

Army Vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride



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NEWS CLIPPINGS

19 March 2017

Sunday

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

19 MARCH 2017

PAGE NR.	TITLE	WRITER	NEWSPAPER
1	Weather Forecast		PDI p.A2-2
NATIONAL NEWS			
2-4	PH urged to rethink China ties	Tarra Quismundo	PDI p.A1
ARMY RELATED NEWS			
5	Military vs BIFF: 21 killed scores wounded	Roel Pareño	Phil Star p.9
6	Military in hot pursuit of jihadists, tightens security	Al Jacinto	Mla Times p.A7
7	3 dies, 2 injured as Army truck rams into motorbike, trike	Jerry Hernandez	Mla Times p.A7
	4 Maute members nabbed	Julmunir Jannaral	Mla Times p.A7
8	Army truck hits motorbikes; 3 dead	Ric Sapnu	Phil Star p.16
	4 Maute militants fall	Roel Pareño & Lino de la Cruz	Phil Star p.16
	Ex-soldier shot dead	Gilbert Bayona	Phil Star p.16
9-10	Rody to southern Mindanao execs: Protect people from Reds	Edith Regalado	Phil Star p.
11	4 Maute members arrested in Lanao del Sur	Nonoy Lacson	Mla Bulletin p.16
12	PVAO, Iloilo honor living world war 2 veterans on panay	PNA	Mla Standard Today p.A2
AFP RELATED NEWS			
13	AFP ready to guard Benham Rise, says general	Francis Wakefield	Mla Bulletin p.3
14	Duterte orders AFP to improve military facilities in the Spratly	Philipi Tubeza	PDI p.A3
15	Palace verifying report on China's Panatag plan		PDI p.A1
16	China plan bad news for PH fishermen	Gabriel Cardinoza	PDI p.A3
17	Chinese incursions may form part of supplemental impeachment complaint	Jovic Yee	PDI p.A2
18	Militants' caravan assails NHA projects	Frederick Silverio	Mla Times p.A7
19-20	MILF ex-combatant spends more time with family	Moh Saaduddin	Mla Times p.A7
21	Militant groups join 'invaders' of housing projects in bulacan	PNA	Tribune p.3
22	AFP handing-handa na sa Benham Rise	Jun Fabon	Balita p.2
23-26	The Profession of Arms	-	PDI p.A16
ONLINE NEWS			
27-28	NPAs threat to attack PNP, military outposts in CMindanao	-	www.manilatimes.com

Army vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

	Retired army shot dead	-	www.sunstar.com.ph
29-35	AFP: War with communists continues	-	www.businessmirror.com.ph
	Korea-made jets deploy for bomb runs vs NPA	-	Thestandard.com.ph
	Abra schools closed amid ongoing operations vs rebels	-	www.philstar.com
	'47 Terrorists Neutralized': AFP checking report 'dangerous' JI operative killed in Maguindanao offensive	-	www.gmanetwork.com

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

19 March 2017



Page: A2-2

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BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MARCH 19, 2017 | SUNDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

TROUGH OF A LOW PRESSURE AREA AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF MINDANAO, NORTHEAST MONSOON AFFECTING LUZON (As of 5:00 AM - Mar. 18, 2017)

SUNRISE 6:01 AM	SUNSET 6:07 PM
MOONRISE 10:48 PM	MOONSET 11:37 AM
FULL MOON MAR 12 10:54 PM	LAST QUARTER MAR 20 11:58 PM
LOW TIDE 10:33 PM 0.08 Meter	HIGH TIDE 1:57 PM 0.73 Meter

- Partly cloudy skies
- 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 20	MAR 21	MAR 20	MAR 21	MAR 20	MAR 21		
METRO MANILA	23-32°C	23-30°C	TAGAYTAY	19-29°C	16-28°C	TACLOBAN	23-29°C	24-30°C
TUGUEGARAO	21-30°C	22-31°C	LEGAZPI	23-29°C	23-28°C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	23-29°C	23-30°C
LAOAG	22-32°C	22-31°C	PUERTO PRINCESA	26-32°C	25-31°C	METRO DAVAO	23-29°C	24-31°C
BAGUIO	14-25°C	14-25°C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	25-30°C	24-29°C	ZAMBOANGA	23-31°C	24-32°C
SBMA/CLARK	23-32°C	23-31°C	METRO CEBU	24-30°C	24-29°C			

SAGOT KO, PADALA MO!

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17 March 2017



Page: 41

PH URGED TO RETHINK CHINA TIES

STORY BY TARRA QUISMUNDO

The government should rethink relations with China following reports Beijing was planning to build a radar station on Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal off the coast of Zambales, according to Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Carpio. China's latest move is meant to back its excessive maritime claims in the strategic region, Carpio said.

A2

PH urged to rethink China ties

FROM A1

By Tarra Quismundo
@TarralNQ

The Philippines should rethink relations with China following reports Beijing was planning to build a radar station on Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal off the coast of Zambales, Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Carpio said on Saturday.

Carpio said China's move could escalate militarization in the disputed South China Sea to back its excessive maritime claims in the region.

The planned environmental monitoring station on Panatag Shoal may just be an initial step in a creeping occupation, as seen in previous Chinese incursions at Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef, he said.

Eventually, China may declare an air defense identification zone (Adiz), through which Beijing may impose restrictions on flights, including the interception of foreign aircraft, Carpio said.

"These developments call for a national debate, and consensus, on how the nation should proceed with its bilateral relations with China," said Carpio, who has been a leading voice urging the government to assert its sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea, its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) within the South China Sea.

President Duterte has been careful not to antagonize China, and has made efforts to improve bilateral relations dampened by the territorial wrangling.



These developments call for a national debate, and consensus, on how the nation should proceed with its bilateral relations with China

Antonio Carpio
Supreme Court
Associate Justice

He has also publicly rebuked China's rival the United States, the country's longtime security ally that has warned against perceived Chinese provocation in the sea region.

In October, Mr. Duterte said he asserted to Chinese President Xi Jinping the Philippines ownership of Panatag Shoal, located just 230 kilometers off the Zambales coast and is well within the Philippines' EEZ.

While China also reiterated its ownership of the shoal, it subsequently allowed Filipino fishermen to return to their fishing activities in the traditional fishing grounds.

Kagitingan Reef

The shoal has been under China's control since a standoff between its ships and Filipino vessels in 2012, but a United Nations-backed arbitral tribunal ruled in favor of the Philippines last year.

Beijing has rejected the ruling, but has appeared to soften following Mr. Duterte's peace overtures.

Carpio cited how China had turned Kagitingan Reef from a meter-high outcrop in the Spratlys into a naval base in

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CH

2013 through reclamation.

Today, China is able to deploy flights to and from the reef.

"In 1987, the Chinese erected a radar weather station on Fiery Cross Reef (an outcrop in the Spratlys just a meter above water) ostensibly to help Unesco's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) global oceanic survey," he said.

"In 2014 to 2015, the Chinese turned that weather station into a 270-hectare military air naval base," Carpio said.

He said China may well be doing the same on Panatag Shoal. A radar station on the shoal would complete China's radar coverage over the expanse of the South China Sea.

"Now it's the turn of Scarborough Shoal," Carpio said.

"China will install an environmental monitoring station (aka radar station) on Scarborough Shoal. A radar station on Scarborough Shoal will immediately complete China's radar coverage of the entire South China Sea. China can then impose an Adiz in the South China Sea," he said.

Through an Adiz, China, the most weaponized nation among claimants to the disputed waters, may utilize missile silos it had earlier built over its bases on South China Sea islands.

"China will use its HQ-9 surface to air missiles to enforce the Adiz. These missiles are now installed on Woody Island in the Paracels. China also just completed building on Zamora (Subi) Reef, Pangani-ban (Mischief) Reef and Fiery Cross Reef concrete hexagonal structures, with retractable roofs, to house HQ-9 missile batteries," Carpio said.

The Philippines also protested China's missile deployment on Woody Island in February last year, saying it violated the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and earlier declarations between China and the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations against aggressive action in the disputed waters.

Carpio said China will use these military installations "to enforce the nine-dash lines as China's national boundaries in the South China Sea."

"That means China will grab 80 percent of Philippine EEZ and 100 percent of Philippine extended continental shelf in the West Philippine Sea," he said.

Apart from the Philippines and China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan also lay claim to parts of the South China Sea.

Clarification

Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said the government was aware of the reports and that it was seeking clarification from Beijing. But he did not say what the government would do after that.

