

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



TEAM ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

09 May 2017

Tuesday

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

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS - FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MAY 9, 2017 | TUESDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

TROUGH OF LOW PRESSURE AREA AFFECTING SOUTHERN MINDANAO, EASTERLIES AFFECTING THE EASTERN SECTION OF THE COUNTRY (As of 3:00 PM - May 8, 2017)

SUNRISE	SUNSET
5:30 AM	6:15 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
5:01 PM	4:23 AM
FIRST QUARTER	FULL MOON
MAY 3 12:47 AM	MAY 11 5:45 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH HARBOR	
4:05 AM 0.16 Meter	6:22 AM 0.81 Meter

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

	MAY 10	MAY 11	MAY 10	MAY 11	MAY 10	MAY 11		
METRO MANILA	25 - 35 °C	26 - 36 °C	TAGAYTAY	23 - 32 °C	22 - 31 °C	TACLOBAN	25 - 34 °C	26 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	24 - 36 °C	25 - 37 °C	LEGAZPI	26 - 32 °C	26 - 33 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	25 - 33 °C	25 - 33 °C
LAOAG	25 - 34 °C	25 - 33 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	27 - 33 °C	27 - 33 °C	METRO DAVAO	25 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C
BAGUID	17 - 26 °C	18 - 24 °C	ILOILO/ BACOLOD	26 - 32 °C	26 - 33 °C	ZAMBOANGA	25 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C
SBMA/ CLARK	26 - 34 °C	26 - 36 °C	METRO CEBU	26 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C			

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CA acquits Napoles of illegal detention

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

The conviction of pork barrel scam mastermind Janet Lim-Napoles for serious illegal detention has been dismissed by the Court of Appeals (CA).

It also ordered her immediately release unless she is being detained for other lawful cause. Napoles is still on trial for plunder, normally a non-bailable offense, in connection with the pork barrel scam.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II said his department, which handled Napoles' prosecution, "would respect" the CA's decision. This triggered speculation that the government will no longer appeal the CA's ruling.

In 2015, Napoles was sentenced to 40 years in prison by Makati City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 150 Judge Elmo Alameda for detaining her cousin and employee Ben-

hur Luy from December 2012 until March 2013. Luy later blew the whistle on the pork barrel scam.

Napoles is serving her sentence at the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) in Mandaluyong.

In a 35-page decision penned by Associate Justice Normandie Pizarro, and concurred with by Associate Justices Samuel Gaerlan and Jhosep Lopez, the CA's 12th Division granted the appeal filed by Napoles.

The CA said the prosecution failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the crime was committed. It said

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here was no indubitable proof that Luy was held against his will at the "Bahay ni San Jose" retreat house when Napoles' brother Reynaldo "Jojo" Lim approached priests and suggested Luy's spiritual renewal.

Bahay ni San Jose is said to be owned by Napoles, but the prosecution also failed to show evidence that she owned the retreat house located in Magalanes Village, Makati City.

"Benhur was neither believer about the idea nor

showed any actions to indicate that he was coerced or forced to undergo the same. Instead, Benhur attended mass every night with the priests residing in Bahay ni San Jose," the CA justices said.

He also reportedly kept a journal that contained biblical verses. He wrote a letter to his family on Feb. 21, 2013 wherein he narrated what he had been doing at the Bahay ni San Jose.

Secondly, the CA also pointed out that during Luy's stay at the retreat house, he never

made an attempt to escape or tell anyone about his situation.

"It is quite baffling how someone who was illegally detained would not mention such fact to several priests he sees on a daily basis," the CA said.

He also updated his family from time to time but never mentioned his forced detention.

There were also several instances when he met with members of his family and never showed any sign that he was being kept in Bahay ni San Jose against his will.

Thirdly, Luy's actions during the rescue operation negates the allegation that he was detained against his will.

During the trial, Luy had said that he thought the rescue operatives were hired by Napoles to kill him, thus he resisted.

But the CA said, "We find this allegation flimsy and too convenient to warrant appreciation" because when the rescue team from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) entered the condominium units in South Gardens, they were accompanied by Luy's brother Arthur. The operatives also introduced themselves to be from the NBI.

