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11 March 2017

Saturday

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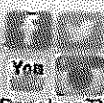
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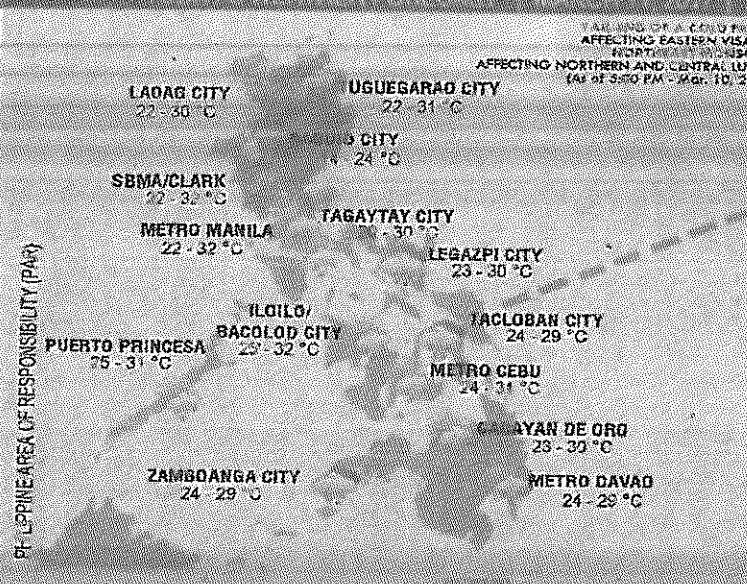


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TALKING OF A CONJURE
AFFECTING EASTERN VISAYAS
NORTHWEST MINDANAO
AFFECTING NORTHERN AND CENTRAL LUZON
(As of 5:00 PM - Mar. 10, 2017)





PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:07 AM	6:06 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
5:01 PM	4:58 AM
FIRST QUARTER	FULL MOON
MAR 5 7:30 PM	MAR 12 0:47 PM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH HARBOR	
4:29 AM 1.15 Meter	5:21 PM 0.96 Meter
Partly cloudy to all times locally with rain showers Partly cloudy to all times ready with showers and thunderstorms Cloudy with with showers and/or thunderstorms	

METRO MANILA	23 - 33 °C	23 - 32 °C	TAGAYTAY	18 - 28 °C	19 - 30 °C	TACLOBAN	24 - 29 °C	25 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	22 - 31 °C	23 - 32 °C	LEGAZPI	24 - 30 °C	25 - 32 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	23 - 30 °C	24 - 29 °C
LAOAG	23 - 30 °C	23 - 31 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	25 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	METRO DAVAO	24 - 29 °C	25 - 31 °C
BAGUIO	15 - 24 °C	14 - 24 °C	ILOILO/BACLOD	26 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C	ZAMBOANGA	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C
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Palace allays fears on martial law threat

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

By threatening to declare martial law in Mindanao, President Duterte was merely trying to “underscore the depth and breadth of lawlessness and violence” in the region and did not mean to alarm the public, his spokesman said yesterday.

“The context of the statement was the challenge to the local chief executives in Mindanao to be more fully engaged in the regional challenges, otherwise he would be constrained to enforce more drastic measures,” Ernesto Abella said.

By raising the prospect of martial law, Abella said Duterte “is hopeful that local leaders would realize the magnitude of the law and order problem and consequently help his administration to fight terrorism, illegal drugs and other forms of violence.”

On Thursday, Duterte called on local executives in Mindanao to help him in the fight against extremism, terrorism and rebellion or he would be compelled to declare martial law.

He also urged them to maximize the use of their police forces to prevent terrorism from spinning out of control.

“I am asking you... because

then as President, I will be forced, I will be compelled to exercise extraordinary powers,” Duterte told local officials in Davao City. “Either you help me or I will declare martial law tomorrow (in) Mindanao.”

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III also downplayed President Duterte’s latest pronouncements on martial law.

“(There’s) no need to be alarmed because if martial law is declared in Mindanao, that would really be based on the need for it and in areas which need to be put under ‘control’ to bring back normalcy and sense of law and order,” Pimentel said in a text message to reporters.

When Duterte threatened to declare martial law last January, Pimentel also asked the public not to make much out of such pronouncements even as he stressed there was no justification for authoritarian rule in the country.

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Palace From Page 1

Pimentel earlier said Duterte's statement – even if hypothetical – was in conformity with the Constitution.

Sen. Ralph Recto, for his part, said Filipinos should be used to the "theatrical bombast" of Duterte, whose "bluster should be likened to a dog that always barks but seldom bites."

"There is no basis to declare martial law. Rebellion has been tamed. No foreign army is steaming towards our shores to invade us. And as the President himself likes to brag, crime is down and the people are safe in their homes and communities," Recto said.

"And as to the real enemies of the people – joblessness, hunger, poor social services – these cannot be suppressed by the armed forces," he said. He described martial law as a cure worse than the perceived disease.

"At a time when we project stability to reel in tourists and investors, a martial law declaration will show the opposite, of how unstable we are," the

senator said.

Sen. Franklin Drilon had also cautioned Duterte against making statements that could cause fear and tension among the people.

Justified order

While it may have caused jitters in some quarters, the President's directive to the military to unleash its whole might against the New People's Army (NPA) is an indication of his determination to stop lawlessness in the country, military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said.

"That pronouncement of the President allowing or giving us permission to make use of the jets and rockets of the AFP only mirrors his desire to end this menace brought by the NPAs," he said.

Arevalo, however, stressed the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) would use its might with caution and that careful intelligence gathering would be made so that every operation would be surgical in nature.

Duterte's order for the military to destroy the NPA came in the wake of the killing of four policemen in an ambush believed to be carried out by the guerrillas in Davao del Sur.

"We will deploy and use these assets when they are extremely needed and in intelligence-driven missions. If aircraft will be deployed it will only be used for surgical operations," Arevalo said.

The ambush-slay meanwhile has also prompted the Philippine National Police (PNP) to place all its units in "active defense mode."

"We have taken an active defense at the stations and have our mobile units continue to have active support to the AFP in going after terrorists and insurgent groups," PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Dionardo Carlos told reporters yesterday.

"We will review the camp defense plan. We will look at the intelligence information if there is a plan to target a police station," he said.

Meanwhile, a soldier was killed and another seriously wounded in an attack by about 50 NPA rebels Thursday night in Barangay Budlingin,

Alegria, Surigao del Norte.

Alegria, Surigao del Norte police chief Insp. Juan Belarmino said the firefight lasted for about 30 minutes.

Lt. Col. Rico Amaro, 30th IB Philippine Army commander, said the Sandatahang Yunit Propaganda-Lumad, Guerilla Front 16 Northeastern Mindanao regional committee under a certain Ka Ricky was behind the attack.

"A tribal leader opposing the recruitment of the terrorist NFA rebels was killed in the same area last year," Amaro said.

Meanwhile, Ka Ariel Montero in a press statement claimed the NFA rebels were preparing to release PFC Erwin Salan last March 2 but were prevented from doing so by attacks by Amaro's men.

