

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

08 March 2017

Wednesday

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

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PHILIPPINES

SUNRISE 6:09 AM
SUNSET 6:05 PM
MOONRISE 2:14 PM
MOONSET 2:25 AM

LOW TIDE 7:32 PM MAR 9
HIGH TIDE 10:54 PM MAR 12

MANILA SOUTH HARBOR
2:16 AM -0.13 Meter
6:13 PM 0.95 Meter

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST MARCH 08, 2017 | WEDNESDAY

LOW PRESSURE AREA 160 KM SOUTHEAST OF DAVAO CITY, DAVAO DEL SUR. NORTHEAST MONSOON AFFECTING NORTHERN LUZON (As of 5:00 AM - Mar. 7, 2017)

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

EXTENDED WEATHER FORECAST	MAR 9 THU	MAR 10 FRI	MAR 11 SAT	EXTENDED WEATHER FORECAST	MAR 9 THU	MAR 10 FRI	MAR 11 SAT	
METRO MANILA	21 °C 30 °C	22 °C 30 °C	22 °C 31 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	23 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 32 °C	Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers
TUGUEGARAO	21 °C 30 °C	20 °C 29 °C	20 °C 29 °C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	24 °C 30 °C	24 °C 30 °C	25 °C 31 °C	Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
LAOAG	20 °C 29 °C	21 °C 29 °C	21 °C 30 °C	METRO CEBU	24 °C 29 °C	24 °C 30 °C	25 °C 31 °C	Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
BAGUIO	14 °C 22 °C	13 °C 22 °C	14 °C 23 °C	TACLOBAN	23 °C 29 °C	23 °C 29 °C	24 °C 30 °C	Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
SBMA/CLARK	23 °C 31 °C	22 °C 30 °C	22 °C 32 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	23 °C 29 °C	23 °C 30 °C	23 °C 31 °C	Light rain
TAGAYTAY	19 °C 29 °C	19 °C 29 °C	19 °C 29 °C	METRO DAVAO	24 °C 28 °C	24 °C 29 °C	24 °C 31 °C	
LEGAZPI	24 °C 30 °C	24 °C 30 °C	23 °C 29 °C	ZAMBOANGA	23 °C 30 °C	23 °C 31 °C	24 °C 32 °C	

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‘Superman’ vs Mighty

**By Leila B. Salaverria,
Aie Balagtas See
and Marlon Ramos
@Team_Inquirer**

President Duterte, known as “Superman” to a confessed hit man of the so-called Davao Death Squad when he was mayor of Davao City, is taking on Mighty Corp., a Filipino cigarette manufacturer accused of massive tax evasion.

Mr. Duterte said on Tuesday he had ordered the arrest of Alexander Wongchuking, the owner of Mighty, for using fake tax stamps on its products.

But he downplayed reports that Wongchuking had tried to bribe him. He said that when he was the Davao City mayor, he was gifted with cash, which he ordered returned.

“Yes, I ordered his arrest. He’s the one behind it, the fake cigarette stamps,” Mr. Duterte told reporters in Malacañang, referring to Wongchuking.

Asked about reports he was offered a bribe, Mr. Duterte declined to call it a bribery. He said he was gifted a gun last Christmas, which he did not accept.

The bribe offer was discussed during the Cabinet meeting on Monday, presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said in a press briefing.

Those who would try to bribe government officials should be scared, Abella said, “because the law will come down full force upon them.”

Earlier on Tuesday, the chief presidential legal counsel, Salvador Panelo, said Mr. Duterte wanted Wongchuking arrested for economic sabotage for using fake tax stamps.

Mighty owner at NBI

The President’s arrest order prompted Wongchuking to show up at the National Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice (DOJ) “to explain his side.”

But the NBI could not arrest and detain Wongchuking despite Mr. Duterte’s accusation of economic sabotage against the Mighty president.

“We cannot hold him,” two NBI sources said, as Wongchuking had no pending arrest warrant.

The businessman went to the NBI office on Tuesday morning, along with Mighty lawyer Sigfrid Fortun, and met with NBI Director Dante Gierran and other bureau officials.

He stayed at the NBI office for about an hour and left to have lunch, before his 2 p.m. meeting with Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II.

Accompanied by Fortun, Wongchuking spoke with Aguirre and Gierran in a closed-door meeting at the DOJ office.

A source close to Wongchuking said the Mighty owner went to the NBI office to “grant Gierran’s invitation.” Gierran called up a friend, who could “bridge” the NBI to the tycoon, and asked: “Maybe he [Wongchuk-

ing] can come here tonight [Monday] or tomorrow morning [Tuesday]?”

When Wongchuking learned about the invitation, which the source said was done because of Palace’s alleged arrest order, the businessman said: “Why, what have I done?”

Competition

Mighty Corp., which operates a factory in the City of Malolos in Bulacan province, produces Cortos, Regaliz Largos, American Blend 30s, American Blend 20s and American Blend Level-Up brands.

It reported a net operating income of P338.22 million in 2014, up 41 percent from P239.63 million in 2013.

Philip Morris International Inc. (PMFTC), which merged its Philippine operations with Lucio Tan’s Fortune Tobacco Corp. in 2010, has seen its market share slide amid stiff competition from Mighty’s cheaper products.

PMFTC produces Marlboro, L&M and Philip Morris as well as homegrown Fortune, Jackpot, Champion and Hope.

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'Airtight' case readied

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III on Tuesday said the government was preparing to file an "airtight" tax evasion case against Mighty.

Also on Tuesday, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) uncovered in Cebu City and Tacloban City packs of Mighty cigarettes that bore fake tax stamps.

The BOC said it was preparing to press charges against Mighty following last week's raids in General Santos City and Pampanga that yielded Mighty cigarettes with over P1.1 billion in unpaid excise taxes.

Customs Commissioner Nicanor Paeldon himself was present when a shipment containing Mighty cigarette packs was opened in the ports of Tacloban and Cebu. The shipment was confirmed to be carrying packs with fake tax stamps.

In all, the two bureaus seized 11,044 master cases of Mighty cigarettes worth P215 million in General Santos City, on top of

62,200 master cases worth P1.98 billion in San Simon, Pampanga province.

The 73,244 master cases contained 36.622 million packs, which at an excise tax of P30 a pack will result in foregone revenues for the government totaling P1.099 billion.

Last month, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) also confiscated 82,902 packs of Mighty cigarettes reportedly also bearing fake tax stamps in Cebu, depriving the government of P2.49 million in excise taxes.

'Malfunctioning' stamp reader

In a statement, Mighty blamed malfunctioning BIR excise-stamp validating devices that produced different results when used yesterday on its products that were seized in what it called unlawful raid on its warehouses in Pampanga.