"We are seeking information from Chinese authorities to clarify the accuracy of the report" Abella said.

The reports came as President Duterte met with Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang in Davao City on Friday.

In that meeting, both leaders reaffirmed their countries' "stronger bilateral ties" with Mr. Duterte underscoring the importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Reports of China's latest plan to build new structures in the area came shortly after the country's defense chief expressed concern over the presence of a Chinese survey ship on Benham Rise, which belongs to the Philippines according to a 2012 United Nations ruling.

China has since said it was only exercising innocent passage in the area and would respect the country's rights over it.

Mr. Duterte had downplayed the issue, and said he had an agreement with China to allow its research ships in the area. —WITH A REPORT FROM

LEILA B. SALAVERRIA INQ

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19 March 2017



Page: 9

Military vs BIFF: 21 killed, scores wounded

By ROEL PAREÑO

At least 47 Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) have been neutralized early this week in offensives that lasted four days in some parts of Central Mindanao, an area military unit commander confirmed yesterday.

Reports from Joint Task Force Central (JTFC) and 6th Infantry Division chief commander Brig. Gen. Arnel dela Vega indicated that from the total casualty figure among the rebels, 21 militants were killed while 26 others were wounded in the series of air strikes and ground combat operations. Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said the offensive mission “delivered a crippling blow” against

the foreign and local terrorists holed up in Barangay Tee, Datu Salibo, Maguindanao province, while it brought no casualty on the government side.

The offensives, which started last Monday, also yielded five improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and several components, according to Galvez.

The IEDs included four pressure-type and a command detonated; the components were half-kilo flash powder, one-inch concrete nail, tin can pressure-type, stranded wire, 9-volt battery, Christmas day battery, one power flash battery, a dry cell battery, a plastic case, a radio frequency receiver, and four improvised circuit light, which were turned over to the explosive ordnance disposal.

Galvez said the offensives aimed to hit the group of Muhammad Ali Bin Abdulrahman alias Muawiyah, a foreign terrorist, Salahuddin Hassan, a local terrorist who was trained as bomber by the former, and Esmael Abdulmalik, alias Abu Toraype, founder of Dawlah Islamiyah Maguindanao (DIM) and BIFF brigade commander.

Intelligence validations made on the ground, he added, yielded persistent reports that the terrorists were among those killed in the massive air and ground operations.

Galvez said Dela Vega also employed the blocking forces that prevented the militants from escaping massive attacks and possible reinforcement.

19 March 2017

The Manila Times

Page: 47

Military in hot pursuit of jihadists, tightens security

BY AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY: The military has tightened its security in Mindanao provinces following the series of clashes between troops and jihadist groups in the restive region, officials said on Saturday.

The military officials said at least 10 members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), including a Filipino bomb expert and a foreign jihadist, were allegedly killed in the recent fighting that also left one soldier wounded in Datu Salibo, Maguindanao.

"A local bomber and a foreign terrorist leader of Jemaah Islamiyah were among those who were killed during the operation, the identities of whom are still being

validated on the ground. Troops also recovered five improvised explosives." Army Captain Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the 6th Infantry Division headquarters, said Encinas, quoting Brigadier General Arnel dela Vega, said the continued support and cooperation of the community complements the ability of the military in countering "radical extremist groups" in sowing fear and violence in the province.

"It will just be a matter of time

that sustained conduct of focused military operation will eventually result to the total defeat of the BIFF and other terrorist groups and this would bring about the realization of a just and lasting peace in this part of the country," Dela Vega said.

Last Thursday, security forces also arrested four members of the jihadist Maute group in Lanao del Sur province, according to Army Captain Jo-ann Petinglay, spokesperson for the Western Mindanao Command in Zamboanga City.

Petinglay identified those arrested as Pao Panganga, Alex Bagul, Alisata Maute and Saadra Madayan, who were all implicated by the military in the ambush-slay of Marawi City police chief Abner Santos in October 2015, and the spate of kidnappings and terror-

ism in the region.

Petinglay said soldiers also recovered automatic weapons and improvised explosives, including crystal meth from the hideout of the Maute members.

She said security has been tightened in both Lanao and Maguindanao – part of the Muslim autonomous region – as security forces continue to hunt down terrorists.

"Operations are continuing against these lawless elements. Security has been heightened in those areas following the successful military operations against the BIFF and Maute group," Petinglay said.

There was no immediate statement from either the BIFF or Maute on the latest clashes. Both groups are allied and have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.

19 March 2017

The Manila Times

Page: A 7

Nation in brief

3 DIE, 2 INJURED AS ARMY TRUCK RAMS INTO MOTORBIKE, TRIKE

MAVANTOC, Tarlac: A family of three died while two others were injured after a Philippine Army truck hit the vehicles they were riding in barangay Rotrottooc here on Friday. The fatalities were Edgar Callo, 39, his wife Elizabeth, 36 and son Cristian 11, while injured were an unidentified tricycle driver and his passenger Rezel Garma. The army truck, driven by Sgt. Frederick Natividad, was on its way to base at Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) in Camp Aquino, Tarlac City when it accidentally hit the Callo family at the intersection of barangay (village) and provincial roads. The truck came from a civilian military operation in the far-flung barangay of Labney in Mayantoc town. Natividad forcibly stopped the truck but failed hitting the Callos on board their motorcycle. The truck then drifted and turned the opposite direction hitting the tricycle

JERRY M. HERNANDEZ

4 MAUTE MEMBERS NABBED

SHARIEF AGUAK, Maguindanao: The military-led teams under Joint Task Force ZamPelan (Zamboanga Peninsula and Lanao) have arrested four members of the Maute Group, notorious for high crimes, and seized high powered firearms. Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, identified the arrested suspects during the raid as Pao Panganga, a.k.a Pao Faizal, Alex Areg Bagut, Alisata Tumao Maute and Saadra Macapanton Madayan. The Joint Task Force ZamPelan seized three high-powered firearms, a pistol, improvised explosive devices and drug paraphernalia. The suspects are wanted for kidnapping-for-ransom, gun-for-hire, car theft, extortion and illegal drugs trade in Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte. They were also tagged as suspects in the murder of Police Supt. Abner Wahab Santos, former PNP director of Marawi City. Petinglay added Panganga is involved in the series of kidnapping in Marawi City notably, the abduction of Omira Lotao, an employee of the Mindanao State University last March 5.

JULMUNIRI. JANNARAL

19 March 2017



Page: 16

Army truck hits motorbikes; 3 dead

CAMP OLIVAS – A couple and their son were killed and two others were injured in a road accident in Barangay Rototooc in Mayantoc, Tarlac on Friday.

Senior Superintendent Ritchie Menardo Posadas, Tarlac police officer-in-charge, identified the fatalities as Edgar Callo, 39; his wife Elizabeth and son Cristian, residents of Barangay Caocayan.

Oscar Agustin and Rezel Gamma were injured.

Probers said a military truck driven by Sgt. Frederick Natividad, 45, was on its way to Camiling when it hit a motorcycle driven by Callo then collided with a tricycle driven by Agustin.

The Calloes were pronounced dead on arrival at the Camiling District Hospital, where the injured were also taken for treatment.

Natividad surrendered to responding policemen.

– Ric Sapnu

4 Maute militants fall

ILIGAN CITY – Four members of the Maute group were arrested in a raid in Lanao del Sur on Thursday, the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) reported yesterday.

Members of Task Force Zampelan (Zamboanga peninsula, Lanao) collared Pao Panganga, alias Pao Faizal; Alex Areg Bagul, Alisata Tumao Maute and Saadra Macapanton Madayan at around 3 a.m.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, Westmincom spokesperson, said three high-powered firearms, a hand gun, improvised explosive devices and drug paraphernalia were recovered from the suspects.

The group is tagged in the kidnapping of Omira Lotao, an employee of the Mindanao State University in Marawi, on March 5 and the killing of Superintendent Abner Wahab Santos, former Marawi police director.

Petinglay said the militants are also involved in contract killing, carjacking, extortion and illegal drugs.

– Roel Pareño, Lino de la Cruz

Ex-soldier shot dead

A former Army soldier was killed in a gun attack in Negros Occidental on Friday.

Melvin Tubis, 49, was shot in Barangay Sebucauan in the town of Isabela.

Capt. Eduardo Precioso, 303rd Infantry Brigade civil-military operations, said that they are still verifying reports that communist rebels perpetrated the attack.

– Gilbert Bayoran

19 March 2017



Page: 7

Rody to southern Mindanao execs: Protect people from Reds

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – President Duterte has tasked local officials in Southern Mindanao to secure their constituents amid threats of renewed attacks by communist rebels, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said yesterday.