The CA also said that unlike the Makati court, it did not find the phrases made by Napoles to Luy "*hindi ka ni makakalabas*" and "*ikulong nayan*" as clear statements and "could have different meaning or interpretation depending on the context on when it was uttered."

The CA also said that the prosecution failed to establish the allegations of conspiracy between siblings Janet and Jojo to commit the alleged crime.

"Thus, the oft-repeated truism that the conviction of the accused must rest not on the weakness of the defense but on the strength of the prosecution must be applied in the present appeal. The constitutionality guaranteed presumption of innocence must prevail," the CA justices also said.

Detention orders remain

Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Amparo Cabotaje-Tang said the court's earlier rulings

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Detention orders remain

Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Amparo Cabotaje-Tang said the court's earlier rulings

ordering Napoles' detention for plunder cases shall stand despite her acquittal by the CA.

"The commitment orders of the Sandiganbayan against her stand because they were issued in connection with the cases pending before the Sandiganbayan. These orders constitute the legal bases for her continued detention," Tang said in a text message to reporters.

In the commitment orders issued by the Sandiganbayan First, Third and Fifth Divisions in July 2014, Napoles was ordered detained at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig.

Tang said the Sandiganbayan may issue a new commitment order to identify where Napoles will be transferred following her acquittal in the illegal detention case.

"The Court needs to issue another order designating her new place of detention because that earlier order

to detain her at BJMP was superseded in light of her supervening conviction then," Tang explained.

Napoles was detained at the BJMP detention facility for almost a year, but following the Makati court's ruling finding her guilty of the illegal detention case, she was transferred to the Correctional Institution for Women in Mandaluyong City in April 2015.

For Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales, however, the CA's ruling on the illegal detention case will have no bearing on Napoles' pork barrel or Priority Development Assistant Fund (PDAF) cases.

"I don't think it has any bearing on the PDAF cases. The credibility of Napoles in that detention case does not affect her credibility or the credibility of the witnesses for that matter," Morales said in a press conference last April 25.

— With Elizabeth Marcelo, Delon Porcalla, Paolo Romero

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CA ACQUITS NAPOLES

STORY BY MARLON RAMOS

■ Appeals court nullifies illegal detention conviction of alleged brains behind pork barrel scam

■ Ruling cites manifestation of Solicitor General to acquit her in case filed by Benhur Luy

■ Napoles will remain detained, however, on plunder charges, according to Sandiganbayan

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WHAT WENT BEFORE

Solicitor General Jose Calida submitted a manifestation to the Court of Appeals 13th Division in January, saying the Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC) had erred in convicting Janet Lim-Napoles of illegally detaining her second cousin and finance officer, Benhur Luy.

In 2015, the RTC's Branch 150 found Napoles and her brother Reynald "Jojo" Lim guilty of illegally detaining Luy for three months, over two years after Luy was rescued by a National Bureau of Investigation team in Napoles' posh apartment in Taguig City.

P10-million bounty

The rescue was a response to a complaint submitted to the NBI by couple Arturo and Gertrudes Luy on March 8, 2013, alleging that their son, Benhur, was being illegally detained by Napoles and Lim since Dec. 20.

A warrant of arrest was issued against Napoles and a P10-million bounty for her arrest was an-

nounced. Napoles surrendered to then President Benigno Aquino III in Malacañang on Aug. 28, 2013.

In his decision to convict Napoles and Lim, Judge Elmo Alameda said Luy's narration of events before and during his detention from Dec. 19, 2012, to March 22, 2013, when he was rescued by NBI agents, was "credible and cohesive."

Civil, moral damages

Napoles and Lim were sentenced to life imprisonment and ordered to pay P50,000 in civil damages to Luy and P50,000 in moral damages. Napoles claimed that Luy was not detained against his will.

After Luy's rescue, he became a whistle-blower and brought to light the P10-billion racket involving the diversion of funds from the Priority Development Assistance Fund to ghost projects and non-government organizations set up by Napoles.

The Inquirer broke the pork

barrel scam story in a series starting July 12, 2013. Luy said that before his detention, Napoles had gotten wind of his plan to break away from her group.

