

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



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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

30 March 2017

Thursday

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

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS – FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MARCH 30, 2017 | THURSDAY

LAOAG CITY 24 - 32 °C
TUGUEGARAO CITY 27 - 33 °C
BAGUIO CITY 18 - 26 °C
SBMA/CLARK 24 - 36 °C
METRO MANILA 24 - 34 °C
TAGAYTAY CITY 31 °C
LEGAZPI CITY 26 - 31 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD CI 26 - 31 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 26 - 32 °C
TACLOBAN CITY 24 - 30 °C
METRO CEBU 26 - 34 °C
CAGAYAN DE ORO 24 - 31 °C
ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 35 °C
METRO DAVAO 26 - 32 °C

TAIL-END OF A COLD FRONT AFFECTING EASTERN VISAYAS MOSTLY IN AMBOSON AFFECTING EXTREME NORTHERN LUZON (As of 3:00 PM - Mar. 29, 2017)

SUNRISE 5:53 AM
SUNSET 6:08 PM
MOONRISE 7:33 AM
MOONSET 9:24 PM
NEW MOON MAR 28 4:38 PM
FIRST QUARTER MAR 31 2:39 PM

LOW TIDE 5:06 PM
HIGH TIDE 11:35 AM
MANILA SOUTH HARBOUR
-0.02 Meter / 0.71 Meter

Partly cloudy to all times cloudy with rain showers
Partly cloudy to all times cloudy with rain showers and/or thunderstorms
Cloudy skies with rain showers and/or thunderstorms

	MAR 31	APR 1	MAR 31	APR 1	MAR 31	APR 1		
METRO MANILA	24 - 35 °C	29 - 30 °C	TAGAYTAY	22 - 31 °C	22 - 30 °C	TACLOBAN	24 - 30 °C	26 - 28 °C
TUGUEGARAO	27 - 33 °C	27 - 29 °C	LEGAZPI	26 - 31 °C	26 - 29 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	23 - 31 °C	24 - 29 °C
LAOAG	24 - 32 °C	25 - 30 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	26 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C	METRO DAVAO	26 - 33 °C	27 - 30 °C
BAGUIO	18 - 25 °C	18 - 21 °C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	26 - 31 °C	27 - 30 °C	ZAMBOANGA	24 - 32 °C	24 - 32 °C
SBMA/CLARK	26 - 36 °C	23 - 30 °C	METRO CEBU	26 - 31 °C	25 - 30 °C			

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Page: 1

Phil, China to hold direct talks on SCS

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines and China will hold direct talks on their maritime dispute in May, Filipino officials said yesterday, as President Duterte seeks stronger economic ties with Beijing.

China has invited officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) for a visit to start discussions on a bilateral consultation mechanism on the South China Sea, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The DFA yesterday confirmed China is proposing to hold and host the bilateral consultation meeting with the Philippines in May.

"This is a new proposal, a bilateral consultation mechanism specifically on the South China Sea," foreign affairs spokesman Charles Jose said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said the Philippines and China agreed during the 20th round of Sino-Philippine diplomatic consultation last January to establish a bilateral mechanism on the South China Sea issue.

Phi, China From Page 1

The two foreign ministries will act as coordinators to discuss issues of mutual concern and promote maritime cooperation and security.

"The Chinese side has invited competent officials of the Philippine foreign ministry to visit China in May for the first meeting of this mechanism," Hua said in a press conference in Beijing.

"The two sides are having friendly consultations on the specifics of relevant matters," he said.

Hua said Beijing is willing to further strengthen communication and dialogue with Manila to properly manage differences, enhance maritime cooperation and create a favorable atmosphere for practical cooperation between the two sides and the healthy and steady growth of Sino-Philippine relations.

Last year, a United Nations-backed international tribunal rejected Beijing's claims to most of the South China Sea, including disputed areas close to the coasts of its neighbors.

But Duterte, elected last

year, has played down that ruling and pushed for rapprochement with China as he seeks billions of dollars in trade and investment from it.

DFA's Jose said both sides are looking at May for the first meeting.

"There was the agreement of bilateral consultation mechanism on the South China Sea and China offered to host the initial meeting This May, both sides will discuss the specific dates and the agenda," Jose said.

He noted the purpose of the bilateral consultation mechanism is to provide a platform to discuss South China Sea issues.

"We have no agreement yet on the substantive agenda as well as the level of the meeting. All of these are yet to be discussed," he said.

The Philippines sent last week a note verbale to China to seek clarification on its plans to build the first permanent structure on Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

The top official in Sansha City that administers China's island claims since 2012 was

quoted by the official *Hainan Daily* as saying that preparations were underway to build an environmental monitoring station at Panatag Shoal.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II said the Philippines was preparing to formally protest China's plan to install a radar station at Panatag in violation of the UN tribunal ruling declaring the shoal a common fishing ground outside any country's jurisdiction.

He said the course of action was in accordance with Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio's suggestion that a strong formal protest against Beijing be filed with the Permanent Court of Arbitration based in The Hague.

In September, China insisted the situation in Panatag Shoal had not changed and maintained the presence of a number of coast guard vessels for law enforcement patrols.

Beijing denied there was dredging or building activities conducted in the atoll.

The Philippine government released surveillance pictures of Chinese coast guard ships and barges at a disputed shoal in the South China Sea.

Under threat

Security officials also pointed out two of the nine islands occupied by the Philippines in the Spratlys archipelago are now under direct threat from China's ongoing militarization of their occupied areas in the region.

These two military outposts are in Pag-Asa Island and the Ayungin Shoal outpost, where Filipino soldiers are currently stationed aboard a grounded ship *BRP Sierra Madre*.

"These two areas are very close to the now Chinese highly militarized artificial islands out of Zamora (Subi) Reef and Panganiban (Mischief) Reef," a senior security official said.

The official said the highly militarized Zamora and Panganiban Reefs could choke Pag-Asa and Ayungin Shoal.

Zamora Reef is located 14 nautical miles from Pag-Asa Island, Palawan's fifth class municipality, which is also home to a contingent of Filipino soldiers.

Ayungin Shoal, on the other hand, is located 22 nautical miles from the Chinese-built artificial island in Panganiban Reef.

The Washington-based

think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said.

China has already put up three radar/sensor arrays, two hangars, a mobile missile shelter and four point defenses in their occupied areas.

The CSIS's Asian Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) reported China has completed early this month the construction of hangars that can accommodate 24 combat aircraft. The artificial island has a 3,000-meter runway and safe harbor.

