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

**18 March 2017**

**Saturday**

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**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**  
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

**TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MARCH 18, 2017 | SATURDAY**

NORTHEAST MONSOON AFFECTING LUZON  
(As of 5:00 PM - Mar. 17, 2017)

**PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)**

<b>LAOAG CITY</b> 22 - 32 °C	<b>TUGUEGARAO CITY</b> 21 - 32 °C
<b>BAGUIO CITY</b> 14 - 24 °C	<b>SBMA/CLARK</b> 23 - 32 °C
<b>TAGAYTAY CITY</b> 23 - 32 °C	<b>METRO MANILA</b> 23 - 32 °C
<b>LEGAZPI CITY</b> 24 - 30 °C	<b>ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY</b> 25 - 31 °C
<b>TACLOBAN CITY</b> 24 - 31 °C	<b>PUERTO PRINCESA</b> 26 - 32 °C
<b>METRO CEBU</b> 25 - 34 °C	<b>ZAMBOANGA CITY</b> 24 - 32 °C
<b>BAGAYAN DE DRO</b> 23 - 31 °C	<b>METRO DAVAO</b> 24 - 30 °C

<b>SUNRISE</b> 6:02 AM	<b>SUNSET</b> 6:07 PM
<b>MOONRISE</b> 10:48 PM	<b>MOONSET</b> 9:50 AM
<b>FULL MOON</b> MAR 12 10:04 PM	<b>LAST QUARTER</b> MAR 20 11:58 PM
<b>LOW TIDE</b> 6:48 PM 0.08 Meter	<b>HIGH TIDE</b> 1:22 PM 0.71 Meter

**MANILA SOUTH HARBOR**

- Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers
- Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
- Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

	MAR 19	MAR 20	MAR 19	MAR 20	MAR 19	MAR 20		
<b>METRO MANILA</b>	22 - 31 °C	23 - 31 °C	<b>TAGAYTAY</b>	19 - 29 °C	19 - 29 °C	<b>TACLOBAN</b>	24 - 31 °C	24 - 30 °C
<b>TUGUEGARAO</b>	20 - 31 °C	21 - 31 °C	<b>LEGAZPI</b>	25 - 31 °C	25 - 30 °C	<b>CAGAYAN DE DRO</b>	23 - 30 °C	22 - 29 °C
<b>LAOAG</b>	22 - 31 °C	22 - 31 °C	<b>PUERTO PRINCESA</b>	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	<b>METRO DAVAO</b>	23 - 29 °C	22 - 29 °C
<b>BAGUIO</b>	14 - 25 °C	15 - 24 °C	<b>ILOILO/BACOLOD</b>	25 - 30 °C	25 - 31 °C	<b>ZAMBOANGA</b>	25 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C
<b>SBMA/CLARK</b>	23 - 31 °C	24 - 32 °C	<b>METRO CEBU</b>	25 - 30 °C	24 - 30 °C			

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18 March 2017



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# Cops, soldiers' houses targeted

## Group Kadamay shifts campaign to take over idle units to housing project in Bocaue town

CITY OF MALOLOS—The occupation of social housing projects in Pandi town in Bulacan province has spread as 200 members of the leftist urban poor group Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay) targeted idle houses meant for policemen and soldiers at Barangay Batia in Bocaue town.

Those who tried to occupy the National Housing Authority (NHA) housing project in Bocaue on Friday came from the towns of Balagtas and Guiguinto in Bulacan.

On March 8, hundreds of families took over idle houses at five NHA housing projects allegedly out of frustration at the slow pace of government housing distribution.

This week, another group of families occupied houses in a sixth housing project that had not been turned over to the NHA.

A housing project in Pandi that the families earlier occupied was also intended for policemen and soldiers.

### Police on alert

De Vera said the police were also on alert because of a solidarity march today (March 18) from Metro Manila to Bulacan by militant groups drumming up support for the takeover of at least 4,000

houses in Pandi.

More than 500 marchers are expected to join Kadamay members in Pandi, said Gloria Arellano, Kadamay national chair, adding that the caravan will move at 6 a.m. from the NHA office in Quezon City to the occupied houses at Padre Pio in Barangay Cacarong Bata, Villa Louise in Barangay Siling Matanda, Pandi Heights 2 and 3 in Barangay

### Latest incursion

The latest incursion involved families traveling on 10 jeepneys who appeared to be headed for Pandi until they suddenly turned toward Bocaue, police said.

Chief Insp. Manuel de Vera Jr., town police chief, said policemen, who were the supposed beneficiaries of the housing project in Bocaue, were alarmed and planned to visit Barangay Batia to check if their units had been taken over by the families.

Mapulang Lupa and Villa Elise in Barangay Masuso, all in Pandi.

### Getting on the list

The families had barricaded these sites, which prevented NHA teams from processing their claims and from completing an inventory of the occupied houses.

Many families said they wanted to be included on the

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list of housing applicants.

But Kadamay had asked President Duterte to instead give these houses to urban poor families for free.

In a statement, Kadamay said at least 3,200 individuals occupied houses in Bocaue, bringing the total number of occupied houses to 8,500.

#### 'Reclaim housing rights'

"This only shows that more urban poor Filipinos are rising up to reclaim their housing rights," Arellano said.

"There is something clearly wrong if there are thousands of vacant and idle homes while the number of homeless continues to increase," she said.

Bocaue Hills was established in 2012 and currently has only 800 residents. There are at least 200 households with relatives of policemen and 500 households being rented out.

Kadamay cited an NHA report in September that said at least 53,000 housing units for policemen and soldiers had been left vacant.

"Many PNP housing projects are too far from the offices and jobs of the personnel which is one of the main reasons they are left vacant," Arellano said.