In June 2014, the Office of the Ombudsman indicted Napoles and other government officials in the Sandiganbayan for plunder and multiple counts of graft.

Last August, President Duterte raised the possibility of reopening the pork scam allegedly masterminded by Napoles and the whole issue of corruption that he said involved Sen. Leila de Lima when she was justice secretary.

Coaccused

Napoles is serving her sentence in the Correctional Institution for Women in Mandaluyong City.

She is also facing plunder charges as coaccused in cases against former Senators Juan Ponce Enrile, Jinggoy Estrada and Bong Revilla in connection with the pork barrel scam.

Source: Inquirer Archives

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

OFFICE OF THE

Detained businesswoman Janet Lim-Napoles, the suspected brains behind the P1-billion pork barrel scam, has scored a legal victory in her efforts to win back her freedom.

The Court of Appeals (CA) has nullified the conviction of Napoles in the criminal case filed by her cousin, Benhur Luy, who had accused her of locking him up inside an upscale subdivision in Makati City to prevent him from spilling the beans on the pork barrel racket.

The appeals court's 12th Division issued the ruling on the heels of Solicitor General Jose Calida's rather unusual manifestation seeking Napoles' acquittal.

"[A]fter thoroughly delving into the records of the instant case and painstakingly assaying the evidence adduced by the parties, we find the evidence grossly insufficient to sustain a conviction," the court said in its May 5 decision, a copy of which was obtained by reporters on Monday.

It said the crime was not proven beyond reasonable doubt "In rushing to convict (Napoles), the trial court carelessly overlooked ... significant facts which would have normally engendered doubts as to the credibility of the prosecution's evidence."

The resolution was written by Associate Justice Normandie Pizarro, with Associate Justices Samuel Gaerlan and Jhosep Lopez concurring.

The decision came almost two years after Napoles was sentenced to up to 40 years in prison by a Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC) for illegally detaining Luy.

Luy is one of the principal witnesses in the plunder case against Napoles, tagged as the mastermind of the pork barrel scam that involved former Senators Juan Ponce Enrile, Jinggoy Estrada and Bong Revilla and other legislators.

The pork barrel, officially called Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), was meant to ease rural poverty but instead went to ghost pro-

jects of nongovernment organizations set up by Napoles and lined the pockets of legislators.

Bad signal

Sen. Francis Pangilinan is worried the pork barrel cases filed against Napoles would be placed in jeopardy following the appeals court's ruling.

"This is a bad signal because first, it means that the court does not believe the testimony of Luy who is the key witness in the PDAF cases or the pork barrel cases. What will happen to the PDAF cases?" Pangilinan said in a statement.

But Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon did not think the pork barrel cases would be affected as these were separate from the serious illegal detention case. Drilon also said Napoles would remain under detention because she was still facing plunder cases.

'Interesting times'

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said "these are interesting times," noting that Calida has reviewed the case against Napoles.

In a statement, Calida said "justice prevailed" in the appeals court, adding that it "encapsulates the Latin maxim fiat 'justitia ruat caelum'—Let justice be done though the heavens fall."

"Some sectors make a big deal out of this case because it involves Janet Lim-Napoles. However, as the principal lawyer of the republic, [I believe] this is just a simple criminal case wherein the evidence does not support the conviction of the accused," Calida said.

No Palace hand

Malacañang said it had no hand in the acquittal of Napoles.

"The Duterte administration has never, will never and can never enter into sweetheart deals. It's very strict on the observance of the rule of law and following constitutional due process," presidential legal counsel Salvador Panelo told reporters.

Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said as much in a separate statement. "[The] government is clear that there is no policy shift on how we deal with Napoles. Neither is there an agreement forged be-

tween the Duterte administration and Napoles," Abella said.

The Palace officials said that Napoles' illegal detention case "has no direct impact on her pork barrel cases."

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II said the government might use Napoles' testimony to initiate a review of the cases involving the PDAF scam.

Ready to be state witness

Stephen David, one of Napoles' lawyers, said his client was ready to turn state witness in the plunder case as she was "not the most guilty."

David said the Napoles camp would move for a house arrest for his client. "If she would be allowed to be a state witness, she should be protected."