“The instructions were clear, tighten the security in their respective localities and secure the people especially after the attack in Bansalan, Davao del Sur,” Esperon said.

New People’s Army (NPA) guerrillas last week attacked a police convoy in Barangay Sibayan in Bansalan.

At least four members of the police Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) were killed and another was wounded in the incident.

The President first met with security officials led by Esperon, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año and Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa over the weekend.

Duterte then convened the mayors of Davao del Sur later on Thursday, apprising them on the peace and order as well as security situation in the province.

Duterte also gathered the governors of Southern Mindanao also on the same day to assess the situation and

update them on the status of the peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines.

“Make sure your people are safe and secure,” Duterte told the local officials in Filipino.

Duterte told the officials that the formal peace negotiations with the CPP-NPA would only resume if all the conditions he earlier set are complied with, including the end to attacks.

Duterte also rejected demands for the release of 400 political detainees as earlier stipulated by the CPP and the National Democratic Front (NDF), the political arm of the rebel group negotiating peace with the government.

This developed as suspected NPA rebels ambushed two militiamen, killing one of them, in Ragay, Camarines Sur yesterday.

Officials identified the slain militiaman as Norbert Moneda, a member of the Civilian Armed Auxiliary (CAA) of Casay detachment in Lupi town.

The other victim, Roland dela Torre, survived the ambush and was brought to hospital for treatment.

Two civilians identified as Rey Barrientos and Versabi Barriento were hit by stray bullets, officials said.

The two militiamen were riding a motorcycle when they were waylaid by NPA rebels in

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Barangay Lanipga-Cawayan.

Also in Bicol, government troops clashed with NPA rebels in Matnog, Sorsogon on Thursday.

No one was reported hurt on the government side but an undetermined number of rebels were reportedly wounded in the clashes in Barangay Tupas, officials said.

Troops recovered an M-60 light machine gun and an im-

provised explosive at the scene of the firefight.

Meanwhile, four suspected rebels were arrested at a police checkpoint in Hungduan, Ifugao on Friday.

Police said the four rebels were riding tandem on two separate motorcycles when they were flagged down by policemen at a road checkpoint in Barangay Poblacion.

The four reportedly yielded

two caliber .45 pistols, a pair of binoculars, a map of Ifugao province, a WiFi gadget, two cellphones and several subversive documents.

Police identified the arrested rebels as John Lee Navarro Hondrado and Justine Buarao Aquino. – With Celso Amo, Raymund Catindig

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19 March 2017

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 16

4 Maute members arrested in Lanao del Sur

By **NONOY E. LACSON**

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Four members of the notorious Maute Group, who were believed involved in kidnapping, gun-for-hire, carjacking, and extortion activities, and illegal drugs trade in Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte were arrested at dawn Thursday by the police and military authorities in Lanao del Sur.

Armed Forces of the Philippines -Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom) Spokesman Capt. Joan D Petinglay said the four were arrested at 3 a.m. in Lanao del Sur by a combined team of policemen and soldiers under Joint Task Force ZamPeLan (Zamboanga Peninsula and Lanao).

Petinglay identified the arrested Maute group members as Pao Panganga alias Pao Faizal; Alex Areg Bagul; Alisata Tumao Maute; and Saadra Macapanton Madayan.

The authorities confiscated from them three high-powered firearms, a pistol, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and drug paraphernalia.

The four were tagged as suspects in the murder of former Marawi City police chief Supt. Abner Wahab Santos, Petinglay said.

Petinglay also said that Panganga was also believed involved in the series of kidnappings in Marawi City and in the abduction of Omira Lotao, an employee of the Mindanao State University only last March 5.

"This remarkable law enforcement operation typifies the degree of intelligence gathering, information sharing, and precise planning and execution initiated by the different AFP and PNP units operating under JTF ZamPeLan led by Major General Gerardo Barrientos," Maj. Gen Carlito Galvez, Jr., commander of the AFP-WestMinCom in this city said.

"This also manifests that good planning, coordination, and execution aided by vital intelligence from local government and the communities would yield to the neutralization of high profile criminal syndicates and personalities," Galvez said.

19 March 2017

The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

Page: A2

PVAO, ILOILO HONOR LIVING WORLD WAR 2 VETERANS ON PANAY

ILOILO CITY—Six living World War II veterans on Panay Island, all now above 90 years old, were recognized Saturday during the 72nd Anniversary of the Liberation of Panay, Guimaras and Romblon at the Balantang Memorial Cemetery National Shrine in Jaro here.

The Philippine Veterans Affairs Office administrator, retired Lt. Gen. Ernesto Carolina, underscored the contribution of the veterans who, "for the love of the country, have sacrificed, offered their lives, and made a significant mark in the history of the country, which serves as an inspiration to the Filipino youth today."

Carolina joined Iloilo Gov. Arthur Defensor Sr. and Iloilo City Mayor Jed Patrick Mabilog and other city officials in the ceremony.

Among those receiving plaques and medals of recognition for their service was Sergeant Eladio Macasar Peñaranda, who turns 94 this July and is a native of Iloilo City. He joined the 6th Military District on Sept. 25, 1942, and participated in cordoning the Balabago-Bito-on line during the battle for the liberation of Iloilo City. Other honorees were:

Private First Class Cornelio Lustre

Areño, 96, born in Lambunao, Iloilo. He enlisted on Feb. 13, 1943, and participated in the liberation of Iloilo City and in mop-up operations in the mountain towns of Alimodian, Leon and Maasin in Iloilo province.

Sergeant Ambrosio Alfeche Ambut, turning 99 this December, a native of Alimodian, Iloilo. He participated in the guerilla offensive during the liberation of Iloilo City, and in the offensive that led to the capture of Pamul-ogan Hill.

PFC Loreto Laru-an Lazo, turning 99 this April 12, a native of Lambunao, Iloilo. Lazo was enlisted as a heavy truck driver on Feb. 25, 1941 and was assigned to "A" Company, 14th Engineers, Philippine Scouts, and served with "D" Company, 1st Battalion. His unit participated in the liberation of Panay and was also responsible for the capture of Tering Landing Field in Iloilo province.

PFC Ramon Atintar Oro, turning 100 this May, joined the guerilla movement on Sept. 15, 1942 and was assigned to the "G4 61st Guerilla (F23)" group that fought the Japanese in strategic assaults. The group was also instrumental in the liberation of Iloilo City in March 1945. **PNA**

19 March 2017

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 3

AFP ready to guard Benham Rise, says general

By FRANCIS T. WAKELFIELD

The military is ready and just waiting for any instructions from the President to begin security patrols at the country's eastside maritime territories like Benham Rise.

"We are just awaiting the green light from government for the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) to start the patrol and mapping survey at Benham Rise," said Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla,

military spokesman.

Padilla said the AFP is very much ready to guard and patrol Benham Rise which is part of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

"Our mandate based on our Constitution is very clear and that is we are obligated to protect our citizens all over the country. We are also mandated under the Constitution to guard our territory, territo-

rial integrity and sovereignty," Padilla said.

He also confirmed that the AFP also has the capability to conduct the mapping survey to further check the area's rich mineral resources.

Padilla said the Philippine Navy will be the one to conduct the mapping survey while Philippine Air Force (PAF) has the capa-

bility to conduct aerial survey

Earlier, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said that they are not discounting the possibility of conducting its own survey of Benham Rise to

check on the resources of the area.

Lorenzana said that as far as he is concerned, Benham Rise is rich in resources, especially in yellow fin tuna which can benefit the country.

19 March 2017



Page: 13

**'AIRCRAFT CARRIER'
DUTERTE ORDERS
AFP TO IMPROVE
MILITARY FACILITIES
IN THE SPRATLYS**

By Philip C. Tubeza
@pctubezaINQ

President Duterte has ordered the military to improve its facilities on the disputed Spratly Islands in the West Philippine Sea, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Saturday.

In particular, Lorenzana said the President wanted the 1.3-kilometer runway on Pag-asa Island paved. The island has been described as the country's "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the Spratlys.

"The President has an order that, on Pag-asa Island, the facilities should be improved," Lorenzana said.

At 37 hectares, Pag-asa is the biggest island occupied by the Philippines in the Spratlys. It is 34 hours away by boat from Rizal town, in Palawan province.

Lorenzana said the President also wanted to improve other facilities in reefs and islets controlled by the Philippines in the Spratlys.

