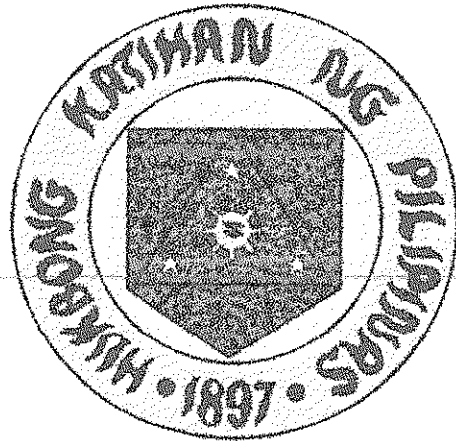


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**NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**13 March 2017**

**Monday**

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# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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**TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MARCH 12, 2017 | SUNDAY**

YALINGO DE A GOLD FRONT AFFECTING EASTERN VISAYAS  
AFFECTING THE EASTERN VISAYAS  
AFFECTING CEBU AND SOUTHERN VISAYAS  
(AS OF 5:00 AM - MARCH 11, 2017)

LOCATION	TEMPERATURE	SUNRISE	SUNSET
LADANG CITY	25 - 32 °C	6:06 AM	5:06 PM
NUVU-DARAO CITY	25 - 32 °C		
SBMA/CLARK	23 - 33 °C	MOONRISE	MOONSET
METRO MANILA	23 - 32 °C	6:54 PM	6:43 AM
TAGAYTAY CITY	23 - 28 °C	FIRST QUARTER	FULL MOON
LEGAZPI CITY	23 - 30 °C	7:31 AM	6:34 PM
ILOILO/BACOLOD	26 - 30 °C	LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
PUERTO PRINCESA	24 - 31 °C	4:58 AM	1:51 PM
ACLANAN CITY	24 - 30 °C	0:50 MILE	0:51 MILE
METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C		
DAVAN DE ORO	23 - 32 °C		
ZAMBOANGA CITY	21 - 32 °C		
METRO DAVAO	25 - 30 °C		

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

LOCATION	TEMPERATURE	TEMPERATURE	TEMPERATURE	TEMPERATURE	TEMPERATURE
METRO MANILA	23 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	20 - 29 °C	20 - 29 °C	24 - 31 °C
TAGAYTAY	23 - 32 °C	23 - 32 °C	23 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	23 - 32 °C	23 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	25 - 31 °C
LAOAG	16 - 25 °C	16 - 24 °C	25 - 31 °C	28 - 31 °C	25 - 33 °C
BAGUIO	24 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	24 - 31 °C	25 - 31 °C	
SBMA/CLARK					
METRO CEBU					
TACLOBAN					
DAGAYAN DE ORO					
METRO DAVAO					
ZAMBOANGA					

Watch PanahonTV daily on Pilipinas HD at 9AM, 12NN, 3PM, 6PM & 9PM.

B March 2017

# INQUIRER

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## Groups hail resumption of peace talks

FROM A1

By Karlos Manlupig,  
Philip C. Tubexa  
and Lelia B. Salaverria  
@Team\_Inquirer

Just days after President Duterte ordered soldiers to flatten the hills in going after the New People's Army, the peace panels of the government and the communist-led National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) announced that peace talks were back on track.

Peace advocates and groups welcomed with relief the decision of the government and the rebels to resume the formal talks after weeks of intense

fighting on the ground.

"We thank God for the resumption of peace talks between the GRP [Government of the Republic of the Philippines] and the NDFP. No more killings," said Jesuit priest Joel Tabora, president of Ateneo de Davao University.

The NDFP is the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Community-based peace organization Balay Mindanaw said the recent development was a celebration for renewed hope for a just and lasting peace.

In a joint statement signed on Saturday both parties, which met for two days in Utrecht, The Netherlands, not only agreed to resume the negotiations but also to reinstate the indefinite unilat-

eral ceasefire declarations while working on an interim bilateral ceasefire agreement. Norway facilitated the informal talks on March 10 and 11.

"The parties shall continue the formal peace talks and reiterate their reaffirming of all bilateral agreements and statements made in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, including the Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law," they said.

The presidential adviser on the peace process, Jesus Dureza, said the unilateral ceasefires and the Jasig would allow the rebels' consultants to move freely and be safe from arrest.

In a statement, Dureza said Mr. Duterte was kept informed of developments in efforts to go back to the negotiating table.

### Ceasefire reinstated

The parties agreed that reinstating the indefinite unilateral ceasefire declarations before the scheduled fourth round of talks in April would help create a better atmosphere for the resumption of the stalled negotiations.

A bilateral ceasefire agreement will also be discussed and signed by the government and the NDFP in the next meetings.

This will replace the unilateral ceasefire declarations and would establish more stable mechanisms, including monitoring and prevention of tensions that might trigger hostilities.

The military welcomed news of the breakthrough but said it would await formal notice from government negotiators and Mr. Duterte's instructions.

"Pending this, all military operations will continue and remain at current state," it said in a statement.

The guerrillas said they would remain vigilant because of continuing counterinsurgency operations but added they were optimistic with the talks' resumption.

"Instead of putting the lives of millions of people in harm's way, such as Mr. Duterte's all-out war declaration, better yet we try to settle our differences at the negotiating table," said the Melito Glor Command.

Founded in 1968, the CPP has unsuccessfully tried to ne-

gotiate with five Presidents before Mr. Duterte. The rebellion, one of Asia's longest, has left about 40,000 combatants and civilians dead and stunted economic development.

Mr. Duterte had reopened stalled peace talks with the 4,000-strong communist rebel movement after taking office in June.

His administration released captured rebel leaders and both sides had called separate ceasefires to pave the way for peace talks overseas.

But the rebels lifted their unilateral ceasefire on Feb. 10 after accusing government of failing to release all political prisoners and the military of deploying troops in rebel-controlled communities.

—WITH REPORTS FROM JEROME ANING, AFP AND AP INQ

B March 2017

MANILA BULLETIN  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

# PMA 'SALAKNIB' CLASS GRADUATION Duterte promises AFP modern aircraft, vessels, and equipment

More modern military aircraft, sea vessels, and other equipment are forthcoming in the next two to three years

to better patrol the country's territory and combat security threats, President Duterte announced yesterday.

Speaking at the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) graduation ceremony

in Baguio City, the President has unveiled plans to further modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to be on a par with its counterparts in the world. ▶ 13

"In the next two to three years, the AFP will have night surveillance, radar support, patrol and assault vehicles as well as new surveillance and fighter aircraft so that you can better patrol our borders and guard our seas," the President said.

"All of these we do so that our AFP will be more effective in pursuing its mandate, in assisting law enforcement agencies in battling crime and illegal drugs and in undertaking relief and rescue efforts during disasters and calamities," he said.

The country's soldiers could also expect better weapons from the Duterte administration in appreciation of their sacrifices for the nation.

"You will be provided with the proper equipment and weapons, particularly body armors, helmets and rifles as well as short firearms so that you can defend yourselves even when you are off duty," the commander-in-chief said.

With the support of the people, the President promised to sustain the military buildup to have "an AFP that we can truly be proud of—an AFP that will be at par with the rest of the world."

The President's military modernization plans come amid the government's struggle to address the problems of terrorism, illegal drugs and other crimes in the country. The country's territorial dispute with China also recently heightened after a Chinese ship was spotted in Benham Rise, an area located within the local territory.