He expressed confidence that Napoles' acquittal in the serious illegal detention case would eventually lead to the dismissal of the string of plunder and graft cases she was facing in the Sandiganbayan.

He admitted that the appeals court's ruling was not enough to free his client from detention as she was still standing trial for at least five separate cases of plunder, a nonbailable offense.

He said the antigraft court would issue a commitment order for Napoles' transfer from the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City, where she is being held after Judge Elmo Alameda of Makati RTC Branch 150 handed out her conviction in April 2015.

In its ruling, the appeals court's three-member division said the testimonies of Luy and seven other witnesses were "inadequate to establish actual confinement or restraint."

It said there was "no indubitable proof" that Luy was forcibly held by Napoles and her brother, Reynald Lim, in Bahay ni San Jose, a retreat house owned by Napoles in Magallanes Village.

In fact, the court said Luy even attended the nightly Mass with priests who were with him during his stay in the retreat house from Dec. 19, 2012, until he was supposedly rescued by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation on March 22, 2013. —WITH REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND NIKKO DIZON INQ

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Army submits 19 complaints on CPP-NPA violations

By YAS D. OCAMPO

DAVAO CITY - The 10th Infantry Division (10ID) of the Philippine Army (PA) has submitted to the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) 19 formal complaints against the CPP-NPA (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army)

The complaints are for violations of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) signed by the government and ►10

Army submits 19...

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the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP)

The army claimed that 15 of the violations were perpetrated against civilians, citing Article 4.4 of Part IV of CARHRIHL which excludes civilians from being objects of attack.

The violations include the burning of nine civilian vehicles, attack and burning of four civilian companies' equipment and facilities, the murder of a civilian, and the harassment of another civilian.

The four violations were committed against soldiers and Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGUs). Those involved the mutilation of the remains of three soldiers, in violation of Article 3.4 of Part 4 of the agreement, and the killing of three soldiers and a CAFGU Active Auxiliary (CAA), who were off-duty, unarmed and in civilian clothes, in violation of

Article 4.1 of Part 4 of CARHRIHL, the army said.

The civilian vehicles burned by the CPP-NPA include five Yellow Bus Line (YBL) units, a Husky bus, one passenger van, an elf truck and one dump truck.

The complaint on attacks on civilian companies cited the burning of heavy equipment of three construction companies and the attack on a packing plant of DOLE-STANFILCO.

The alleged violations were committed from February last year to January this year, the report said.

According to the Philippine Army, the violations are:

1. Killing of Bernabe Abanilla of Doroluman, Arakan, North Cotabato on Feb. 7, 2016.
2. Killing of Cpl Wenie O Dacuag and

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3. Pfc Jestony A Orca, who were reportedly off-duty, unarmed and in civilian attire on June 10 2016;
4. The alleged mutilation of the dead bodies of Cpl Jimmy N Bayta, Cpl Gilmar C Mapa and Pfc Rolan Roy Sarmiento on Aug. 5, 2016;
5. Killing of CAA Oscar Olo Emba, who was unarmed and in civilian clothes in Kidapawan City on Aug. 11 2016;
6. Killing of Cpl Randy Santa Iglesia, who was off-duty, unarmed and in civilian attire in Lupon, Davao Oriental on Sept. 15, 2016;
7. Attack and burning of heavy equipment of Rock Mixer Company which is implementing a government project at Alabel, Sarangani Province on Nov. 9, 2016;
8. Burning of a civilian-owned Mitsubishi Elf Truck in Matanao, Davao del Sur on Nov. 9, 2016;
9. Burning of a Yellow Bus Lines bus in Kiamba, Sarangani Province on Nov. 24, 2016;
10. Burning of a YBL bus in Mag-saysay, Davao del Sur on Nov. 26, 2016;
11. Burning of one civilian-owned dump truck in Malita, Davao Occidental on Dec. 2, 2016;
12. Burning of heavy equipment of Quick Mix and Happy Living Quarry in Koronadal, South Cotabato on Dec. 6, 2016;
13. Burning of one YBL bus in Tupi, South Cotabato on Dec. 13, 2016;
14. Burning of one YBL bus in Sto. Niño, South Cotabato on Dec. 13, 2016;
15. Burning of heavy equipment of Filmix Concrete Industries Inc in Digos City, Davao del Sur on Dec. 18, 2016;
16. Burning of packing plant of DOLE - Stanfilco in Surallah, South Cotabato on Dec. 19, 2016;
17. Burning of one Husky bus in Koronadal City, South Cotabato on Dec. 21, 2016;
18. Burning of one YBL bus in Kiamba, Sarangani Province on Jan. 5, 2017;
19. Harassment of a truck driver of Santos Land Development Corporation in Makilala, Cotabato on Jan. 20, 2017, and
20. Burning of a passenger van in Kiamba, Sarangani Province on Jan. 30, 2017.