Fortun, a Mighty lawyer, said that when the devices were used by BIR examiners on the confiscated cartons bearing Mighty cigarettes, they registered a green light indicating they were genuine stamps.

Later, these registered red or bogus marks for stamps on the same carton, he said.

"Worse, when the same device was used to test tax stamps on products of its competitors brought in by one of the agents, the device also turned red, indicating that the competitors stamps were fake," Fortun said in a statement.

On the alleged attempt to bribe Mr. Duterte, Fortun denied any participation by Mighty.

When he was mayor, the President said he was asked for a favor, "but I said I am not into it." But a package was left with him.

"There was no bribery because nothing was said," Duterte said.

But when his aide checked the package and saw that it contained money, he had the cash returned.

"I said, give that back to that jerk. He caught up with him on the airplane itself in Davao," Mr. Duterte said. —WITH REPORTS

FROM BEN O. DE VERA AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ

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5 Maute militants slain in clashes

JOLO – Five members of the Maute group were killed in encounters with government forces in Lanao del Sur yesterday.

Capt. Jo-Ann Peninglay, Western Mindanao Command spokesperson, said two militants were initially killed in a clash with policemen serving a warrant of arrest in a village in Maguin town at around 3 a.m.

Three other militants died when soldiers of the 14th Division Reconnaissance Co. under Joint Task Force Zam-PeLan encountered around 30 militants led by a certain

Afgan at around 9 a.m. in Barangay Ragayan.

Peninglay said a Garand, an M16 and three M14 rifles, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, assorted ammunition, two improvised explosive devices and three bandoleers were among those recovered from the militants.

She said pursuit operations are underway as soldiers of the 51st Infantry Battalion were deployed to serve as blocking forces.

Military units in the area are on alert to augment the troops, she added.

– Roel Pareño

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Malaya
The National Newspaper

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37 Abu Sayyaf killed in AFP drive

BY VICTOR REYES

THIRTY-SEVEN members of the Abu Sayyaf have been killed and 37 others were either apprehended, captured or have surrendered since January when the military leadership set a six-month deadline to defeat the group.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said the number shows that the Armed Forces is on track to defeating the Abu Sayyaf within the timeline.

"As a result of series of encounters and decisive operations, we neutralized many members of the Abu Sayyaf. Based on our reports, 32 (group members) were already killed, though we recovered only 14 bodies," said Petinglay.

Petinglay said 13 Abu Sayyaf

members were apprehended and two others have surrendered. Also, she reported that 22 other members of the group were injured in armed engagement with soldiers.

The military stepped up its offensive against the Abu Sayyaf in January after AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Ano vowed to defeat the ASG, the Maute Group and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in six months.

Petinglay said they are confident of defeating the Abu Sayyaf within the timeframe. The Abu Sayyaf has about 300 to 400 members, mostly based in Sulu where the group is keeping 31 foreign and Filipino kidnap victims.

"We are positive on that as long as we have the support of the LGUs (local government units)," said Petinglay. "We don't really have

to killed everyone (in the ASG)," the official qualified.

"The moment we degrade their capability to fight and we stop them from their kidnapping activities, we would have already won the fight. We don't really need to kill all the members of the Abu Sayyaf," she said.

Nine of 32 slain Abu Sayyaf were killed in on and off skirmishes in Maimbung town in Sulu which broke out last Sunday. One of the fatalities was Jaber Susukan, brother of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Idang Susukan.

Idang Susukan, who is said to be close to senior Abu Sayyaf leader Radullan Sahiron, was reported to have been "seriously" wounded in the fighting, Col. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Joint Task Force Sulu, earlier said.

Petinglay said they received

reports that the Abu Sayyaf men encountered last Sunday are holding 12 kidnap victims. Government forces are still continuing with pursuit operations against the fleeing bandits as of yesterday.

Yesterday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana led a dialogue with local government officials of Sulu in Jolo town to address the Abu Sayyaf problem. Top military officials joined Lorenzana in the dialogue.

During the dialogue, Petinglay said local officials gave their inputs on how to end the Abu Sayyaf known for bombings, kidnappings and beheading of kidnap victims.

"They talked about the problems and solutions...In the end, we got their commitment to help us (in the fight against the ASG)...They are 100 percent committed," she said of the local government officials.

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POLICE FILES

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POLICE FILES

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4 NPA patay sa engkwentro sa Quezon

PATAY ang apat na miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) nang makasagupa ang mga sundalo sa may Sitio Umagos, Brgy. Mabunga, San Francisco, Quezon kung saan tatlong matataas na kalibre ng armas ang nakarekober ng militar kahapon.

Ayon kay 2nd Infantry Division spokesperson Captain Xyzon Menesses, nakatanggap ng impormasyon ang tropa mula sa 2nd Jungle Fighter Company (2JFC) sa ilalim ng 201st Brigade kaugnay sa presensiya ng armadong grupo na hinihinalang miyembro ng NPA.

Bahayag ni 201st Brigade Commander Col. Lenard Agustin, walang uitalang casualties sa hanay ng mga sundalo pero apat sa panig ng rebeldeng NPA.

Nakarekober din ang militar ng tatlong matataas na kalibre ng armas, dalawang AK47 at isang M16 Rifle.

Patuloy pa rin hanggang sa ngayon ang pursuit operations ng mga sundalo laban sa mga rebeldeng NPA.

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Militiaman hurt in clash with rebels in Camarines Sur

By: Delfin T. Mallari Jr. - @inquirerdotnet

~~Inquirer Southern Luzon / 07:00 PM March 07, 2017~~

LUCENA CITY – A still unknown government militiaman was slightly wounded in an encounter between government forces and a band of suspected New People’s Army (NPA) rebels in Goa town in Camarines Sur province on Tuesday, a military spokesman said.

Major Virgilio Perez Jr., public information officer of the military’s Southern Luzon Command (Solcom), said troopers from the Army’s 83rd Infantry Battalion engaged an estimated 20 communist guerillas in a firefight in Barangay Tabogon around 1 p.m. The soldiers recovered three caliber .45 pistols and materials for the production of improvised explosive devices in the encounter site.

In Quezon province, at least four NPA rebels were killed in another encounter in San Francisco town on Tuesday afternoon.

“We extend our deepest sympathy to the bereaved families of the NPA killed in the encounter,” Lt. General Ferdinand Quidilla, Solcom commander, said in a statement.

Quidilla said the state security forces will continue to adhere to the President’s order to wage war against NPA rebels “who continue to conduct violent attacks against the soldiers and the public”.