Duterte said his government is committed to reciprocate the soldiers' valor and courage by providing them with all the necessary support and incentives. He promised to give the soldiers and their families the "services, benefits and entitlements that you rightfully deserve."

"At this point, I would like to personally thank all Filipino soldiers for your loyalty to the Philippine flag," Duterte said.

"To those who risked their lives and limbs to defend this country's sovereignty as well as those who continue to offer their sweat and blood to fortify the pillars of a great nation that we are presently trying to build," he added.

At the start of his speech, the President paid tribute to the fallen soldiers and promised assistance to their bereaved families.

"Taos-puso akong nakikiramay sa mga nasawi sa kamay ng kaibigan. Let me assure the bereaved that the valiant sacrifices of your loved ones will not be in vain. Your government will ensure that your needs will be taken care of. That is my commitment to you," he said.

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#### US aid to AFP

The United States may cut off its military aid to the Philippines if the AFP will have a bigger role in the drug war, according to Murray Heibert, deputy director for the Southeast Asia program of Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C.

"If the military were to join the drug war and participate in extrajudicial killings, congressional regulations could force the United States to suspend military aid and training," he warned.

President Duterte has given the leading role to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) while ordering the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP) to back PDEA.

"This could potentially have a devastating impact on the bilateral military relationship, introducing major complications to long-standing training and military education programs that could take decades to resolve," Heibert said.

In 2016, the US government gave \$79 million in military aid that was mostly used to boost the capacity of the Philippine Air Force, Coast Guard, and Navy. The Philippines was also a recipient of a \$42-million training program conducted by the US Maritime Security Initiative.

In an assessment published by CSIS, Heibert disclosed that the United States Congress has "been discussing whether and how the US Congress should respond to Duterte's deadly drug war," while the Trump administration is still in the process of assigning key positions for the US State Department and US Defense Department in Asia.

#### 'Defend the country'

Meanwhile, President Duterte has laid down the mission of the PMA class of 2017 dominated by women — defend the country with honor and might and stay loyal to the Constitution at all times.

"To the Salaknib Class of 2017, may you always stay true to your class name and defend the motherland with your honor and might. I have no doubt that you will do this because you are the cream of the crop," Duterte said in his prepared address.

"Just be true to your oath of office. Do not pledge loyalty to a person, a human being. It's always to the flag and to the Constitution. Iyan ang advice ko sa inyo," he added.

The Commander-in-Chief said they should never nurture loyalty to a government worker since "we are on the same boat, we work for the Filipinos."

The 167-strong PMA class of 2017

has adopted the name Salaknib (Sangalang ay Lakas at Buhay na Alay Para sa Kalayaan ng Inang Bayan), an Ilocano word for "shield." Sixty-three of the 167 PMA graduates are women. Eight women also made it to the top 10 of PMA Class of 2017.

The President told the PMA graduates to remember the values learned from the academy and become "vanguards of hope" and "catalysts of change."

He said the challenges waiting the new military officers outside PMA would not only require their intellect and strength but also "sound moral judgment."

"It is not only your enemies, but the entire world, that will test, tempt, corrupt, and pressure you. But as long as your hearts and minds remain in the right place whom you have pledged to serve, remember your roots and remember the people," Duterte said.

"May the values and learning imparted to you during your years in the Academy be engraved in your hearts and may these guide you wherever life leads you," he added.

The President also lauded the record-high number of women in this year's PMA class led by valedictorian Rovi Martinez of Cabanatuan City.

"Today, we make history. This is the first time female cadets occupied eight of the Top 10 spots in their graduating class," Duterte said.

"With the highest number of graduating women in PMA's history, this breakthrough is a fitting tribute to our mothers, sisters [and] daughters as we celebrate Women's Month," he added.

Of the 167 newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenants, 90 will serve the Philippine Army, 44 will go to the Philippine Navy and 33 will join the Philippine Air Force. The class valedictorian has chosen the Philippine Navy.

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**No. 1 picks Navy**

In her speech, newly-commissioned Navy Ensign Martinez said that she and her fellow graduates owe it to the Filipino people and to the country do everything they can to serve with honor and dignity.

"To the Filipino people, whom we have pledged to serve with honor and integrity utang namin ang lahat ng ito sa inyo (we owe everything to you)," she said.

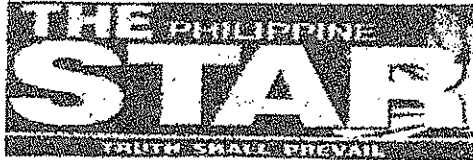
"We will strive to become the best officers who are worthy of your respect and trust. We vow as young leaders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to always serve you and country," she added.

For topping her class, Martinez received from President Rodrigo Roa Duterte the Presidential Saber Award, Philippine Navy Saber, Cum Laude Academic Group Award, Social Sciences

Plaque, Navy Professional Courses Australian Defence Best Overall Performance Award, AGFO Award, Spanish Armed Forces Award, and the Tara Yap and Francis T. Wakefield



3 March 2017



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## PMA grads told: Be loyal to flag, not superiors

Be catalysts of change and vanguards of hope.

President Duterte made this call on the new graduates of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) yesterday as he reminded them to place their loyalty to the country above everything else.

Out there, the challenge will not just require your intellectual

Turn to Page 10

or physical capabilities, but your sound moral judgment as well. It is not only your enemies, but the entire world, that will test, tempt, corrupt and pressure you," Duterte told the PMA "Salaknib" Class of 2017.

He urged the graduates to bring with them the values they learned from the academy wherever they go.

"But as long as your hearts and minds remain in the right place whom you have pledged to serve, remember your roots and remember the people. Be vanguards of hope; be catalysts of change," he said.

Duterte, as the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, advised the new commissioned officers to be loyal to their oath of office and not to their superiors.

"Just be true to your oath of office. Do not pledge loyalty to a person, a human being. It's always to the flag and to the Constitution. That's my advice to you," the President said.

"Never propagate or nurture loyalty to a government worker who is also like you. We are on the same boat, we work for the Filipinos," he added.

Duterte asked members of

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the Salaknib Class of 2017 to always stay true to their name and defend the motherland with all their honor and might. Salaknib stands for *Sangalang ay lakas at buhay para sa kalyaan ng Inang Bayan*.

"You have been trained and molded like all other cavaliers, but your true self will make the officer, soldier and leader in you," Duterte said.

The President vowed to provide the military the equipment it needs to perform its mandate.

"You will be provided with the proper equipment and weapons, particularly body armors, helmets and rifles as well as short firearms so that you can defend yourselves even when you are off-duty," he said.

Duterte said the military would have flight simulators, radars, support, patrol and assault vehicles, and new surveillance and fighter aircraft in the next two to three years so it can better patrol and guard the country's borders and seas.

"All of these we do so that our AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) will be more effective in pursuing its mandate, in assisting law enforcement agencies in battling crime and illegal drugs and in undertaking relief and rescue efforts during disasters and calamities," he said.

"With our people's continued support, we will have an AFP that we can truly be proud of – an AFP that will be at par

with the rest of the world."

Duterte also thanked the soldiers "who risked their lives and limbs to defend this country's sovereignty – and those who continue to offer their sweat and blood to fortify the pillars of a great nation."

"Rest assured that the government will reciprocate your valor and your unwavering courage by providing you with all the necessary support and incentives. This administration will give you and your families the services, benefits and entitlements that you rightfully deserve," he said.