"Construction teams were putting the finishing touches on five larger hangars. A finished radar tower stands in the middle of the reef and a trio of large towers have been constructed on the southwestern corner," the AMTI said.

AMTI also reported recent monitoring on the placement of a radar dome on the ground next to one of the towers, indicating this construction is similar to what China has built at Kagitingan (Johnson South) Reef.

Retractable roofs are also being installed on the recently built missile shelters at Panganiban Reef, AMTI reported.

Meanwhile, the Department of National Defense (DND) is working out a deal with Japan for the transfer of spare parts needed by the Philippine Air Force to keep its fleet of UH-1H combat and utility helicopters up in the air.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said talks are now underway with Japan's Minister of Defense Acquisitions, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA) regarding the Huey spare parts transfer to PAF.

Japan used to be a big user of UH-1H helicopters and has huge spare parts inventory for the Vietnam-vintage rotary aircraft.

Lorenzana made this disclosure following last Monday's transfer of two of the five TC-90 surveillance aircraft that the Japanese government has leased to the Philippine government to bolster the Navy's air maritime and sovereignty monitoring capabilities.

The Navy will be using the two aircraft provided by Japan to patrol the country's maritime domain in the South China Sea and Benham Rise in the eastern seaboard facing the Pacific Ocean.

- With AFP, Jaime Laude

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ESPERON: PH CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT CHINA

STORY BY CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon says the government is aware that Beijing is nearly done with its construction on three PH reefs, but he stresses Manila can't stop the buildup **A2**

FROM A1

By Christine O. Avendaño
@10avendanoINQ

The government is fully aware that China has nearly completed construction work on three Philippine-claimed reefs in the South China Sea but cannot do anything about it, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon said on Wednesday.

Esperon, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said the government had its own pictures of the Chinese construction work on Kagitingan, Zamora and Panganiban reefs.

He said the pictures were taken by the AFP Western Command, whose jurisdiction includes the Kalayaan Group of islands in the Spratly archipelago.

Military deployment ability

Esperon spoke to reporters two days after the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI), part of the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies, released a report saying runways, aircraft hangars, radar sites and hardened surface-to-air missile shelters had either been finished or nearing completion on the three reefs.

The development has given China the ability to deploy combat aircraft and other military assets to the disputed region whenever it wishes, the report said.

"Indeed the airstrips of 3 to 3.5 kilometers are in place. There are radars, but will these be for military use? It could be," Esperon told reporters after attending a Senate hearing on the proposed establishment of a Benham Rise Development Authority.

Asked whether China's construction work on the three reefs claimed by the Philippines in the Spratlys was a cause for concern for the government, Esperon, talking like President Duterte, replied:

OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PU.



Hermogenes Esperon

"Oh yes. So what do you want us to do, attack the facility?"

Speaking to reporters on March 19, before leaving for official visits to Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand, Mr. Duterte said he could not stop China from building on Panatag Shoal, as the Philippines was no match for China's military might.

The official Hainan Daily reported the plan to build environmental monitoring stations on six islands in the South China Sea, including Panatag Shoal, on March 13, quoting Xiao Jie, the top Communist Party official in Sansha City, from where China's claims in the sea are administered.

Strong protest

On March 20, Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio said Mr. Duterte had other options to deal with China besides military action.

He said the government should file a strong protest against China's plan to build on Panatag Shoal.

But instead of a diplomatic protest, the Department of Foreign Affairs sent a note verbale—an unsigned diplomatic communication written in the third person—seeking confirmation of Xiao's statements in the Hainan Daily report.

China's foreign ministry said the report was "not true."

Esperon mentioned no plan to protest the Chinese construction work on the three Philippine reefs and when told about apprehension that weapons could be deployed on

the reefs, replied that there were no missiles there yet.

Asked about the likelihood that the facilities on the reefs are for military use, Esperon said, "I don't know, but it's possible it may not be."

He added, "It can be used for many other purposes. If these will not be for military use, this can be for civilian use."

'Freedom of navigation'

China has denied the accusation of the United States and others that it is militarizing the South China Sea, although last week Premier Li Keqiang said defense equipment had been placed on islands in the disputed waterway to maintain "freedom of navigation."

But the Amri report said China was using its island-building project to give teeth to its claim over almost the entire South China Sea and its islands and reefs.

Kagitingan, Zamora and Panganiban—internationally known as Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief reefs, respectively—are part of the Spratly chain, which is claimed in whole or in part by China, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan.

China already uses an existing airfield on Woody Island in the similarly disputed Paracel chain, located to the north, where it has maintained mobile HQ-9 surface-to-air missiles for more than a year and deployed antiship cruise missiles on at least one occasion, the US think tank said.

The airfields and advanced surveillance and early warning radars will allow China's military to operate over virtually the entire South China Sea, it said in its report.

"Beijing can now deploy military assets, including combat aircraft and mobile missile launchers, to the Spratly Islands at any time," the report said.

Esperon said it was better to "wait [for] what happens next" after the construction was finished. —WITH REPORTS FROM AP AND REUTERS INQ

555 Local: 5285, 5295

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cal: 5285, 5295

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More troops sent to Surigao del Sur

TANDAG CITY – More troops have been deployed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Surigao del Sur.

The 16th Special Forces Company of the Special Forces Regiment Airborne, Special Operations Command, arrived here on Saturday via C-130 Air force

cargo plane

The arrival of new troops was welcomed by top area commanders and provincial and city officials here

Col. Franco Nemesio Gacal, commanding officer of the Army's 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade based here, said he was confident that the

troops can easily adjust in their new assignment

He also asked the troops to assist the local government unit and 402nd Brigade to achieve their mission, which is to create an environment conducive to development and lasting peace

This troops were formerly assigned in Jolo, Salu under Capt. Michael Jameson Constantino (Mike U. Crismundo)

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NPA rebs detonate IED in Ilocos Sur

Communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) in Ilocos Sur province on Tuesday, targeting but missed on a military truck while traumatizing civilians in the area.

Lt. Col. Eugenio Julio Osias IV, commanding officer of the Army's 81st Infantry Battalion (IB), said that the bomb attack could be part of the NPA's 48th founding anniversary.

Osias said that elements of the 81st IB, aboard a military truck, were traversing Barangay Calaoan in Sta. Cruz town at around 12.15 p.m. when the IED exploded some 20 meters from the vehicle.

Fortunately, Osias said that there was no casualty on the government side and the truck did not sustain any damage.