The government intended to construct a port in southern Palawan, and put up an installation on Benham Rise in the western Pacific to assert the country's sovereign rights over the area.

INQ

19 March 2017



Page: 1

Palace verifying report on China's Panatag plan

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is verifying the accuracy of a report on the supposed plan of China to build a structure at Scarborough Shoal.

"We are seeking information from Chinese authorities to clarify the accuracy of the report," DFA spokesman Charles Jose said in a text message

yesterday. Jose was referring to a report of Chinese newspaper *Hainan Daily*, which quoted Sansha Communist Party Secretary Xiao

In Davao, China official prioritizes deals over disputes. See Page 8.

Jie as saying that preparations are underway to build an environmental monitor-

ing station at Scarborough, also known as Panatag Shoal.

The official was also quoted as saying that Chinese stations will also be built on features in the Paracel island group, which is being claimed by Vietnam.

Xiao is the mayor of Sansha City, which

Turn to Page 4

Palace From Page 1

Beijing in 2012 established to administer the islands in the disputed territories.

The Chinese foreign ministry has yet to confirm the accuracy of the report.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella yesterday indicated that they have not received any official word on the plan, which is expected to renew concerns over Beijing's robust assertions of its claims in the strategically crucial sea.

"We are seeking information from Chinese authorities to clarify the accuracy of the

report," Abella said.

"I'll have to check with the defense department," was the only reply **The STAR** got from Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman, when asked for comment.

In an interview earlier this month, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said China planned in June to conduct reclamation activities at the shoal.

He said it was the United States that stopped the planned reclamation.

Situated inside the Philippine exclusive economic zone, the shoal was the site of a tense standoff between Philippine

and Chinese vessels in 2012.

Beijing has seized control of the feature, barring Filipino fishermen from entering its resource-rich waters.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague did not rule on the ownership of the shoal. However, it denied Chinese claims that it is an island capable of generating its own 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone.

Rather, it said the shoal – a traditional fishing ground of Chinese and Filipino fishermen – was an above-water feature that generates entitlement to a 12-nautical mile territorial sea.

The arbitration court, before which the Philippines lodged its dispute during the term of former president Benigno Aquino III, also ruled that China violated the traditional fishing rights of Filipinos when it stopped fishermen from entering the shoal.

China last year allowed Filipino fishermen to access the shoal following a meeting between Chinese and Philippine officials led by President Duterte, who sought friendlier ties with Beijing upon assuming office.

In pursuing an independent foreign policy, Duterte has set

Turn to Page 14

19 March 2017

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER

Page: A3

China plan bad news for PH fishermen

DAGUPAN CITY—China's plan to build a permanent structure on Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal in the West Philippine Sea is bad news for fishermen in the coastal town of Infanta in Pangasinan province.

A permanent Chinese structure there would signify that China owned the shoal, which it seized from the Philippines in 2012, said Charlito Maniago, head of the fishing village of Cato in Infanta.

"What will happen to our fishermen? They will not be allowed to fish there again," Maniago told the Inquirer by telephone on Saturday.

The government should assert ownership over the shoal, as the International Arbitral Tribunal in The Hague had ruled

last year, said Jowe Legaspi, Cato village councilman.

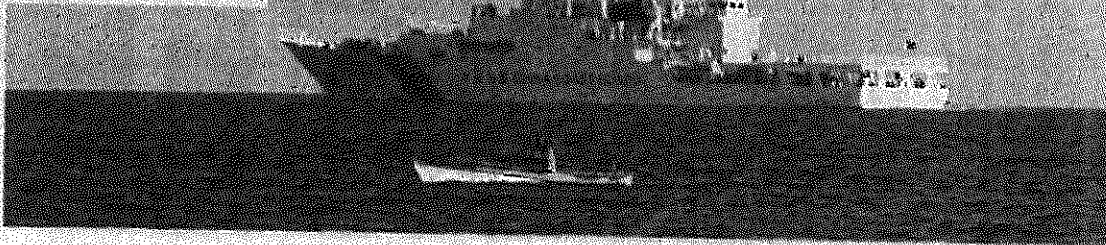
According to the tribunal's decision, China has no historic title over the West Philippine Sea and that it has violated the sovereign rights of the Philippines.

"I hope China's plan to build a permanent structure (on Panatag) will not push through. Why them? It's ours," Legaspi said.

On Monday, Hainan Daily quoted Sansha City Communist Party Secretary Xiao Jie as saying that the Chinese government was preparing to build an environmental monitoring station on Panatag Shoal.

Panatag, also known as Scarborough Shoal and Bajo de Masinloc, is a triangular chain of reefs and rocks, about 240 kilometers southwest of Infanta.

A Filipino fisherman steers his boat near a Chinese ship patrolling Panatag Shoal.



Its 150-square-kilometer lagoon, as well as the waters surrounding it, are home to high-value fish species like tanigue (Spanish mackerel), lapu-lapu (grouper) and *maya-maya* (red snapper).

In 2012, China seized Panatag

Shoal after a two-month stand-off with Philippine vessels. In October last year, Chinese coast guards finally allowed Filipino fishermen back to the shoal, shortly after President Duterte's state visit to Beijing.

Since the start of the fishing season in early February, fishermen have brought home large bounties of fish from the shoal each day, Maniago said.

"You now see people in groups celebrating almost every night, es-

pecially in the fishermen's house at the beachfront," he said.

He said at least 30 fishing boats from his village are now back to Panatag Shoal.

"We are happy that our village folk here now have a regular source of income. This is the first fishing season since 2012 that our fishermen have not been harassed on the shoal," Legaspi said.

A fishing boat would normally stay on the shoal for a week before returning to shore to unload its catch.

But Legaspi said bigger boats do not leave the shoal, sending their catch instead to the shore through smaller boats every four days. The smaller boats would return immediately to bring supplies like food, water and fuel. —GABRIEL CARDINOZA, INQ.

19 March 2017



Page: A2

A QUESTION OF FOREIGN POLICY

CHINESE INCURSIONS MAY FORM PART OF SUPPLEMENTAL IMPEACHMENT COMPLAINT

By Jovic Yee
@jovicyeelNQ

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano said on Saturday his lawyers were looking at filing a supplemental complaint to boost the impeachment case he earlier filed against President Duterte, to possibly include China's planned infrastructure buildup on Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal and its recent incursion on Benham Rise.

Alejano said that their legal team was already studying the pronouncements made by Mr. Duterte regarding Chinese actions on the territories since the Cabinet appears to be "at a loss" to explain them to the public.

'Inform everybody'

Recent events showed that there was "confusion" as to the government's foreign policy direction and its relationship with China, whose bilateral relationship with Manila is currently on the mend amid the territorial dispute.

"If he has nothing to hide, it should be properly communicated to his team, to his Cabinet and to the Filipino people. He cannot just keep [agreements] to himself. He has to inform everybody," Alejano told reporters.

Then Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay in February said that the country has been assured by China that it had no plans to set up structures on Panatag.

But a recent Hainan Daily report quoted Sansha Communist



President Duterte

Party Secretary Xiao Jie as saying that preparations were under way for Beijing to put an environmental monitoring station on the shoal, which is just 200 kilometers off the coast of Zambales province, well within Manila's exclusive economic zone.

Allay fears

Mr. Duterte has sought to allay public fears last week by saying that a Chinese survey ship spotted by the Navy on Benham Rise recently had prior invitation to conduct research on the 13-million-hectare underwater landmass off the coast of Isabela and Aurora provinces.

His statement caught the defense and foreign departments by surprise.

"If we will not assert ourselves now, then we cannot as-

sert ourselves in the future," Alejano said.

Waste of time

But election lawyer Romulo Macalintal said unseating President Duterte at this time was an "impossible dream" and called the 16-page impeachment complaint filed by Alejano at the Duterte-controlled House a "waste of time."

"The move to impeach and remove him from office is, at this time, an impossible dream. It will never happen and will not even reach the first base," Macalintal said in a statement.

Alejano filed the complaint on Thursday, claiming that Mr. Duterte was responsible for the deaths of 8,000 drug offenders, of amassing some P2.2 billion in unexplained wealth and of committing other high crimes.

Tremendous support

Macalintal said that at least a third of the 292 lawmakers or 97 votes were needed to decide whether the case should go ahead. But with 260 representatives supporting the President, only 42 solons are left to support the impeachment moves.

"With the tremendous support the President gets from the House leadership and his steady high approval and trust ratings, his impeachment and removal from office is a long shot and is not likely to prosper. It is just a waste of time," Macalintal stressed.