"We are serious about releasing Salan as a show of support for NDFP stand on the resumption of peace talks but some people in the Army don't seem to want peace by waging war instead," Montero said.

Protests

Militant youth groups, meanwhile, yesterday criticized President Duterte for

threatening to declare martial law in Mindanao if local officials fail to solve the region's security problems.

Likening Duterte to the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, the League of Filipino Students (LFS) said the violations of human rights and civil liberties during martial law persist under the present administration.

"After seven months in power, Duterte is becoming more and more like Marcos. He is more than willing to kill the Filipino people and employ state terrorism across the country. Even before he declares martial law, either in Mindanao or the whole country, there are already countless human rights violations committed by the regime," LFS spokesman JP Rosos said.

"In the strongest possible terms, we condemn Duterte for his threats to declare martial law. Despite knowing the violations of human rights and civil liberties that martial law entails, Duterte unacceptably dangles this threat to the people," he added.

Members of youth group Anakbayan trooped to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City to protest the latest statements

made by the President, including his order for the military to "unleash its weapons" against the NPA.

Anakbayan said the public should not take Duterte's statements lightly as it could result in more killings across the country.

"Duterte's order for military forces to flatten the hills with bombs in its ruthless counterinsurgency war is bound to result in more human rights abuses and sow terror in civilian communities," the group said.

In Congress, Kabataan party-list Rep. Sarah Elago also criticized Duterte's threat to declare martial law.

"Martial law is the only logical conclusion in the Duterte administration's maneuvers to reinstate an atmosphere of fascism and terror in the country," said the lawmaker.

"Martial law will only pave the way for greater and graver state-sanctioned atrocities and killings, and would worsen the number of casualties since the start of all-out war. Hindi pa ba tayo natututo (Haven't we learned)?" she added. – With Paolo Romero, Jaime Laude, Ben Serrano, Emmanuel Tupas, Janvic Mateo

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The Manila Times

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PALACE: DUTERTE'S MARTIAL LAW TALK UNDERScores MINDANAO WOES

MALACAÑANG on Friday clarified President Rodrigo Duterte's statement that martial law would be declared in Mindanao if local officials didn't help to keep the peace.

In a statement, presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said Duterte's remarks "underscore the depth and breadth of lawlessness and violence in Mindanao."

"The context of the statement was the challenge to the local chief executives in Mindanao to be more fully engaged in regional challenges, otherwise he would be constrained to enforce more drastic measures," Abella said.

"By raising the possibility of martial law in the island [President Duterte] is hopeful that local leaders would realize the magnitude of the law and order problem and consequently help his administration to fight terrorism, illegal drugs and other forms of violence," he added.

Duterte on Thursday said he might be forced to declare military rule in Mindanao if local officials did nothing to help him ensure peace in Mindanao.

Speaking before local government leaders in Mindanao, Duterte appealed

► Underscores A8

■ UNDERScores FROM A1

PALACE: DUTERTE'S MARTIAL LAW TALK

for just and long-lasting peace in the region.

"I will be compelled now [to have] extraordinary powers, not to perpetuate myself. Believe me, I am not happy continuing with this job. But since I have to – it's not a question of emotions, it's a question of duty," the President said in a speech.

"I now face the enormity of the problem, face this violence almost unstoppable. I have no choices but let's talk. Either you help me or I will declare martial law tomorrow for Mindanao," he added.

Duterte said he possessed the mandate to "serve and protect the Filipino people and the Philippine territory" from violence.

The President, however, clarified that he was not ready to declare martial law, as it would not guarantee the end to the peace and order problem in the country.

Duterte had floated the idea of declaring martial law in his previous speeches but said one-man rule won't be beneficial to the country.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE

(1 March 2017

POLICE FILES

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7 NPA sumuko sa Iloilo

ILOILO CITY – Pitong mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) sa lalawigan ng Iloilo ang nagbalik loob sa gobyerno.

Sa interview ng Bombo Radyo Iloilo kay Teodora Sumagaysay, provincial director ng Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG-Iloilo), sinabi nito na umaabot sa P65,000 ang financial assistance na ibinigay sa mga rebel returnee.

Sa nasabing halaga, P50,000 dito ang para sa livelihood assistance at P15,000 naman para sa immediate assistance.

Ayon kay Sumagaysay, ang nasabing hakbang ay bahagi ng Comprehensive Local Integration Program ng ahensya.

Tiniyak ni Sumagaysay na magiging mahigpit ang pagbabantay ng Philippine National Police (PNP) at Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) sa mga sumukong rebelde upang hindi na ang mga ito bumalik sa kabundukan.

|| March 2017

POLICE FILES

Page. 2

NPA naghahamon na Nanununog ng heavy equipment, nang-a-ambush

PATULOY sa paghasik ng lagim ang mga komunistang New People's Army matapos putulin ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang usapang pangkapayapaan sa CPP-NPA-NDF.

Sinunog ng mga hinihinalang miyembro ng NPA ang mga heavy equipment na nagkakahalagang P10 milyon sa isang planta ng palm oil sa Bataraza, Palawan nung Martes.

Ayon sa pulisya, ang mga nasunog na kagamitan ay gaya ng backhoe, bulldozer at dump truck.

Sa imbestigasyon, hinanap umano ng armadong kalalakihan ang manager ng Calasaguen Farmers-Producers Cooperative nung Martes. Pero nabigo ang mga ito. At nang bumalik ay sinilaban ng grupo ang tatlong heavy equipment.

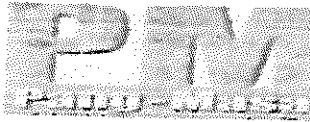
Kamakalawa, Huwebes, tinambangan naman ng umano'y miyembro ng NPA ang police patrol sa Bansalan, Davao del Sur, kungsaan apat na pulis ang nasawi at isa ang nasugatan.

Kahapon ay sinuspinde ng local government ng San Francisco, Quezon ang pag-erya ng kanilang health workers dahil sa ginagawang operasyon ng militar laban sa NPA.

Sa post ng isang health worker sa Quezon, sinabi niyang: "God bless nalang sa ating mga hero in camouflage. Sabi nila mababait daw at kesyo may pinaglalaman ang mga NPA na yan, actually mga mamamayan ang kawawa. di matapos tapos yung kalsada dahil sinusunog nila yung heavy equipments, tapos kagaya saming nasa health, pano nalang yung mga TB patient ko dun na dapat everyday ang injections, yung mga manganganak, yung mga nagkakasakit?"

Iniutos ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte nung Huwebes sa Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at Philippine National Police (PNP) na gamitin na ang lahat ng air assets para bombahin ang mga kabundukan at kapa-tagan na pinagtataguan ng NPA.

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Pahina. 2

Combat patrol ops palalakasin vs NPA rebels

Dahil sa posibleng target ng mga pag-atake ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) ang himpilan ng pulisya na nasa liblib na lugar ay palalakasin pa ng Philippine National Police (PNP) ang kanilang combat patrol operations.