"There is no reason why the housing units should be left to vegetation, dirt and pests," she said. —CARMELA

REYES-ESTROPE INQ

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**BusinessMirror**

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*A business mirror for the business community*

# AFP: WAR WITH WITH COMMUNISTS CONTINUES

BY RENE ACOSTA

**T**HE government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) have embarked on yet another attempt at forging peace by agreeing to begin a new round of talks, along with a cease-fire.

But until both parties begin meeting on the negotiating table, there is no certainty that even a temporary amity between them

will come—not just yet.

In fact, a prelude to the meeting is already characterized by posturing and innuendos by “angels”

and “guardians” from both sides, one from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the other from the New People’s Army.

Rather than building confidence, the demeanor does not give credence, or augurs well for the resumption of peace negotiations.

## Continuing operations

UNTIL the official start of the talks and the issuance of an accompanying cease-fire, the military said it will continue its “focused” combat and intelligence operations against the rebels.

The chief of the military’s public affairs office, Col. Edgard A.

SEE “AFP,” A2



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been committed by members of the NPA, as recorded by the military.

Out of these incidents, Arevalo said they have neutralized 120 rebels.

### Countering AFP operations

AS the military stuck to its guns, the NPA, through its spokesman, Jorge Madlos, alias Ka Oris, said it stands ready to confront the offensive and “defend the people” from the reported abuses of soldiers.

Since [the] GRP [government of the Republic of the Philippines] [represented by] President Duterte’s order on March 9 [decided] to flatten the hills, the AFP has become even more frenzied in its crazed war against the people,” Madlos said in the same statement.

The rebel spokesman went on to enumerate the reported excesses of the military.

According to him, on March 11, the military carried out aerial strikes in Barangay Cabuyuan in Mabini, Compostela Valley, using at least three MG-520 attack helicopters that dropped 10 bombs.

The bombing took place as ground troops fired their machine guns.

At least 75 families, composed of 200 individuals, were reportedly forced to flee their homes.

“For two days now, the AFP has conducted aerial bombing runs in Barangays Gawang, Tee and Andavit in Datu Salibo, Maguindanao, using FA-50 jet fighters and MG-520 helicopter gunships,” Madlos claimed.

Arevalo, said this was due to the fact that there has been no word yet for the AFP to suspend its anti-insurgency operations.

Arevalo banked on the Palace position that the Commander in Chief has only acknowledged the joint statement of both panels of their “intent” to resume formal talks.

Before the negotiations were stopped by President Duterte on February 4, both parties have already agreed to continue the formal talks the following month, with a bilateral cease-fire among the subjects of discussions.

With a mere intent, Arevalo said negotiations are not enough. The effectivity could even be the subject to an agreement by both the government and the NDFP.

Even if there would be talks, there must be a cease-fire before the military could stop its ongoing operations against NPA members around the country.

For a cease-fire to be issued and become effective, the military, taking a cue from Malacañang, said both parties should also come up with parameters.

“Until a unilateral cease-fire is issued, we will continue our operations,” said Arevalo, adding the military cannot be insensitive to the “sufferings of Filipinos” as a result of the “atrocities” committed by the rebels.

Until Wednesday, at least 61 “atrocities”, including firefights, have

The operation, he added, forced the evacuation of at least 3,000 families.

Madlos said that since last month, the military has been conducting aerial bombings against “peasant communities” in Laak, Compostela Valley; in Bansalan, Davao del Sur; Asuncjon in Davao del Norte; Fatima in Davao City; and Alabel in Sarangani.

He also claimed that over the past weeks, at least 15 peasants have been killed by the military and other agents of the government in Rizal, Quezon, Capiz, Compostela Valley, North Cotabato, Davao City and other places.

### Options

RATHER than trading barbs and painting animosity toward each other, both forces should diligently work for an environment that is conducive to the holding of the talks and its success. After all, peace is the only option, observers noted.

However, in the event that the second attempt for the negotiations follows the path of the initial talks, what would be left for the rebels and the military?

As previously declared by the rebels, they would have to continue fighting the government. After all, the insurgency has survived previous administrations, and there is no reason it could not survive the Duterte administration.

### Localized peace talks

ON the other hand, the military will continue its operations against the NPA.

It may follow also its track before the negotiations were sidelined, and this is to push through with localized peace talks.

Ground commanders have earlier reported that local officials in areas where the NPA operates have agreed, and even endorsed, the holding of localized talks.

This idea has been espoused by the military even in previous administrations.

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

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## Army: E. Visayas still peaceful

TACLOBAN CITY – Eastern Visayas remains to be generally peaceful, the Army has reported.

Major General Raul Farnacio, commanding general of the Army's 8th Infantry Division based in Catbalogan City, Samar, more than 100 kilometers northeast of this city, told Manila Bulletin there are no intelligence reports of possible attacks by the communist New People's Army (NPA) on government forces or vital installations.

Farnacio said that just the same, his command is ready to neutralize any attack that will be carried out by the NPA, the

armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

The general said the Army in the region has been guarding potential targets like the San Juanico Bridge, airports, sea-ports and the geothermal plants in Kananga and Ormoc City.

Farnacio expressed optimism that the communist rebels in the region are still open to peace talks. He said the clashes between the rebels and government forces in the region have affected the economy, and the three provinces in Samar island are still among the 10 poorest provinces in the country. (Restituto A. Cayubit)



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## Soldier killed by cousin

By TARA YAP

ILOILO CITY - A drunk barangay kagawad shot and killed his cousin, a soldier, in Calinog town, Iloilo.

Reports from Police Regional Office identified the victim as Sgt. Rustom Caballero, 47, of the 61st Infantry Battalion (61IB).