However, civilians in the area were traumatized by the incident, particularly a teenager who was trailing the military vehicle aboard a motorcycle when the explosion occurred.

The teenager, Osias said, was still in a state of shock when rescued by the troops.

"The incident that happened is

always expected every time the NPAs celebrate their founding anniversary," said Osias.

"The NPA terrorists are fond of marking their activity with harassments, murders, rapes, arsons and extortions. This time they include civilians as their targets," he added.

Osias said the elements of the Sta. Cruz police Scene of the Crime Operatives immediately processed the explosion site while troops were dispatched to track down the perpetrators.

Col. Milfredo Melegrito, commander of the Army's 702nd Brigade, lauded the 81st IB troops for their alertness and rescuing the civilian.

"I commend the alertness and presence of mind of the troops onboard the targeted military vehicle as they did not lose their focus when the IED exploded, which is expected among soldiers," said Melegrito.

For his part, Maj. Gen. Angelo de Leon, commander of the 7th Infantry Division, urged peace-loving civilians to continue working with the government and condemn the NPA's terror acts. **Mario J. Mallari**

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NPA detonates IED in Ilocos

New People's Army rebels operating in Santa Cruz, Ilocos Sur detonated an Improvised Explosive Device on the day they were celebrating their 48th founding anniversary.

Army 2nd Lt. Rey Gaezzel M. Anfone, Civil Military Operations Officer of the 81st Infantry Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, Philippine

Army, said the incident took place on a road in Barangay Calaoan where a military vehicle was traversing at noon Tuesday.

While no one was killed or seriously injured, a teenager onboard his motorcycle trailing the military vehicle was nearly hit by the blast. **(Francis T. Wakefield)**

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Rebels torch road construction equipment

From Tempo (Mar 29)

The construction of roads that would connect the municipalities of Alcala and Baggao in Cagayan may be facing some delays after suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels destroyed heavy equipment being used for the said construction.

Ltc Rembert R Baylosis, Commanding Officer of 17th Infantry Battalion in Masin, Alcala, Cagayan said at least six alleged NPA rebels set on fire three road construction equipments of the Pulsar Construction Corp. in Baybayog, Alcala.

The rebels then stole the construction company's Isuzu Elf truck which they used as their getaway vehicle. Baylosis said owners of the firm reveal that damage to their equipment was estimated to be around P10 million.

There were about 50 workers tapped to be part of the road construction project and Baylosis as well as the owners fear they would end up being jobless because of the senseless attack.

Baylosis also said most of the workers and their families were most likely traumatized by the incident.

The Army Officer confirmed that there was a letter handed to the worker containing an extortion demand.

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AFP REJECTS NPA REQUEST TO STOP OPERATIONS IN BUKIDNON

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY— The military rejected the request of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) for a 10-day suspension of military operations in Bukidnon province to allow the safe release of a policeman who communist rebels have been holding captive for more than a month.

Capt. Joe Patrick Martinez, spokesperson of the 4th Infantry Division (ID) based here, said the military was happy over efforts to free Police Officer 2 Anthony Natividad of the Kahlangan town police, but Army officials could

not suspend their ongoing operations against the New People's Army (NPA).

"How can the government suspend its operations when NPA [rebels] continue their atrocities in the area?" Maj. Gen Benjamin Madrigal, 4th ID commander, asked.

NDFP earlier relayed its request for the military to suspend operations in at least 74 villages in Bukidnon for the release of Natividad, who was taken in Talakag town on Feb. 9 while he was on his way to this city.

Cesar Renerio, spokesperson

of the NDFP North-Central Mindanao Region, said the rebel group would release Natividad if the Army and the police ordered a stand down of forces in some villages in the Bukidnon towns of Talakag, Lantapan, Baungon, Paungantucan and Kahlangan; and in the cities of Malaybalay and Valencia.

Bishop Felixberto Calang of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and Catholic Archbishop Antonio Ledesma relayed the NDFP's request to the military during a meeting with Col. Jesse Alvarez, 4th ID assistant division

commander, on Monday.

Renerio said the NPA would declare a temporary ceasefire once its request for suspension of military operations would be granted.

But Madrigal rejected the request. He said government forces needed to keep their presence in local communities to prevent the NPA from entering these areas.

He said if the rebels were sincere in releasing Natividad, they could simply let him go and release him anywhere.

"They (NPA) don't need to ask for any suspension [of mili-

tary operations] when they can just leave their captive (Natividad) anywhere, anytime," Madrigal said. "They just have to notify everyone, especially the media, where they will leave him so that authorities and his family can pick him up."

Despite the military's decision, Calang believed the NDFP would still make true its promise to free Natividad before or during the start of the fourth round of the formal talks between the government and the NDFP panels in The Netherlands next week. —JIGGER J. JERUSALEM INQ

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 1

AFP urges NPA to reflect on its relevance

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD
and YAS D. OCAMPO

The chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Public Affairs Office (AFP-PAO) said that the New People's Army (NPA) should reflect on its relevance and the imperatives of its existence as the revolutionary group marked its 48th foundation anniversary yesterday.

"It is time for it to seriously introspect on its relevance in light of growing disdain of the people over the NPA's forced monetary exactions, destructive arson of farm implements and public conveyances, its various atrocities and abuses, and duplicity to the peace talks," Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo said.

NPA supporters and members,

wearing red and images of slain rebel leader Lencio Pitao (Ka Parago) staged several lightning rallies around Davao City on Wednesday. They earlier staged a rally in Cubao, Quezon City on Monday. They were allowed to protest without interference from the police. In a statement, the revolutionary movement asked for the masses to take part in its rebellion days. ▶ 6

before the scheduled peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Peace or force

Arevalo said the military will apply both peace and force in its mission to end the communist rebellion.

"Our hitherto intent is to defeat the NPA, by force and by peace negotiations - but not necessarily in that order," he stressed.

"We will decimate their ranks by neutralizing their armed component, help integrate surrenderers to mainstream society, and relegate the recalcitrants as police matters to deal with," he added.

Arevalo said although the NPA can still commit atrocities especially in the countryside, it can no longer be considered as a potent force.

"Given the serious degradation of the strength and followings of the NPA, we deem it no longer a force to reckon with as compared to the '70s and the '80s," Arevalo said.

"Today, they have been relegated to pure banditry and terrorism as they continue to extort money from people or corporations that provide employment to our people."

"As such, they cannot stay in a community long enough without confronting military units responding to the people's call reporting the former's criminal activities in their community," he added.