Ito ang inihayag kahapon ni PNP Spokesman P/Sr. Supt. Dionardo Carlos kasmod naman ng

muling pagdedeklara ng all out war ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte laban sa grupo ng mga rebeldeng komunista.

Nagdeklara ng all out war nitong Huwebes ang Pangulong Duterte matapos itong maalarma sa panambang ng NPA rebels sa mga elemento ng pulisya na ikinasawi ng apat na pulis Bansalan, Davao del Sur noong Miyerkules.

"Well we have our mobile units on all provinces. Nakikita naman natin na etong marahas na pagatake ng NPA sa ating security forces ang gagawin namin ngayon is take an active defense at the stations and have our mobile units continue to have active support to the AFP in going after terrorists and insurgent groups", pahayag ni Carlos. - *Joy Cantos*

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AFP to deploy drones vs Abus

By JAIME LAUDE

The government is eyeing the deployment of drones to monitor and prevent kidnapping and other cross-border atrocities by Abu Sayyaf bandits.

The drones that the government will acquire from China are likely to be deployed over the country's borders with Indonesia and Malaysia, Defense

Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday.

Seafarers whose vessels pass through Sibutu Strait between Tawi-Tawi and Sabah are among recent targets of kidnapping and piracy.

Lorenzana earlier said a military task force based in Bonggao town would be created to ensure the safety of vessels passing through the strait. He said a two-star general would lead the task force.

The bandits are still holding six Vietnamese sailors in Basilan and 25 other hostages, including Malaysians, a Dutch man and Filipinos in Sulu.

Lorenzana said he recently met with Ambassador Ly Quoc Tuan of Vietnam and discussed the need for Vietnamese-flagged vessels to coordinate with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) when they pass through

Sulu Sea

LGUs tapped

Meanwhile, the AFP said local government units (LGUs) would also be mobilized in the campaign against the Abu Sayyaf.

In a meeting with local executives in Sulu on Monday, Lorenzana said LGUs should come up with a comprehensive plan in coordination with other sectors to address the

problem with the bandits.

At least 14 mayors attended the meeting and submitted their respective recommendations.

Maj Gen. Carlito Galvez, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief, said local officials and civilian communities support the ongoing offensive of Joint Task Force Basilan.

"Military action is not the only solution," Sulu

Gov. Abusakur Tan II said. "Those reported coddling terrorists will be investigated and must answer for their infractions."

As this developed, Westmincom confirmed that Mobin Kulin, one of the four bandits killed in an encounter with government operatives on Wednesday, is a cousin of Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon. – With Lino de la Cruz, Roel Pareño

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Martial law threat meant for LGUs

President Duterte's latest threat to declare martial law in Mindanao is intended to spur local officials into doing more to combat lawlessness in the region, Malacañang said on Friday. Speaking in Davao City on Thursday, Mr. Duterte raised the specter of martial law anew, urging local officials to help him fight terrorism and other forms of violence. —STORY BY LEILA SALAVERRIA **A2**

ANOTHER CLARIFICATION

PALACE: MARTIAL LAW THREAT MEANT FOR MINDANAO LGUS

By Leila B. Salaverría
@LeilasINQ

President Duterte's latest threat to declare martial law in Mindanao is intended to spur local officials into doing more to combat lawlessness in the region, Malacañang said on Friday.

Speaking to about 300 local officials from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), central and northern Mindanao whom he had called to Davao City, Mr. Duterte on Thursday raised the specter of martial law anew, urging them to work with the police and help him fight terrorism and other forms of violence so that he would not have to resort to extraordinary measures to bring law and order in Mindanao.

Extraordinary powers

Only local officials could "prevent [violence] from spinning out of control," he said, adding that they had the police under their supervision and the military could be called out to help if necessary.

Mr. Duterte warned the local officials that if they did nothing and the situation got worse, he would be compelled to "exercise extraordinary powers" by declaring martial law in Mindanao.

"Either you help me or I declare martial law tomorrow [in] Mindanao," he said.

Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said in a statement on Friday that Mr. Duterte's remarks underscored "the depth and breadth of lawlessness and violence in Mindanao."

"By raising the possibility of martial law [on] the island, [the President] is hopeful that local leaders [will] realize the magnitude of the law and order problem, and consequently help his administration fight terrorism, illegal drugs and other forms of violence," Abella said.

Need for cooperation

For two Mindanao officials, Mr. Duterte's threat to declare martial law was a "passionate" reminder that cooperation was needed to solve the peace and order problem in the region.

"We need to support the call of the President to end terrorism as soon as possible," ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman said on Friday.

"I believe that if our [local government units, or LGUs] are active in this fight, we can end this problem," he said.

Maguindanao Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu said he believed Mr. Duterte was speaking from

the heart when he asked Mindanao local officials to help him fight lawlessness on the island.

"If we could stop or eliminate lawlessness, extremism, rebellion, 70 percent of the country's problems would be solved," Mangudadatu said.

Senators offered divergent views on Mr. Duterte's remarks.

No cause for jitters

For Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III, Mr. Duterte's comments should not cause jitters.

"No need to be alarmed, because if martial law is declared in Mindanao, that would be based on the need for it, and only in areas [that] need to be put under control to bring back [normality] and a sense of law and order," Pimentel said.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan warned of the dangers of martial law, which he said did not work during the time of dictator Ferdinand Marcos and "won't work now."

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto said he did not believe Mr. Duterte would declare martial law.

"Declaring martial law is like declaring war on the people," he said. —WITH REPORTS FROM TARRA QUISMUNDO, ALLAN NAWAL AND JUDY QUIROS INQ

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1946
1988
1988
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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NO END TO CONFLICT – President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (right) comforts the family of Police Officer 1 Rholly Bonelayo, who was among the four PNP men killed in an ambush by suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) last March 8 in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. The wake was at the Bansalan Municipal lobby, Thursday night. (Malacañang Photo)

GRP, NDF in backchannel talks to revive peace negotiations

BY FRANCIS T. WAREFIELD

Philippine government (GRP) negotiators are now reportedly in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in a bid to hammer

out a bilateral peace agreement with counterparts from the National Democratic Front (NDF) that could save the fractured peace talks with the Communist rebels.

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GRP, NDF in...

The meeting between the GRP and NDF peace panels, which was to be held March 10 to 11, will be part of "backchannel talks to rescue the formal talks," according to a reliable source.

The source added that initial, yet informal, discussion had actually started between the two sides, "focusing on the request of the government for the New People's Army (NPA) to release hostages, stop the use of landmines and burning, and stop the collection of revolutionary taxes."

"So far the reception from both sides on these issues has been good. These will lead to the general objective to agree on a bilateral ceasefire that could also restart the formal talks," the source noted.

There have so far been three formal rounds of talks between the GRP and NDF. A fourth round of formal talks has been slated on April 2 in Oslo, Norway.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza, GRP Peace Panel Chairman Silvestre Bello III, Peace Panel Member Hernani Braganza, and consultants Efrén Moncuba and Pancho Lara have reportedly arrived in Utrecht.