Copies of the formal complaints were forwarded to the Secretariat of the JMC of CARHRIHL, Secretary Silvestre H Bello, Chairman of GPH-Negotiating Panel, and Fidel V Agcaoili, Chairman of the NDFP panel, the army said

"We likewise urge other government agencies to assist the victims of these senseless violence committed by the CPP-NPA against the Filipino people, so that appropriate complaints can be filed not only in the JMC but also in the proper courts," Capt. Rhyan Batchar, 10ID spokesperson, said in a statement.

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The Manila Times

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Troops kill 4 Abu Sayyaf, seize camp in Basilan

BY JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: Government forces killed four Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorists in separate encounters over the weekend and seized its camp in Sumisip, Basilan.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, spokesman of the Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), said troops of the 4th Special Forces Battalion under Lt. Col. Andrew Bacala Jr., encountered an undetermined number of ASG rebels at Sitio Talisay in Barangay Upper Bembengan last Saturday.

The group, surprised by the presence of government troops, tried to put up a fight resulting in a 30-minute gun battle but scampered away in different directions

upon sensing the approaching planes of the Philippine Air Force.

The soldiers immediately pursued the fleeing bandits and blocked their possible escape route resulting in another exchange of fire that lasted for more than an hour.

"Our troops saw the enemy getting hit by our bullets but they were not able to retrieve bodies during the clearing operations," said Col. Juvymax Uy, commander of the Joint Task Force Basilan.

A temporary encampment, that

can accommodate about 40 people, was also seized by the special forces in the vicinity of Barangay Cabcaban in Sumisip.

Found in the encampment were a 15-meter long plastic pipe and a fuse believed to be used for making an improvised explosive device (IED).

In the continuing pursuit operations, troops of the 18th Infantry Battalion under Lt. Col. Ricardo Lucero Jr., encountered Abu Sayyaf members believed to be the same group engaged by the special forces earlier. The clash occurred in Barangay Mahatang.

"The information we received from people in the village was precise that the bandits were hiding in that area that led to another engagement last night," Uy said on Sunday.

"We also learned that four bandits who were wounded earlier died during the series of fire-fights," he added.

Meanwhile, Basilan forces are still scouring the area while pursuit operations are continuing.

"We will continue to pound on the Abu Sayyaf. As long as they continue to pose a threat to the populace, we will be going after them and we will make sure that we will get them," Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., WestMinCom commander said.

"The information given by those who surrendered is indeed very helpful in our operations. We are therefore calling on the other Abu Sayyaf members to surrender before government forces get them. They have to decide now and fast before it is too late," he added.

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Top BIFF aide killed in clash

By ALI G. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY – A senior commander of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) was killed while four other rebels and seven soldiers were injured as clashes continue Sunday in Datu Salibo, Maguindanao.

No less than the spokesman of the BIFF, Abi Misri, confirmed through a radio interview the death of Khalid, said to be a nephew of Ismael Abubakar who is acknowledged as the chairman of one of three factions of the BIFF.

Abubakar's group is said to be loyal to the dreaded Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Khalid died after he and his cohorts fought it out with the Philippine Army's 57th Infantry Battalion who were pursuing suspects in the twin roadside

bombs in Maguindanao.

Local officials said two of the four wounded BIFF bandits were hit in the lower torso by Army snipers while two other rebels sustained shrapnel wounds when a mortar projectile landed near them.