"Our reports provide that those who pulled the lightning rally (in Cubao) are paid NPA sympathizers, supporters, and front organizations posing as NPAs," Arevalo said.

"We nonetheless urge them not to abuse the magnanimity of the present administration as regards freedoms of assembly and of expression," he said.

Arevalo said while they may want

to exercise both, they should do so with due regard to the people who stand to suffer from the disruptions.

IED detonated

NPA rebels operating in Santa Cruz, Ilocos Sur detonated an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) as rebel group marked its 48th founding anniversary.

Army 2nd Lt. Rey Gaezzel M. Alfonso, Civil Military Operations Officer of the 81st Infantry Battalion, 7th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, said the incident took place on a road in Barangay Calaoan, Sta Cruz, Ilocos Sur, at about 12:15 p.m. Tuesday.

Fortunately the IED blast did not cause any injury or damage. A civilian onboard a motorcycle who was trading the military vehicle was almost hit by the IED blast but escaped unhurt.

He said the military vehicle with troops onboard was traversing Barangay Calaoan on their way to the 81st Infantry Battalion headquarters located just two kilometers away when the IED exploded. Fortunately, the military vehicle was already past 20 meters from the blast site upon detonation.

After the blast, Lt. Col. Eugenio Julio C. Osias IV, Battalion Commander of 81st Infantry Battalion, immediately led the reinforcement and cleared the area. The Philippine National Police (PNP) in Sta. Cruz, SOCO and PNP K-9 unit also arrived at the blast site.

Major General Angelo M. De Leon, the commander of 7th Infantry Division said, it was unfortunate that the NPA detonated an IED in a place that civilians frequent.

"In line with this, I call on peace-loving people to condemn this criminal act of NPAs which disregarded the safety and well-being of civilians for their sinister purpose," he said.

For his part, Colonel Mifredo M. Melegrito, the commander of the 702nd Infantry Brigade, commended the alert-

ness and presence of mind of the troops onboard the targeted military vehicles as they did not lose their focus when the IED exploded, which is expected among soldiers.

"The incident that happened is always expected every time the NPA celebrates its founding anniversary. The NPA terrorists are fond of marking their activity with harassments, murders, rapes, arsons and extortions. This time they (NPAs) include civilians as their targets," Osias said.

No change

The NPA said it was dismayed at the lack of change promised by the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte.

"Hapit usa ka tung sukad sa iyang pagkadaug, wala pay nahatag nga mahunungdanong kabag-ohan si Duterte sa kinabuhi sa katawhang Pilipino (there has been no change in the Duterte administration)."

"Sukwahi sa iyang saad, miyukbo si Duterte ngadto sa mga maki-Tuo ug militarista sa iyang gobyerno sa dili niya pagwagtang sa Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement ug uban pang pangmilitar nga kasabutan tali sa imperyalistang US (despite his stance, the Duterte administration remains beholden to the United States with its agreements such as EDCA)."

The rebel organization lamented the continued abuses in the countryside, as well as in sectors such as labor.

The NPA also denounced a statement of President Duterte to "flatten the hills" in bombing runs in pursuit of the NPA.

The rebels said they were conducting their own punitive measures against drug syndicates in the countryside, as well as its protectors.

The NPA cited its attacks in Governor Generoso in Davao Oriental and in Barangay Malabog in Paquibato, Davao City, as part of its anti-illegal drugs campaign.

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AFP laments CPP's recruitment order

FRANCIS T. WAKIPUN

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman Brig Gen. Restituto Padilla yesterday expressed sadness over the latest Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) directive ordering its members to step up its recruitment.

In a statement sent to Defense reporters, Padilla said the directive runs counter to the National Democratic Front (NDF) peace panel's earlier pronouncement of wanting peace to

succeed through negotiations with the government.

The Government of the Philippines (GPH) and Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF) peace panels are set to open the fourth round of formal peace negotiations in the first week of April.

It was recalled that talks were temporarily suspended by President Duterte last February after NPA rebels launched a series of atrocities against government troops and private companies in various parts of the country.

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Salceda elected as DND advisory council's chairman

Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda was recently elected chairman of the Department of National Defense (DND) Multi-Sector Advisory Council (MSAC), tasked to provide direction towards the desired goals of the Philippine Defense Transformation Roadmap (PDTR) 2028.

MSAC was established along the principles of the Performance Government System or PGS which promotes "good governance, transparency and accountability within the framework of stakeholders' engagement and consultations, in accordance with the council protocols."

It aims to ensure that DND is able to perform its defense mandate and guide and help assess the implementation of its various policies and programs for the protection of the people and the state under PDTR 2028.

Salceda, who was first appointed as MSAC adviser prior to his election as its chairman also sits as chairman of the Regional Advisory Committee for Philippine National Police Transformation and Development in the Bicol Region. He presently holds the rank of lieutenant colonel in the AFP reserve force and is the regional commander of the 33rd Air Force Group Reserve in Bicol.

Salceda and other MSAC members took their oath of office last March 9 at Camp Gen. E.

Aguinaldo in Quezon City in front of senior defense officials. Present during the rites were Gen. Alexander Yano, former AFP chief of staff; Bai Rohaniza Sumudad-Usman, founder of Teach Peace, Build Peace; Marife Zamora of the Management Association of the Philippines; Alexander Lacson of the Institute for Solidarity in Asia; Antonio La Vina of Manila Observatory; Daniio Concepcion, UP president; Donald Dee of the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines; Antonio Aquino of Makati Property Ventures, and Maria Ressa, CEO of Rappler Inc.

Aside from policy recommendations to the DND, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said MSAC encourages participation from various sectors of society to ensure that defense strategies are responsive to the needs of Filipino people. MSAC has four committees – Policy and Governance, Assessment and Review, Strategic Communications and Resources Generation.

A PDTR social media post said "...Salceda's participation will help boost Philippine Defense Transformation." PDTR 2028 is the DND's strategic and long-term organizational and development plan, with clearly defined direction and set of priorities.

Salceda earlier had pledged to assist in the financial programs of the AFP. A respected economist, he is senior vice chairman of the House committee on ways and means and vice chairman of the House committees on appropriations, economic affairs, local government and climate change. He expressed optimism DND's "initiatives and visions of a globally standard defense capability would be fully realized within the next 10 years."