They are expected to meet with NDF Peace Panel Chairman Fidel Agcaoili, Peace Panel Member Benito Tiamzon, consultant Wilma Tiamzon, and the leftist group's lawyers and other consultants.

Call for resumption of talks

The presence of the Tiamzons in the backchannel talks was confirmed

by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana who said that the government has allowed them to join Dureza in his trip to Utrecht.

During the "First Kapihan sa Kampo" held at the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP) Honor Hall in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, on Thursday, Lorenzana said the back channel talks came about following the prodding of a lot of people, including congressmen, for government to resume the peace talks with the Reds.

Lorenzana said the Tiamzons left the country Wednesday night en route to Europe.

He said another NDF consultant Vicente Ladlad was also part of the trip to help revive the stalled peace talks.

"A lot of people are urging us that before we will go back to the formal peace talks there will be back channeling talks so that we will already have a concrete proposals acceptable by both sides so that when we return to the formal talks everything is ironed out," Lorenzana said.

The bid to rekindle the fading hopes for peace with the communist rebels came after the ambush of four policemen March 8, in Barangay Sibayan, Bansalan, Davao del Sur allegedly by the NPA enraged President Duterte into ordering an all-out war against the communist rebels.

The slain police officers were PO1 Rholly Benelayo, PO1 Joey O Narvaza,

PO1 Saro S Mangotara, all from Bansalan Municipal Police Station, and PO3 Jeden Mei Rabor, a member of Scene of Crime Operatives (SOCO) while wounded was PO3 Allen Arnado.

In a press conference Thursday in Bansala, Duterte said he has given the military and police the green light to use all the government assets, even newly acquired military jets, against the NPA rebels.

NDF cannot confirm attack

But Agcaoili said they have yet to confirm if the ambush last Wednesday was indeed perpetrated by the NPA.

In a statement issued on March 9, Agcaoili maintained there were "peace spoilers around" and there was no ceasefire between the government (GRP) and the NPA in place when the incident took place.

He alleged that Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) forces have been going into "villages and violating people's rights in their combat and intelligence operations, including the murderous "Tokhang" (Tuktok Hangyo or "knock and ask") operations.

Stop to fighting

"We in the military and the defense department welcome this development because we also want to stop the fighting in the hinterlands, in the rural areas so that we can bring development there," Lorenzana underscored.

Lorenzana said in relation to this, the Philippine Army has organized one more engineering brigade to help bring devel-

opment in poor rural communities.

"We are pouring in engineering equipment to be procured from either China or Japan so that we can use this to bring development in the countryside," Lorenzana said.

"However, the local contractors refuse to do because it is very dangerous to them," he added.

Lorenzana said there are conditions or things that President Rodrigo Duterte would like to happen before government go on with the peace process again with the

Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

"Number one is there should be a bilateral ceasefire, number two is they should stop extorting from the businessmen, and Number three is to release all their prisoners or their captured hostages especially the military. So we are actually letting our focused eye, the military and the Defense department that this will progress so that we can attend to some more important things for our country," Lorenzana said.

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Cousin of ASG leader, 3 others slain in clash with gov't troops

By FRANCIS T. WAINFIELD
and MONY E. LACSON

Four notorious members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), including the cousin of top leader Isnilon Hapi-

lon, were killed in a 30-minute clash with members of the Joint Task Force Basilan and the police in Basilan last Wednesday.

Army Captain Jo-Ann Petinglay, the spokesperson of the

▶ 6

Cousin of ASG leader...

◀ 1

Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP WestMinCom), said reports from ground units disclosed that combined elements of the military and the police encountered 15 notorious Abu Sayyaf members, led by Ustadz Mobin Kulin, alias "Mulawin, the cousin of Hapilon, while conducting law enforcement operations in Tapiantana Island, Basilan.

Petinglay said the encounter resulted in the death of Kulin and three of his members. Their bodies were found at the encounter site.

Apart from the bodies of the four ASG bandits, government forces also seized several high-powered firearms and war materials, including a Barret, a rocket-propelled grenade with three live ammunitions, and 12 grenade rifles.

Petinglay said Kulin was an active and hardcore Abu Sayyaf member from Lantawan, Basilan,

who was involved in the Lamitan, siege and Dos Palmas incident in the province.

The remains of the slain Abu Sayyaf members will be turned over to the Basilan Police Provincial Office for appropriate action, identification, and disposition.

Pursuit operations are ongoing to thwart efforts of the Abu Sayyaf to extricate the bodies of the slain bandits.

Major General Carlito G. Galvez Jr., commander of the AFP Western Mindanao Command, said all-out offensives are being conducted by the Joint Task Force Basilan with the support and coordination of the local government, police, and civilians against the Abu Sayyaf bandits who are being held responsible for the conduct of bombings, extortion activities, and kidnappings in the province.

"The entire command is more motivated to go after and finish off the group within the next six

months or less," he said.

Piracy, kidnapping

Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana admitted that the problem of piracy and kidnapping in the Southern Philippines is giving him a headache.

During the "1st Kapihan sa Kampo" at the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP) Honor Hall in Camp Agumaldo, Quezon City, last Thursday, Lorenzana told reporters that these problems are also keeping him sleepless at night.

"It's actually... it's giving me, personally, headache. Sometimes I couldn't sleep at night thinking about how to solve the problem there," Lorenzana told reporters.

Lorenzana said kidnapping has not abated even after President Duterte assumed office on June 30 last year.

He said from only 18 hostages, the Abu Sayyaf captives have increased to 31.

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ASG leader's relative, 3 others dead in clash

Four members of the Abu Sayyaf Group, including a relative of top leader Isnilon Hapilon, were killed in an encounter in Tapiantana Island in Basilan Wednesday.

Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command, said police and the Joint Task Force Basilan were conducting law enforcement operations when they chanced

upon 15 members of the ASG led by Ustadz Mobin Kulin, alias "Mulawin," a cousin of Hapilon in Tapiantana Island.

A firefight ensued, resulting in the death of Kulin and three of his men. Recovered from the slain ASG men were several high-powered firearms and war materials.

Petinglay said Kulin was an active and hardcore Abu Sayyaf member from Lantawan, Basilan

who was involved in the Lamitan, Basilan siege and Dos Palmas kidnapping incident.

The remains of the slain ASG members will be turned over to the Basilan Police Provincial Office for appropriate action, identification, and disposition.

Pursuit operations are being conducted by ground troops against the ASG on the island.

(Francis T. Wakefield)

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ONLINE NEWS

11 MARCH 2017

Pres. Duterte to grace PMA graduation

From the Philippine Information Agency (Mar 10): Pres. Duterte to grace PMA graduation

President Rodrigo Duterte will be the guest of honor and speaker in the commencement exercises of Philippine Military Academy "SALAKNIE" Class of 2017 at Fort del Pilar here on Sunday, March 12.

The President is expected to arrive at the PMA at 9:00Am where he will be given arrival honors to be followed by parade and review, and graduation exercises.

Cadet First Class Rovi Mairel Martinez of Cabanatuan City leads the 167- strong Class of 2017. As the class valedictorian, she will receive the Presidential Saber award from Pres. Duterte.