—WITH A REPORT FROM JULIEM.AURELIO INQ

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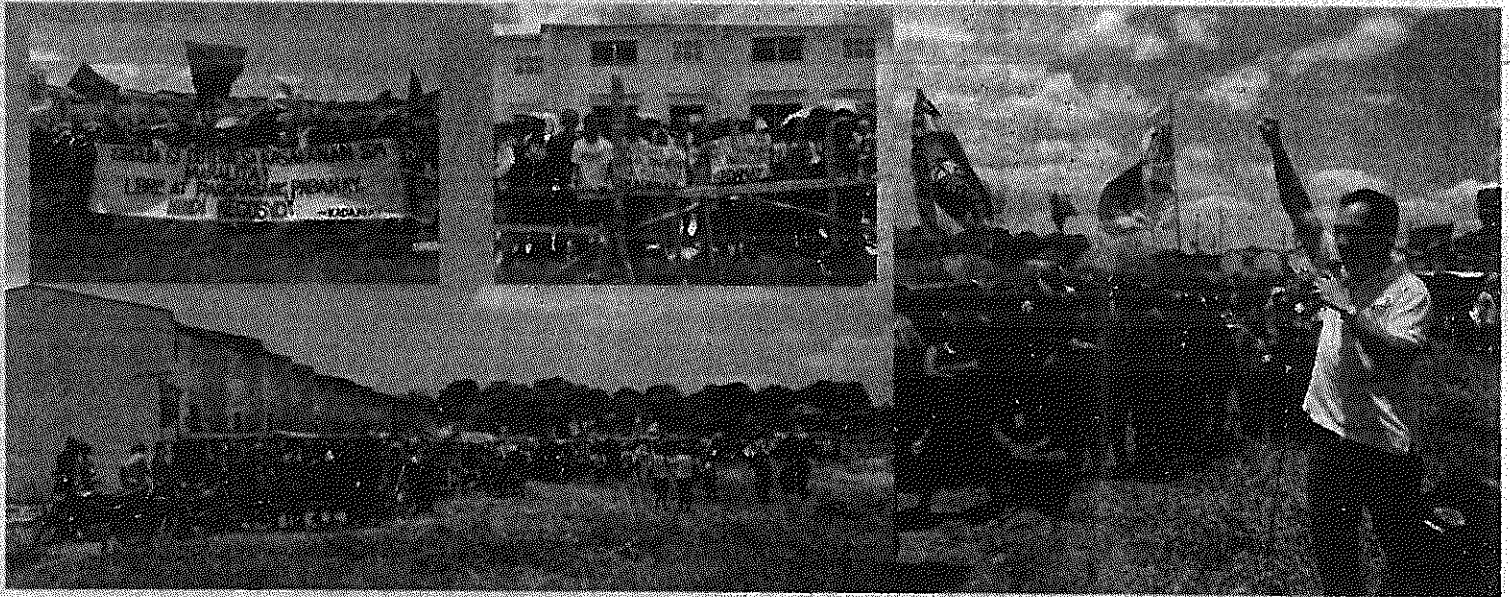
285, 5295

17

19 March 2017

The Manila Times

Page: 17



SHOW OF SUPPORT Members of the militant groups headed by Rep. Antonio Tinio of ACT Partylist (right) led a caravan as show of support to the urban poor groups that occupied the housing projects in Bulacan. PHOTOS BY FREDERICK SILVERIO

Militants' caravan assails NHA projects

PANDI, Bulacan: Some 600 militants on Saturday morning staged a people's caravan of 40 passenger jeepneys and stormed one of the occupied housing units of the National Housing Authority (NHA) in Barangay Mapulang Lupa here as a show of support to the urban poor who forcibly occupied various shelter projects in the municipality.

The militant groups composed of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), Akbayan, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Anak Pawis and Kabataan Partylist took turns assailing government housing programs and vowed to support members of the leftist group Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay) who have been occupying at least 6,000 "idle" housing units in different resettlement areas here since March 8.

The five housing projects forcibly occupied by Kadamay were Villa Elise in Barangay Masuso, Villa Lois in Barangay Siling Bata, NHA Village Heights 2, Pandi Resident 3 in Barangay Mapulang Lupa, Padre Pio Housing Project and Pandi Heights I in Barangay Cacarong Bata.

Rep. Sarah Elago of the Kabataan Partylist said their group and four other partylist organizations belonging to the Makabayan Block already filed

a resolution in Congress aiming to investigate the idle housing projects of the government.

"The poor has the right to proper shelter and public funds intended for the poor should go to the poor, but unfortunately it will only be heard after the session break," she said.

Elago added it is high time to probe the incidents so that it will not have spill-over effects in other provinces where NHA housing units are located.

She added that NHA should speed up the processing of papers for the poor since many of them have no means to follow up the requirements. She said President Duterte himself does not want people lining up in government offices.

Rep. Antonio Tinio of ACT Partylist said the police and military should not be allowed in the community and diverted his speech to the alleged offensive moves of the government against communist insurgents.

Asked for their action when the NHA serves the notice of eviction on Monday, Carlito Badioc, Kadamay secretary general, said their group will not leave the occupied housing units and will continue to fight for the right of the poor to have their own

dwelling place.

He said Kadamay is willing to provide the masterlist of the group who took over the NHA housing units but NHA officials refused to accept it.

"What they want is we leave the houses we occupied first before they start processing our papers. We want them to remove the police from the area, remove the food blockade and provide electricity, water and other basic needs in the housing sites," Badioc said.

The NHA explained that the units Kadamay occupied have already been awarded to the Philippine National Police housing board while the other units have been awarded to informal settlers whose houses have been demolished and families who were relocated from geological hazard zones.

The NHA also issued statements they are following instructions of the President who ordered them to provide adequate living conditions for the people by providing them with water and electric supply.

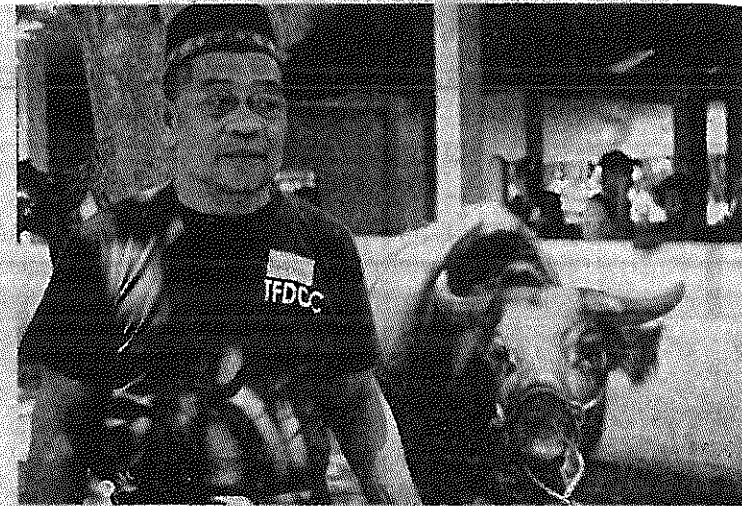
It was learned that the Kadamay and Makabayan Block will visit one after another all the six NHA housing projects to stage a rally.

FREDERICK SILVERIO

19 March 2017

The Manila Times

Page: A7



DECOMMISSIONED Former MILF combatant Jacob Palao with the water buffalo to help him in his farm.
PHOTO BY MOH SAADUDDIN

MILF ex-combatant spends more time with family

CAMP DARAPANAN, Maguindanao:

For more than forty years, Jacob Palao has lived as a freedom fighter with Muslim revolutionary groups struggling for self-determination in Southern Philippines.

He spent most of his life in the jungle before the current peace process between the government (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) began and gave him an opportunity to change his life.

Palao, 56, said he first joined the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLFF) Zone 4 in Cotabato province at the age of 12. He then transferred to the MILF after the rebels separated from the mother unit sometime in 1980s.

Palao is now among 145 profiled members of the MILF's Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) who turned over their firearms on June 16, 2015.

The decommissioned combatants are the initial results of the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) which was signed on March 27, 2014.

FEATURE

"I really wanted to spend the rest of my time with my family so I could also witness my children complete their studies and dreams," Palao said during the recent turnover of livelihood assistance to 127 former MILF combatants here at the rebel headquarters in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

He said three of his children are in school and his eldest son, a management scholar at a university abroad, is about to graduate.

"If not for the current peace process, my eldest son could have been one of the young field commanders of the MILF fighting the government," he said as he thanked the government for assistance provided to them.