SALCEDA

30 March 2017



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CPP consolidates forces during truce



By Ted Tuvera

Communist rebels proved to have merely capitalized on the government's unilateral ceasefire President declared last July to consolidate forces after the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) revealed yesterday it hosted a first ever general assembly congress that it has not done in nearly 50 years in an

undisclosed guerrilla camp.

According to the CPP, their second congress is the largest gathering ever of communist leaders from different regions and provinces.

"For the first time in nearly five decades, key leaders and cadres representing the Party's close to 70 thousand members, were assembled to strengthen the Party's unity, amend its

program and constitution based on accumulated victories and lessons and elect a new set of leaders," the CPP said in a communique.

While the government claims that the CPP-New People's Army (NPA) forces heavily declined from 25,000 members in 1987 to 4,000 in recent years, the rebels claim that they now

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have 70,000 card-carrying members nationwide.

The CPP's assembly happened when the government's ceasefire was still in force and also at a period when prominent rebel leaders were recently allowed to walk free from jail despite multiple murder charges.

Among the ranking CPP leaders, who were released from detention were CPP Central Committee chairman Benito Tiamzon, secretary general Wilma Austria-Tiamzon and other ranking NPA regional leaders.

The released rebels were supposed National Democratic Front (NDF) "peace consultants" and were expected to be in the negotiating table with the government and not regrouping communist forces.

Moreover, the CPP said that it has elected nameless, younger leaders to lead the rebel movement to counter the notion that most of its leaders are mostly aging veterans.

"The Second Congress elected the new Central Committee (CC) and Political Bureau for a five-year term. More than half of the newly-elected CC members are from the young and middle-aged cadres of the Party, ensuring that the Party leadership will remain vibrant, tightly linked with the lower levels of leadership and capable of leading the practical work and day-to-day tasks of the Party, especially in waging revolutionary armed struggle," the CPP said.

"The combination of senior Party members with the young and junior Party cadres will ensure the ideological, political and organizational training of a new generation of Party leaders who will be at the helm of the Party in the coming year," it added.

Joma hailed

The CPP also paid tribute to its founder Jose Maria 'Joma' Sison who is reported to be sickly and hospitalized for a couple of times in the past few weeks.

"The Second Congress resolved to give the highest honors to Comrade Jose Maria Sison as founding chair of the CPP. It extolled Ka Joma as a great communist thinker, leader, teacher and guide of the Filipino proletariat and torch bearer of the international communist movement," the CPP statement said.

Sison, 78, an exile for more than 30 years in the Netherlands used to be President Rodrigo Duterte's college mentor at the Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU).

The CPP recently said it plans to reactivate the unilateral ceasefire it withdrew last February claiming that the government did not live up to its truce commitments.

Despite the CPP pronouncement, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said it will first await orders from President Duterte before stopping operations against the insurgents.

"It depends on the President. We shall await his decision. The CPP (New People's Army) declaration for unilateral ceasefire is useless if they continue to extort money and burn equipment and properties," AFP chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año said.

Duterte earlier ordered the lifting of the government ceasefire last February following the series of unprovoked NPA attacks that resulted in the death of six soldiers and abduction of three others.

The CPP added it will support the forging of a bilateral ceasefire between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The fourth round of the peace negotiations will resume on April 2 to 6 in The Netherlands.

30 March 2017

The Manila Times

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Reds 'silent' as they mark anniversary

TARLAC: Members of the New Peoples' Army (NPA) – the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines – in this province were apparently silent as they marked their 48th founding anniversary on Wednesday.

The military said there were no monitored activities in the area related to the commemoration, at least in its birthplace here.

The NPA was founded by Bernabe "Ka Danic" Buscayno in Capas town on March 29, 1969.

"We have not monitored any significant activity relative to the commemoration of the insurgency's [founding]," Maj. Gerardo Somera of the Army's 3rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion said.

Somera, however, expressed concern over a protest rally staged by at least 30 students of Tarlac National High School on Monday, reportedly backed up by militant organizations.

"We are a little wary about the activity [demonstration] and we want to know the real purpose why they did it," he told *The Manila Times*.

Somera called for a critical inter-agency convergence to maximize efforts against CPP-NPA activities and its members in the underground.

"We call for concerted efforts among concerned organizations, especially school officials, to help us maintain peace for our community," he said, noting the importance of working hand-in-hand in keeping spoilers of peace at bay.

The demonstration, however, turned out to be a move against a domestic issue in the school, according to a reliable source.

Presence of militant groups in the area was observed, though.

"Yes, we know about that activity," a member of the communist underground, who requested not to be named for lack of authority to speak, said, without elaborating.

JERRY M. HERNANDEZ

30 March 2017

Malaya
The National Newspaper

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As peace talks near, CPP tells NPA to recruit fighters

BY VICTOR REYES
AND JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

THE Communist Party of the Philippines yesterday directed its armed wing, the New People's Army, to step up recruitment of fighters as it said NPA has expanded in terms of personnel and structure.

The order, given on the NPA's 48th founding anniversary, raised questions about the communist group's sincerity in negotiating peace with government, as it was issued also just days before the resumption of formal peace talks.

"This (directive) is a sad development, granting this is truly their real intent," said Brig. Gen. Resituto Padilla, Armed Forces spokesman. "Why? Because it is

an indication of an expansion program that ironically runs counter to the essence of the ongoing peace talks. It also belies the real intent of the group... that they really do not desire a long, just and lasting peace for the country."

Peace adviser Jesus Dureza shrugged off the CPP's claim about the increased NPA strength but did not comment on the recruitment directive.

"Peace negotiations are not about strength of forces. It's all about bringing sustainable peace," he said.

Asked if the latest CPP pronouncements would affect the peace talks set for April 2 to 6 in the Netherlands, Dureza said he would not speculate. He, however, said that as a negotiator, he has to remain optimistic about the peace negotiations.

Dureza said he is in London attending a forum about the Colombia peace process, and will proceed to Noordwijk for the talks.

President Duterte scrapped the peace negotiations in February following ambushes by the NPA, its lifting of its unilateral ceasefire, and the National Democratic Front's insistence that Duterte release hundreds of alleged political prisoners before a final peace agreement is signed.

Successful back-channel talks early this month led to the agreement to resume the talks.

The communist group has said it will reinstate its ceasefire "before March 31."

The President, during the People's Day in Socorro town in Oriental Mind-

oro yesterday, reiterated he would grant amnesty to communist rebels which will cover the release of political prisoner recommended by the CPP-NPA-NDF, if he has concurrence from Congress and after a final peace agreement is signed.