Caballero was trying to pacify his cousin, 47-year-old Geraldo Caballero, who was in a drunken frenzy Wednesday night, police said.

The kagawad was screaming and challenging anyone to a fight at the barangay basketball court

When no one fought him, he fired his pistol twice.

When the sergeant tried to calm him down, the kagawad shot Sergeant Caballero once.

Caballero died at a nearby hospital.

The sergeant was part of a team securing a television crew that was filming in the village that is home to the Panay Bukidnon indigenous group.

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## **Troops helping Kitcharao LGU in providing aid to civilians displaced by NPA attacks**

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 16): Troops helping Kitcharao LGU in providing aid to civilians displaced by NPA attacks

Military units are now helping the local government of Kitcharao in Agusan del Norte in aiding 89 families displaced by three unprovoked New People's Army (NPA) attacks on Barangay Hinimbangan last March 15.

In a statement, 2nd Lt. Ashley Mae Del Rosario, 29th Infantry Battalion civil-military operations officer, said the rebels decided to attack the said community are hosting troops conducting development support and security operations in the locality.

The attacks forced 89 families or around 357 individuals to evacuate and seek shelter at the gymnasium of Barangay Crossing, Kitcharao.

29th Infantry Battalion soldiers are coordinating with the town's officials to address the basic needs of the displaced families in the area.

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## **DWDD: 6th ID units alerted for possible retaliatory BIFF bombing attacks**

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 17): **6th ID units alerted for possible retaliatory BIFF bombing attacks**

Units of the Maguindanao-based 6th Infantry Division are now on alert for possible Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) bomb attacks following a bombardment on the lawless elements lair early this week.

Capt. Arvin Encinas, 6th Infantry Division public affair office chief, said the discovery of improvised bombs at the BIFF lair in Barangay Tee, Datu Salibo town, could mean that the bandits have more in store.

He issued this statement when asked what threat the group of BIFF commander Salahudin Hassan alias "Bungos" could still pose after the air strikes and artillery on its lair earlier this week.

No bodies were found on Monday and Tuesday's strike but ground troops, conducting follow-up operations, recovered four improvised explosive device and information that two BIFF members were killed.

Encinas said the group of Hassan is known to have carried out several bomb attacks in Central Mindanao in the past.

Abu Toraype alias "Muawiya," an Indonesian leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah seen with Hassan, had previously mingled with foreign bomb experts Abdulbasit Usman and Zulkifli bin Hir alias "Marwan".

Hassan and Toraype were seen at the lair and were the subjects of the operation, but neither were found after.

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**INQUIRER**

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# China to build on Panatag

BEIJING—China plans to build the first permanent structure on a South China Sea shoal at the heart of a territorial dispute with the Philippines, in a move likely to renew concerns over Beijing's robust assertions of its claims in the strategically crucial waterbody.

The top official in Sansha City that has administered China's island claims since 2012 was quoted by the official Hainan Daily newspaper as saying that preparations were under way to build an environmental monitoring station on Panatag Shoal, known internationally as Scarborough Shoal, off the coast of Zambales province in the Philippines.

The preparatory work on the stations and others on five other islands in the strategically vital

waterway was among the government's top priorities for 2017, Sansha Communist Party Secretary Xiao Jie was quoted as saying in an interview published in the paper's Monday edition seen online Friday in Beijing.

No other details were provided.

The Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs said on Friday it could not comment on Xiao's remarks, as it had yet to verify the Hainan Daily report.

## Seized by China

Beijing seized tiny, uninhabited Panatag Shoal in 2012 after a two-month standoff with Philippine vessels.

Taiwan also includes the island within its South China Sea claims that largely overlap with those of China.

The other stations mentioned by Xiao would be situat-

ed on features in the Paracel island group that China has controlled since seizing parts of it away from Vietnam in 1974.

## Arbitral ruling

China's construction and land reclamation work in the South China Sea have drawn strong criticism from the United States and others, who accuse Beijing of further militarizing the region and altering geography to bolster its claims.

China says the seven man-made islands in the disputed Spratly group, which it has equipped with airstrips and military installations, are mainly for civilian purposes and to boost safety for fishing and maritime trade.

Prior to the announcement, South China Sea tensions had eased somewhat since Beijing erupted in fury last year after a

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Hague-based arbitration tribunal ruled on a case filed by the Philippines.

The verdict invalidated China's sweeping territorial claims and determining that China violated the rights of Filipinos to fish at Panatag Shoal.

China has since allowed Filipino fishermen to return to the shoal following President Duterte's calls for closer ties between the countries, but it does not recognize the tribunal's ruling as valid and insists it has historical claims to almost the entire South China Sea, through which an estimated \$5-trillion in global trade passes each year.

Panatag has no proper landmass and any structure on it would likely have to be built on stilts.

The shoal forms a triangle-shaped lagoon of rocks and reefs running for 46 kilometers,

with its highest point just 1.8 meters above water at high tide.

Known in Chinese as Huangyan Island, it lies about 200 km west of the main Philippine island of Luzon, and about 600 km southeast of China.

#### Red line

US diplomats have said privately that reclamation work on the shoal would be seen as crossing a red line because of its proximity to the main Philippine islands and the threat it could pose to US and Filipino military assets.

During his Senate confirmation hearing for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson compared China's island-building and military deployments to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, and suggested China's access to the islands should not be allowed.

The United States says China has reclaimed more than 1,295

hectares of land in the area.

The topic is likely to be high on the agenda when Tillerson visits Beijing for talks with top officials on Saturday and Sunday.