Duterte also condoled with the families of soldiers who died in combat and assured them that their needs would be provided.

"Let me assure the bereaved that the valiant sacrifices of your loved ones will not be in vain," he said.

Duterte said PMA Class of 2017 has made history, noting that it is the first time female cadets occupied eight of the top ten spots in their graduating class.

"With the highest number of graduating women in PMA's history, this breakthrough is a fitting tribute to our mothers, sisters and daughters as we celebrate women's month," he said.

Duterte also pardoned the outstanding punishment of cadets, a time honored graduation tradition of the PMA.

– Alexis Romero

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March 2017

The Manila Times

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## NPA RECRUITMENT IN NEGROS REGION DOWN- ARMY OFFICIAL

**BACOLOD CITY**—The division commander of the 3rd Infantry Spearhead Division of the Philippine Army believes that the recruitment of new members of the communist New People's Army (NPA) in the Negros Island Region (NIR) is "declining."

The decline of their recruitment activities is a result of the enlightenment of the people that war is not the solution to their grievances

toward government, Maj. Gen. Jon Aying said.

He pointed out that often the rebels resort to threatening the people, but they fail to convince them to join the armed struggle.

Aying said there are only about 200 rebels based on Negros island, as many have already surrendered.

They are intensifying their

recruitment activities to augment their dwindling forces, he added.

Aying expressed optimism that in 10 years, the island will be peaceful with insurgency weakening.

Earlier, Negros Occidental Gov. Alfredo Maranon Jr. offered P500,000 to communist rebels who will surrender to authorities.

**EUGENE V. ADLONG**

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13 March 2017

The  
**Standard**  
DEFINING THE NEWS

Page: 1



**CLASS ACT** President Rodrigo R. Duterte hands over the Presidential Saber to top cadet Royl Mairel Valino Martinez, during the graduation ceremonies for the Salaknib Class of 2017 of the Philippine Military Academy held at Fort del Pilar, Baguio City on Sunday, March 12, 2017. Martinez also received 10 other awards including the Philippine Navy Saber and the Australian Defense Force Award. PNA

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13 March 2017

# PHILIPPINE ARMY INQUIRER

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## PMA graduates ready to serve, says class valedictorian

By Vincent Cabrera  
and EV Espiritu  
@InquirerNational

BAGUIO CITY—“We are ready to serve.”

Thus said newly commissioned 2nd Lt. Rovi Mairel Martinez in her valedictory address on Sunday after President Duterte challenged 167 new graduates of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) to serve the country.

“To the Filipino people to whom we have pledged to serve with honor and integrity, we owe these [achievements] to you,” said Martinez, the valedictorian of Salaknib Class of 2017.

“We vow as young leaders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to always serve you and the country with vigor and unwavering commitment,” she said to the audience that included Vice President Leni Robredo, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Ano, Philippine National Police Director General Ronald dela Rosa and the heads of the service commands.

Ninety members of Salaknib Class are joining the Philippine Army while 33 are joining the Philippine Air Force. Forty-four others are joining the Philippine Navy.

“Let us not fall our alma mater. Let us make it proud by doing our job and by doing it well,” Martinez said, after Mr. Duterte handed her the Presidential Saber

### Female cadets praised

Mr. Duterte lauded the 63 female members of the class, the largest number of women to graduate from the academy in its 119-year history.

The school also set a new milestone when Martinez and seven other women placed among the top 10 graduates.

Second Lt. Shiela Joy Jallorina became the 41st recipient

of the Aguinaldo Saber, which was handed by Emilio Aguinaldo Suintay III, great-grandson of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo, during the pregraduation ceremonies led by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Saturday.

“What a wonderful way to celebrate International Women’s Month,” Lorenzana said of the honors achieved by the female cadets.

As with most PMA graduations, it was the last ranking cadet, Riuze Marrion Eviota of Lapu-Lapu City, who received the most cheers for being the goat of Salaknib Class.

After receiving his diploma from Mr. Duterte, Eviota faced his classmates and bowed. He turned around and bowed once more to the guests, drawing applause from the crowd.

### Success stories

One of Salaknib’s members used to be a housemaid.

Newly commissioned Ensign Meriam Libongcogon of Cebu province said she was born poor and had to land odd jobs to help raise money for

her family while she struggled to maintain good grades in school.

“When I was young, I helped earn money for the family. I used to gather coconuts shells to sell or haul sand for families that were building houses. The coins I earned I placed in a piggy bank. Our life may not have been grand but it did not stop me from fulfilling my dreams,” she said.

“I did not have an allowance growing up. I was happy if I had a peso coin. We sometimes settled for a meal of bananas—whatever was available. Yet I graduated from grade school as a valedictorian,” Libongcogon said.

She completed high school on a scholarship. “Because I was 15 years old, I could not land a good job and my parents could not afford to send me to college so I took a job as a maid in my hometown, Balamban,” she said.

In his speech, Lorenzana had a message for cadets like Libongcogon: “Success comes to those who seek it and those who work hard for it.” INQ

13 March 2017

# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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## BACK-CHANNEL MEET

# GOVT, NDFP OK RELEASE OF CAPTIVES

By Philip C. Tubeza  
and Karlos Manlupig  
@Team\_Inquirer

Four soldiers and a policeman, four communist rebel consultants and 19 political prisoners are to be released after the government and the communist-led National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) agreed to resume formal peace negotiations.

The government expects the New People's Army (NPA) to free at least four soldiers, the government chief negotiator said on Sunday.

The NPA, armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, early last month said it had captured five soldiers, whom the rebels considered prisoners of war.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, head of the government peace panel, said he expected the release of the soldiers once the negotiators from both panels returned to Manila from Utrecht in The Netherlands.

"Actually, that should have happened before we left (Utrecht) but there was a little miscommunication, so that did not happen. But when we go back (to Manila), they will give to us the four soldiers and a policeman," Bello said in a radio interview.

The government and NDFP panels held back-channel meetings on March 10 and 11 in Utrecht, weeks after the collapse of the formal negotiations.

To ensure the full participation of panel members and consultants from both sides, the government committed to release NDFP consultant Ariel Arbitrario, who was arrested at a military checkpoint in Davao City earlier this year after the talks collapsed.

In a joint statement issued by both panels from Utrecht, the government said it would "ensure the safety and liberty of all consultants, as well as undertake the necessary measures, including the extension or reinstatement of bail, as the case may be, and other legal remedies to enable their free and unhindered movement."

As part of a mechanism for the implementation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig), both parties agreed to reschedule for March 14 the deposit and safekeeping of the reconstituted list and pictures of Jasig holders from the NDFP.

The deposit and safekeeping of the list and pictures of Jasig holders were originally set on Feb. 27 but these were shelved because of the cancellation of the formal talks. (NO)

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## PMA GRADUATION CEREMONY

# DUTERTE ADVICE: BE LOYAL TO FLAG, CHARTER

By Lella B. Salaverria  
@leilasino

BAGUIO CITY — "Just be true to your oath of office. Do not pledge loyalty to a person, a human being. It's always to the flag and to the Constitution. That's my advice to you," President Duterte on Sunday told this year's graduates of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA).

With the top of the class dominated by women, the President hailed the event as historic.

Mr. Duterte also reminded the future leaders of the military that their greatest challenges would require not just brains or brawn, but their moral judgment as well.