Perez said Solcom appealed to NPA rebels to lay down their arms and “stop the senseless fighting against fellow Filipinos and participate on a more peaceful resolution of armed conflict through localized peace talks.” **JE**

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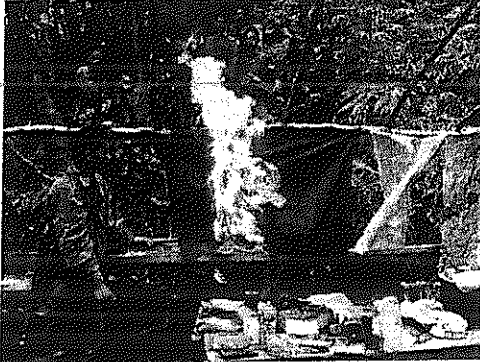
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www.inquirer.net

4 suspected rebels killed in Quezon clash

By: Delfin T. Mallari Jr. - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

Inquirer Southern Luzon / 05:52 PM March 07, 2017



INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

LUCENA CITY — Four suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed in an encounter with government forces in San Francisco town in Quezon province, Tuesday afternoon, an Army official said.

Col. Lenard Agustin, commander of the Army's 201st Infantry Brigade, said troopers engaged a band of more than 20 heavily armed communist guerillas in Sitio Umagos in Barangay (village) Mabunga around 2 p.m.

Citing initial reports from the combat site, he said four rebels were killed in the encounter.

"There's body count," he said in a phone interview, but he said he had not received information on the identities and gender of the fatalities. No one was hurt among government soldiers.

Agustin said the soldiers also recovered two AK 47 rifles and an M16 left behind by the rebels who hurriedly escaped. Combined military and police forces are conducting hot pursuit operations. **SFM/rga**

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MANILA BULLETIN
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IN HOT PURSUIT – Soldiers await deployment in the military's ongoing offensives against the Abu Sayyaf Group in Jolo, Sulu. The military has reported heavy casualties against the bandit group, which has lost 23 combatants, in the last five days of fierce encounters with government forces. (EPA)

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Sayyaf wiped out by June – DND

By ROEL PAREÑO

JOLO, Sulu – Security forces have been ordered to sustain the offensive against the Abu Sayyaf and to finish them off within a six-month deadline as ordered by President Duterte.

“The Armed Forces, the PNP (Philippine National Police) will sustain the operations against the Abu Sayyaf and we will try to finish them by the deadline,” Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told the troops here yesterday, reminding them of the six-month order of Duterte that started last January.

Col. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Sulu (JTFS), expressed optimism they would meet the deadline.

Sobejana said they have all the resources of the Armed Forces to back their operations.

“We are confident we can even finish the job in less than

Turn to Page 2

six months,” Sobejana said.

“We are using all the might of the Armed Forces,” he added.

Sobejana said the military has started using TA-50 fighter jets against the militants.

Lorenzana led the top security officials in the visit

here yesterday to assess the situation.

He was accompanied by National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año and commanders of the different military service units.

Sobejana briefed Lorenzana and top officials on the situation against the Abu Sayyaf.

He said they are hunting down a total of 430 bandits in different areas of Sulu.

Sobejana said the Abu Sayyaf sustained a consider-

able number of casualties from the renewed military offensive.

He said there are as many as 30 militants were killed and scores wounded since the renewed offensive began Feb. 21.

Officials said at least seven more militants, including the brother of a ranking Abu Sayyaf leader, were killed in Maimbung town yesterday.

The latest casualties brought the total number of Abu Sayyaf killed to 16 in the latest offensive.

“As we speak, operations continued in that area. There were sporadic exchanges of gunfire,” Sobejana said.

He said among those killed

was Jaber Susukan, the brother of Abu Sayyaf leader Idang Susukan who was also wounded in the clashes with government troops.

“They have already suffered 30 killed and 22 wounded. We have the names we want to withhold for the time being,” Sobejana said.

He said at least 28 soldiers were also wounded.

“This is an operation so we expect also casualty from our side,” Sobejana said.

Government forces also occupied most of the Abu Sayyaf stronghold, driving the militants out from their comfort zones.


Sobejana said they have

also taken control of parts of the Sinumaan complex, which the Abu Sayyaf used as their refuge in the border of Talipao and Maimbung.

He said there were still pockets of resistance in the area.

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

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Abus on the run

— AFP

The military Monday said that five more Abu Sayyaf fighters were killed in the continuing assault of military troops against the bandit group in Sulu province over the weekend.

The latest death toll put the total number of Abu Sayyaf fighters killed in the last three weeks to 23, as per report coming from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Western Mindanao Command (WesMinCom).

Army Colonel Cirilito Sobejana, the commander of the AFP Joint Task Force Sulu, said a number of high-powered firearms were also recovered by ground troops in the latest encounter that transpired at Barangay Lumipad, Mainbung, Sulu, at 5 a.m. Sunday.

Sobejana said ASG sub-leader Idang Susukan was also wounded in the fierce encounter, while his brother Jaber was killed.

Idang Susukan is said to be one of the very close sub-commanders of Abu Sayyaf leader Radullan Sahron.

In another news report, it was said that both Susukan brothers were killed.

Sobejana added that the bodies of four other Abu Sayyaf fighters were recovered by troops on the ground.

"This is a relentless and sustain military operation. The Abu Sayyaf is

on the run. They are disorganized and confused," he said.

"Firefight started at 5 a.m. Sunday. Our operations are ongoing despite soldiers having difficulty with the terrain," he added.

Sobejana said they expect the Abu Sayyaf casualties to rise as they pressed their attack against the bandit group.

"We expect more casualties on their side as we close on them despite the difficulty in the terrain. Our troops have to walk or to wade through waist-deep mud, it's a mangrove area," Sobejana said.

"Getting there was very difficult, but they are already in the area," he added.

Sobejana said firefight is still imminent as they continue with their push in efforts of destroying the Abu Sayyaf.

"The fighting has been on and off that's why we are continuing with our push. We have already encircled their lair and hopefully we will have good results," he said.

Sobejana said, from an estimated 120 Abu Sayyaf fighters under Idang Susukan, the number has drastically dropped to 70.

"But the number could go up as there are sub-commanders in the area which we have not accounted for yet," Sobejana said. (Francis T. Wakefield)

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US-made sniper rifles due for delivery

By JAIME LAUDE

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is now awaiting the delivery of sniper rifles from the United States to give more teeth to its ongoing campaign against homegrown terrorist groups.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana confirmed 60 Barrett sniper rifles are due for delivery to the AFP, most of them going to elite military units.

Lorenzana, who is also working to acquire Russian-made sniper rifles for the AFP, said the purchase of these weapons from Moscow has to go through procurement processes.

"It is already due for delivery by May as those which we may acquire from Russia has to go through various procurement stages," Lorenzana said.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Glorioso Miranda earlier said they would be having an additional inventory of Barrett sniper rifles that the previous administration has purchased from the US for more than P30 million.

He also said the rifles are due to arrive soon and will be given to the troops to enhance their fighting capability against terrorists.