The President will also award diplomas to the graduates composed of 104 males and 63 females. Aside from Martinez, seven other female cadets are in the Top 10.

The other women in the Top 10 are C1C Eda Glis Marapao of Baguio City and Benguet (No.3); C1C Cathleen Jovi Baybayan of City of San Fernando in Pampanga(No. 4); C1C Shiela Joy Jallorina of Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya (No. 5), C1C Sheila Marie De Guzman of Manaoag, Pangasinan (No. 7), C1C Joyzy Funchica of Butuan City (No. 8), C1C Resie Jezreel Hucalla of Nabunturan, Compostela Valley (No. 9) and C1C Catherine Mar Gonzales of Zamboanga City (No. 10).

Only two male cadets made it in the top 10- C1C Philip Viscaya of Ligao City in Albay is No. 2 in the merit roll and No. 5 is C1C Emmanuel Canlas of Lubao, Pampanga.

The President is expected to have lunch with the graduating class.

Meanwhile, the President will lead the inauguration of the Peoples Television Network, Inc. Cordillera hub at Lualhati, Baguio City on Saturday, March 11.

This newest government information facility will strengthen the delivery of government programs and policies that will inform, inspire, and empower the people to deepen their civic engagement, improve their quality of life and contribute to nation building.

<http://news.pia.gov.ph>

Peace gab with Reds scrapped

From The Standard (Mar 10): Peace gab with Reds scrapped

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte declared Thursday that the government is ready to wage war with the communists for another 50 years after condemning a New People's Army ambush that killed four policemen and wounded a fifth in Bansalan, Davao del Sur.

On Wednesday, hours after the ambush, NPA rebels went on a rampage at a village in Pagadian City, killing three civilians.

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"There will be no peace talks for the meantime," Duterte said in an interview after visiting the wake of the slain policemen. "I will ask the military and the police to wage war against them."

"I will allow them to use all available assets. Use rockets," he said.

He said the communists would never gain power because the people did not want them to.

Duterte said he has ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to use all its assets, including newly acquired jets, and drop bombs on the rebels.

"Go ahead, flatten the hills," he added. "Look at what you have done. Look at how the people responded."

He said it was no longer viable to talk with the rebels because "they're diverting issues in the talks, they're muddling the talks" and waging a revolution based on "ideological cannibalism."

"It's a question of honor. We fight a war and as the revolutionary ideology would put it, it's a kind of ideological cannibalism because you devour your own kind. You kill your own brother and sisters on the altar of a revolution ... Because it is a war among Filipinos, your countrymen," he added.

The Palace on Thursday said that the deaths of four policemen ambushed by the NPA might derail efforts to revive the stalled peace talks even as top National Democratic Front consultants flew to Europe Wednesday night in an attempt to start backchannel talks with the government.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said the killing of the four policemen could set back efforts to restart the negotiations.

The slain policemen were identified as Police Officer 1 (PO1) Rolly Benelayo, PO1 Joe Narvaza, PO1 Saro Mangutara, belonging to the Bansalan Municipal Police Station, and PO3 Jayden May Rabor of the Scene of the Crime Operations of Digos City. Another policeman, PO3 Allen Arnado, was wounded.

Duterte earlier opened up the possibility of reviving the stalled peace talks, but has laid down three "requests" before any negotiation can proceed: A genuine ceasefire done in sincerity, the release of all soldiers and civilians being held captive by the NPA, and a stop to NPA extortion activities.

1 soldier killed, another wounded in Surigao Norte clash

From the Sun Star-Cagayan de Oro (Mar 9): 1 soldier killed, another wounded in Surigao Norte clash

A soldier was killed while another was wounded after a firefight erupted between elements of the Army's 30th Infantry Battalion (30IB) and alleged members of the New People's Army (NPA) in the town of Alegria in Surigao del Norte, Wednesday evening, March 8.

A report from the 30IB revealed that around 8 p.m. Wednesday, soldiers were on their way to Budlingin village to check on intelligence reports of the presence of NPA rebels in the Indigenous People's community.

"Last night, our troops encountered the NPA while they were on their way to the village to secure the area after we received reports of the NPA harassing the community. Then a 30 minute firefight erupted against around 10 to 15 NPAs which lead to the death of a soldier while injuring another," said Second Lieutenant Jonel Castillo, civil military officer of the 30th IB.

Castillo identified the soldier who was killed in action as Private First Class (PFC) John Francis Rivera, 27, and the

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wounded as PFC Windyl Daayata, 26.

Rivera and Daayata are both from the province of Bukidnon.

Castillo said that the NPA activity in the area is not new and that the armed group is going back to the IP community to bolster their ranks.

"This group is headed by commander Ricky, and they have been going back to the area to conduct recruitment operations taking advantage on the IP community," said Castillo.

The NPA is yet to issue a statement regarding the said incident.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph>

NPA rebels burn rubber firm's vehicle in Zamboanga Sibugay

From the Sun Star-Zamboanga (Mar 10): NPA rebels burn rubber firm's vehicle in Zamboanga Sibugay
MEMBERS of the New People's Army (NPA) burned a vehicle of a rubber company in Zamboanga Sibugay on Wednesday, March 8, authorities said.

Zamboanga Sibugay Police Director Romulo Cleve Taboso said the incident happened around 11 a.m. Wednesday at Purok 3 in the village of Lacnapan, Kabasalan town.

Taboso said the NPA rebels drove the vehicle owned by MJ Rubber Company to a riverbank and torched it there.

The rebels owned up the torching through a letter they left in the area, signed by NPA's Zamboanga Peninsula Regional Operations Command spokesman Ka Mario Jose.

No one was reported killed or injured during the incident.

Investigation showed the NPA rebels torched the vehicle as the owners of the land being cultivated by the rubber firm have filed complaint with the NPA's court, Bagong Hukbong Bayan, against the company.

The NPA rebels fled to the town of Bayog in Zamboanga del Sur, the police said.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph>

4 suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits killed in Basilan

From ABS-CBN (Mar 10): 4 suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits killed in Basilan

Four members of the Abu Sayyaf Group, including a relative of terrorist leader Isnilon Hapilon, were killed in a military offensive on Wednesday morning in Basilan province, the Armed Forces' Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom) said Thursday.

A 30-minute firefight between 15 Abu Sayyaf members and joint elements of the military and the police resulted in the death of Ustadz Mobin Kulin, alias Mulawin, a cousin of Hapilon, in Tapiantana Island.

Three other Abu Sayyaf members were also killed, based on the bodies recovered in the encounter site.

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Government troops also seized several high-powered firearms including a Barrett M82 sniper rifle, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher with ammunition, and 12 grenade launcher rifles.

Kulin was an "active and hardcore" Abu Sayyaf member from Lantawan, Basilan who was involved in the Lamitan siege and Dos Palmas incidents in the province, according to the military.

The remains of the slain Abu Sayyaf members will be turned over to the Basilan Provincial Police Office.

"All-out offensives are being conducted by the Joint Task Force Basilan with the support and coordination of the local government, police, and civilians in the province against the Abu Sayyaf bandits who are responsible for the conduct of bombings, extortion activities, and kidnappings in Basilan," said Wesmincom commander Major General Carlito G. Galvez, Jr.