He advised the new graduates to remain loyal to the flag and the Constitution, and not to a single person.

Aside from eight women in

the Top 10, with Rovi Marel Martinez as the valedictorian, the PMA 2017 Salaknib Class has the highest number of women graduates.

Today, we make history. This is the first time female cadets occupied eight of the top 10 spots in their graduating class," Mr. Duterte said.

### Tribute to women

"With the highest number of graduating women in PMA's history, this breakthrough is a fitting tribute to our mothers, sisters and daughters as we celebrate Women's Month," he added.

Mr. Duterte called on the Salaknib Class to "always stay true to your class name and defend the motherland with your honor and might."

Salaknib is an Ilocano word meaning shield. The whole class

name is "Sanggangang ay Lakas at Buhay Na Alay Para sa Kalayaan ng Inang Bayan."

Mr. Duterte expressed confidence that the class would be able to live up to its name because its members were the cream of the crop who had surpassed the demands of the PMA.

He called on them to keep the values and learnings from the academy and let these guide them in their lives.

"Out there, the greatest challenge will not just require your intellectual or physical capabilities, but your sound moral judgment as well," he said.

The soldiers must also remain loyal to the country, not to a person, he said.

"Never propagate or nurture loyalty to a government worker who is also like you. We are on the same boat, we work for the Filipinos," he added. **INO**

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# Gov't, NDF to resume peace talks, truce

By EDITH REGALADO

**DAVAO CITY**—The government and communist rebels have agreed to resume peace talks and restore the truce following an escalation of deadly clashes.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza yesterday said the government and rebel negotiators would resume talks early next month and discuss the terms of a broader ceasefire.

Dureza said the decision to resume the peace talks came after backchannel meetings between key members of both panels last Friday and Saturday in the Netherlands.

Norway, which has been brokering the negotiations, was again instrumental in the two-day informal talks in the Netherlands that led to a decision to resume the talks.

"I am pleased to announce that the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the Commu-

nist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) are now back on track," Dureza said.

He said the government also has agreed to release the detained rebels who are consultants to the peace talks and reinstate the immunity from arrest of 19 other NDF consultants.

The NDF is the umbrella organization representing the CPP-NPA in the peace negotiations with the government.

Both parties have also agreed to reinstate their respective unilateral ceasefire declarations that will take effect before the scheduled fourth round of talks in the

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first week of April.

"The unilateral ceasefire is a prelude to an interim bilateral ceasefire that needs further meetings between the two sides to determine and agree on rules, necessary guidelines and mechanisms. The parties are expected to start discussions on the bilateral ceasefire during the planned resumption of the negotiations during the first week of April this year," Duterte said.

He said President Duterte "closely monitored" the two-day exploratory talks held in Utrecht last Friday where the decision to resume formal peace negotiations was reached.

The two panels have agreed that they will continue the formal peace talks and reiterate their reaffirmation of all bilateral agreements and statements, including The Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees, and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Malacañang welcomed the resumption of peace talks and expressed hopes that the rebel leadership would be able to control its ground forces.

"The Palace welcomes the announcement of Secretary Jesus Dureza in Utrecht on the resumption of formal peace talks between the Philippine government

and the Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army - National Democratic Front," presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said in a statement.

"We remain hopeful that the leadership of the CPP-NPA-NDF can rein its forces on the ground in reciprocating the efforts of the Duterte administration to move the peace process forward," he added.

Abella stressed that peace building is "not the exclusive responsibility of the government."

"The burden is also shared by those who claim to speak for the underserved," he said.

"The resumption of the peace talks is a welcome sign that both sides are in agreement about the common good of the Filipino people."

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) also expressed full support for the resumption of peace talks with the communist rebels.

"The AFP has time and again expressed its unequivocal support to all peace initiatives undertaken by our government past and present," spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said.

However Padilla said they would wait for the official pronouncement from the President regarding military operations against the NPA.

"We will anxiously await the official message of our panel and the instructions of our Commander-in-Chief. Pending this, all military operations will continue

and remain at current state," he said.

This developed as a suspected NPA rebel was killed in clashes with government troops in Lagonoy, Camarines Sur early yesterday.

Officials said troops from Army's 83rd Infantry Battalion clashed with some 30 NPA rebels in Barangay Pinamihagan.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or injuries on the government side during the 15-minute firefight with the rebels.

On Tuesday, three suspected NPA rebels were killed during an encounter between troops from the 83rd Infantry Battalion and 20 more rebels in Barangay Tabgon in Goa, Camarines Sur.

Last month, President Duterte ended the government's ceasefire and ordered the suspension of peace talks with the rebels.

He also ordered the military to resume fighting after the NPA lifted their own truce and killed troops in a spate of attacks.

Duterte said the communists made "unreasonable demands" regarding the release of more political detainees that apparently caused the breakdown in peace talks.

The NPA accused the government of not complying with its obligation to declare an amnesty for the rebels and release about 200 so-called political prisoners under an earlier agreement. With Michael Punongbayan, Alexis Romero, Celso Amo, AP

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# Peace talks back on track

## GRP, NDF agree on Oslo meeting in April, truce, and release of communist consultants

By ROCKY NATARANG  
and ANTONIO LOYANAN

**D**espite the blood spilled in nearly a month after both sides called off their respective ceasefires, the Philippine Government (GRP) and the National

Democratic Front (NDF) agreed Saturday night (Manila time), in Utrecht, The Netherlands, to return to the negotiation table and talk peace anew in a bid to put an end to 49 years of armed conflict.

At the focal point of the informal talks was the agreement to "reinstat-

their respective unilateral ceasefires which shall take effect before the scheduled fourth round of talks in the first week of April in Oslo, Norway." The fifth round of talks is set for June 2017.

The agreement added that the unilateral ceasefires will take effect "as soon as their respec-

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five forces shall have been informed.

The Communist rebels had withdrawn their unilateral ceasefire last February 10, while President Duterte followed suit with the government's own lifting of the truce after New People's Army (NPA) rebels began stepping up attacks on military and police personnel.

During the backchannel talks, the two parties also reaffirmed the previous bilateral agreements and statements such as The Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

The two parties also stated that they will "forge an interim bilateral ceasefire agreement which shall take effect after the terms of reference and other considerations shall have been settled."

According to the statement, these "considerations" will take into consideration "the issues and concerns raised in the previous six-month unilateral cease-fires" of each side which took effect from August, 2016 to February, 2017.

The agreement was hammered out in Utrecht, The Netherlands at around 11 p.m. Saturday (Manila time) when the GRP Peace Panel, composed of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza, GRP Peace Panel Chair Silvestre Bello III, GRP Peace Panel Member Hernani Braganza and consultants Eifren Moncuna and Pancho Lara held informal negotiations, usually referred to as "backchannel talks," with their NDF counterparts.

Signing for the NDF were Peace Panel Chairman Fidel Agcaoili, Peace Panel Member Benito Tiamzon, NDF Senior Political Consultant Jose Maria Sison, Chairperson of the Reciprocal Working Group on the Cessation of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces Wilma Austria Tiamzon, and consultant Vicente Ladlad.

Ambassador Elisabeth Slattum of the Third Party Negotiator Royal Norwegian Government also signed the statement.

#### Releasing Reds

Under the agreement, the government also agreed to release an NDF consultant who was re-arrested when the

unilateral ceasefires were withdrawn.