Seven members of the Army's 57th IB were wounded when BIFF gunmen fired assault rifles and shoulder-mounted B-40s on a roadside detachment in Barangay Pagatin in Datu Salibo.

Captain Arvin Encinas, public affairs officer of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the injured soldiers underwent medical treatments in a military hospital.

Encinas said the military's continuing law enforcement operations in Salibo and neighboring towns were meant for Abubakar, the radical figurehead of one of three groups in the BIFF.

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

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BIFF leader killed, 11 wounded in Maguindanao

By **ALI G. MACABALANG**

COTABATO CITY – A senior commander of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) was killed, while four other rebels and seven soldiers were wounded in separate clashes in Datu Salibo, Maguindanao on Sunday.

The rebel fatality was named as Khalid, nephew of Ismael Abubakar, who is the self-styled chairman of one of three factions in the BIFF. Abubakar's group boasts of loyalty to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and has adopted the black ISIS flag as its revolutionary banner.

Officials of the municipal peace and order council of Datu Salibo confirmed the killing of Khalid in military artillery attacks during Sunday's gunfights, that started with the BIFF setting off two roadside bombs.

BIFF spokesman Abi Misri yesterday confirmed in an interview over

a radio station here the death of a comrade and wounding of four others in the firefight.

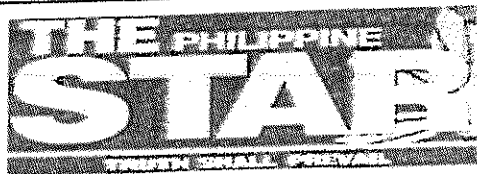
Local officials said the two of four wounded BIFF bandits were hit in the lower torso by Army snipers, adding that two other rebels sustained shrapnel wounds when a mortar projectile landed near them.

Seven members of the Army's 57th IB were wounded when BIFF gunmen fired assault rifles and shoulder-mounted B-40s on a roadside detachment in Barangay Pagatin in Datu Salibo.

Capt. Arvin Encinas, public affairs officer of the Army's Sixth Infantry Division, said the wounded soldiers have undergone medical treatment at a military hospital.

Encinas said the military's continuing law enforcement operations in Salibo and neighboring towns were meant to capture Abubakar, the radical figurehead of one of three groups in the BIFF.

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20 BIFF men killed in Maguindanao

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – At least 20 members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), including six foreigners, were killed in air strikes and ground assaults conducted by the military over the weekend.

Among those killed was Ismael Abubakar, alias Commander Bongos, one of the leaders of the group, Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Western Mindanao Command chief, said yesterday, citing reports from ground commanders and information provided by

their sources from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Galvez said Abubakar, a certain Salahuddin Hassan, alias Orak, six foreigners and eight others died in the initial assault launched by Joint Task Force Central of the 6th Army Division on Saturday.

He said the military offensive targeted the hideout of the group of Abubakar.

Galvez said four other militants were killed in a firefight when the group attacked the detachment of the 57th Infantry Battalion in Barangay Pagatin on Sunday. Six soldiers were also reportedly wounded.

Galvez said they are validating reports from MILF sources that at least 25 BIFF men were killed in the encounters.

The municipal peace and

order council in Datu Salibo confirmed that one of those killed was a certain Khalid, a nephew of Abubakar.

However, BIFF spokesman Abu Misry Mama disputed the report of the military on the death of Abubakar.

"There is no truth to stories that Abubakar was killed," Mama said in a text message to reporters yesterday.

The BIFF boasts of loyalty to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and uses the black ISIS flag as its banner.

– With John Unson

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ENCOUNTERS

NPA REBEL, SOLDIER KILLED IN CLASHES

A New People's Army (NPA) member and an Army soldier were killed in separate armed encounters yesterday, a military spokesperson said.

Lt. Xy-zon Meneses, spokesperson for the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, said a female NPA member was killed in Occidental Mindoro while a soldier was killed in another encounter in Quezon.

"The Army will continue to go after the rebels until they stop the terror acts they commit against the people," said Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, 2nd Division chief.

Meneses said the first encounter happened at around 10 a.m. at Sitio Tagbungan, Barangay Barahan, in Sta. Cruz, Occidental Mindoro.

