees and some casino habitués like the dead arsonist Jesse Carlos, exposed the laxity in, or the poor security mechanisms in public and private establishments we visit at times.

What the Maute Group failed to reiterate when it established a stronghold before launching a counter-attack versus the military that was out to capture Isnilon Hapilon in Marawi, Carlos had successfully instilled in the minds of those far and away from those battlefields of Mindanao.

We are not safe. Not at anytime.

Not in this age of different, more radical ideologies, beliefs and persuasions not based on science and some on humankind's medieval sins.

And in the case of Carlos, the lure of wealth and greed is not different from big business winning the bigger gamble on the world's economy at the expense of the rest us.

Carlos proved an international hotel like the Malaysian-owned Resorts World could not be a fortress like we have imagined these kinds of establishments offer as an alternative to the world outside it.

Some casino habitués could no longer distinguish night from day whenever they're playing. A hotel in Macau offers this kind of ambience, complete with the calming energies of fake clouds and blue skies that make its ceilings.

Carlos could have been one of them. That was until he

snapped, based on the conclusions of mind, attitude and personality experts who saw the difficulties encountered by Carlos soon after losing millions and disposing of properties to sustain his gambling addiction.

But this is the first time in memory when a gambling addict went to a different kind of a suicide ritual by storming into one of the establishments which have caused his withdrawal from society and life itself. He fired his gun without hurting anyone, and then he set ablaze gambling tables which have caused his miseries.

The deaths caused by the suffocation from the fire Carlos had started could partly be blamed to the Resorts World management and security officials, whom survivors and witnesses claimed had barred them from leaving the casino premises while they were at a loss themselves as to what had hit them.

It took the Philippine National Police (PNP) several days to establish the identity and the motive of Carlos's action. But the PNP was fast – and thankfully – in confirming it was not a terror attack as some in government had tried to sell it to suit their own purposes.

The Resorts World incident was far different from what is still transpiring in Marawi, which has caused President Duterte's declaration of martial law in Mindanao.

But that the Marawi standstill was also due to the laxity in or the lack of stronger security



Jesse Carlos



mechanisms was evident when discoveries of an arms and bullet cache that power the Maute Group and several millions in cash and checks, suspected to be for the bandits' use, strengthens belief the group has been in Marawi undetected for long.

It is also troubling that the arms and bullets bore marks of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). These are properties of the government and these are being used to kill our soldiers and civilians.

While Mindanao traders are known to keep their cash in their homes and not in banks, the presence of that amount in one house very close to a Maute Group base is worth looking into. Government also has mechanisms to know if bank transfers have been made from donors – local and foreign – to the Maute Group or their fronts, including the possible involvement of non-government organizations (NGOs) acting in cahoots of the bandits.

There could also be ranking military officials who could be working with the Maute Group, as there could have been with the Abu Sayyaf. But the AFP stays silent on this despite past discoveries of its properties falling into their enemies' hands.

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INQUIRER

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Voices from Marawi

When the fighting in Marawi City began, public opinion, broadly speaking, rallied around the flag and our troops—something made even easier by the military establishment's obvious reluctance over martial law and relative transparency over the unfolding events.

Somebody observed that Moro refugees willingly evacuated Marawi City not only to save themselves but also to assist the military in clearing out the terrorists. But these refugees are now critical of the government because of the military air strikes. A refugee rued that even if the military sprayed all their houses with bullets, they could patch them up; but to bomb is to utterly destroy, and that they could not accept.

To compound matters, up to that point the refugees had heard no assurances from officials that government would help them rebuild. Instead, what traveled through the refugee grapevine was news of which areas were being destroyed, resulting in people forming a fairly complete picture of who still had homes, and who no longer has one to return to. It is the destruction of homes that is turning refugee opinion against the armed forces.