#### Benham Rise

Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang was visiting the Philippines, just days after President Duterte said on Monday that he had told the military to assert Philippine ownership of Benham Rise off the country's northeastern coast where Chinese survey ships were spotted last year, in a discovery that alarmed Philippine defense officials.

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei have long contested ownership of the South China Sea, which straddles one of the world's busiest sea lanes and is believed to sit atop vast deposits of oil and gas. —AP AND JOCELYN R. UY INQ

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## MORO REBELS YIELD GUNS AS THEY RECEIVE FARM TOOLS, ANIMALS FROM GOV'T

COTABATO CITY—Jacob Palao, 56, is not your typical guerrilla. Three days a week, he fights with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and he spends the rest of the week farming.

On Wednesday, Palao's choice became clear.

He and 126 other MILF combatants received farm tools and animals from the Office of the Presidential Peace Adviser on the Peace Process (Opapp) in Camp Darapanan here, an MILF base.

"I thought about it but I didn't expect it to come too soon," Palao said after Irene Santiago, Opapp project implementation chair for, Bangsamoro, distributed plows, farm implements and farm animals.

"At my age, I never expected that carrying guns in the name of the struggle would end," Palao said.

"Instead, I will be using plows and carabaos as I farm,"

he said, wiping tears.

Palao had spent many years of his life in combat until the government and MILF struck a peace deal in 2014, which gave him hope for an end to a life of war.

The farming assistance, said Palao, would help MILF combatants lead productive lives.

"I can now live peacefully with my family," he said. "It's unlike in the past when I could not tell whether I would come home alive or not," he added.

Among those distributed to MILF members were 103 carabaos; 83 cattle head; goats; rice and corn seeds; rubber and fruit seedlings; and fertilizers.

Agriculture Undersecretary Ranibai Dilangalen said the aid was part of President Duterte's commitment to the peace process with Moro rebels, who had agreed to an expanded autonomous region.

Santiago said the program

was different from previous livelihood programs that were offered to rebels.

"We are looking at changes and these are not just giving and receiving. This is about making social change not only with the decommissioned combatants but also their communities," Santiago said.

Palao's Armalite rifle was among the MILF weapons that have been turned over to a panel overseeing the transition of MILF guerrillas from combatants to productive members of the community.

Foreign observers are keeping watch over the firearms.

But the low-key ceremony showed MILF guerrillas were now reaping the fruits of the peace process. Palao said he hoped his transition from a life of conflict to full-time farmer would help send his children to school. —EDWIN FERNANDEZ, INQ



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## DFA: Phl may ink deal with China on Benham

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines does not have a policy allowing China to conduct research in Benham Rise, but President Duterte may enter into binding agreements with China to explore the gas-rich underwater plateau, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said.

Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo said he is not aware if China was given permission to conduct research in Benham Rise, an underwater area off the provinces of Aurora and Isabela believed to have gas deposits.

"We have no policy on that. There are ships through the area exercising freedom of navigation. But the fact that this is within the sovereign rights and jurisdiction of the Philippines, any ship would have to get permission from the Philippines if they wish to undertake research," he told reporters on Thursday.

When asked if the DFA was informed about Chinese ships passing through Benham Rise, Manalo said, "I'm not in a position to answer that type of question."

But Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles Jose said yesterday President Duterte may enter into binding agreements with other countries such as China to explore Benham Rise.

"The President can enter into executive agreements; whatever he agrees to binds the Philippines," Jose said in an interview with ANC.

"The agreement has to be legal," Jose said in a separate text message to **The STAR**.

Jose said he is also not aware of any request from China to explore Benham Rise.

### Palace: China not monitoring US submarines

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella, meanwhile, has denied that Chinese vessels in Benham Rise were out to monitor the presence of US submarines in the country's continental shelf.

"We have not heard of such information," he said.

He also reiterated Duterte's previous statement that he does not want the Philippines to be caught in the conflict between the US and China.

"Be that as it may, the President will not allow that as he said in numerous occasions that he does not want the Philippines to be caught in the middle of a conflict between the United States and China," he added.

### 'Duterte cautioned on Benham deal'

Senators yesterday asked Duterte to be careful in entering into agreements with other countries to survey Benham Rise and not to limit the country's partnership to just China.

They also sought more measures to secure the country's sovereign rights over the area.

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III prodded the DFA to work harder to secure international recognition of the country's rights over Benham Rise.

Pimentel reiterated that in 2012, the United Nations favorably ruled on the Philippines' claim over Benham Rise, a 13-million hectare area off the coast of Aurora province. The UN said it is part of the Philippine continental shelf and territory.

Benham Rise has untapped natural resources and is said to be wider than Luzon, Samar and Leyte combined.

Military strategists for the country's territorial defense have revived proposals for the building of Pacific Coast highway that will run from Sta. Ana, Cagayan down to Dingalan, Aurora passing through the coastal mountains of Isabela.

The building of the Pacific Coast highway has been proposed not only to spur economic development in areas facing the Pacific Ocean but also to bolster the country's territorial defense of Benham Rise.

"There are no other claimants, there is no other land mass near it, so the DFA must make sure we get our en-

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titlements under the law," Pimentel said in a telephone interview.

He said the DFA should also clearly apprise lawmakers as well as the general public on the status of the country's claims as well as the situation in the area.

Sens. Sonny Angara and Sherwin Gatchalian pressed for the immediate passage of the bill seeking to create the Benham Rise Development Authority.

Gatchalian also sought clarification from Malacañang as to exactly what kind of agreement has been entered into by the Duterte administration and China.

He said Duterte must not limit the country's partnership with just China.

He also said some civilian government agencies and non-government organizations have been collaborating with foreign counterparts to explore Benham Rise as the Philippines lacks resources and technology to undertake such research on its own.