A Barrett is a .50 caliber sniper rifle that has an effective range of 1,800 meters and can take out targets behind cover and immobilize moving trucks and vehicles.

Officials stressed the troops would gain tactical advantage over the rebels by having this rifle.

Also, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has been given a new weapon, the *BRP Malapasuca*, in its anti-piracy campaign in Southern Mindanao.

PCG officer-in-charge Commodore Joel Garcia also urged Congress to support their proposal to install search and rescue (SAR) and radar station near the Sibutu Passage, the area prone to sea piracy attacks.

The PCG stressed the need to beef up security in there following 13 piracy attacks in the last six months.

On the other hand, a warship from New Zealand is due to arrive in Manila next month.

The scheduled arrival of *HMNZS Te Kaha*, a frigate, early next month was made known Sunday by New Zealand Secretary of Defense Helene Quilter.

Quilter visited the AFP main headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo and called on Secretary Lorenzana and Armed Forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año.

The New Zealand embassy said Quilter's visit reflects the commitment of both countries to progress the bilateral defense

relationship.

Quilter's visit centered mostly on discussions over contemporary challenges as well as regional security architecture.

Also discussed during Quilter's visit was New Zealand and the Philippines'

co-chairmanship of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security from 2017 to 2020.

– With Evelyn Macairan

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Malaya
The National Newspaper

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Former AFP chief named to head NIA

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday appointed former Armed Forces chief Ricardo Visaya as head of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

The President, in a chance interview at the sidelines of the series of Department of Agriculture-related events held in Malacañang, said he had to carefully choose who would head the agency as it involved a P150 billion-budget.

Visaya will replace Peter Lavifia, who resigned as NIA chief last week amid allegations of corruption.

Visaya retired as the 48th AFP chief last December. He was succeeded by General Eduardo Año.

Among the positions he held in the military include heading the Southern Luzon Command, assistant division commander of the 6th Infantry Division in Cotabato, and commander of the 104th Brigade in Sultan Kudarat.

He was also the ground commander in Tarlac and Pampanga when the Hacienda Luisita massacre happened in 2004.

Malacañang also announced the appointment of more than 50 persons in government and the promotion of six police officers.

The list of new appointments was led by

former senator and former executive secretary Alberto Romulo as member of the board of directors of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP). He replaces Jose Nunez Jr. and will serve a term until June 30, 2017.

Other appointees include former health secretary and former Civil Service Commission head Francisco Duque III as member of the board of trustees of the Government Service Insurance Corporation (GSIS) and former Philippine Army Commander Reynaldo Mapagu as member of the board of the North Luzon Railways Corporation. — *Jocelyn Montemayor*

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Ex-AFP chief Visaya to head NIA



Visaya

President Duterte confirmed yesterday the appointment of retired Armed Forces chief Gen. Ricardo Visaya as the new chief of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

eral Ricardo Visaya as NIA chief, Duterte said during the launch of the National Color-Coded Agriculture Guide Map at Malacañang yesterday.

In the same event, Agriculture

Probe on, but NEA chief stays for now. Story on Page 2

Visaya will replace Duterte's campaign spokesman Peter Laviña, who was fired amid corruption issues three months after assuming the NIA post.

Undersecretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat confirmed the appointment of her father, former foreign affairs secretary Albert Romulo, as chairman of the Development

"I have appointed retired gen-

Turn to Page 9

Ex-AFP From Page 1

Bank of the Philippines.

Duterte made the announcement a few days after he asked Laviña, a trusted ally, to "go quietly" amid reports of corruption under his term as NIA administrator.

In an earlier interview in Cordova, Cebu, Duterte talked about the pain of having to let go a friend who was part of his Cabinet.

The President said he needed to do so, as he had vowed to stamp out corruption in government under his term.

Asked if he is hurt by his decision, Duterte replied: "Yes, of course."

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said Duterte announced Visaya's appointment during a Cabinet meeting

on Monday night.

"And the deputy administrator is engineer Caesar Sulaik. It's a personal choice. I think the number one criteria of the President in choosing Visaya is incorruptibility," Piñol said.

Visaya retired as the 48th Armed Forces chief last December and was succeeded by Gen. Eduardo Año.

Although Visaya has no background in the irrigation and agriculture sector, Piñol said the new NIA chief could learn the process along the way.

Visaya is expected to report to office within the week.

Piñol refused to comment on the corruption issues attached to the former NIA chief. — With Christina Mendez, Louise Maureen Simeon

H

March 2017

BusinessMirror

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A broader view of today's business

EVER HEARD OF TOO MANY COOKS?

Top security execs in Sulu to boost fight vs Abus

JOLO, Sulu—Four top security officials arrived here on Tuesday to oversee the ongoing military operations against the Abu Sayyaf.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr.; Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana; the Armed Forces chief of staff, Gen. Eduardo Año; and the Army commander, Lt. Gen. Glorioso Miranda, immediately held a closed-door meeting with Joint Task Force Sulu ground commanders after their arrival at around 9 a.m.

Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief, said

they will assess the ongoing military offensive against the Abu Sayyaf bandits.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, Westmincom information officer, said the four top officials will also meet with the local chief executives to determine the needed assistance to the communities affected by the fighting.

At least 32 Abu Sayyaf members have been killed since January. Six have been reported

wounded, while 23 were captured.

The biggest number of fatalities incurred by the Abu Sayyaf is in this province, where 30 were killed, including two subcommanders.

"This will greatly affect their capability to conduct atrocities," Petinglay said.

So far, no soldiers have been killed, although 28 were wounded.

Task Force Sulu is employing a "surgical operations" to ensure the safety of the hostages.

To date, there are 31 kidnapped victims who are still in Sulu, 26 of them foreigners.

The calibrated military operation was ordered following the spike of atrocities launched by the bandits. *PNA*

08 March 2017

Malaya
The National Newspaper

Page: B2

Gov't, Reds holding back-channel talks

PRESIDENT Duterte yesterday said “back-channel” negotiations are ongoing between government and communist rebels in a bid to restart the peace negotiations.

He declined to give details, saying he does not want to “spoil” the peace efforts. He made the disclosure in a chance interview at the sidelines of a series of events of the Department of Agriculture in Malacaniang.

The President last month scrapped the formal peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front following the cancellation of unilateral ceasefires, NPA ambushes against government forces, and because of the communist group's demand that government release some 400 political prisoners even before a peace agreement is forged.

In Quezon yesterday, 4 NPA rebels were killed in a firefight with soldiers in San Francisco town.

Troops from the 2nd Jungle Fighter Company were deployed to Sitio Umagos, Barangay Maybunga after the military received information from civilians about the presence of the NPA rebels, said 1Lt. Xy-zon Meneses, public affairs officer of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division based in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal.