With the reactivated JASIG, the GRP has agreed to release Ariel Arbitrario, a consultant of NDF who is currently detained at the Compostela Valley Provincial Jail after he was re-arrested last month in Davao City.

Along with Arbitrario, the NDF demanded the release of Eduardo Sarmiento, Leopoldo Caloza, and Emeterio Antalan.

The statement also said that, as per the agreement in the Rome formal talks last January, the government "shall ensure the participation of four detained consultants in the fourth round of talks."

"The GRP shall also work for the release of 19 political prisoners based on humanitarian grounds on or before the next round of talks (on April 2)," it said.

However, the agreement may come short of Duterte's conditions to withdraw his orders for an all-out war against the Communist insurgents.

The President had said that he will only allow the resumption of the talks if the NPA will release all the military and police personnel it is holding, that the insurgents desist from burning assets of extortion victims, installing landmines, and demanding for revolutionary tax.

#### President's blessing

Nevertheless, in a message from Utrecht, Dureza said that he has already talked to Duterte about the joint statement and that the President had given them the go signal to forge the deal.

"President Duterte, himself, closely monitored the efforts taken by the negotiators while in Utrecht in The Netherlands in bring about an early breakthrough in the talks with the facilitation of the Royal Norwegian Government," Dureza said.

Dureza also said that Duterte's conditions will be taken up during the discussions over the bilateral ceasefire agreement which will transpire this April in Oslo.

#### AFP backs talks

Yesterday, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said that it fully supports the resumption of peace talks.

Air Force Brigadier General Restituto Padilla Jr., AFP spokesman, said the AFP has – time and again – expressed its unequivocal support to all peace initiatives

undertaken by the government past and present.

He added that the AFP also has a proven track record of being an able and reliable partner in all the peace talks undertaken by the country.

"We share the Commander-in-Chief's aspiration to attain a just and lasting peace for our country and will do all we can to deliver on this for the benefit of all our citizens specially in conflict affected areas," Padilla said.

However, Padilla stressed that pending specific instructions from the President, "all military operations (against NPA rebels) will continue and remain at current state."

#### Encounters

But sporadic lighting continued with the latest encounter breaking out in Camarines Sur, resulting in the death of a communist guerrilla.

A report from Camp Elias Angeles in Pili, Camarines Sur, said 30 NPA rebels engaged soldiers from the Philippine Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion (33rd IB) at 11 a.m. yesterday in Barangay Pinamihagan, Lagonoy, Camarines Sur.

Lt. Col. Eduardo M. Monjardin, 33rd IB commander, said the rebels were in the area allegedly collecting "revolutionary taxes" from local residents.

The gun battle resulted in the death of one NPA rebel and the seizure of five high-caliber firearms left on the battleground by the fleeing guerrillas.

Maj. Gen. Manolito Orense, commander of the 9th Infantry Division, immediately extended his condolences to the family of the slain NPA guerrilla.

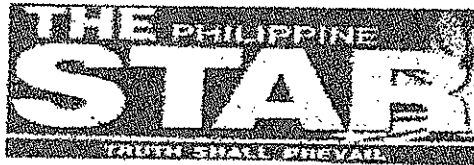
Last Friday, another armed encounter was reported in Iuy, Batangas between guerrillas and joint forces of the police and the military.

Yesterday, the Batangas Police Provincial Office (PPO) reported the completion of clearing operations in the area of the encounter in Sitio Masapinit, Barangay Toong, where rebel firearms and explosives were collected.

The PPO said the rebels left behind an AK-47 automatic rifle, bandoleer with two magazine and five ammunition, a 12-gauge shot gun, a rifle grenade, a used landmine, combat boots, and backpacks containing subversive documents and personal effects. (With reports from Francis T. Wakefield, Ruel Saicico, and Danny J. Estacio)

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## PSG gets Moscow training

A 20-man delegation from the Presidential Security Group (PSG) recently received training in VIP protection from the Federal Protective Service (FSO) of the Russian Federation in Moscow.

The PSG team, headed by Col. Ignatius Patrimonio, was in Moscow from Feb. 27 to March 11.

This training in Russia is a historic first for the PSG and augurs very well for Philippines-Russia relations. This is a manifestation of the growing trust and confidence between the two sides, which, in turn, generates positive momentum for deeper cooperation in the field of security and other areas of mutual interest," Ambassador to Russia Carlos Sorreta said.

The capacity-building activity is one of the concrete results of the successful visit to the Philippines of Nikolay Patrushev, chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, last month. Patrushev met with President Duterte, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. in Davao City to discuss a wide

range of bilateral matters, including defense and security cooperation.

During the meeting, Patrushev offered the Philippines access to an intelligence database to help it fight crime and militancy, and training for the elite forces assigned to protect Duterte.

Ria Lee-Brago

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## Deputy speaker pushes ROTC revival

By DELON PORCALLA

Deputy Speaker Raneo Abu is confident the House leadership will pass the bill reviving the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) as a mandatory course for senior high school students or those that would enter Grades 11 and 12.

"I appeal to the House leadership to prioritize my measure in line with President Duterte's desire to revive the ROTC to promote the primary duty of the government to serve and protect the people," Abu, who represents Batangas, said last weekend.

Previously, ROTC was compulsory for first and second year college students - now the equivalent of Grades 11 and 12 under the K-12 curriculum.

In filing House Bill 5113, Abu intends to "resuscitate" ROTC and make it mandatory among public and private schools by amending Republic Act 7077 or the "Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines Reservist Act."

Generally, the proposed law will introduce basic military training to prepare students for national defense or civil-military operations.

"If implemented efficiently, it would have the potential to produce an entire generation of young Filipinos who will be proud of their heritage and are ready to serve their countrymen," Abu said.

He cited Article III, Section 4 of the 1987 Constitution, which allows the government to call upon the people to defend the state and require all its citizens to render personal, military or civil service.

"The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual and social well-being. It shall inculcate patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs," Abu added.

If passed into law, those who finished their college and ROTC courses will have the equivalent of first level civil service eligibility and an incentive for second level eligibility if the student pursues Advance ROTC.

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## Rody, Reds agree to resume talks

By Ted Tuvera

The government and the local communist group agreed to resume peace negotiations that were stalled after both parties withdrew their unilateral ceasefires last February.

The decision to resume the talks between the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) was reached following a two-day backdoor channeling negotiations in Utrecht, The Netherlands. Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza said.

"I am pleased to announce that the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the CPP-NPA-NDF, which broke down weeks ago, are now back on track again," Dureza said in a statement.

"At the same time, a unilateral ceasefire that was also earlier terminated is deemed restored and reinstated but will be made effective only as soon as the respective forces of both sides are duly informed but definitely before the next round of talks in April 2017," he added.

Both the government and CPP-NPA-NDF terminated last month their unilateral ceasefires following accusations of insincerity and atrocities.

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### From page 1

President Duterte lifted the ceasefire after the communist rebels launched a series of attack against soldiers in Mindanao—a move seen to pressure the government to release at least 400 political prisoners.

The CPP-NPA-NDF also terminated its own declaration of ceasefire on February 10.

#### Bilateral truce in horizon

Dureza said the restored unilateral ceasefire "is a prelude to an interim bilateral ceasefire that needs further meetings between the two sides to determine and agree on rules, necessary guidelines and mechanisms."