"Now there is reportedly permission for Chinese troops so it's not clear what is being allowed to be done in that area. Is it for environmental aspects?" he added.

Last week, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said he was not aware of any agreement between the Philippines and China involving the conduct of research in Benham Rise.

Lorenzana also expressed concern over information that a Chinese survey ship was spotted in Benham Rise.

The DFA sent a note verbale to China, asking Beijing to explain the presence of the survey ship in Philippine territory.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said China "fully respects the Philippines' rights over the continental shelf in the Benham Rise, and there is no such thing as China challenging those rights."

- With Paolo Romero, Helen Flores, Jaime Laude, Christina Mendez, Evelyn Macairan

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## China to build permanent structure on Panatag

BEIJING – China plans to build the first permanent structure on a South China Sea shoal at the heart of a territorial dispute with the Philippines, in a move likely to renew concerns over Beijing's robust assertions of its claims in the strategically crucial waterbody.

The top official in Sansha City that has administered China's island claims since 2012 was quoted by the official *Hainan Daily* newspaper as saying that preparations were underway to build an environmental monitoring station on Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal off the northwestern Philippines.

The preparatory work on the stations and others on five other islands in the strategically vital waterway was among the government's top priorities for 2017, Sansha Communist Party Secretary Xiao Jie was quoted as saying in an inter-

view published in the paper's Monday edition seen online yesterday in Beijing. No other details were available.

Beijing seized tiny, uninhabited Scarborough in 2012 after a tense standoff with Philippine vessels. Taiwan also includes the island within its South China Sea claims that largely overlap with those of China.

The other stations mentioned by Xiao would be situated on features in the Paracel island group that China has controlled since seizing parts of it away from Vietnam in 1974.

China's construction and land reclamation work in the South China Sea have drawn strong criticism from the US and others, who accuse Beijing of further militarizing the region and altering geography to bolster its claims. China says the seven man-made islands

in the disputed Spratly group, which it has equipped with airstrips and military installations, are mainly for civilian purposes and to boost safety for fishing and maritime trade.

Prior to the announcement, South China Sea tensions had eased somewhat since Beijing erupted in fury last year after a Hague-based arbitration tribunal ruled on a case filed by the Philippines. The verdict invalidated China's sweeping territorial claims and determining that China violated the rights of Filipinos to fish at Scarborough Shoal.

China has since allowed Filipino fishermen to return to the shoal following President Duterte's calls for closer ties between the countries, but it does not recognize the tribunal's ruling as valid and insists it has historical claims to almost the entire South China Sea, through which an

estimated \$5 trillion in global trade passes each year.

Scarborough has no proper land mass and any structure on it would likely have to be built on stilts. The shoal forms a triangle-shaped lagoon of rocks and reefs running for 46 kilometers, with its highest point just 1.8 meters (about 6 feet) above water at high tide. Known in Chinese as Huangyan Island, it lies about 200 kilometers (120 miles) west of the main Philippine island of Luzon, and about 600 kilometers (370 miles) southeast of China.

US diplomats have said privately that reclamation work on the shoal would be seen as crossing a red line because of its proximity to the main Philippine islands and the threat it could pose to US and Filipino military assets.

During his Senate confirmation hearing for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson com-

pared China's island-building and military deployments to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and suggested China's access to the islands should not be allowed. The US says China has reclaimed more than 1,295 hectares (3,200 acres) of land in the area.

The topic is likely to be high on the agenda when Tillerson visits Beijing for talks with top officials on Saturday and Sunday.

Meanwhile, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang was visiting the Philippines, just days after Duterte said Monday that he had told the military to assert Philippine ownership of a large ocean region off the country's northeastern coast where Chinese survey ships were spotted last year, in a discovery that alarmed Philippine defense officials.

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and

Brunei have long contested ownership of the South China Sea, which straddles one of the world's busiest sea lanes and is believed to sit atop vast deposits of oil and gas.

Also this week, the commander in chief of China's navy, Vice Adm. Shen Jirong, noted improving relations in a meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart, Rear Adm. Pham Hoai Nam, in Beijing.

China and Vietnam have had long-running territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Tensions spiked in 2014 after China parked an oil rig near Vietnam's central coast, sparking mass protests in Vietnam.

The two navies and their countries should "together play a positive role in maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea," Shen was quoted as saying by China's defense ministry. - AP

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## Air Force builds up jet inventory

The Philippine Air Force (PAF) will acquire two more fighter jets from South Korea this month, bringing its total number of fighter jets to eight.

The fourth batch of FA-50 aircraft will arrive in the country on March 29, PAF spokesman Col. Antonio Francisco said yesterday.

PAF chief Lt. Gen. Edgar Fallorina will welcome the fighter jets that will land at the Haribon Hangar, Air Force City at Clark Air Base in Pampanga.

"It will be delivered in batches, so this is the fourth batch of planes to arrive, with

tail numbers 007 and 008," Fallorina said.

The Philippines has bought 12 fighter jets from South Korea, with the remaining batch scheduled to arrive by September this year.

"We expect the delivery of the jets to be completed within the year," Francisco told reporters on the sidelines of a media shootfest at the Villamor Air Base shooting range yesterday.

The arrival of the two aircraft and four more within the year all worth P18.8 billion is expected to further boost the fighting and defense capabilities of the PAF.

– Michael Punongbayan

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## 2 more training jets arriving

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Two more FA-50PH training jets from South Korea will be delivered to the Philippine Air Force (PAF) on March 29.

The aircraft will be brought by pilots from the Korean Aerospace Industries, Ltd. (KAI) to Clark Airbase in Pampanga, PAF spokesman Colonel Antonio Francisco said Friday.