Authorities are still conducting pursuit operations against other members of the terrorist group.

<http://news.aps-cbn.com>

Army: Military ops vs. ASG 'gaining success'

From the Davao Today (Mar 10): Army: Military ops vs. ASG 'gaining success'



COMBAT READY. As part of their Araw ng Dabaw preparations, soldiers of the Task Force Davao display their readiness to respond to emergency scenarios during the combat simulation conducted by the Joint Task Force Haribon at the Task Force Davao headquarters in Sta. Ana Wharf, Davao City on Wednesday, Feb. 8. (Paulo C. Rizal/davaotoday.com)

A ranking army official here said the military operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group was gaining success following a series of reported encounters and killings of ASG rebels.

"The AFP's campaign against the Abu Sayyaf Group and other terror groups there in the [Western Mindanao Command], particularly in Sulu and Basilan are gaining success. The encounters and and the neutralization of terrorists in those areas) are continuous," Brig. Gen. Gilbery Gapay, commander of the Joint Task Force Haribon said in a press conference here Wednesday.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines is currently waging an all out war against the ASG. The AFP recently deployed 8,000 soldiers as augmentation force to Sulu and Basilan, both known to be a bailiwick of the ASG operations.

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"What usually happens is that they make some diversionary tactics in other areas to ease up the Armed Forces' pressure on them," Gapay said.

He, however, assured the public that they are constantly monitoring for possible threats. Gapay said they already neutralized the leadership of local terror group Ansar al-Khilafah in the Philippines in Sarangani which is within the area of responsibility of the Eastern Mindanao Command.

As for the ASG, the Maute Group, and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Forces, Gapay said they "extensive intelligence coverage."

"Our intelligence coverage of these groups are extensive. [We monitor] their movements, their splinter groups so that we would know firsthand of any attempts to infiltrate Davao City), Gapay said.

<http://davaotoday.com>

7 NPAs killed in SOLCOM area of responsibility

From Update.PH (Mar 9): 7 NPAs killed in SOLCOM area of responsibility

Armed Forces of the Philippines Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM) reported the death of seven NPA members during follow-up operations in Camarines Sur and Quezon provinces.

"The encounter ensued on March 7, 2017 at around 1:05 PM between 83rd Infantry Battalion (83IB) and 20 NPAs at Brgy Tabgon, Goa, Camarines Sur and recovered three (3) NPAs killed including three (3) .45 Cal pistol and materials for making Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) with one (1) CAA slightly wounded identified as Solomon Biviro," SOLCOM said. As troops of 83IB continued the offensive two AK47 rifle, one M16 rifle, one M203 grenade launcher, and NPA documents were recovered.

SOLCOM said three NPAs who were killed are yet to be identified. While a wounded CAA is now at Camp Elias Angeles Station Hospital for medical assistance.

Meanwhile, four still unidentified NPAs were killed after a 30-minute firefight between troops of 2nd Jungle Fighter Company of 85th Infantry Battalion (85IB) and 20 NPAs on March 7, 2017 at around 2:00 PM at Sitio Umagos, Brgy Camplora, San Andres near the boundary of Brgy. Mabunga, San Francisco, Quezon.

SOLCOM commander Lieutenant General Ferdinand F. Quidilla said that the AFP will continue to conduct military offensive operation as a punitive action in order to pursue these lawless NPA members who continue to conduct violent attacks against the soldiers and the public.

The AFP appeals to the members of the NPA to engage in a localized peace talks and encourage them to ask for the help of the third party sectors if they decided to negotiate at the grassroots level.

<http://www.update.ph>

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Government forces encounter NPA in Batangas

From Update.Ph (Mar 10): Government forces encounter NPA in Batangas

At around 1 pm today, another firefight ensued between the government troops from Philippine Army 2nd Infantry 'Jungle Fighter' Division (2ID) and members of NPA at Brgy Toong, Tuy, Batangas. According to 2ID, the encounter was a result of continuing military offensive after the termination of unilateral ceasefire, and the order of Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief-of-Staff to hit the enemy hard.

"While conducting combat operation, the troops of 1st Infantry Battalion and 730th Combat Group all under the control of 2nd Division's 202nd Brigade encountered an undetermined number of armed rebels," 2ID said.

No casualty from the government troops was recorded while the number of casualties from enemy side is undetermined. The troops recovered one AK47, one Shotgun, and one Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

2ID noted that the said engagement is just three days after the encounter in Quezon Province which resulted to the death of 4 NPAs, apprehension of two alleged NPAs, and the recovery of seven high-powered firearms (two AK47, four M16, and one M203).

"The enemies of the government shall expect massive combat operations as we are now more focused in protecting the people from any threat," 2ID commander Major General Rhoderick Parayno said.

<http://www.update.ph>

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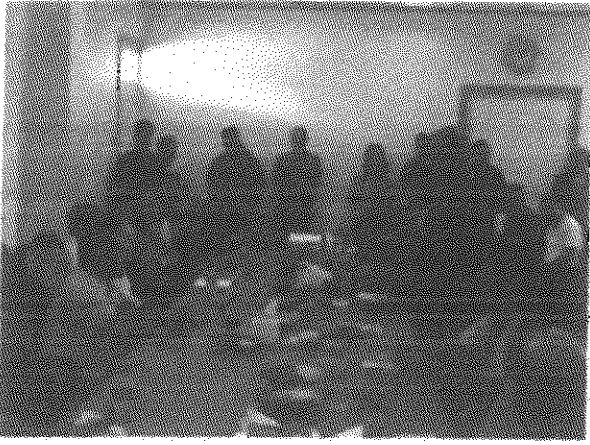
All-out offensives launched in Basilan province

From the Mindanao Examiner (Mar 10): All-out offensives launched in Basilan province



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*Sulu Governor Totoh Tan during a recent meeting with Defense chief Delfin Lorenzana and other senior military officials.
(Photos by Ahl-franzie Salinas)*



ZAMBOANGA CITY – The Philippine military ordered an all-out offensive against the ISIS-affiliated Abu Sayyaf group in the restive province of Basilan in the Muslim autonomous region following fierce clashes that left 4 rebels dead, officials said Saturday.

Major General Carlito Galvez, chief of the Western Mindanao Command, said the campaign has the backing of the local governments and civilians in the province, just several nautical miles south of Zamboanga City.

“All-out offensives are being conducted by the Joint Task Force Basilan with the support and coordination of the local government, police, and civilians in the province against the Abu Sayyaf bandits who are responsible for the conduct of bombings, extortion activities, and kidnappings in Basilan,” Galvez said.

He also boasted to finish off the Abu Sayyaf in just 6 months. A rhetoric also made by many generals ahead of him and all of them failed in their campaign to rid the island-province of the Abu Sayyaf, which authorities linked to deadly attacks on military and civilian targets in the troubled region.

“The entire command is more motivated to go after and finish-off the group within the next six months or less,” Galvez said.