Palao and his fellow decommissioned combatants received last Wednesday 103 heads of carabao (water buffaloes), 83 cattle, 38 goats, seedlings and farming tools from the government through the Department of Agriculture.

Palao said he will treasure what the government and other peace stakeholders have done for them who have been locked up in the decades-long rebellion.

"I never expected in my entire life that this day would come when we will be carrying ploughs and carabaos to our

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farms together with our families instead of firearms," he added in the vernacular.

The turnover of the agricultural assistance was spearheaded by members of the Task Force for Decommissioned Combatants and their Communities (TFDCC), an implementing body created on March 31, 2015 and mandated to undertake special socio-economic and development programs for the decommissioned women auxiliary forces of the MILF.

The event was attended by Government Implementing Panel Chair Irene Santiago, Agriculture Undersecretary

Ranilba Dilangalen and officials from the TFDCC and the Muslim revolutionaries.

"Our approach to the decommissioned combatants is case to case basis, so we make sure that various situations and issues that concerns the decommissioned combatants are properly addressed to make sure that these aids have an impact on their lives," TFDCC Chair and Assistant Secretary Rolando Asuncion said.

"We are learning a lot of things so we are preparing for an enhanced program for the second batch based on our experience from the first batch of decommissioned combatants," he added.

Asuncion also announced that 18 remaining decommissioned combatants will received their shares in April.

Dilangalen pointed out that the recent programs and commitments made are manifestations of President Rodrigo Duterte's directive that the Bangsamoro peace process should proceed and the enabling programs should be fast-tracked.

While Santiago explained that the program will not be like the usual distribution of livelihood assistance.

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

"What we are doing is to bring about this just peace that the Bangsamoro people have been struggling for. We really want to listen to them so that they own that change that is going to come," she added saying that the process of normalization will be from transition to transformation not only of the combatants but also their communities.

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19 March 2017



Page: 3

Militant groups join 'invaders' of housing projects in Bulacan

Some 600 militants belonging to five partylist groups swooped down in one of the rows of occupied housing units of the National Housing Authority (NHA) at the NHA Village Heights 2 in Barangay Mapulang Lupa in Palm, Bulacan where they staged a rally in a show of support to the cause of the urban poor yesterday morning.

The militant groups composed of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Akbayan, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Anak Pawis and Kabataan partylist took turns in assailing the government housing programs and vowed to support members of the leftist group Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay), who occupied since March 8 at least 6,000 "idle" housing units in different resettlement areas in this town.

Sarah Elago of the Kabataan

partylist said that their group, together with the four other partylist organizations belonging to the Makabayan Block, had already filed a resolution in Congress aimed at investigating the idle housing projects of the government.

"The poor has the right to proper shelter and public funds intended for the poor should go to the poor," she said.

She said, however, that their resolution would have to wait because Congress is now on break.

Elago said that it was high time to probe the incidents so that it would not have spill-over effects in other provinces where NHA housing units were located.

She added that NHA should speed up the processing of papers for the poor since many of them had no means to follow up the requirements.

She said that President Duterte

himself did not want people lining up to follow up something in every government offices.

Rep. Antonio Timio of ACT partylist said that the police and military should not be allowed in the community and also diverted his speech in the offensive of the government against communist insurgents.

When asked what would they do if the NHA served the notice of eviction this coming Monday, Carlito Badioc, secretary general of Kadamay, said that their group would not leave the occupied housing units and continue to fight for the right of the poor to have their own dwelling place.

He said that Kadamay was willing to provide the masterlist of the group who took over the NHA housing units but NHA officials did not let it happen that way.

"What they want is for us to

leave first the occupied housing units before they process it. And also, we want them to acknowledge our wishes – to pull out the police in the area, remove food blockade and provide electricity, water and other needs of the housing sites," Badioc said.

The NHA, on the other hand, explained that the units that the Kadamay has occupied have already been awarded to the PNP housing boards while the other units are already awarded to informal settlers whose houses have been demolished and to families who were removed from geological hazard zones.

The NHA also issued statements that they are following instructions of the President who ordered them to provide adequate living conditions for the people by providing them with water and electric supply.

PNA

21

19 March 2017



Page. 2

BFAR TUTULONG

AFP handang-handa na sa Benham Rise

Sinabi kahapon ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na naghihintay na lang ito ng go-signal mula sa gobyerno upang simulan na nila ang pagpapatrulya at mapping sa Benham Rise.

Nabatid kay AFP Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla na nakahanda ang militar sa direktiba ni Pangulong Duterte para magsagawa ng malawakang pagsuyod sa Benham Rise, na sakop ng Exclusive Economic Zone ng Pilipinas.

“We are just awaiting the green light from government for the AFP to start the patrol and mapping survey

at Benham Rise,” sabi ni Padilla.

Aniya, ang Philippine Navy ang magsasagawa ng mapping survey, habang aerial survey naman ang gagawin ng Philippine Air Force (PAF).

Matatandaang sinabi noong nakaraang linggo ni Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana na hindi imposibleng magsagawa rin ang gobyerno ng sarili nitong survey sa Benham Rise upang matukoy ang mga likas na yaman sa lugar.

Kaugnay nito, kinumpirma ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)-Region 2 na

tutulong ito sa pagpapatrulya at pagbabantay sa Benham Rise.

Ito ang inihayag sa panayam sa Quezon City kay Atty. Samuel Agaloo, hepe ng BFAR-Region 2 Law Enforcement Division, at iginiiit na sa kabila ng sakop ng Region 3 ang malaking bahagi ng Benham Rise at may bahagi ito na malapit sa Dinapigue, Isabela.

Sinabi ni Agaloo na hinihintay lang ng BFAR ang malaking barko para makapaglayag at magpapatrulya sa lugar ang Quick Response Team (QRT) ng ahensiya.

Jun Fabon

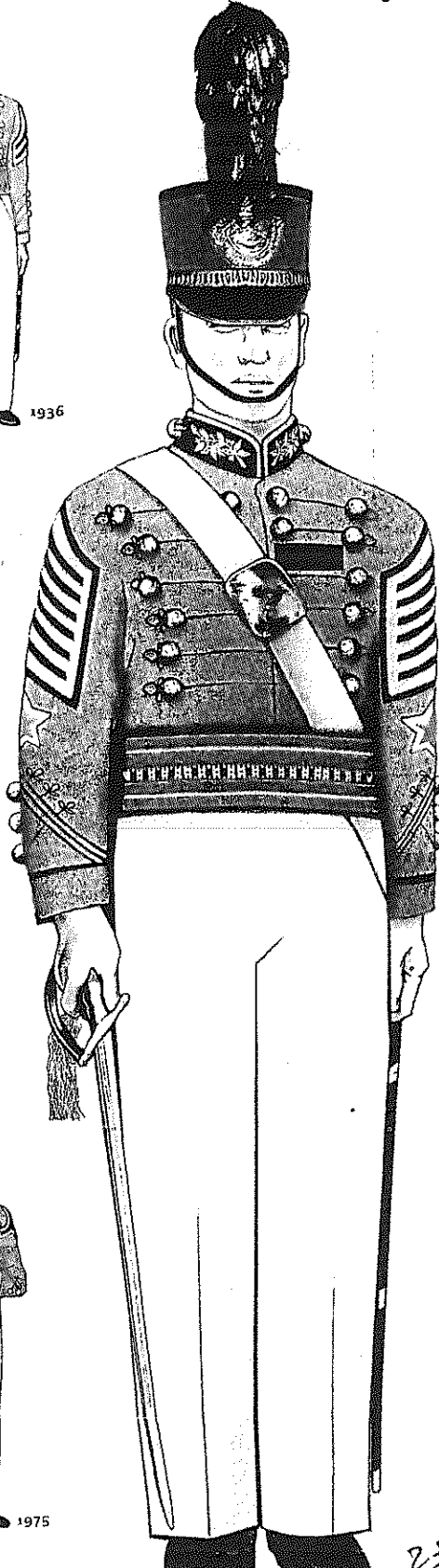
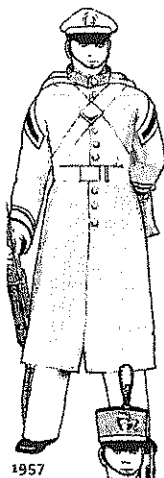
19 March 2017

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Page: 116

THE PROFESSION OF ARMS

Writing to his sons, Gen. Vicente Lim observed, "No matter how crooked, how weak the next President is... as long as the Army is strong, honest, and free from politics, the nation will stand. The Army has always been the backbone of all nations, barring none in the world." Its history may be complicated, but its vision for itself has remained consistent: to defend the nation by demonstrating the values of integrity, courage, and loyalty to institutions, and not personalities among its alumni.