The Air Force ordered 12 FA-50PHs from Korean Aerospace for ₱18.9 billion and six have been delivered.

The first batch arrived on November 28, 2015 and the remaining planes will be flown in by Septem-

ber 28, Francisco said.

The two FA-50PHs will be welcomed by the PAF chief, Lieutenant General Edgar R. Fallorina.

Francisco said the jets is expected to further boost the country's air assets.

"The planes will also help boost the training capabilities of our pilots. It will also be used for training purposes so that our pilots will acquire more skills in flying fighter jets or supersonic jets," he said.

The FA-50 PH has a top speed of Mach 1.5 or one and a half times the speed of sound, and could be fitted with air-to-air missiles.



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## Rebels seize guns from alleged PNP scalawag

By YAS D. ODAMPO

DAVAO CITY - New People's Army (NPA) rebels raided the residence of a police officer who they have accused of being engaged in illegal arms trade in Brgy. Mateo, Kidapawan City last March 15.

Rigoberto Sanchez, NPA southern Mindanao regional operations command spokesperson, confirmed that the rebel group conducted the raid at 1 p.m. last Wednesday and that it was able to seize 15 firearms from the home of Reynaldo V. Dinampo.

Seized were four M4 Bushmaster rifles, 2 M14 rifles, 1 Ultimax light machine gun, 2 M203 grenade launchers, 1 shotgun, 1 KG9 sub-machine gun, and 4 calibre .45 pistols, assorted ammunitions and magazines and various other military hardware, Sanchez said.

Dinampo's residence was reportedly near the command headquarters of the Philippine Army's 39th Infantry Battalion, and was just several minutes away from the city police headquarters.

The NPA accused Dinampo, as well as the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG in Region 12 as profiting from illegal arms trade.

"With the protection of mercenary police scalawags, Dinampo and his network of dealers smuggle arms and ammunition for private armies of warlords, big landlords, and compradors, big bureaucrats and fanatic paramilitary groups in North Cotabato, Far South and Central Mindanao and some parts of Davao Region," Sanchez said.

"The same weapons have targeted lumad and peasants in the countryside, and other civilians and members of progressive groups," he said.

Sanchez further alleged that these were the same weapons used in last year's Kidapawan Massacre, which killed three and wounded at least 100.

"NPA units will continue to punish, disarm and dismantle arms trade made into milking cows by the ruling class and its armed forces at the expense of millions of poor Filipinos. While the AFP and the PNP engage themselves in all-out war, Oplan Tokhang and large miners and plantations, the NPA strives to launch more victorious tactical offensives for the benefit of the Filipino masses," Sanchez said.

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The Manila Times

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# NPA threatens to attack PNP, military outposts in CMindanao

BY JERRY N. ADLAW

**T**HE Central Mindanao Police Regional Office 12 has revealed that Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) guerrillas will gather their forces in various areas in the country for a show force, apparently to belittle a report of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that they are a gang of extortionists and terrorists.

Police Senior Supt. Fanklin Alvero, provincial director of South Cotabato, confirmed the threat, saying the CPP-NPA will conduct massive attacks on designated police checkpoints and Army detachments in Central Mindanao.

About 300 NPA fighters massed up in a rebel camp in Barangay Lumiad, Paquibato District in Davao region recently.

The assembly was witnessed by an estimated 3,000 members and supporters of the NPA.

The communist rebels are celebrating their founding anniversary on March 29.

In January, the NPA rebels burned down nine buses of the Yellow Bus Line Co. (YBL) allegedly for failure of the bus owners to pay "revolutionary" tax.

Total damage was estimated at P30 million.

The burning of the YBL buses alarmed the Ritchie Yap family, owner of the bus company.

The bus firm may have to stop

their business to the detriment of about 700 employees, according to Boy Par, the company's operations manager based in Koronadal City.

"It's not worth dying anymore that we will continue the business as the NPA guerrillas continue to burn the buses along the routes in various parts of the region because the management could not give in to their demand for 'revolutionary' tax. The company will be forced to shut down its operation if these harassment will continue and would cause the retrenchment of 700 employees," Par said.

South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Avance-Fuentes made an appeal in a TV interview, urging the police and military to closely be on guard and to monitor the harassments carried out by the NPA through illegally collecting money from businessmen.

Fuentes also urged the heads of the NPA to calm down and respect the communities in the areas, especially the businessmen who help the province achieve progress.

According to intelligence re-

ports, the order to collect and demand revolutionary tax come from the Main Regional Guerilla Command to finance the CPP-NPA recruitment of teenagers to join the communist army.

The reports said that even resumption of peace negotiation between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) cannot prevent the Main Regional Guerilla Command from exacting revolutionary tax.

Meanwhile, the NPA rebels continue to attack police and military personnel in various parts of Mindanao, displacing residents.

Last Wednesday, about 357 persons were evacuated after the communist guerrillas harassed Barangay Hinimbangan in Kitcharao, Agusan-del Norte where the military was conducting development support and security operations.

On the same day, NPA spokesman Rigoberto Sanchez claimed they raided the house of a police agent in Kidapawan City, North Cotabato and seized assorted weapons.

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## China plans station on disputed South China Sea shoal

CHINA plans to build an environmental monitoring station on a South China Sea shoal at the heart of a territorial dispute with the Philippines, potentially raising new concerns over Beijing's actions to assert its claims in the strategically crucial water body.

The top official in Sansha City that administers China's island claims was quoted by the official *Hainan Daily* newspaper as saying such stations were being built on six islands and reefs, including Scarborough Shoal off the northwestern Philippines.