The firefight erupted at around 2 p.m. in the same barangay.

During clearing operations, troops recovered the bodies of the still unidentified rebels, two AK-47 rifles, an M16 rifle, and an M16 rifle.

Pursuit operations are ongoing.

The 2nd ID is in charge of military operations in Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, Mindoro, Marinduque, and Romblon.

Since the termination of the government's ceasefire, six NPA rebels have been killed and eight high-powered firearms have been recovered in combat operations, Meneses said. — *Jocelyn Montemayor and Victor Reyes*

08 March 2017



Page. 2

5 pang Abu Sayyaf, utas sa bakbakan

Lima pang miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf ang napatay sa patuloy na pakikipagbakbakan ng militar sa bandidong grupo sa Sulu nitong Linggo, kinumpirma nitong Lunes.

Base sa report ng Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom), umakyat na sa 23 miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf ang napatay nakalipas na tatlong linggo.

Ayon kay Army Colonel Cirilito Sobejana, commander ng Joint Task Force Sulu (JTF-Sulu) ng AFP, nakasamsam din ng ilang matataas na kalibre ng baril sa huling engkuwentro sa Barangay Lumipad, Mainbung, Sulu, dakong 5:00 ng umaga

nitong Linggo.

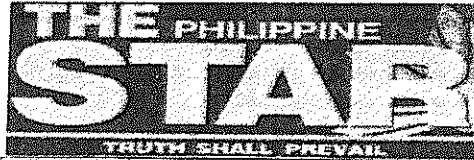
Ayon pa kay Sobejana, sugatan din ang ASG sub-leader na si Idang Susukan sa madugong engkuwentro na ikinamatay ng kapatid nitong si Jaber.

"We have an additional five killed Abu Sayyaf. Idang Susukan, who is a sub-commander of the Abu Sayyaf, was also wounded with his brother also getting killed as a result of the fierce encounter," pagkukumpirma ni Sobejana.

Sinabi ni Sobejana na inaasahan ng militar na patuloy pang madaadagdagan ang bilang ng mga napatay na bandido sa patuloy na opensiba ng militar.

Francis T. Wakefield

March 2017



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Gotcha

By JARIUS BONDOC



NDF panelists don't have field control

Peace talks between the government and communist rebels were going well when everything suddenly collapsed. Too bad, since the two sides already had inked three major agreements in three months in Oslo and Rome. Still, President Rodrigo Duterte had to call it all off. Guerrillas in Mindanao and Luzon had slain unprovoked six soldiers and abducted two more. It was in breach of the ceasefire that the umbrella National Democratic Front (NDF) had declared from Europe, as the government did ahead, to get the talks started last year.

This is the nth time under six Presidents that negotiations broke down. As in the past, various New People's Army (NPA) guerrilla fronts simultaneously

Nobody sat for the NPA, much more for the higher-ranking Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). José Maria Sison, the acknowledged CPP founder presently based in Utrecht, The Netherlands, participated in past talks. But he acted then, as now, merely as "political adviser" of the NDF. Padilla doubts if the newly freed Tiamzon spouses Berito and Wilma are participating as the current CPP chairman and secretary general, respectively. Only NDF officer Luis Jalandoni signed the documents then, as his replacement Fidel Agcaoili is doing now.

It would be useful to understand the interrelationship of the CPP, NPA, and NDF, based on various reports. The CPP

Past peace talks collapsed because the main rebel forces were not represented.

ambushed government installations and troops. The NPA in Mindanao accused soldiers of entering its controlled barrios hunting down its members. No such thing, the Armed Forces of the Philippines countered. Three of the fatalities were evacuating flood victims when attacked; three others brutally were shot 93 times; the abductees were in civvies teaching the rural folk livelihoods.

Between the propaganda lines lies the truth. The NDF panelists in Europe have no control over the NPA guerrillas in the field. There was dire reason for the NPA to attack, despite the NDF ceasefire. The rebels had to eat, and needed money for it. The troop presence in rebel locales, though engaged only in civic action, were hampering the insurgents' collection of "progressive taxes" from big businesses.

Alexander Padilla shares lessons from heading the government peace panel during the previous Aquino administration. Then, as now, only the NDF spoke for the rebel side, he says.

professes to lead the "national democratic revolution," with the NPA as its military arm. But the NDF claims to represent in the talks all the "revolutionary forces" – the CPP, NPA, and under- and aboveground organizations and individuals. In a table of organization, that would put the NDF at the top, with the CPP, NPA, and allies in a row under it.

But then, the NDF also was a creation of the CPP; its officers are attached to the CPP United Front Commission. That latter subgroup is of equal importance to the CPP Military Commission that consists of commissars in charge of the NPA guerrilla fronts. In effect, Padilla says, the NDF is a mere political arm of the CPP. That, in a new table of organization puts the CPP at the helm, with the NDF and NPA under it. That's why the NPA need not abide with ceasefires declared solely by the NDF.

For the talks to come to a peace settlement, Padilla says, the government must insist on sitting down with the CPP and

BONDOC From page 11

NPA, not only with the NDF. Real influence resides in the communist ideologues and the men with the gun. They too must be in the negotiations.

Factors to consider too are age and field command, Padilla adds. Septuagenarians Sison and the Namzon spouses are considered titular leaders. Long self-exile and imprisonment have separated them from the guerrilla fronts. Younger NPA cadres have command and control of the armed units in Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Bicol, Eastern Visayas and Mindanao.

It is unlikely, though, for the various NPA field commanders to accede to regional peace talks. They have denounced such suggestion during past talks as "divide-and-rule tactic." Would there be a way for the commanders to pick a common rep to the talks in Europe? That

would restart the stalled process.

A final factor to consider is the disposition of the rebel forces. Since both the government and NDF are eager to resume the talks, they need to agree on how to feed and secure the rebels under a new truce. The guerrillas will need food, clothing, and other basic needs. If those expenses remain unaddressed, they will always resort to "progressive taxation," which the government deems as robbery-extortion.

* * * * *

Catch *Sapol* radio show, Saturdays, 8-10 a.m., DWIZ (882-AM).

Gotcha archives on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Jarius-Bondoc/1376602159218459>, or The STAR website <http://www.philstar.com/author/Jarius%20Bondoc/GOTCHA>

★

68 March 2017

The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

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Wipe out the Abu Sayyaf



THE government should harness all its armed forces resources to wipe out the Abu Sayyaf. It's not enough to express regrets and apologize to the German government over the killing of its national Jurgen Kantner by the Abu Sayyaf who beheaded him after failing to get a P30-million demand for his release.

Although there is no official confirmation of the Abu Sayyaf acting under the aegis of the dreaded Islamic State terrorists, the Muslim bandits' atrocities committed against their captives are comparable to ISIS. Captives are kept for days while ransom is negotiated. The hostages are killed when the victims' relatives fail to come up with the money.