Duterte remains hopeful a peace agreement will be signed within his term as president. He said as president, it is his duty to pursue peace and not to wage war with Filipinos but his government is prepared to fight it out.

The CPP, in its anniversary message said its Central Committee has issued several "tasks" or directives to the NPA including the acceleration of the recruitment and launching of "extensive and

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AS PEACE

intensive guerrilla warfare.”

“Accelerate the recruitment of armed personnel in all regions across the entire archipelago. Recruit large numbers from the educated youth and working class to become cadres and political officers in the New People’s Army,” it said.

“Increase several times over the number of people’s militia units in all barrios where there are party branches, and build local guerilla units at the municipal or section levels where there are Party section committees,” it also said.

Citing assessments during the CPP’s second congress held from October 24 to November 7 last year, the CPP boasted it has noted a “substantial uptick in the number

of Red fighters since mid-2016.”

Military estimates placed the NPA strength at about 4,000 men, mostly in Northern Mindanao and Davao region, though officials recently admitted that the number may have increased due to rebel recruitment, taking advantage of the government’s unilateral truce declared in August last year.

The CPP also said the NPA should frustrate Oplan Kapayapaan – the military’s new blueprint in winning the peace. The campaign plan was launched last January, replacing “Oplan Bayanihan” of the previous administration.

“Punish the fascist and criminal perpetrators of extrajudicial killings, illegal arrests and detentions, aerial bombardments, shelling, forcible evacuations and hamletting, occupation of schools, ba-

rangay halls, day care centers and other civilian structures,” it said.

The CPP also said President Duterte’s promises “have yet to be translated into firm policy, much less actual change and momentum” after eight months in power.

“The Filipino people are becoming increasingly restive over the unfulfilled promises of Duterte. They demand national sovereignty, national industrialization, genuine land reform, an end to bureaucratic corruption and widespread poverty and oppression,” it said.

CLASSROOM BURNED

NPA rebels burned a classroom, a faculty room and a library in Valencia City in Bukidnon after teachers refused to give in to its extortion demand.

1Lt. Erwin Bugarin, civil military operations officer of the Army’s 8th Infantry Battalion, said a group of rebels arrived at the school in Barangay Concepcion last Sunday and demanded a share of funds for the feeding program for pupils.

“The teachers refused to give in to their demands so the NPA resorted to such terroristic acts. Without considering the effects of their actions to the civilian populace especially the students of the said school, the armed group burned a faculty room, one classroom and one library in the process,” said Bugarin.

“It is very evident that the NPA exempts no one in their extortion activities not even the schools which are essential in providing education for our country’s future,” the official also said.

30 March 2017

The
Standard
DEFINING THE NEWS

Page: A1

Reds go for young blood; younger cadres take over

By John Paolo Bencito

YOUNGER cadres took over the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines' central committee as the rebel's armed wing, the New People's Army,

celebrated its 48th anniversary on Wednesday.

The CPP in a communique said that, after more than 50 years, it held its Second Party Congress on Oct. 24 to Nov. 7 last year with more than 120 attending and non-

attending delegates—the first since the revolutionary organization was founded by reaffirmists led by its founder Jose Maria Sison.

With 60 percent of the delegates at 45 to 59 years old, more than half of the newly elected cenual

committee members are from the young and middle-aged cadres of the party, the communique said.

"[This is] ensuring that the Party leadership will remain vibrant, tightly linked with the lower levels

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Reds...

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of leadership and capable of leading the practical work and day-to-day tasks of the Party, especially in waging revolutionary armed struggle against the reactionary state," the CPP said.

"The combination of senior Party members with the young

and junior Party cadres will ensure the ideological, political and organizational training of a new generation of Party leaders who will be at the helm of the Party in the coming years."

In Davao City, an official said the city government will establish a Specialized Caggu Active Auxiliary or SCAA that will secure the outskirts of the city to answer the call of President Rodrigo Duterte to stop

the insurgency in Davao.

Public Safety and Security Command Center chief Benito de Leon said three companies or 360 SCAA will be deployed for additional security in the entire Davao City.

"This is to answer the call of President Duterte to give priority to the insurgency here in the region. He required us to put a stop to it," De Leon said.

Duterte on Wednesday said

the unilateral ceasefire between the communists and the government broke down due to a "misunderstanding" between government negotiators and the top guns of the CPP.

"You see, we are talking with the NPA's, there's no more killings, but they had a misunderstanding with [Jesus] Dureza, Bebot [Bello] and the others" Duterte said. With F. Pearl A. Gajunera

30 March 2017

BusinessMirror

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CPP to NPA: Intensify war vs military

By RENE ACOSTA

@reneacostaBM

THE New People's Army (NPA) has been ordered by its political wing to intensify and accelerate its war against the government, noting President Duterte has yet to deliver his promised change after eight months in office.

The order was issued by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to the NPA on the latter's 48th anniversary on Wednesday. It came in the aftermath of a statement by the CPP about its plan to declare a cease-fire at the end of this month.

"Carry out extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare on an ever-widening and deepening mass base and toward developing full-scale guerrilla warfare," the CPP, through its central committee, ordered the rebels.

"Accelerate the recruitment of armed personnel in all regions across the entire archipelago. Recruit large numbers from the educated youth and working class to become cadres and political officers in the New People's Army," it said.

The CPP also ordered the rebels to increase their fighters in villages and build guerrilla units in the municipal level, while expanding, consolidating and building new guerrilla fronts around the country.

The government and the rebels, through the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), are set to resume peace talks in the Netherlands next week. Negotiations would focus on socioeconomic reforms and, possibly, even a bilateral cease-fire.

The CPP said it will declare a cease-fire for its fighters in preparation for the talks, but Duterte said it may not be reciprocated by the government, unless it is put into writing with its parameters.

He said the rebels must stop their attacks and collecting taxes.

The CPP claimed Filipino people are "becoming increasingly restive over the unfulfilled promises of Duterte as they demand national sovereignty, industrialization, genuine land reform, an end to bureaucratic corruption and widespread poverty and oppression."

It said that, while the rebels are willing to engage the Duterte administration in talks and forge a peace agreement, they are also aware of the danger of "pacification, especially as a result of a prolonged cease-fire without substantial gains for the Filipino people."

Meanwhile, the military, through its spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, has warned soldiers to be on alert against any possible attacks by the rebels in marking their anniversary.