Dureza said the effectivity of the joint agreement on safety and immunity guarantees (JASIG) that

was also ordered terminated by the President has been restored to enable the NDF consultants and their staff who were in jail or otherwise constrained, to physically surface and join in the peace work.

Dureza said the President is fully aware of the development of the informal talks.

President Duterte himself closely monitored the efforts taken by the negotiators while in Utrecht in the Netherlands in bringing about an early breakthrough in the talks with the facilitation by the Royal Norwegian Government," he said. The informal talks took place on March 10 to 11.

Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate, vice-chair of the House special committee on peace, reconciliation and unity, welcomed the breakthrough in the peace talks.

"This is a very welcome positive development and we hope this will further advance the concrete gains achieved in the last three rounds of talks, particularly in the socio-economic, political and constitutional reforms that aim to address the root causes of the five-decade old armed conflict in our country," he said in a statement.

Earlier, the House panel approved Resolution 769 which sought the formal resumption of the peace negotiations with at least 140 solons signing it.

"Indeed, our peoples' long quest for a just and lasting peace in our country should always be a compelling reason to forge ahead with the peace negotiations; it should trump any and all attempts by the saboteurs and militarists in the government to derail our peoples' aspirations," Zarate added.

#### JASIG restored

Among the issues that resulted in a stalemate in the talks is the communist group's demand that military elements should not operate in areas where the NTA is present.

The government, for its part, wanted the rebels to stop collecting its so-called revolutionary tax which

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was considered a form of extortion.

Among the immediate agenda in the resumption of the peace talks is the crafting of the Comprehensive Agreement on Socioeconomic Reforms (CASER) which both camps consider the "heart and soul" of the peace process.

President Duterte also restored the application of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) or the safe conduct pass for the rebel leaders.

"The effectivity of JASIG that was also ordered terminated by President has been restored to enable the NDF consultants and their staff who were in jail or otherwise constrained, to physically surface and join in the peace work," Dureza said.

"The continuation of the formal talks is a positive development as both sides strive to address the root causes of the armed conflict through agreements on socio-economic, political and constitutional reforms," Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) secretary general Renato Reyes said.

"The regime should now recall its all-out war declaration, stop the militarization of communities and end human rights violations. It should do away with its so-called counter-insurgency program," he added.

Over the weekend, Mr. Duterte said in Baguio City that the communists do not need to launch offensives to spread their ideology, saying that they're open to all their grievances on state-run People's Television Network (PTV-4).

"The public wanted to know what's happening in this planet. So they want to hear their countrymen. The NPA, We'll give you the space," the Chief Executive said in his speech during the inauguration of PTV 3 Cordillera hub last Saturday.

"In this world, you don't need to hide. So what's the use of... there's the media. It's a free writing democracy and our government must be a player in this crucial battle for truth," he added.

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Editorial EDITORIAL Editorial

## Incentives para kina mamang sundalo

**H**INDI naman talaga matatawaran ang dedikasyon at pag-aalay ng mga sundalo sa kanilang buhay, maipagtinggol lang ang bayan.

Bagamat may ilang naliligaw at napaliliko, hindi naman maitatangging mayroon pa rin namang tapat sa bandila ng Pilipinas.

Kaya ang pangulo, ipinangako na rin sa mga sundalo na susuklian ng gobyerno ang kanilang tapang at integridad sa pagbubuwis ng buhay para sa bayan.

At ang pangako na ibibigay sa mga ito ang kaukulang suporta at insentibo maging sa mga kagamitan para madepensahan ang kanilang mga sarili.

Kunsabagay, anumang tapang at dedikasyon ang ipakita ng ating magiging na militar, kung wala namang sapat na gamit na pamproteha sa sarili, malamang na hindi rin sa maganda mapunta ang mga operasyon.

Dagdag pa ng pangulo, sa susunod na dalawa hanggang tatlong taon daw ay magkakaroon ang armadong puwersa ng bansa ng simulators, radar at iba pang gamit na magagamit nila sa pagpapatriya sa mga border at karagatang sakop ng bansa.

Kumbaga, le-level up na tayo.

Pinupuri natin ang magandang plano ng gobyerno para sa ating mga sundalo!

Magandang malaman na sa pagsubo sa kanila sa mga bakbakan ay hindi naman sila napababayaan at naibibigay pa rin ang para sa kanila.

Dahil sa totoo lang, tama rin namang bigyan sila ng insentibo at siguruhing kumpleto sila sa gamit, panangga man ng sarili o gamit sa pagganap sa kanilang tungkulin, dahil bukod sa hindi na biro ang kanilang trabaho ay buhay din nila ang iniaalay nila para sa bayan.



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## NPA di na makontrol ng CPP/NDF?

Sa tingin ko, sa tingin ko lang, mistula nang isang saksyang nasiraan ng griya at preno ang New People's Army (NPA). Hindi na makontrol ng pamubuan nitong Communist Party of the Philippines/National Democratic Front (CPP/NDF).

Nasabi ko ito dahil sa kabila ng klarong usapan ng pamahalaan at ng CPP/NDF para magtamo ng kapayapaan, patuloy pa rin ang mga ambuscade at sabotaje na isinasagawa nilo. Kamakailan, apat na pulis ang nambus at napatay ng mga elemento ng NPA sa

Davao del Sur, bagay na ikhagalit na naman ni Presidente Duterte.

Sinundan pa ito ng pagtratrat ng mga elemento ng NPA sa talibong sibilyan sa Pagadian City na sirtasabi nilang "may atraso" kaya sinientensyahan ng kamatayan. Hindi ko alam ang dahilan. May mga taunan ba ang communist party of the Philippines na ayaw magkaroon ng peace talks kaya sila nanggugulo? Bago magkaroon ng usapang pangkapayapaan, dapat ay magkaroon muna ng confidence building measure. Yung bang tubuo ng tiwala ang pamahalaan at mga komunista sa isa't isa habang isinusulong ang usapan upang tiyakin ang tagumpay nilo.

Kaya ang tanong: Wala na bang magawa sina Sison at Jalandoal para masuheto ang kanilang mga armadong taunan na ayaw makiusa sa prospect na magkaroon ng kapayapaan at wakasan ang digmaan?

Kung talagang wala ni katiting na bag-asa, eh di ang gawin ng pamahalaan ay tugunan na lamang ng karampatang aksyon ang mga paglabag sa batas ng mga mandirigma ng komunista. Alangan naman na maghaha-

*(Sundan sa pahina 5)*

lukip na lang ang mga taunan ng military at pulisya habang ihuhubus sila ng mga mandirigma ng komunista.

Kaya tama si Presidente Digong: Ibuloy ang all-out war at gamitin ang lahat ng resources ng pamahalaan para masupil ang pang-aabuso ng mga NPA na sa tingin ko ay kagaya na rin ng mga Abu Sayyaf na namamera nalang at nawalan nang ideyolohiya at prinsipyong ipinaglalaban.

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## ONLINE NEWS

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### Insurgency in parts of Central, Northern Luzon now manageable – Army official

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 12): **Insurgency in parts of Central, Northern Luzon now manageable – Army official**

The insurgency problem in portions of Central and Northern Luzon is now manageable following the conduct of counter-insurgency operations and the surrender of armed rebels over the past months.

Major General Angelito M. De Leon, commander of the Army's 7th Infantry (Kaugnay) Division based in Fort Magsaysay, Palayan City, Nueva Ecija, said the New People's Army (NPA) has been crippled due to the series of operations by the division which covers 14 provinces in Regions 1, 2 and 3 and two towns in Mt. Province.