Kantner, a 70-year-old German national, was abducted by the Abus when his yacht strayed into Sulu waters. His female companion was killed on board when she resisted the bandits. Warnings have been posted by Philippine authorities against sailing and trekking in the deep south of Mindanao where the Abu Sayyaf ply their nefarious trade like the Somalian pirates.

Now, if the Duterte administra-

tion throws all its armed forces against the Abus and wipe them out, I don't think there will be any outcry about extrajudicial killings. The people, in fact, will welcome the end of the notorious Abu Sayyaf. Not even the United Nations and international human rights groups can condemn the all-out war against the savage Sayyaf. The same focus and attention given to the relentless war on drugs should also be carried out by the Duterte administration.

The beheading of the German Kantner is not the first in the long and bloody history of the Abu Sayyaf. Other foreigners and locals have lost their heads to the savage bandits. Several years back, two American missionaries and another American were abducted by the Abu Sayyaf. The wife of the missionary survived but her husband was killed during a rescue attempt by government troops. An American tourist with the group was beheaded. This is kidnapping with murder and certainly when the death penalty must be imposed to the fullest extent of the law. "An eye for an eye," goes the biblical passage.

As a matter of policy, government does not negotiate nor pay ransom to the bandits. But the government can put up bounty money for the capture, dead or alive, of members of this barbaric group. Bounty money on the heads of the Abu Sayyaf can serve

as incentives for rouge cops who are going to be deployed in Basilan and terrorist-infested areas in Mindanao. Because the policemen have families in Metro Manila, their assignment in Mindanao should only be for a year. They can be replaced by the next batch of scalawag cops. Even a short stint in dangerous Basilan or Sulu should be enough to deter erring cops from committing the same mistakes.

Metro Manila's monstrous traffic mess

How do you solve Metro Manila's monstrous traffic problem? Some measures have been taken by the government but so far the traffic gridlock has only been eased to a small degree. It has not been totally solved. It would be too much to expect the authorities to solve this problem that has been allowed to fester by past administrations. Phasing out old jeepneys is not the answer. An efficient public rail transport system which other Asian cities like Singapore, Bangkok and Taipei have is the only solution in sight.

Commuter groups who suffer the daily travails of travel to and from work have complained that the new train carriages from China are dangerous because they do not seem to fit the rails for which they are rolling on. They feel uneasy with the ride not being smooth and running at a slow speed of 30 kilometers per hour.

That's nearly as slow when commuters take the torturous road traffic on EDSA during rush hours.

There are suggestions for jeepney drivers to form themselves into consortiums or cooperatives and operate public utility transport like the brand new point-to-point buses already proving popular among commuters. This will of course take huge capital outlay. But the government could perhaps provide loans for displaced jeepney drivers to start up their public utility buses. This is better than for them to drive buses and jeepneys and taxis with them paying exorbitant boundary fees to the owners and operators who don't give them a break with the stiff boundary system when gasoline and oil prices go up.

Metro Manila's monstrous traffic can also be traced to the increasing volume of vehicles being sold. Not just the rich have two or three cars nowadays. Even the middle class need two cars to get around the number coding in order to get to work and bring their children to school. The sale of motorcycles is also up because there is no decent public transport system and sensible traffic management. While a few elevated highways have been constructed, there are not enough roads to accommodate the heavy volume of vehicles. This can all be traced to the lack of urban planning and forward thinking to cope with a growing

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ONLINE NEWS

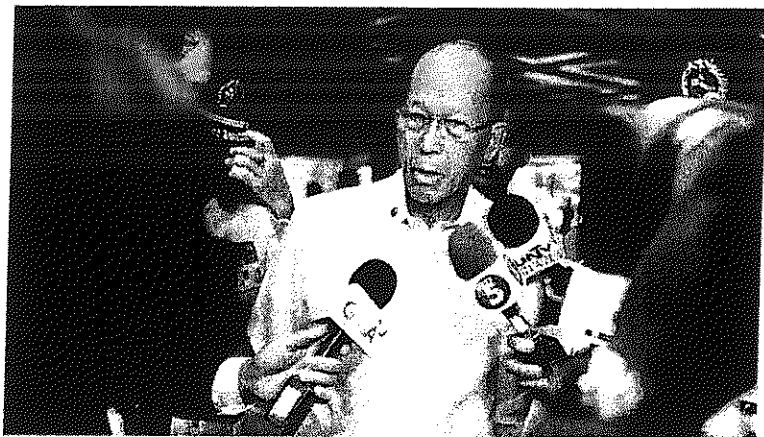
08 MARCH 2017

www.rappler.com

Duterte gov't rejects U.S. plans to construct in Palawan air base

From Rappler (Mar 6): Duterte gov't rejects U.S. plans to construct in Palawan air base

EXCLUSIVE: Construction will proceed in two other military bases – Basa Air Base in Pampanga and Lumbia Air Base in Cagayan de Oro – to implement the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement



DEFENSE DEAL. Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana says the EDCA will be implemented in 2017. File photo by Martin San Diego/Rappler

The Philippines rejected US plans to build facilities at a military air base that is nearest most of the disputed islands in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) – the Bautista Air Base in Palawan – following President Rodrigo Duterte's order to review implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

But Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told Rappler construction in two other military bases will proceed. Construction will start within the year at the Basa Air Base in Pampanga and at the Lumbia Air Base in Cagayan de Oro.

"Yes, the EDCA is a go both in Basa and Lumbia. No construction yet but scheduled to start this year," Lorenzana told Rappler on Monday, March 6.

The Basa Air Base is considerably near the disputed Scarborough Shoal (Panatag Shoal), a flashpoint with China, located off the coast of Zambales province.

The Lumbia Air Base, meanwhile, is near the known lair of local terrorists in Central Mindanao.

Lorenzana did not explain why plans for Bautista Air Base were called off. "Yes, 'yun muna dalawa (just the two in the meantime)," he said.

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Duterte had repeatedly threatened to cancel the EDCA, but his advisers appear to have persuaded him to enforce the agreement signed between the previous Aquino and Obama administrations.

The EDCA allows the US to construct facilities and preposition assets inside Philippine military bases, a deal that was declared constitutional by the Philippine Supreme Court.

Duterte's pronouncements, however, have caused confusion.

Last January, Lorenzana announced plans to implement the EDCA in 2017 in the 3 mentioned bases. But the announcement was immediately followed by Duterte's tirades against alleged US activities in the Philippines that supposedly include the "unloading of arms."

"You place us all in danger. You do that and I will be there when you start building, even before you build the first post," Duterte said back in January.

Lorenzana clarified then that Duterte wasn't canceling the EDCA but was merely ordering a review.