A Metro Manila resident who heard this responded, "Do you think any government would dare to do to Metro Manila what is being done to Marawi City?" An opinion born of experience with the last time there was urban fighting in the capital—in 1989. Destruction was significant, but nowhere near what it could have been—as was the case with Manila in 1945, when fanatical, suicidal, ruthless Japanese troops systematically set about murdering as many civilians and killing as many Filipino and American soldiers as they could.

One of the most difficult and bloodiest



THE LONG VIEW

MANUEL L. QUEZON III

forms of fighting is the kind that takes place in an urban setting. A small, motivated and ruthless force can tie down a much larger one.

The instinct of the military is to shoot and demolish first and ask questions later, rather than risk the lives of its troops. Gen. Robert Beightler who commanded the 37th Infantry Division during the Battle of Manila in 1945, summed it up this way: "Although I know there was plenty of weeping and wailing from property owners who saw the buildings disappear in the blasts of 240-mm shells, if I could have had those dive bombers too, I might have made the big rubble into little rubble."

That is the military mind at work: Once the mission starts, the instinct is to throw everything into the fight, to finish it faster, with minimal loss of military lives. Civilian casualties are justified—resulting in a smaller overall loss of life than if things had gotten bogged down and protracted.

But the danger, as quite a few voices from Mindanao civil society expressed last

Friday, is that as government tries to accelerate its operations, the toll can have unexpected repercussions not just on the Moro people, but also on the wider public opinion. It can radicalize younger Moros; and it can fan the embers of old prejudices.

If we are troubled by the thought of jihad, we should be equally troubled by images of the crusades. Back in 2008 when news of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity agreement broke, one Mindanao blogger recounted how citizens rushed to their church, brought out the town's statue of the Virgin Mary, and held an impromptu procession, vowing to defend their homes to the death against the Moros.

Another blogger wrote about their mayor closing his oration about rumors that the city [Iligan] would be ceded to the Moros with the cry, "Viva Señor San Miguel!" as his fellow Iliganons thundered, "Viva!"

"The Mayor was speaking the heart language of the Iliganon, something that they could understand. He was speaking the old language of the Spanish times at the time when the citizens of the old fort of Iligan defended the fort and even waged battle against the Moros," he recalled.

And yet today, Iligan is one of the places where residents of Marawi City have found refuge with relatives and friends. And it is in Marawi where story upon story has emerged—of Moros standing up against the terrorists, risking life and limb to protect and rescue Christian town-mates. When has the nation seen such authentic spirituality, such heroic solidarity, in the face of brutality? And if such voices insist there must be a different way to free Marawi, shouldn't the first instinct of those who serve and protect be, to listen?

ONLINE NEWS

07 JUNE 2017

www.dwdd.com.ph

Marines receives counter terrorism equipment from US

Posted by Lui Claudio

Manila — Commandant of the Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) Maj. Gen. Emmanuel Salamat accepted new counter-terrorism weapons and equipment from United States Embassy military representatives during a transfer ceremony at PMC Headquarters in Taguig, June 5.

Officials from the Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) turned over weapons and equipment delivered recently under the U.S. government's Counterterrorism Train and Equip Program at a ceremony at PMC Headquarters. This equipment will enhance the PMC's counterterrorism capabilities, and help protect Philippine Marines actively engaged in counterterrorism operations in the southern Philippines.

The weapons and equipment include 300 M4 carbines, 200 Glock 21 pistols, 4 M134D Gatling-style machine guns, and 100 M203 grenade launchers delivered May 18-22 to Clark Air Base. JUSMAG also delivered 25 new Combat Rubber Raiding Craft (CRR) with outboard motors May 30 to PMC Headquarters. The PMC's Inshore Boat Battalion and Marine Special Operations Group have already employed previous U.S. Counterterrorism Train and Equip gear in ongoing combat operations in the southern Philippines.

Since 2007, representatives from JUSMAG have delivered and programmed Php7.3 billion of military equipment to the Philippine Marine Corps and other branches of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to enhance counterterrorism capabilities. In addition, the AFP has procured small-arms weapons, water craft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and personal protective equipment as part of the U.S. government's Foreign Military Sales system and other programs.