MINIMUM HEIGHT REQUIREMENT FOR MALE AND FEMALE CADET APPLICANTS

PMA FULL DRESS WHITE UNDER ARMS

For cadet officers, the uniform is comprised of:

- Shako with plume
- Full-dress coat
- Sash tied around the waist
- White gloves
- White pants
- Breastplate
- Sword with sword straps
- Black socks and black shoes

RANK INSIGNIAS/CHEVRON OF THE CORPS



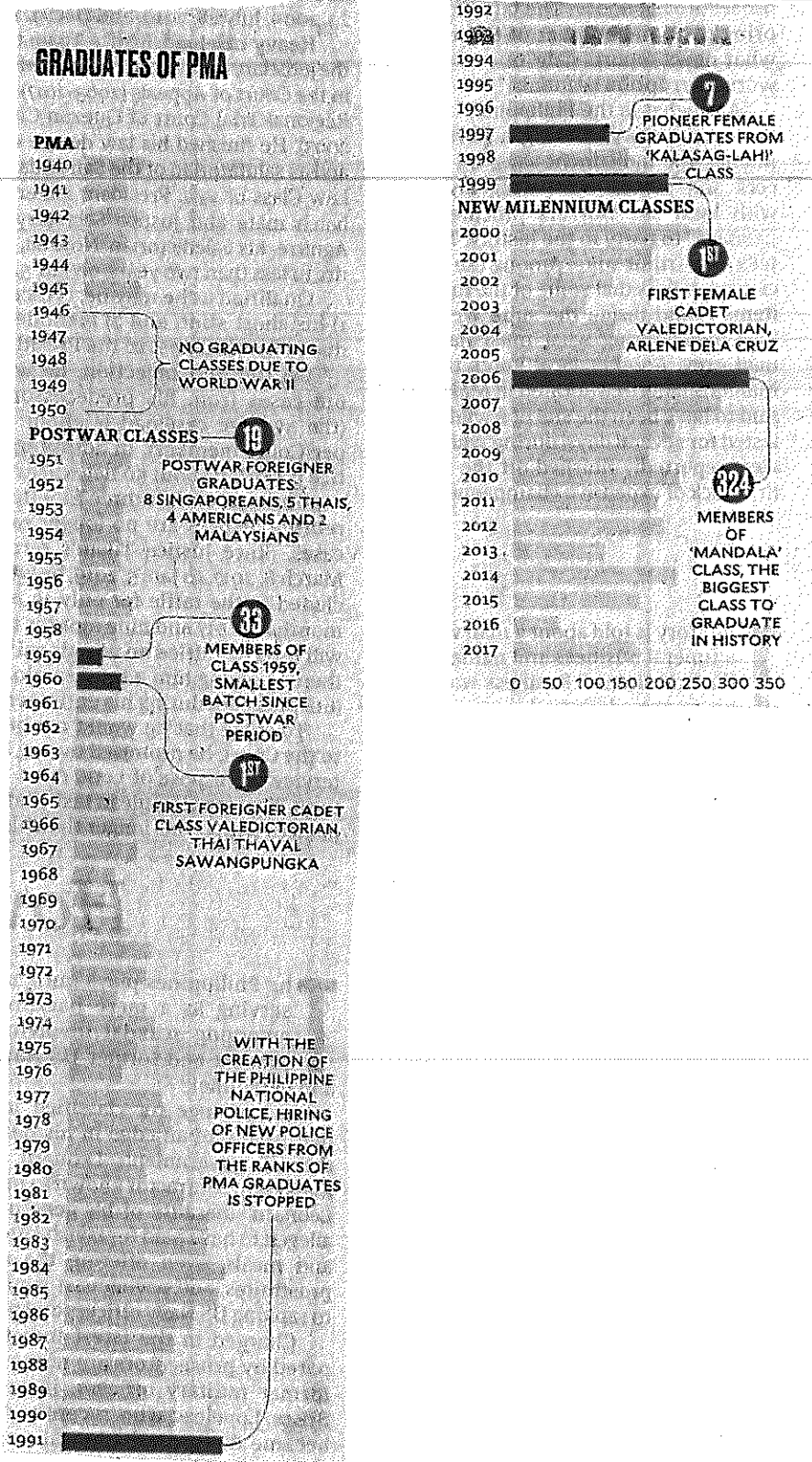
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23

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BY THE NUMBERS

3

Cadets who are both class baron and recipient of Presidential Saber: Aristeo Ferraren (1938), Leopoldo Regis (1951) and Manuel Arevalo (1964)

5

Foreign cadets who are class valedictorians: Thais Thaval Sawangpunka (1960) and Thawip Netniyom (1981); Singaporeans Kah Lim (1977) and Ho Yee (1978); and American Eckwood Solomon (1963)

17-22

Age requirement upon entering PMA on April 1 of the year after examination

4

Female cadets who graduated as class valedictorian: Arlene dela Cruz (1999), Tara Velasco (2003), Andrelee Mejica (2007) and Royi Mairal Martinez (2017)

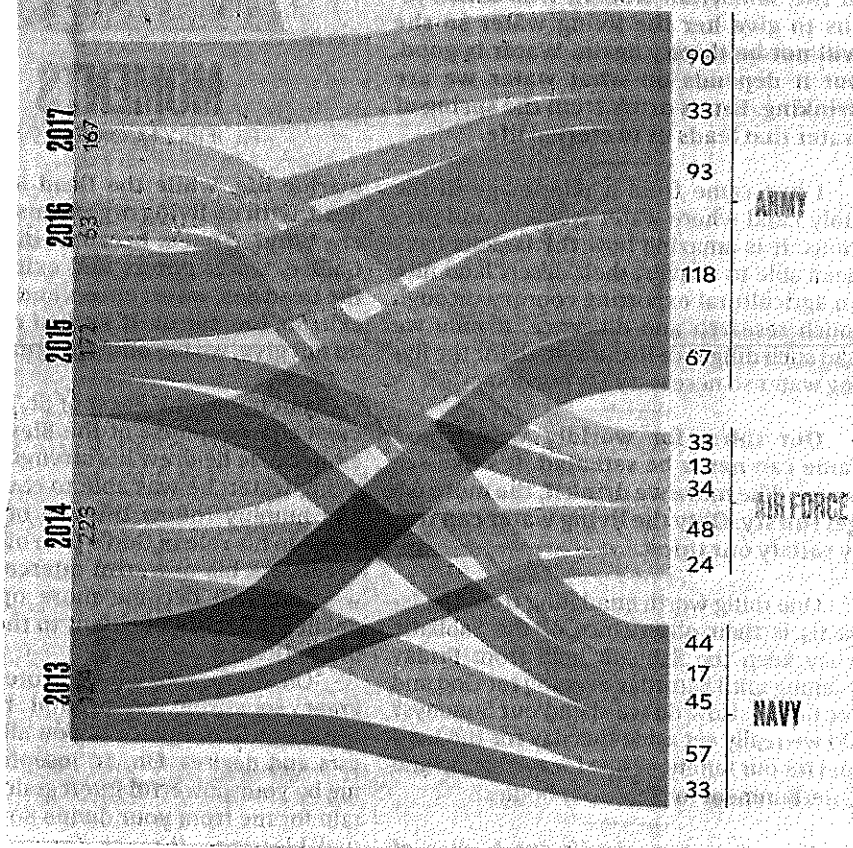
13

Awards received by the most bemedaled graduates and class valedictorians: American Eckwood Solomon (1963), Manuel Gaerlan (1985) and Angel Evangelista (1987)

373

Area in hectares of Fort del Pilar, PMA's site

PMA GRADUATES BRANCH OF SERVICE



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ONLINE NEWS

19 MARCH 2017

NPA threatens to attack PNP, military outposts in CMindanao

From the Manila Times (Mar 17): **NPA threatens to attack PNP, military outposts in CMindanao**

The 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 guerillas 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 reports, 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.

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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.

<http://www.manilatimes.net>

Retired army shot dead

From the Sun Star-Bacolod (Mar 18): **Retired army shot dead**

A RETIRED member of the Philippine Army was shot to death by suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) at Barangay Sibucawan, Isabela, Negros Occidental Friday.

Senior Inspector Joseph Partidas, deputy chief of Isabela Municipal Police Station, identified the fatality as Melvin Tavis, 49.