Bautista Air Base has been the launching pad of joint exercises in recent years between the US and the Philippines as the treaty allies joined forces in protesting China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea.

Reconnaissance planes of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force landed at Bautista Air Base, too, when they joined for the first time maritime patrol exercises in the West Philippine Sea. This was done only once after the lack of a visiting forces treaty with Japan raised constitutionality questions.

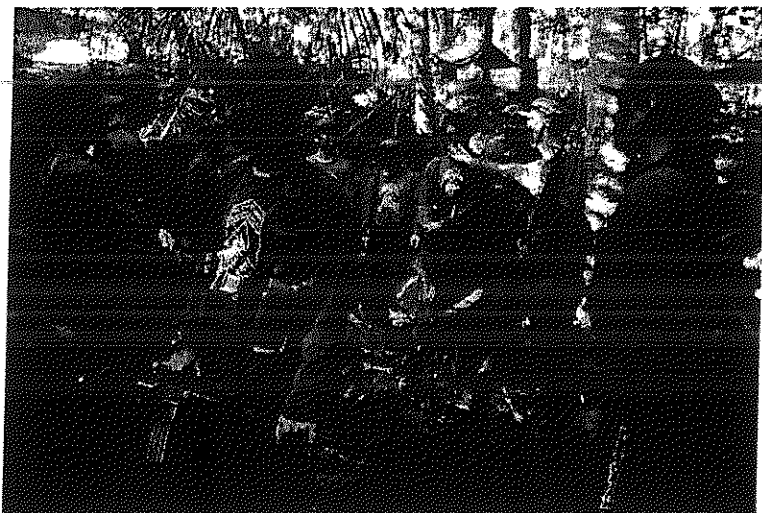
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www.interaksyon.com

Rebels won't stand idly by if bloodshed marks revived 'Tokhang'

From InterAksyon (Mar 7): Rebels won't stand idly by if bloodshed marks revived 'Tokhang'



Guerrillas of the NPA's Melito Glor Command. (InterAksyon.com file)

A major communist rebel command warned it would not stand idly should the government's resumed "war on drugs" be marked by the same unbridled killings during the first eight months of the Duterte administration.

"Sa panahon na may mga mamamayan na mabiktima muli nito (extrajudicial killings) ay titiyakin din ang agarang pagbibigay hustisya sa kanila (Should the people fall victim to this again, we will make sure they are given justice as quickly as possible)." Jaime "Ka Diego" Padilla, spokesman of the Melito Glor Command of the New People's Army, told InterAksyon.com.

"Palaging nakahanda ang Melito Glor Command sakali man kallanganin nitong makipagsagupaan sa mga elemento ng reaksyunaryong gubyrno, sa AFP at PNP, sa panahong niyuyurakan nila ang karapatan ng mga mamamayan (The Melito Glora Command is always ready should it need to confront the elements of the reactionary government, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, once they trample on the rights of the people)," he added.

Earlier, the NPA command, which covers the Southern Tagalog region, issued a statement predicting that the resumption of the controversial Oplan Tokhang anti-drug drive would only "create many uniformed criminals and killers."

In that statement, Padilla called the revival of Tokhang "a signal for widespread killing throughout the land in the guise of the war against drugs" that would victimize only "the small victims of illegal drugs" even as "the first six months of the Duterte administration saw not a single drug lord in their touted (drug) list jailed or killed."

He added that police generals and so-called "ninja cops" involved in the drug trade remain free while "there has been no word" on the hundreds of government officials Duterte repeatedly claims protect the narcotics trade and whose names he has listed down in a so-called "matrix."

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"Kung seryoso ang rehimeng Duterte sa gera laban sa droga, tutukan niya ang malalaking drug lords na nasa hawak niyang listahan at hindi puro grandstanding o walang katuturang pahayag laban sa drug lords ang ginagawa sa publiko (If the Duterte regime is serious about its war on drugs, he should concentrate on the big drug lords in the list he has and not stick to grandstanding or uttering useless public statements against drug lords)," Padilla said.

Since July last year, various counts place the death toll from Duterte's war on drugs at anywhere from more than 7,000 to upwards of 8,000. The killings continued unabated even after Duterte, stung by the revelation that a gang composed of law enforcers kidnapped a Korean businessman and murdered him right inside PNP headquarters in Camp Crame, ordered police anti-narcotics operations suspended for about a month.

And when Duterte and PNP chief Ronald dela Rosa recently announced that the police were ready to resume the anti-drug drive, they warned that it would likely be as deadly as before.

But early this week, when Dela Rosa announced the start of the anti-drug campaign now renamed "Oplan Double Barrel, Reloaded," signaled they would try to keep it as "bloodless" as possible and even suggested police teams would be accompanied by clergymen.

Hostilities between the rebels and state security forces have resumed since Duterte suspended peace talks following the termination of both parties' unilateral ceasefires early last month.

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Military to bond with civilian communities -- AFP

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 7): Military to bond with civilian communities -- AFP

In line with efforts to bond and be one with the communities it vowed to serve and protect, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) announced that it seeking more engagements with civilians from all walks of life.

This initiative will allow the AFP to address the gap between military personnel and the civilians.

"Through our joint initiatives, AFP's vision of having institutional reform is now being embraced in our work culture; the gap between the military and the civilian society is filled in with substantial engagements," AFP chief-of-staff Gen. Eduardo Año said.

This was demonstrated anew when AFP and the "Bantay Bayanihan" network reaffirmed their commitment to continue their "constructive and critical engagements" in pursuing security sector reforms last week.

"Winning and sustaining the peace is now the Filipino people's fight and no longer the AFP's alone, and finally, the IPSP (Internal Peace and Security Plan) "Bayanihan" culminated successfully, giving birth to DSSP (Development Support and Security Plan) Kapayapaan," Año added.

"Kapayaan" was launched by the AFP last January. It succeeded "Bayanihan" which formally ended last Dec. 31, having been launched on Dec. 22, 2010.

While "Bayanihan"s strategic approach is the whole-of-nation approach that focused on security aspect, "Kapayapaan" is centered on the AFP' support to the challenges on governance, development and security.

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Top security, local execs tackle Abu Sayyaf problem in Sulu

By: [Frances Mangosing](#) - Reporter / [@FMangosingINQ](#)

INQUIRER.net / 09:07 PM March 07, 2017



Top security officials flew to Jolo on Tuesday to meet with local government officials to assess the Abu Sayyaf problem. / Frances Mangosing

JOLO – How do you solve a problem like the Abu Sayyaf?

It's not just a military solution, top security and local government officials say.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana flew to Jolo in Sulu with National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año and other top military officials on Tuesday to tackle with local government officials the root causes of the Abu Sayyaf problem plaguing the island province for several years now.