Sansha Communist Party Secretary Xiao Jie told the paper that preparatory work on the stations was among the government's priorities for 2017, but gave no other details. Beijing seized tiny, uninhabited Scarborough in 2012 after a prolonged standoff with

Philippine vessels. Taiwan also includes the island in its South China Sea claims.

The other stations mentioned by Xiao would be situated on features in the Paracel Island group that China has controlled since seizing parts away from Vietnam in 1974. Also this week, the commander in chief of China's navy, Vice Adm. Shen Jinlong, noted improving relations in a meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart, Rear Adm. Pham Hoai Nam, in Beijing.

China and Vietnam have had long-running territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Tensions spiked in 2014 after China parked an oil rig near Vietnam's central coast, sparking mass protests in Vietnam. The two navies and their countries should "together play a positive role in maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea," Shen was quoted as saying by China's defense ministry.

South China Sea tensions have eased somewhat since Beijing erupted in fury last year after a Hague-based arbitration tribunal ruled on a case filed by the Philippines, invalidating China's sweeping territorial claims and determining that China violated the rights of Filipinos to fish at Scarborough Shoal.

China has since allowed Filipino fishermen to return to the shoal following President Duterte's calls for closer ties between the countries, but it does not recognize the tribunal's ruling as valid and insists it has historical claims to almost the entire South China Sea, through which an estimated \$5 trillion in global trade passes each year.

China's creation of seven man-made islands in the disputed Spratly group, complete with airstrips and military installations, has drawn criticism from the

US and others and focused attention on Beijing's long-term plans for Scarborough.

US diplomats have said privately that reclamation work on the shoal would be seen as crossing a red line because of its proximity to the main Philippine islands.

During his Senate confirmation hearing for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson compared China's island-building and deployment of military assets to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, and suggesting China's access to the island should not be allowed.

The topic is likely to be high on the agenda when Tillerson visits Beijing for talks with top officials on Saturday and Sunday.

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam have long contested ownership of the South China Sea, which straddles one of the world's busiest sea lanes and is believed to sit atop vast deposits of oil and gas. AP

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## Peace talks to be held in The Netherlands

By **ROCKY NAZARENO**

The fourth round of peace talks between the Philippine government (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) will be held in The Netherlands, not Oslo, Norway from April 1 to 7.

This was confirmed by a member

of the GRP Panel, who said that the change in venue was to make sure that Jose Maria Sison, founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the NDF Peace Panel's chief political consultant who is ailing would be able to attend the talks.

Sison, 78, has been living in exile in Utrecht, The Netherlands ▶ 14

since 1987 and reported to be not in good health.

In fact, during the third round of the peace talks in Rome, Italy last January, Sison fell ill and had to be rushed to the hospital and was not able to attend the last days of the negotiations.

The Manila Bulletin source intimated that Sison may not be able to withstand the rigors of the two-hour flight from Amsterdam to Oslo.

The agreement on a bilateral cease-

fire is expected to be on top of the agenda of the Netherland talks, which had been formally proposed by the GRP Peace Panel in Rome.

The creation of a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), which will oversee the implementation of a bilateral ceasefire is also expected to be tackled.

Discussions on the Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reforms (CASER) will likewise be continued, as well as Political and Con-

stitutional Reforms (PRC).

Both parties agreed to return to the negotiation table after informal talks were held in Utrecht last March 5.

The agreement came after the GRP and NDF terminated their respective unilateral ceasefires last month due to escalating conflicts on the ground. President Duterte was incensed over the brutal slay of four government troops that he ordered peace panel negotiators to pack up and return to the Philippines. The atrocities by NPA rebels against government troops were committed while their unilateral cease-

fire was in effect.

Following appeals from various quarters to resume the talks, President Duterte relented after back channeling moves to fulfill a campaign promise to bring peace to the country.

But this time he has set conditions

to "ensure that genuine peace talks are realized."

"I want a ceasefire that is reduced in writing and the parameters clearly shown where we should be going and what we should do if it fails," the President said.

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## AFP cites bad weather for canceling Roque's flight to Pagasa Island

By Mario J. Mallari

The military yesterday justified its decision not to allow the group of Kabayan partylist Rep. Harry Roque to conduct public hearing on the island town of Pagasa in the West Philippine Sea.

Military officials cited bad weather as reason behind the postponement of the trip to Pagasa.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla Jr., spokesman for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), said that the safety of those who were scheduled fly to Pagasa Island was the primary consideration for the postponement.

"The weather was bad. It would have been unsafe to push through," Padilla said.

The AFP spokesman said that the trip can be re-scheduled "when the weather improves."

In fact, Western Command

spokesman Capt. Cheryl Tindog said that even the activities scheduled for the 41st anniversary of Wescom were cancelled due to the prevailing bad weather.

She said Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Ano were also scheduled to visit Pagasa but did not push through with the plan due to similar reason.

Tindog said that it was unsafe to land aircraft on Pagasa Island as the air strip is "not conducive for landing." The air strip on the island is unpaved and becomes soft when it rains.

"The Wescom regrets that it had to disallow the intended flight of Rep. Harry Roque to Pagasa because of safety issues," Tindog said.

"The AFP's Wescom is concerned with his safety when his aircraft lands in the island since it rained the day prior," she added.



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# The Standard

DEFINING THE NEWS

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## Korea-made jets deploy for bomb runs vs NPA

By Florante S. Solmerin

IN THE 1980s and the early part of the 1990s, the “Tora-Tora” war planes—the Japanese-made T-28D “Eagles”—were dropping 500-pound bombs above the dense forests and communities in the valleys of Marag, Paco and Zinundangan.