Just recently, security forces killed Ustadz Mobin Kulin, alias Mulawin, a relative of Abu Sayyaf chieftain Isnilon Hapilon; and 3 other rebels in ferocious fighting in Tapiantana Island which is also part of Basilan. Troops also recovered several automatic weapons and improvised explosives.

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The government offensives in Basilan came after Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Armed Forces' Chief of Staff, General Eduardo Año, including Galvez, met with various sectors in the neighboring province of Sulu where they discussed security measures in the region and sought the support of the Muslims in fighting the Abu Sayyaf.

The meeting was also attended Army Lieutenant General Glorioso Miranda, Brigadier General Francis Carada, Deputy Commander of the 3rd Air Division of the Philippine Air Force; Rear Admiral Rene Medina, Commander of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao; and National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, and provincial officials led by Governor Totoh Tan and 14 of the 19 municipal mayors in Sulu. Representatives of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Moro National Liberation Front, and the academe, religious, health and business sectors also attended the meeting held at the Provincial Capitol.

Lorenzana said President Rodrigo Duterte wants the problem in Sulu to be given a long-term solution and ordered the cabinet secretaries to talk with the local governments in order to make them affirm that their role is very important in giving solution to the Abu Sayyaf problem.

For his part, Tan said military actions are not the sole answer in addressing the Abu Sayyaf problems, but the delivery of basic government services and other peace and development projects to the people.

"We also want a permanent solution to our problem here in the province, that is why we are all here to talk about possible actions. With us are fourteen mayors who have given their own recommendations after airing their concerns to the government. We believe that military action is not the only solution to the current situation but the delivery of basic goods and services of the government to the people is one of the most potent and effective answers to the problem at hand," Tan said.

Tan and the mayors also reaffirmed their commitment to peace and support to the military and government efforts in finding a long lasting solution to the Abu Sayyaf problems. "We are with you (the military) 100 percent. We will not allow those who are supporting the Abu Sayyaf to live and prosper within our communities. We will have those reported cuddling terrorist investigated and answer their infractions. Let us work together to cleanse our barangays and towns so that we can bring development in our area," Tan said.

Security forces are also battling another Abu Sayyaf faction in Sulu which is also part of the autonomous region.
<http://mindanaoexaminer.com>

NPA rebels own up deadly attack in Davao Sur

From the Mindanao Examiner (Mar 10): **NPA rebels own up deadly attack in Davao Sur**

Communist rebels on Friday owned up to the deadly ambush of a police team in the southern Philippine province of Davao del Sur and boasted how it carefully planned and carried out the daring attack.

Rigoberto Sanchez, a spokesman for the New People's Army, said rebel forces from the Mt. Apo Subregional Operations Command also seized four weapons from the slain police members in the village of Sibayan in Bansalan town on March 8.

The team of policemen were heading to the village to respond to a shooting incident when rebels attacked them. Police said those killed were mostly forensic experts.

But Sanchez said the armed policemen were on "offensive operation" against the NPA. "Humiliated in the face of defeat and supremacy of guerrilla tactics, the enemy desperately attempted to twist the facts of the incident to conceal the bare-faced rotteness of the Armed Forces' counter-insurgency plan," he said.

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He said the police was just covering up for its failed anti-insurgency operation. "Shamefaced by the aftermath of the successful NPA ambush against its troops, the Philippine National Police hierarchy peddled the dubious line and outrageously melodramatic declaration that the PNP unit was a non-factual police team overwhelmed by a superfluous NPA force which seized all six of its total firearms."

"It is a vain attempt to cover-up the fact that an armed PNP unit on offensive operation was effectively neutralized by a 14-man NPA unit. Seizing the initiative as a matter of principle of guerrilla warfare, the NPA unit was able to induce the enemy into a well-laid ambush and attack the enemy's weak force by the NPA's relative superior force. In subduing the PNP unit, the NPA aims to win a battle of quick decision by demobilizing its moving targets and wiping out the enemy swiftly," Sanchez said.

He also accused the police and military forces of committing "atrocious" human rights violations and international humanitarian law violations against innocent civilians and members of indigenous tribes suspected either as members or supporters of the NPA in the provinces of Davao del Sur and North Cotabato.

Sanchez, narrating how rebels carried out the ambush, he said: "An NPA platoon was positioned at the mountainside of Barangay Sibayan in order to frustrate military and police operations in the area. Another squad took position nearby. The NPA command was in anticipation of police and military operations to be coordinated by the 39th Infantry Battalion. At 6:15 a.m., heavily armed police personnel aboard two mobile PNP vehicles were dispatched, apparently to reconnoiter and clear the area before deploying its soldiers."

"The first police vehicle passed by the NPA ambush position site at 6:35 a.m. The NPA squad desisted from striking when it saw civilians riding in motorcycles were in close proximity to the moving PNP vehicle. The second police vehicle passed by subsequently. At 7:10 a.m., the NPA squad, positioned eight meters from the road, proceeded to ambush the passing mobile vehicle. After the initial five-second volley of gunshots, the NPA commander called for the enemy troops to surrender and lay down their arms."

He continued on saying "the PNP personnel, however, retaliated with numerous return of fire. A wounded police officer jumped off from the vehicle. It took ten minutes of an exchange of fire before the NPA squad succeeded in subduing the PNP unit before cautiously approaching the PNP mobile vehicle to seize two M16 rifles and two 9mm Glock pistols. At 7:25 a.m., the NPA 14-man squad safely withdrew from the ambush site."

Sanchez said rebels will continue to exact revolutionary justice and wage tactical offensives anywhere and anytime in the countryside and areas under the so-called People's Democratic Government. "Tempered in the long running guerrilla warfare in the country, the Red fighters will continue to deliver heavy blows against the enemy, seize arms to increase the number of its full-fighting units and advance the level of people's war," he said.

Following the ambush, President Rodrigo Duterte also ordered the police and military to run after the rebels. The attack occurred as members of the government panel are holding backchannel talks with the rebels for the resumption of the peace negotiations.

Duterte suspended the peace talks last month after rebels launched a series of deadly attacks in the restive region following government's failure to release some 400 political detainees – mostly NPA leaders and members arrested and captured in the past by authorities – a promise made by the President during election campaign last year.

The rebels have been fighting for many decades now for the establishment of a communist state in the country.

<http://mindanaoexaminer.com>

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

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At Ground Level

By SATUR C. OCAMPO



Continue peace talks rather than wage war

How shall we read this latest situation? What can we expect to happen next?

Having dispatched his peace adviser Jesus Dureza and a team of government negotiators to Europe and allowed the travel of NDFP negotiating panel member Benito Tiamzon and two consultants to participate in back-channel talks, President Duterte made a U-turn and ordered the AFP and PNP to “wage war” on the NPA, using all their “available assets.”

All things considered, the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations – which Mr. Duterte had “cancelled” on Feb. 4 in a blustering fit – will most likely continue.