Over the last five years, the U.S. government has allocated Php15 billion of grant funding to provide the AFP with equipment, including corresponding upgrades and training. The equipment transfers and continued bilateral training and exercises demonstrate the commitment of the United States to work with the Philippines towards building safer communities and eradicating global terror networks.

AFP now validating reports on death of Omar Maute in Marawi air strike

MANILA, June 6 -- Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año on Tuesday announced that they are now validating reports that Omar Maute, one of the founders of the Maute Group, was killed during an air strike in Marawi City last May 28.

"We are still validating the report. (his alleged death by air strike) took place last May 28. The report is still not confirmed and we are still validating it. There is still the possibility that he is alive," he added.

Omar, the brother of Abdullah Maute, was earlier reported killed in February 2016 during the military offensive against them and their cohorts in Butig, Lanao Del Sur.

Earlier, the AFP announced that President Rodrigo Duterte has offered a PHP20 million for any information that could lead to the neutralization of Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon and the two Maute brothers.

The latter are the heads of the terror now being cornered by security forces in Marawi City.

A PHP10 million bounty is allotted for Hapilon and PHP5 million for each of the Maute brothers.

"The President is offering PHP10 million-reward money for the neutralization of Isnilon Hapilon who is believed to be leading the terrorist Maute-ISIS group in attacking Marawi City," Año disclosed.

Fighting in Marawi City started last May 23 when government troops tried to arrest the wounded terrorist leader.

The amount is aside the USD5 million-bounty offered by the US government for Hapilon.

Hapilon, a senior leader of the Abu Sayyaf, has an outstanding warrant of arrest for kidnapping with ransom and serious illegal detention.

He also has a PHP7.4 million standing bounty from the Philippine government. (Priam F. Nepomuceno/PNA)

Additional troops to be deployed to secure cleared Marawi City areas

MANILA, June 6 --- Additional troops will be deployed in Marawi City to prevent Maute Group terrorists from reentering cleared areas in the locality, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff, Gen. Eduardo Año, said in a radio interview Tuesday.

"We have enough forces there (in Marawi City) but to be sure that they (Maute Group terrorists) will be prevented from infiltrating into the cleared areas, we will be deploying additional troops," he added.

These troops will be deployed to prevent these brigands from conducting terroristic actions and other atrocities against civilian residents.

Año said heavy fighting is now ongoing in areas being held by remnants of the Maute Group as the military is now focusing on clearing sniper positions. These lawless elements, Año added, are used in slowing down troop movements and targeting civilians.

"Once these sniper positions are cleared, we can now say that Marawi City is now fully cleared," he said.

Of special interest is the Maute Group positions in Bangolo as they were able to take control of tall buildings in the area and stocked these with weapons and bullets, showing that there is an existing plan of the group to stage attacks in Marawi City during Ramadhan. (Priam F. Nepomuceno/PNA)

Soldiers escape unscathed after attack by Abu Sayyaf

TROOPS of the 68th and 69th Infantry Battalion were attacked by alleged sub-leaders of the Abu Sayyaf group in their camp in Barangay Katian, Indanan, Sulu on Saturday around 6:20 p.m.

The two battalions were sent to Jolo, Sulu last Sept. 6, 2016 to help in the fight against the terror group in the area, according to the report of the regional police of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (PRO-ARMM).

Investigation conducted by Indanan Municipal Police Station showed that the troops were attacked believed to be under ASG sub-leader Aldrin Bagadi alyas Shining and Mujakkal Bagadi.

No casualties on the government side were reported.

The said attack was believed to be a retaliation for the military operation conducted by military forces last June 2 at the vicinity of Barangay Langpas, Indanan which resulted to the apprehension of two sons of Mujakkal.

The operation also resulted to the confiscation of four motorcycles at nearby house of said ASG group.

Suspected Maute members nabbed in Davao City

Suspected members of the Maute Group, including its alleged top leader Cayamora Maute, 67, were arrested at the checkpoint of Task Force Davao in Sirawan, Toril, Davao City at around 10 a.m. Tuesday.