De Leon particularly cited Batangas province which has been declared insurgency-free last September.

"Parts of Central Luzon and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) that include two municipalities of Mountain Province although with NPA presence have been declared to be peaceful," he said.

In 2016 alone, he said that 24 NPA rebels and 47 members of the Marxista Leninista Partido ng Pilipinas/Rebolusyong Hukbong Bayan (MLPP/RHB) surrendered to authorities while two of the rebels were killed and one arrested in three major tactical encounters.

The government troops also recovered 29 firearms, he added.

De Leon said that they continuously convinced our brothers in the mountains to return to the mainstream of society.

He added that in Ilocos Sur, 10 communist rebels who returned to the folds of the law late last year received livelihood assistance from the comprehensive local integration program of the provincial government (CLIP).

Lt. Col. Eugenio C. Osias IV, commander of the 81st Infantry (Spartan) Battalion based in Santa Cruz, Ilocos Sur, said that Gov. Ryan Singson extended PHP807,000 in financial aid to the rebel returnees.

Osias also said that only last Wednesday, a squad leader identified as Ka Yumu of the NPA's Squad Uno surrendered to them.

"Ka Yumi" whose group operates in the tri-boundaries of Abra, Mountain Province and Ilocos Sur, turned over a calibre 30 Garand rifle

Meanwhile, Col. Milfredo Metegrito, commander of the 702nd Infantry Brigade, said that the growing number of surrenderers is a good indicator that the NPA has no more reason to rebel against the government since the Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.

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latter provided much for their reintegration to the mainstream of society.

Lt. Col Louie DS Villanueva, 56th Infantry "Tatag" Battalion, Philippine Army said that when he took over the command in this province only one incident related to insurgency was reported in the mountainous area in San Luis town.

The encounter happened in August last year between the "Tatag" army troopers and the NPA rebels that resulted to the recovery of two high-powered firearms, one AK47 and one M16 rifle.

The Tatag Battalion discovered an abandoned enemy encampment composed of nine bunkers, seven enemy posts, a lecture hall and kitchen.

The army seized numerous assorted ammunitions, NPA's personal belongings, foodstuff and subversive documents.

In Aurora alone, there are 28 regular NPA rebels listed in the police and army. Of the 28 NPA guerrillas, five are amazon fighters.

In Nueva Ecija, there are 22 regular NPA fighters monitored by the authorities.

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## Gov't troopers seize arms, explosives in Batangas clash

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 12): Gov't troopers seize arms, explosives in Batangas clash

Government troopers thwarted anew New People's Army (NPA) rebels during their intensified military operations and recovered two high-powered firearms (HPFs) and an improvised explosive device (IED) in a firefight at Toong, Tuy, Batangas, a military report said Sunday.

According to 1st Lieutenant Xy-Zon Meneses, chief, Public Affairs Office of the 2nd Infantry (Jungle Fighter) Division (2ID) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) stationed here, combined forces the 1st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (PA) and 730th Combat Group of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) neutralized the insurgents in combat operations which started on Friday.

Meneses said the troopers recovered an AK47 rifle, a Shotgun, and an improvised explosive device (IED) left by the fleeing rebels at the encounter site.

No casualties were reported on the military side but assessments over the weekend continued to determine rebel casualties, the report said.

He said that the military offensives happened three days after their recent encounter in Quezon province where four NPA rebels killed and seven high-powered firearms including two AK47 rifles, four M16 ArmaLite rifles and an M203 grenade launcher were recovered.

Major General Rhoderick Parayno, 2ID commander has declared to sustain combat operations to achieve peace and development in their area of responsibility.

"The enemies of the government shall expect massive combat operations as we are now more focused in protecting the people from any threat," stressed Parayno.

Parayno also warned terrorists to stop their extortion activities and stop burning equipment.

"We will come after them with all our might if they don't stop derailing development of communities," he challenged.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=2&sid=&nid=2&rid=971003>

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## Formulation of Benham Rise protection strategy urged

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 12): Formulation of Benham Rise protection strategy urged

To prevent another Chinese incursion in the Benham Rise, a senator on Sunday called on the Executive Department to craft a comprehensive strategy aimed at protecting the 13-million-hectare underwater plateau.

Senate President Pro-Tempore Ralph Recto made the statement following reports that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has sent a note verbale to the Chinese Embassy to clarify the reported presence of a Chinese survey ship near Benham Rise.

The Department of National Defense (DND) also reported the Chinese survey ship was seen plying the waters of Benham Rise for around three months last year.

Chinese Embassy, however, denied that it intentionally sailed to Benham Rise and simply passed by international sea noting that they had the right of freedom of navigation.

Recto said that without a protection strategy, the Benham Rise may easily "fall prey" not only to poachers but foreign countries interested in exploring the plateau's marine and mineral resources.

"No ifs or buts. The government must have a 'Benham Rise Protection Strategy'. A comprehensive strategy - military, diplomatic, economic - in holding on to and developing Benham Rise," Recto said.

"We have practically lost the seas west and north of us. We cannot be encircled. The Eastern side of the country should be defended as well," he added.

He, however, said that he was not referring to just "one country."

"I am not singling out China. But this goes out to all countries who might be tempted by the riches underneath the Benham Rise," Recto said.

The senator said the government should also focus its attention not only on Benham Rise, but other areas on the Pacific side of the country.

He noted that the Benham Rise is also believed to be a rich source of manganese and natural gas aside from its diverse marine life.

"The Pacific side has always been the unattended portion of our archipelago. There are many places there that are underdeveloped. It is time for us to pivot," he further said.

He stressed that the Philippine government should not be caught "unaware."

"We should not allow that area to be partitioned like a frontier homestead. Or cut up into blocks to be controlled and exploited by others," Recto said.

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Recto also urged the Senate to should consider expediting a bill filed by Sen. Juan Edgardo Angara providing for the creation of a Benham Rise Development Authority - the lead agency that will be mandated to conduct scientific research and exploration in the plateau.

Under Angara's measure, BRDA is meant to take the lead in formulating and implementing a development roadmap for Benham Rise, ensuring that it is aligned with the Philippine Development Plan.

On Saturday, neophyte Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian urged the government to take "immediate action" to defend exclusive sovereignty over the Benham Rise to ensure that its potential will be developed and utilized to benefit the Filipino people.

He said that the country is only beginning to discover the true potential of the Benham Rise to contribute to the Philippines' ecological and economic prospects.

Benham Rise is a 13 million-hectare underwater landmass that is about 250 kilometers off the coastline of Aurora province.

It officially became part of the Philippines in 2012 when the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf ruled that the Benham Rise area was fell under its exclusive economic zone.

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## AFP always supportive of peace process

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 12): AFP always supportive of peace process

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is always strongly behind the government's various initiatives.

This was stressed by AFP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla on Sunday when sought for a comment after the Government of the Philippine negotiating panel and the National Democratic Front (NDF) agreed to a resumption of the peace talks in the Netherlands.

"The AFP has time and again expressed its unequivocal support to all peace initiatives undertaken by our government past and present. We also have a proven track record of being an able and reliable partner in all the peace talks undertaken by our country," he added.

Informal talks between the government and the NDF were held in Utrecht on March 10 and 11

The meeting was hosted by third party and facilitator Royal Norwegian Government led by Elizabeth Stattum.