The Eagle was back in Northern Luzon on Thursday with more advanced capability and conducting bombing sorties in

Malibcong, Abra.

Imelda Tabiando, head of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance, at least four “Golden Eagle” (FA-50) lead-in jet fighters had dropped 14 bombs in multiple sorties in Barangay Lat-ey where suspected fighters of the New People’s Army were allegedly sighted.

The FA-50 jets are the newest aircraft acquisitions of the Armed Forces of the Philippines

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## Korea-made...

From A1

from the manufacturer Korean Aerospace Inc. of South Korea. The AFP bought a dozen of the aircraft worth P18.9 billion.

But Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate condemned the bombings by the Philippine Air Force as part of its intensified counterinsurgency operations following the collapse of the peace talks between the Duterte administration and the communists.

But early this week the negotiating panels of both parties had agreed to revive the peace talks. Zarate said the “indiscriminate bombings” in Malibcong was “part of the aerial support to the Army’s 24th Infantry Battalion otherwise known as Palparan Battalion after retired major general Jovito Palparan.

Palparan is among military of-

icers facing criminal charges before a regional trial court in Bulacan for the abduction and disappearance of student-activists Karen Empeno and Sherlyn Cadapan, both from the University of the Philippines Diliman.

“The bombings also razed the forested part of Barangay Lat-ey and affected the farms, grazelands and rice fields of the Tingguians belonging to the Mabaka, Banao and Gubang tribes. Since yesterday morning, around 14 huge explosions were reported by residents in the area,” he said, citing reports from CHRA.

The bombing sorties also forced teachers to suspend classes and some families were affected.

“The CHRA said the AFP operations headed by Lt. Col. Dominic Baluga commenced last Monday, forcing Dep-ed to suspend the classes of public elementary and high school as the parents, adults and elders feared that children might be harmed,” Zarate said.



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## Thousands of NHA housing units in Bataan unoccupied

**HERMOSA, Bataan:** More than 1,800 out of the 2,000 housing units of the National Housing Authority here have remained idle and unoccupied, Mayor Jopet Inton said on Thursday.

Inton said stringent requirements for beneficiaries are the main reason why the housing program is ineffective.

He pointed out that 500 units were intended for local residents along river banks while 1,500 units are for personnel of the Philippine National Police (PNP), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) but remain vacant and are considered as white elephants.

It was not known why not a single unit in the AFP/PNP Housing Project is occupied.

Of the 500 units turned over by NHA to the municipality in June 2016, Inton said only over a hundred units were occupied.

He wrote the NHA, requesting reevaluation or assessment of existing agency policies and guidelines pertinent to the disposition and awarding of completed housing units in Hermosa Ville AFP/PNP Housing Project and Hermosa Heights Resettlement project, both located in Barangay Mabuco.

"There has been no reply or action from the NHA until

now," the mayor said.

He pointed out that for the 500 units to be awarded, one of the requirements is for the applicant to be residing on the river banks.

Those who were ejected or whose houses in a private property were demolished are not qualified.

Inton said some of the housing units constructed about five years ago showed signs of dilapidation, with a number of them having broken window glass jalousies and wooden doors.

The housing units have electricity but no water because the developer refused to operate the water system, saying there are only a few residents in the area.

Rosalia Manzanares, one of the few occupants, said they fetch water from a shallow well, adding that they have not paid for the unit since August 2016 when they moved in.

Nenita Jaring, chief of Hermosa municipal social welfare and development office, said 186 families have vacated the 500 housing units turned over by NHA to the municipal government.

Occupants came from the villages of Almacen, Pulo and San Pedro, which are the most flood-prone villages.

Jaring said amortization for a unit is free for the first year but for the second year, the occupant pays P200 monthly.

**ERNIE B. ESCONDE**

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## **Ambassador Kim Honors Secretary Lorenzana with Inaugural Major General Albert Jones Memorial Award**

From the Philippine News Agency (Mar 16): Ambassador Kim Honors Secretary Lorenzana with Inaugural Major General Albert Jones Memorial Award

U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Y. Kim awarded the inaugural Major General Albert Jones Memorial Award to Secretary of National Defense Delfin N. Lorenzana for his steadfast commitment and invaluable contributions to the alliance of the U.S. and the Republic of the Philippines.

The ceremony took place during the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group's (JUSMAG) 70th anniversary celebration hosted at the U.S. Chief of Mission residence.

The Major General Albert Jones Memorial Award recognizes a U.S. or Philippine government official who has made significant contributions to the bilateral defense partnership.

General Jones first commanded the 51st Division of the Philippine Army in 1940, and then commanded the 1st Philippine Corps until his capture at Bataan in 1942. Of the 76,000 Philippine and American soldiers, Jones was the only general officer on the infamous death march. He was held as a P.O.W. for over two years, and was among the many who endured torture and starvation.

In testament to his grit, tenacity, and courage, Jones returned to the Philippines in 1946 to lead the U.S. military advisory mission in Manila, which evolved into JUSMAG a year later.

JUSMAG's initial mission was to advise and assist with training and equipping the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Since then, the group has evolved to coordinating with the Armed Forces of the Philippines to develop all U.S.-Philippine military training activities.

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Bantay Bayanihan, React-CRS, DENR National Capital Region, Hope Inc., Mr. Rolly Canon of DWDD Kanyon, ICEP, Yes for Peace Movement, and Teach Peace Build Peace Inc.

As a proud Radio Station, our very own Mr. Rolly Canon, program host of KANYON is also an awardee for his invaluable service rendered as volunteer radio commentator.

**Major General Melquiades Feliciano, Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations** spearheaded the said event as a guest of honor and speaker. He also expressed his gratitude to these individuals and organizations.



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