"Gusto naming marinig ang mga hinaing nila at yung mga mungkahi, paano ba ma-solve itong problema sa Jolo na nagbibigay ng sakit malaking sakit ng ulo at kahihyan sa ibang bansa," Lorenzana said in a press briefing after the closed-door meeting that lasted for about two hours.

(We want to hear their grievances and their suggestions on how to solve this problem in Jolo that has been giving us a big headache and embarrassment.)

The meeting comes a week after the Abu Sayyaf, which has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, beheaded its German captive last Feb. 26 after failing to get the P30 million ransom.

Aside from German hostage Jurgen Kantner who was beheaded last week, two other foreigners have been executed by the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu in the past 10 months — Canadians John Ridsdel in April and Robert Hall in June.

Most of the terrorist group's hostages are kept in Sulu, a hotbed of the Islamist militants.

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Both the security and local government officials have agreed that military solution is not the only answer to the lingering problem.

Lorenzana saw the need for something beyond a military strategy but said they are still targeting to meet their six month-deadline to finish the Abu Sayyaf.

"Gusto nating dalhin ang buong gobyerno like DepEd, DPWH, DOH, lahat na para maramdaman ng tao na government cares for them. Kaya kami nandito nagkaroon kami ng exchange of ideas, kung anong gusto nila mangyari at yun ang iparating natin sa Presidente," he said.

(We would like to bring all government services, such as the Department of Education, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Health, here so that the people will get the feeling that the government cares for them. We are here to have an exchange of ideas, to find out the things they want to happen and these will be conveyed to the President.)

Sulu Governor Abdusakur Tan said that government projects should be implemented properly in order to be felt by their people.

"Kailangan maayos ang programa na darating sa probinsya at maimplement ng maayos," he said.

(Programs should be suited for the province and should be properly implemented.)

"Kung ano ang nagca-cause ng kidnapping dapat hindi lang Abu Sayyaf ang habulin natin pati yung kahirapan ng taumbayan," Tan also said.

(Whatever the root causes of kidnapping the government should not only go after the Abu Sayyaf but also address poverty.)

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Soldiers kill 3 Maute members in Lanao del Sur clash

By: **Richel V. Umel** - [@inquirerdotnet](https://twitter.com/inquirerdotnet)

Inquirer Mindanao / 06:25 PM March 07, 2017



FILE – The fight to extract members of the Maute Group in Butig town, Lanao del Sur province, brought soldiers, like this trooper patrolling a village in Marawi City, on a hunt to annihilate the rest of the terror group. —RICHEL V. UMEL

MARAWI CITY – Three alleged members of the Maute terrorist group were killed in a clash with government forces in Poona Bayabao, Lanao del Sur on Tuesday morning.

Col. Nixon Fortes, chief of the 103rd Army Brigade, said soldiers also recovered three M14 rifles, an M16 rifle with a grenade launcher, ammunition and improvised explosive devices.

Originally based in Butig town, the Maute group, which has been blamed for the kidnapping, bombing and extortion activities in some parts of Mindanao, was trying to establish a base in Poona Bayabao, Fortes said.

But Fortes said there will be no letup in the military's operations against the group, which allegedly has allied with the Sulu-based Abu Sayyaf, another bandit group.

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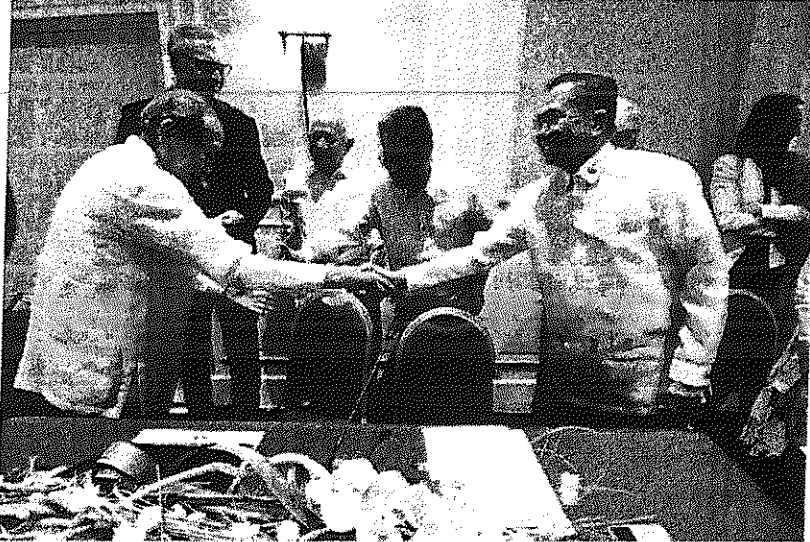
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Gov't, Reds hold dialogues to revive peace talks – Duterte

By: [Nestor Corrales](#) - Reporter / [@NCorralesINQ](#)

INQUIRER.net / 07:34 PM March 07, 2017



FILE. Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza (right), Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III (second from right), shake hands with Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison (left) and Fidel Agcaoili (center) of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines after they sign an agreement in Rome, Italy, that would be the basis for future talks on socio-economic reforms. (Photo release from the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process)

President Rodrigo Duterte revealed on Tuesday that the government was in “backchannel talks” with the communist rebels in a bid to resume the peace talks.

But Duterte did not give details so as not to derail the informal communication with the communist group.

“Well, ano lang, (let’s just) hang on, hang on kasi... (because...) [we] do not [want to] spoil [this effort]. We have... well I must admit nasa (it’s in the) backchanneling [stage],” he said in an ambush interview with reporters in Malacañang.

On February 4, Duterte said the peace talks would no longer continue, unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

The President’s decision to end the peace negotiations came after a series of encounters with government troops and rebel members.

In his speech in Cagayan de Oro last week, Duterte said he was open to the possibility of reviving the scrapped peace talks.

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8th ID gets 51 brand-new mobility assets

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 7): 8th ID gets 51 brand-new mobility assets

The Catbalogan-based 8th Infantry Division's capability to respond to various security threats and humanitarian assistance disaster relief operations got a much needed boost when it received an additional 51 units of brand-new 1 1/4 KIA KM-450 trucks.

In a statement Tuesday, 1st Lt. Cherry Junia, 8th Infantry Division spokesperson, said the vehicles were commissioned into military service last March 3.

Commissioning ceremonies took place at the 8th Infantry Basketball Court at Camp Vicente Lukban, Catbalogan.

Junia said the multipurpose all-terrain military truck was first introduced in 1998 as part of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Program.

The 1 1/4 KIA KM-450 is powered by a 3.9 liter diesel engine and can run a maximum road speed of above 100 kilometers per hour.

Out of the 51 units of KM-450 received by 8th Infantry Division, 17 were issued in advance to line units in Mindanao to boost and strengthen their mobility assets in support to the intensive military operation against the terrorist groups.

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