Why so? Let’s first review the recent developments

= March 3: After visiting the wake of two AFP soldiers killed in an encounter with the NPA in Mindanao, as he had done on Feb. 4, the President expressed pain over the soldiers’ death but said he was willing to talk peace again. He was quoted by reporters as saying:

“We need to talk from the heart. I’m ready as long as we communicate well. I’m ready to resume the ceasefire, but this time I want it to be sincere. Back then [in February], there was a ceasefire but my soldiers were killed.” He added, “I really get hurt when someone from the other side dies. These are Filipinos. Me, I’m in the government and I have a job to do. Please understand that... I just want peace.”

He went further: “I do not want war. It’s a waste of money. Instead of buying bullets, I can buy machines for giving away to people to help them. For me no one will win in a war. If we Filipinos fight against fellow Filipinos nobody wins. The people lose, the Philippines loses.”

Mr. Duterte called on the NPA to release the six soldiers and policemen held captive by the NPA. (The latter had in fact announced its readiness to release the “prisoners of war” as soon as the government ordered, as in previous instances, a suspension of military and police operations in areas where the releases would take place). He also said he wanted the NPA to stop its revolutionary taxation.

= March 4: Peace adviser Dureza said in a radio interview he was awaiting the President’s instructions on the possible continuation of the peace talks. He clarified that Mr. Duterte was not imposing any condition but was simply expressing his “wishes.” There are no preconditions for going back to the negotiating table, he emphasized.

= March 6: The President told reporters that back-channel were ongoing to discuss how and when to continue the formal peace negotiations. But he declined to provide details so as not to “spoil the developments.” “Hang on, hang on,” he assured reporters, “I must admit there is back-channelling.”

= March 8: At about 6 a.m. NPA fighters ambushed town policemen and members of the provincial Scene of the Crime Operatives (Soco) in the upland barangay of Sibayan, Bansalan, Davao

del Sur. Four policemen were killed and one was wounded. They reportedly were on their way to verify a murder case when ambushed.

– March 9: Speaking before a crowd in Bansalan late afternoon, after visiting the wake of the slain policemen, President Duterte ordered the AFP and PNP to “wage war” on the NPA, apparently in retaliation for the ambush-killing. The media quoted him thus:

“There are no peace talks yet. It’s totally absent. So in the meantime, I would just ask the armed forces and the police to just go ahead and wage a war against them. Anything goes.” He further said, “I will allow the police and the military this time to use all available assets.”

The reports said Mr. Duterte referred to using, among other war-making assets, the AFP’s newly acquired fighting jets from South Korea to drop rocket-bombs on the NPA fighters.

“Go ahead, flatten the hills,” he ordered the state security forces. Should the bombings incur collateral damage (as usually happens) – meaning, the residents in rural communities with NPA presence suffer casualties, injuries or property damages as a result – he added, “*Pasensya* (sorry).”

Earlier Thursday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, in a speech at the National Defense College, announced that peace adviser Dureza had left the night before to conduct back-channel talks in Europe, followed by Tiamzon, with his wife, Wilma, and Vicente Ladlad.

“We in the military and the defense [department] welcome this development,” Lorenzana explained, “because we also want to stop the fighting in the hinterlands, in the rural areas so that we can bring development.”

The Duterte government, he said, is aware of the public clamor for the continuation of the GRP-NDFP peace talks. He also took note of the fact that more than 100 congressmen had signed a House resolution to that effect.

It needs pointing out that the government soldiers and policemen died in encounters with the NPA in areas of the armed conflict or “war zones” in the AFP’s pursuit of “all-out war” declared last month. Hence, it appears that President Duterte himself has been holding back from condemning the NPA actions. In fact, replying to reporters’ queries, he conceded that the Bansalan attack on the policemen was “not an overkill” while remarking that the ambush was a “well-laid trap.” (In contrast, the killing of a soldier in February caused him to flare up and cancel the peace talks.)

The President also premised his recent order to wage war against the NPA “in the meantime” on the fact that “there are no peace talks yet.” His statement implies that, should the back-channel talks result in an agreement to continue the stalled peace negotiations, his March 8 order will be withdrawn.

Let’s wait for the developments on this matter, quite soon.

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PAGBABAGO

Women's rights; honoring teachers, soldiers, and policemen



By FLORANGEL BRAID

A RECENT Pulse Asia Survey on women's rights showed that a large percentage of Filipinos (94%) believe a woman has the right to fight for her rights. Also, that while 93% think that there still exists gender inequality, a larger percentage - 41% of Filipinos from all over the country - believes that most Filipino women are not disadvantaged, and that they enjoy equal footing with their male counterparts. President Duterte likewise paid tribute to women during the celebration of International Women's Day by thanking women as he shared inspiring words. "Women are heroes and the entire world can look up to women for their creativity and imagination, for their courage and boldness, for their self-sacrifice and charity," he said as he made a commitment to empower women during his presidency.

And, at the Philippine Military Academy, women displayed their mettle when eight female cadets were among the top ten honored at this year's graduation rites.

The Philippine Commission for Women (PCW) is now pushing for an amendment of the Anti-Rape Law in the light of recent statistics which showed that an average of 28 women are raped every day. Data based on a report from the Philippine National

Police revealed an increase in the number of rape cases from 4,700 in 2012 to 10,000 in 2015. The proposed amendment calls for rape to be defined as a case of lack of consent and for Congress to impose a heavier punishment on sexual assault of minors. Women's groups are in favor of imposing reclusion perpetua or life imprisonment on those found guilty of rape.

According to Chito Sobrepena who is president of Metrobank Foundation, Inc. (MBFI), the latter recently elevated the prestige of its flagship program, the Outstanding Filipino Awards by searching for public servants who are not merely models of excellence in the professions, but more importantly, agents of proactive change in their sectors and communities.

The awardees will come from three sectors - education, armed forces, and the police force. Teachers, soldiers, and police officers who will be nominated must have a minimum of at least 10 years of service to become eligible. For elementary and secondary teachers to qualify, they must have completed all the academic requirements for a master's degree, while higher education teachers must have a doctorate to qualify.

For AFP commissioned officers (captain to colonel), they must have completed a bachelor's degree while AFP enlisted personnel (corporal to

chief master sergeant) must have a high school certificate. PNP commissioned officers (police inspector to police senior superintendent) and non-commissioned officers (PO2 to SPO4) must have a bachelor's degree.

Interested applicants must have exhibited good moral character and must not have been charged guilty in any administrative or criminal case.

Nominees will be accepted by the MBFI secretariat in its nearest Metrobank branch or before March 24, 2017, according to Executive Director Nicanor Torres. For inquiries, please call 8968898 or mobile 09568734684 and ask for Dyan Tee or Neury Chan, or go to their website: www.mb.foundation.org.ph

The theme for this year's search is "Beyond Excellence." The Award will recognize 10 outstanding Filipinos - 4 teachers, 3 soldiers, and 3 police officers. Each outstanding Filipino will receive ₱1 million cash prize, a trophy, and a medallion. The awardees will be conferred the title, "2017 Metrobank Foundation Fellows in Public Service," and will be given the opportunity to share their advocacies through public lectures. Award ceremonies will be held during Metrobank's 54th anniversary celebration this coming September.

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