30 March 2017



Pahina. 3

Dalaga dinukot ng NPA

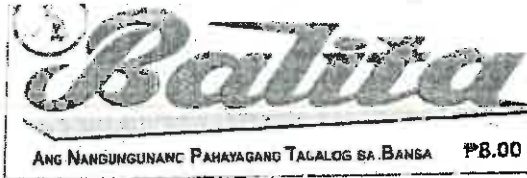
Grabeng trauma at takot ang nataramdaman ngayon ng isang 24-anyos na dalaga matapos itong pakawalan ng mga duraukot na mga miyembro ng rebeldeng grupong New People's Army (NPA) kamakalawa ng hapon sa bayan ng Lagonoy, Camarines Sur.

Dakong alas-singko ng hapon nang pabalikin ng mga rebelde sa kanyang pamilya sa Barangay Bocogan ng nabanggit na bayan ang biktimgang si Gladecel Gardoce, 24, napagalaman na kapatid ng isang sundalo ang dalaga.

Nauna dito, pinasok ng tinatayang 15 rebelde ang bahay ng pamilya Gardoce at hinalughog ito at ng walang makuha ay sapilitang isinama ang dalagang biktima.

Ayon naman sa dalaga, wala naman umanong ginawang masama sa kanya. (Edwin Balasa)

30 March 2017



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Walang NPA sa Metro Manila—militar

Nilinaw kahapon ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na walang kasapi ng New People's Army (NPA) ang namonitor ng militar sa Metro Manila.

Sinabi naman ni AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) Chief Col. Edgard Arevalo na batay sa nakuha nilang impormasyon, ang mga nagsagawa ng kilos-protesta sa FDSA nitong Lunes ay nagpanggap na mga rebelde at mga bayarang sympathizer lamang ng kilusan.

Kahapon, nagkasa rin ang mga tagasuporta at kasapi ng NPA ng ilang biglaang lightning rally sa Davao City kaugnay

pa rin ng ika-48 anibersaryo ng kilusan.

Malaya namang nakapagdaos ng protesta ang mga nakasuot ng pula at may takip ng mukha sa Quirino Avenue sa Davao City, bagamat nagdulot ito ng pagsisikip ng trapiko.

Sa isang pahayag, umapela ang NPA sa publiko na lumahok sa kanilang rebelyon ilang araw bago ang pagpapatuloy ng usapang pangkapayapaan ng gobyerno sa Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF) sa Oslo, Norway sa Abril 2.

**Fer Taboy
at Yas Ocampo**

30 March 2017

POLICE FILES

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Balikatan exercises ng sundalong Pinoy at Kano tuloy

TULOY pa rin ang joint balikatan exercises sa pagitan ng tropang Amerikano at mga sundalong Pinoy sa darating na Abril.

Ayon kay AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año,

walang mababago dito dahil bahagi ito ng commitment ng Pilipinas para sa pagpapaunlad ng kapabilidad ng magkabilang panig sa larangan ng pagtugon sa iba't ibang secu-

rity situation at disaster at humanitarian assistance.

Sinabi ni Año na sa May 19 isasagawa ang closing ceremony ng Balikatan exercises kung saan mabibidat naman ang tropa ng Japan bilang mga observer.

Nagdulot ng pagkalitang naunang paliyag noong isang taon ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa pagkontra nito sa US kaya inakalang pata ang joint military exercises sa pagitan ng tropang Kano at Pinoy ay kanselado na rin.

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SEIZED. Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Año (second from right) inspects during his first command visit to the Southern Luzon Command headquarters in Lucena City the hundreds of high-powered firearms, including machine guns, seized by troopers from New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Southern Luzon. Also in photo are (from left) 9th Infantry Division commander Maj. Gen. Manolito Orense, 901st Infantry Brigade commander B/Gen. Claudio Yucoy, 2nd Infantry Division commander Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno and SolCom commander Lt. Gen. Ferdinand Quidilla.

Photo by Gemil Formaran

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

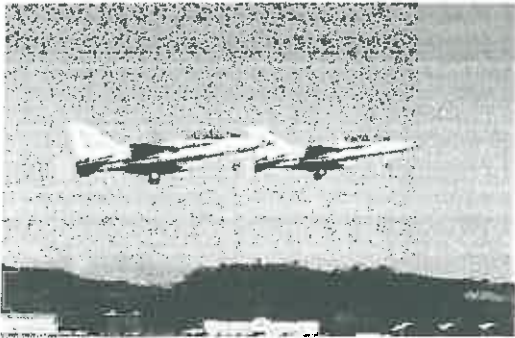
ONLINE NEWS

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<http://www.philstar.com/>

Air Force receives 2 more fighter jets from Korea

(philstar.com) | Updated March 29, 2017 - 2:37pm



The first two FA-50PH jet fighters make their way to the Philippines from South Korea. KAI/Released

MANILA, Philippines — Two more FA-50PH fighter jets from South Korea arrived in the Philippines on Wednesday.

The fourth batch of planes, which arrived on Wednesday, brings its total number of fighter jets to eight. The Philippine Air Force (PAF) received the new air assets, with tail numbers 007 and 008, at the Haribon Hangar, Air Force City at Clark Air Base in Pampanga.

The two jets are part of the 12 supersonic trainers bought for P18.9 billion in 2014 by the Aquino administration from South Korean defense contractor Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI), under the military's modernization program.

The first batch of fighter jets arrived in November 2015, which marked the symbolic return of the PAF to the supersonic age. Supersonic refers to aircraft capability of flying faster than sound or 750 miles per hour. The rest of the jets are scheduled to be delivered in September.

"We expect the delivery of the jets to be completed within the year," said PAF chief Lt. Gen. Edgar Fallorina on Tuesday.

The arrival of the aircraft is expected to further strengthen the fighting and defense capabilities of the PAF. — with report from Michael Punongbayan

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<http://bomboradyo.com/>

NPA, walang dapat ipagmayabang na tagumpay – AFP

Posted By: Bombo Radyo CdeO

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY – Wala umanong dapat na ipagdiriwang na anumang tagumpay ang Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) nitong araw. Ito ay mayroong kaugnayan nang paggunita ng Komunistang grupo ng kanilang ika-48 na anibersaryo. Sa panayam ng Bombo Radyo, inihayag ni AFP spokesperson Brig/Gen Restituto Padilla Jr na simula nang mabuo ang grupo ng mga rebelde ay wala itong naidudulot na kabutihan para sa sambayanan. Sinabi ni Padilla na habang tumagal umano ay lalong lumilinaw para sa publiko kung sino ang tunay na nagbibigay ng matapat na serbisyo at ito ay walang iba ang Hukbong Sandatahang Lakas ng Pilipinas. Tiniyak rin ng opisyal na susupilin ang lahat ng mga gagawing panggugulo ng mga rebelde kahit ang buhay pa nila ang maibubuwis dito.