"We share the Commander-in-Chief's (President Rodrigo Duterte) aspiration to attain a just and lasting peace for our country and will do all we can to deliver on this for the benefit of all our citizens specially in conflict affected areas," Padilla stressed.

However, pending the official message and instruction from the Chief Executive, all military operations against New People's Army units will continue.

"We will anxiously await the official message of our panel and the instructions of our Commander-in-Chief. Pending this, all military operations will continue and remain at current state," the AFP spokesperson further said.

Duterte ordered the lifting of the unilateral ceasefire against the rebels last Feb. 4 in wake of the NPA's series of unprovoked attacks against government troops which resulted in the death of six and abduction of three others.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=1&sid=&nid=1&rid=970993>

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## DND wants more night-capable attack helis, other equipment for Second Horizon

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 12): DND wants more night-capable attack helis, other equipment for Second Horizon

The Department of National Defense (DND) is looking at the possibility of including more night-capable attack helicopters, precision guided missiles, drones and fast boats in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Modernization Program's Second Horizon.

DND Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said that they are studying the possibility of including these platforms and weapons in the existing list of equipment which will be acquired in the Second Horizon.

"We are still studying this as (Second Horizon) has already existing list," he added.

The study gained further impetus when President Rodrigo Duterte earlier announced that he wants the AFP to have more night-capable attack helicopters and fast boats to expedite the elimination of threats from the Abu Sayyaf Group and other lawless elements in Mindanao.

The AFP Modernization Program is divided into three horizons, with the first lasting from 2013 to 2017, the second from 2018 to 2022 and third 2023 to 2028.

The Second Horizon calls for the acquisition of equipment more attuned to external defense missions and has a programmed funding of around PHP100 billion.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?idn=1&sid=&nid=1&rid=970951>

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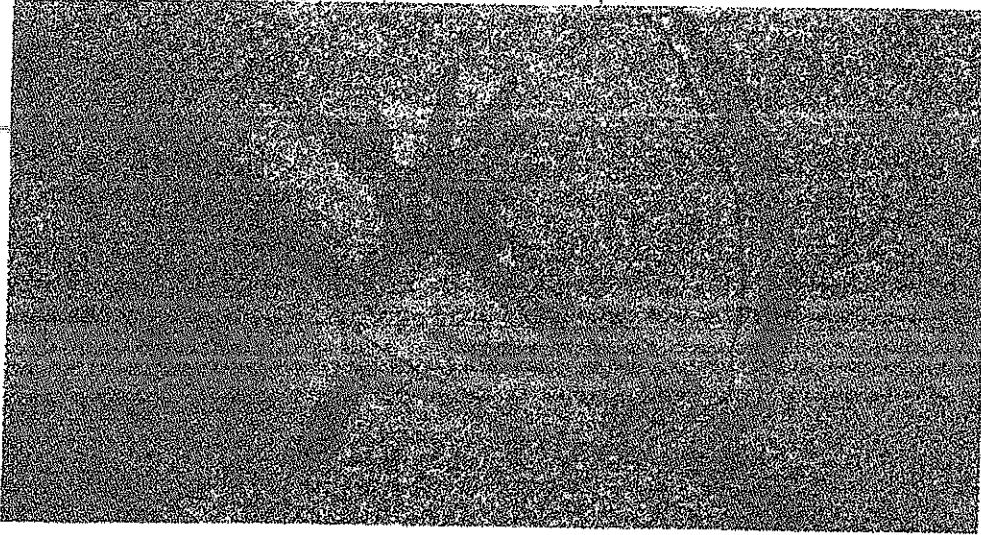
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## Suspected rebel slain, 5 guns recovered in Camarines Sur clash

By: Mar S. Arguelles - Correspondent / @msarguellesINQ

Inquirer Southern Luzon / 03:54 PM March 12, 2017



New People's Army. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

LEGAZPI CITY — A suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebel was killed and five high-powered rifles were seized in a clash with Army soldiers in a hinterland village of Lagonoy town in Camarines Sur Sunday, an Army officer said.

The still unidentified slain rebel was among a group of NPA rebels who engaged a platoon of Army soldiers from the 83rd Infantry Battalion and the 9th Infantry Division in a fierce firefight at around 11 a.m. in Barangay (village) Pinamihagan, Capt. Joash Pramis, 9th ID spokesperson said.

Pramis, quoting a report from Lt. Col Eduardo Monjardin, commander of the 83rd IB, said villagers tipped off the Army on the presence of a group of NPA rebels extorting money from villagers.

A 10-minute firefight ensued that led to the death of a rebel while Army soldiers recovered a machine gun, three M16 rifles, an M14 rifle, a grenade and documents left by the fleeing NPA group, Prames said. **SFM/rga**

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## 5 cops, 3 civilians hurt in accident as witness vs NPA goes berserk

By: Deffin T. Mallari Jr. - @inquirerdotnet  
Inquirer Quezon City 02:47 PM March 12, 2017

LUCENA CITY – Five policemen and three civilians were injured in a road accident in Pagbilao town in Quezon province on Saturday afternoon, police said Sunday.

Reports said a Toyota Hilux police patrol vehicle being driven by Police Officer 2 Khemar Barquiles was traveling along the Maharlika Highway in Barangay (village) Binahaan around 2 p.m. when civilian passenger Jose Yuson allegedly grabbed the steering wheel of the vehicle.

The police vehicle turned wayward and occupied the opposite lane and eventually sideswiped the incoming Toyota Fortuner being driven by Carlos Pastorpide.

Aside from Barquiles and Yuson, the other passengers of the police vehicle – Senior Insp Reynaldo Dalumpienes, San Andres chief of police, Police Officers 1 Rodel Minchero, Fernando Postelco Jr. and Bien Care; and two civilians Yessa Barquiles and Florida Jumao, residents of Barangay Camflora in San Andres, Quezon — sustained injuries and were rushed at the MMG Hospital in Lucena City.

The police vehicle was headed to San Andres town to bring Yuson home to Barangay Camflora. Barangay Camflora was where four rebels were slain on Tuesday in a 30-minute clash between New People's Army rebels and Army soldiers.

The soldiers arrested a suspected rebel, Christopher Redota after the firefight. The soldiers also found Jennifer Yuson, Jose Yuson's daughter who sustained a bullet wound in her left arm. Jennifer is confined in a military hospital in Metro Manila while Redota and Jose Yuson were brought to the police headquarters in Camp Nakar in Lucena City.

Senior Supt. Rhoderick Armamento, Quezon police provincial director, said Jose was earlier freed on Saturday morning to the barangay officials of Camflora.

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"He (Jose) will serve as a witness against the NPA. But he is afraid. It seems his mind is disturbed," Armamento said in a phone interview on Saturday.

"He showed signs of trauma from the encounter. I suggested to the barangay officials to seek medical and psychological intervention for him," Edgar de Luna, Commission on Human Rights-Region IV chief investigator, said.

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Jose even attempted to escape from the custody of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group inside Camp Nakar early evening Friday, De Luna said.

He added Jose was not detained at the CIDG jail and could freely move around. "But he was immediately accosted by the guards at the gate for his suspicious demeanor," he said.

"He really wants to go home. He was extremely worried about his wounded daughter and his three grandchildren," he said.

According to the military, Jennifer's three small children are under the custody of Department of Social Welfare and Development in Quezon province. **SFM/rga**

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