Investigation showed that Tavis and his friend were talking in front of a coffee shop when five unidentified men fired at him past 3 p.m.

Tavis succumbed to five gunshot wounds, but his friend was unharmed.

The assailants then carted away the bag of Tavis's friend containing cash amounting to P10,000 and escaped on foot.

Recovered were bullets of .45 caliber pistol.

Partidas said Tavis served as security guard of an hacienda after his retirement in 2009.

Tavis reportedly had an encounter with the rebels at Barangay San Agustin in 2016, where he got injured, Partidas added.

The police deputy said they are eyeing revenge and grudge as the motives.

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

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AFP: War with communists continues

From the Business Mirror (Mar 18): AFP: War with communists continues



In Photo: In this November 23, 2016, file photo, New People's Army new regional rebel commander and spokesman Jaime Padilla, who uses the nom de guerre Comrade Diego, poses beside Comrade Katryn, who had her face painted to conceal her identity, at their rebel encampment tucked in the harsh wilderness of the Sierra Madre mountains southeast of Manila. Young Filipino rebels represent a new generation of Maoist fighters, who reflect the resiliency and constraints of an insurgency that has dragged on for nearly half a century through six Philippine presidencies. Crushing poverty, despair, government misrule and the abysmal inequality that has long plagued Philippine society were their best recruiter, according to the guerrillas. AP/Aaron Favila

The 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.



Protesters hold slogans during a rally outside Camp Aguinaldo, headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), in Quezon City to protest the alleged "all-out war" being waged by the military and the police against communist rebels following the collapse of the peace talks on March 10.

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Army vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

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. 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 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.

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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.

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; Asuncion 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.

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

Korea-made jets deploy for bomb runs vs NPA

From The Standard (Mar 18): Korea-made jets deploy for bomb runs vs NPA

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 Zinundungan.

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

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sorties in Malibcong, Abra.

Imelda Tabiando, head of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance, at least four "Golden Eagle" (FA50) 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 FA50 jets are the newest aircraft acquisitions of the Armed Forces of the Philippines 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 officers 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 OTHER SIDE. Supporters of the CPP-NPA-NDF hold a lightning rally on the 48th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Manila, saying the Armed Forces should support reopening the peace talks instead of engaging in war. Lino Santos

"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.

"An estimated 56 families, including close to 200 children, are reportedly affected in the villages of Malibcong.

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"We are calling on President Duterte to rein in the military in displacing civilians and causing widespread destruction of property and trauma to the indigenous people in the area.

"Also, in line with the resumption of the GRP-NDF peace negotiations, the military should stop this rampage to have a more conducive atmosphere for the talks."

<http://thestandard.com.ph>

Abra schools closed amid ongoing operations vs rebels

From the Philippine Star (Mar 17): Abra schools closed amid ongoing operations vs rebels



In this photo taken Nov. 23, 2016, members of the New People's Army communist rebels with face painted to conceal their identities, stand in formation during ceremonies before a news conference held at their guerrilla encampment tucked in the harsh wilderness. AP/File photo

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines - School children in hinterland Malibcong town in Abra are still confined to their homes and villages.

Classes are still suspended with the ongoing military operations against communist rebels who raided the town police station Sunday night and ambushed the top police chief's convoy the morning after.

The class suspensions may still be extended, the Department of Education (DepEd) said.

At least 11 elementary schools shut down classes starting Tuesday and would continue until the military and police declare the situation "cleared," said Georaloy Palao-oy of the DepEd.

Most of the teachers in the affected schools, the education department added, are from other towns and far-flung areas.

The Cordillera police leadership formed a Special Investigation Task Group (SITG) headed by Cordillera police's deputy regional director for administration Senior Superintendent Gregorio Lim charged to dig deep if there were operational lapses on the part of the policemen.

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Around 30 communist guerillas raided the town's police station temporarily housed at the abandoned home of Malibcong town mayor Benido Bacuyag at around 7:30 p.m. Sunday. They occupied the station for an hour and took away seven M16 assault rifles, three pistols and four mobile phones.

Reinforcing policemen headed by Abra police director Senior Superintendent Alberto Tagum were ambushed along their way to the town proper at around 11 a.m. Monday.

Police Officer 2 Jessie Triniad, Police Officers 1 Marlon dela Paz, Gerome Baldos, Kennon Sanggoy and Von Harold Layao, though hurt in the exchange of gunfire with rebels, were declared safe. Tagum was unhurt.

Cordillera police director Chief Superintendent Elmo Sarona had reminded all policemen to be alert at all times to prevent similar incidents. He ordered all chiefs of police to intensify their crime prevention efforts and strengthen security of their personnel in their areas of responsibility and to further step up their anti-criminality strategies.

Abra Gov. Jocelyn Valera-Bernos said all policemen deployed in Malibcong were pulled out and relieved with those coming from the Cordillera regional headquarters.

Abra is on heightened alert at present.

Tokhang prompted Sunday raid

Meanwhile, communist guerillas who admitted doing the attack said complaints of local villagers against the police's "Oplan Tokhang" prompted Sunday's raid at the headquarters of the Malibcong town police.

Martin Montana, spokesperson of the New Peoples Army-Ilocos said Sunday's raid was meant to punish the police for abuses on villagers during various "Oplan Tokhang" operations and disrespect on indigenous socio-political structures on villages.

According to Montana, majority of the villagers in Malibcong cannot erase in their memories the local police station's role in defending the interest of warlords and the Cellophil Resources Corporation during the Marcos regime which exploited their natural resources, grabbed their ancestral lands and trampled on their human rights until now.

"Hindi lang sa Malibcong, kundi sa halos sa lahat ng bayan ng Abra ay ganito ang papel ng kapulisan," said Montana.

The twin attacks in Abra were the latest attack by the NPA in the Cordillera after rebels torched two trucks of the Philex Mining Corporation in Itogon, Benguet on the third week of February.

<http://www.philstar.com>

'47 TERRORISTS NEUTRALIZED': AFP checking report 'dangerous' JI operative killed in Maguindanao offensive

From GMA News (Mar 18): '47 TERRORISTS NEUTRALIZED': AFP checking report 'dangerous' JI operative killed in Maguindanao offensive

The military's Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) on Saturday said it is verifying reports that a
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suspected foreign terrorist was killed in a series of assaults against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) early this week in Maguindanao.

Westmincom spokesperson Capt. Jo-Ann Petinglay said in a statement that there are "persistent" reports that Indian-Singaporean terrorist Mohammad Ali bin Abdulrahman alias Muawiyah were among the 21 terrorists killed in air and ground assaults launched by the military in known lairs of the BIFF in Barangay Tee in Datu Salibo town from March 13 to 16.

Abdulrahman had reportedly acted as a negotiator for the Abu Sayyaf group and known as a "dangerous" operative of the Jemaah Islamiyah.

Petinglay said that also reported killed in the air and ground assaults were Salahuddin Hassan, a local terrorist and bomber trained by Abdulrahman and Esmael Abdulmalik alias Abu Toraype, a brigade commander of the BIFF.

"Validations are being made on the ground on the persistent reports that these terrorists were killed in the well-planned, well-coordinated, and well-executed massive air and ground operations," the military spokesperson said in the statement.

Marwan cohorts

She said that Abdulrahman and the two local terrorists were cohorts of terror suspect Marwan, who had been confirmed killed by Special Action Force elite troopers in Mamasapano town on January 2016.

Petinglay said in the statement, quoting a report from Joint Task Force Central Brig. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, that 26 suspected terrorists were wounded in the four-day military offensive in Barangay Tee.

Recovered during the operations were bomb-making manuals, five improvised explosive devices and several IED components.

"The recovery from the area of manuals of IED-making indicates that the slain terrorists were giving instructions on how to assemble explosive devices and launch bombing attacks," she said.

Petinglay said that Abdulrahman's group had also provided training for new recruits, including members of local terror Maute group based in Lanao.

She also reported that troops also recovered five firearms following an encounter with Abdulrahman's group in Barangay Pidsandawan in Rajah Buayan town at around 2 a.m.

Shabu

Petinglay, meanwhile, said that Joint Task Force Central soldiers seized P1 million worth of shabu during a joint operation with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the North Cotabato police in Barangay Dalingaoen in Pikit town on Friday morning.

Eleven people, including "high-value" target Mangiging Pandian, were arrested during the operation.

Also seized during the operation were one .45 pistol, three stolen vehicles, P28,000 cash and several cellphones.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com>

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