<http://bomboradyo.com/>

AFP walang namomonitor na NPA members sa Metro Manila

Posted By: Analy Soberano



AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief Marine Col. Edgard Arevalo | Photo © scoopenest.com

Nilinaw ngayon ng pamunuan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na walang miyembro ng New Peoples Army (NPA) ang namomonitor sa kalakhang Maynila.

Ito'y kasunod sa ginawang kilos protesta ng ilang mga miyembro umano ng NPA sa Quezon City kamakailan kung saan bahagi umano ito sa paggunita ng anibersaryo ng komunistang grupo.

Ibinunyag ng isang intelligence official na ang mga nagsagawa ng protesta kamakailan ay mga miyembro umano ng "legal fronts" ng communist party na nagpapanggap na mga miyembro ng NPA.

Siniguro ng militar na walang NPA members ang namonitor sa Metro Manila.

Samantala, ayon naman kay AFP Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief Col. Edgard Arevalo na batay sa kanilang impormasyon na ang mga nagsagawa ng kilos protesta na nagpanggap na mga miyembro ng NPA ay mga bayaran na mga sympathizers at supporters ng rebeldeng grupo.

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CPP announces leadership change as NPA marks 48th anniversary

From Rappler (Mar 29)

The Communist Party of the Philippines says it has elected young leaders to its central committee as it aims to 'complete victory'



GUERRILLAS IN THE METRO. Communist rebels stage a rally on March 27, 2017, in Quezon City, before their March 29 founding anniversary. Photo by Romeo Mariano/Rappler

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) on Wednesday, March 29, marked the 48th anniversary of its armed wing New People's Army (NPA) by announcing the election of a new set of young members to its central committee.

The announcement came as the guerrillas and the Duterte administration revive a stalled peace process that began last year.

In a communique, the CPP disclosed that it held its historic Second Party Congress from October 24 to November 7, 2016, the first national party congress that Asia's longest-running insurgent movement held in 5 decades.

The national congress is the highest policy-making body of the party. In between sessions of the congress, it's the CC that crafts policies and implements party decisions.

In the guerrillas' congress last year, the CPP amended its constitution to guarantee the participation of younger members to the CC.

"More than half of the newly-elected CC members are from the young and middle-aged cadres of the Party, ensuring that the Party leadership will remain vibrant, tightly linked with the lower levels of leadership and capable of leading the practical work and day-to-day tasks of the Party, especially in waging revolutionary armed struggle against the reactionary state," the CPP said.

Up to 120 leaders participated in the historic gathering, the party said. "Of those who attended, around 30% were above 60 years old, while around 60% were in the 45-59 years age bracket, while 15% were 44 years and younger. The oldest delegate was 70 years old. The youngest delegate was 33 years old," the statement added.

The amendments also allowed "members of foreign fraternal parties" and paved the way for the retirement of CC members older than 70 but who will retain party membership and continue to enjoy financial support from the CPP.

"The Party program reaffirms the necessity of waging armed revolution in order to counter the armed violence employed by the US imperialists and the local reactionary ruling classes and end the oppressive and exploitative semicolonial and semifeudal system," the CPP said.

"Drawing lessons from the Party's rich history, the Second Congress presented a clearer picture of the strategy and tactics for taking advantage of the insoluble and worsening crisis of the world capitalist system, the strategic decline of US imperialism and the chronic crisis of the domestic ruling system in order to advance the protracted people's war towards complete victory," the CPP added.

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Peace under Duterte?

The statement made no mention of the ongoing peace talks with the Duterte administration. The gathering last year was held just after the 2nd round of peace negotiations in Norway between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) that represents the rebels in the talks.

Separate unilateral ceasefires were in place at the time, but the CPP claimed the military kept on attacking its guerrillas.

The first firefight to break the ceasefire between the military and the NPA would happen in January 2017 while the peace panels were holding the 3rd round of talks in Rome.

The CPP claims to have close to 70,000 members nationwide, mostly from Mindanao.

The military scoffed at this, saying the guerrillas have been reduced to banditry and extortion. Military estimates show the NPA has 4,000 armed combatants.

"Given the serious degradation of the strength and following of the NPA, we deem it no longer a force to reckon with compared to the 1970s and 1980s," said the military's public affairs chief, Colonel Edgard Arevalo.

The CPP disagrees, saying its second congress "is a testimony both of the accumulated strength and capacity as well as determination to assemble a big number of cadres. It underscores as well the inability of the reactionary state to destroy the armed revolutionary movement."

At its peak in the mid-1980s, the CPP had 25,000 armed regulars, according to the military. The movement suffered a bitter ideological split in the 1990s that caused the formation of breakaway rebel groups and a subsequent decline in rebel influence in major areas.

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Agri chief slams communists' revolutionary tax

From ABS-CBN



Suspected communist rebels torched a mini tanker truck in Misamis Oriental earlier this month. Greanne Mendoza, ABS-CBN News

Revolutionary taxes imposed by communist rebels in rural areas have led to the closure of operations of several agricultural companies in the countryside, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said Wednesday.

"The New People's Army (NPA) are on a rampage extorting money from poor farmers, small businessmen and burning and destroying equipment and properties of big agricultural corporations who refuse to pay the revolutionary tax," Piñol said in a statement.

In a span of a month, banana and pineapple companies operating in Mindanao have reported at least "nine attacks which resulted in the death of seven soldiers and two suspected NPA members and the destruction of hundreds of millions worth of equipment," Piñol said.

"In August last year, Dole Stanfilco was forced to close down its operations in Tagbina, Surigao del Sur which employed about 1,500 poor workers after a series of attacks by the NPAs," he said.

Even poor farmers were not spared from the unlawful taxation as small rubber farmers in North Cotabato were charged by the communists with a monthly payment of P3 for every rubber tree they own.

"That if a farmer has a one-hectare area with 500 trees, he has to pay P1,500 every month," Piñol said.

The agriculture chief said he is scheduled to take up the matter to President Rodrigo Duterte Wednesday.

The halt to the collection of revolutionary taxes was one of the conditions set by Duterte weeks before the government resumes talks with the communist rebels.

The Reds, however, were firm that they would not stop collecting revolutionary taxes despite the president's directive.

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