Police identified the other suspected Maute members as Cayamora's second wife Kongan Alfonso Balawag, Norjannah Balawag Maute and her alleged partner Benzarali Tingao, and Aljon Salazar Ismael, the driver of the van they were using.

Police said they recovered a grenade and a .45 caliber pistol from the suspects' vehicle.

In a press conference, Brig. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, martial law spokesperson for the Eastern Mindanao Command, said Cayamora himself confirmed his identity as father of the Maute brothers.

The Maute Group has been battling government forces in Marawi City since May 23 in a siege that triggered a mass evacuation of residents.

The suspects were heading for Davao City on board a black Toyota Grandia for Cayamora's medical checkup.

Upon checking, Gapay said authorities found an aged man wrapped in a blanket that partly covered his face lying on a passenger seat.

He said the man bore resemblance to the Maute's top leader upon verification.

He said the police brought the suspects to the Davao City Police Office for investigation.

He said police recovered from Cayamora several identifications (IDs) with different names but admitted his true identity during the investigation.

He said Cayamora will be charged with rebellion and Balawag with violation of Presidential Decree 1866 for alleged possession of blasting caps and triggering devices.

Police Regional Office 11 director Chief Supt. Manuel Gaerlan said the arrest was a big blow to the Maute Group as Cayamora is considered one of the brains of the terrorist group.

He said there is a standing warrant of arrest against 89 other Maute members including Cayamora for five counts of kidnapping and serious illegal detention in Lanao del Sur.

He said they are still verifying reports on the presence of Maute members in the city.

"There are various information being confirmed. They are attempting to enter the city. As to the exact identifies we cannot ascertain it. We are assuming they have sympathizers here," he said.

In an interview with reporters, driver Salazar denied involvement with the Maute Group.

He said he picked up Tingao and Norjannah at Hotel Filipino in Cotabato.

He said Tingao, a friend from college, told him that they would pick up passengers in Sultan Kudarat before they would head to Tagum City.

Upon reaching Sultan Kudarat, he said they picked up another unknown couple.

He said the instruction to him changed. Instead of Tagum City, he said he was told that they were going to Davao City.

Gaerlan said they are still studying whether they will include the driver in the rebellion case, given the evidence.

He said Cayamora was attended to by Central 911 because he had cough.

Rebels attack another Cafgu detachment in North Cotabato

Suspected communist guerrillas harassed a paramilitary detachment under the 72nd Infantry Battalion in Makilala town in North Cotabato around 8:30 p.m., Monday, an Army official said.

Lt. Col. Harold Argamosa, commander of the 39th Infantry Battalion, said the attack was the fifth since Mindanao was placed under a state of martial law and took place a day before President Duterte' scheduled visit in the province.

Argamosa said the rebel attack in Barangay Kisante, Makilala lasted only five minutes.

"We did not reply to it. Our troops decided to stay put and did not retaliate. They knew it was just pure harassment," said the Army colonel.

Makilala falls under the area of responsibility of the 39th IB but the 72nd IB built a detachment of the Civilian Armed Force Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in Kisante.

Argamosa identified the attackers as members of the New Peoples' Army (NPA) Front 51 which operates in Makilala and in the towns of Bansalan and Sta. Cruz in Davao del Sur.

The attack by the NPA in Kisante was the fifth since May 22.

On May 26, two roadside bombings by suspected communist rebels took place in Kidapawan City wounding four policemen.

On May 29, alleged rebels attacked two members of a K9 unit, and on May 31, a Cafgu detachment.

Duterte was expected to arrive at the headquarters of the Army's 602nd Brigade in Carmen, North Cotabato for his regular troop visitation, around 2 p.m. Tuesday.

The families and relatives of soldiers killed in the siege in Marawi City would be given an opportunity to talk to the President.

At least five of the government casualties in Marawi came from North Cotabato – two from Kabacan, and one each from Pikit, Aleosan, and Libungan towns.