He said members of the 76th Infantry Battalion fought around 30 armed NPA guerillas in Mindoro for about 30 minutes. The fire-fight left one female NPA member, identified as a certain Ka Bikke, dead.

Government troops also recovered one 9mm cal. pistol along with an improvised explosive device, Meneses said.

At around 11 a.m., government troops clashed with some 30 NPA rebels in Sitio Little Baguio, Barangay Magsaysay in Infanta, Quezon.

—PHILIP C. TUBEZA INQ

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Soldier, female NPA killed in clashes

A SOLDIER and a female member of the New People's Army died in firefights in Quezon and Occidental Mindoro yesterday.

Two other soldiers were wounded in the clashes.

The first clash occurred at around 10 a.m. in Sitio Tagbungan, Barangay Barahan, Sta. Cruz town in Occidental Mindoro, involving troops from the 76th Infantry Battalion and a 30-man NPA group.

The soldiers, who were on security operation, traded fire with the NPA band for about 30 minutes. A female NPA rebel, who was identified only as Ka Bikke, died, said Lt. Xy-zon Meneses, public affairs officer of the Army's 2nd

Infantry Division.

Meneses said the clash also resulted in the recovery of a cal. 9 mm pistol and an improvised explosive device.

The second clash occurred at around 11 a.m. in Sitio Little Baguio, Barangay Magsaysay in Infanta town in Quezon. Troops from the 1st Infantry Battalion were on security operation in the area when they caught up with about 30 NPA rebels.

Meneses said a 15-minute fire-fight led to the killing of one soldier and wounding of two others. He declined to name the slain and wounded soldiers, pending the notification of their families.

– Victor Reyes

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NPA rebel, soldier die in clashes

A New People's Army (NPA) rebel and a soldier were killed in separate encounters in Occidental Mindoro and Quezon yesterday.

A woman identified only as Bikke died when the rebels clashed with government troops in Sitio Tagbungan, Barangay Barahan in Sta. Cruz, Occidental Mindoro

at around 10 a.m. The rebels reportedly yielded a 9mm pistol and an improvised explosive device.

A soldier whose identity was withheld pending notification of his family died in a clash in Sitio Little Baguio, Barangay Magsaysay, Infanta, Quezon at around 11 a.m. Two other soldiers

were wounded and taken to an Army hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, NPA rebels attacked an Army detachment in Barangay Tappa, San Mariano, Isabela on Sunday night.

First Lt. James Carl Teaño, 86th Infantry Battalion spokesman, said there was

no reported casualty after a 30-minute gunfight.

The attack followed the raids on police stations in Cagayan and Quirino last week that left a soldier dead. The police chiefs of the two provinces were replaced following the attacks. – **Michael Punongbayan, Ed Amoroso, Raymund Catindig**

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Military pursuing NPA in Bukidnon

By Lance Baconguis

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY— The military on Monday said it is pursuing suspected New People's Army forces as they try to locate a soldier held captive by the rebels in Bukidnon last week.

This developed as a suspected member of the communist insurgents was killed Friday in an encounter with troops of the 8th Infantry Battalion under the 403rd Infantry Brigade, brigade spokesperson Captain Norman Tagros said.

The rebel, who remains unidentified, was killed at around 4:30 p.m. on May 5 in the outskirts of Sitio Lagaslasan, Barangay Kulaman, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon.

"The incident took place after the troops who conducted focused military operations in the area were fired upon by more or less five armed men," Tagros said. "The operations were launched in response to the complaints of the residents about the presence of armed men who are constantly threatening the civilians while asking for food and extorting money from the residents."


In a different part of Bukidnon, the Philippine Army's 4th Infantry Division has deployed troops to go after the captors of Technical Sergeant Joseph Paredes, who belonged to the 8th IB, a unit of the 4ID.

According to Captain Joe Patrick Martinez, 4ID spokesperson, Paredes was unarmed and was with his wife on board a motorcycle when taken by force by the NPA rebels in Barangay Poblacion, Valencia City, Bukidnon.

Paredes "was on RNR [rest and recreation] and was preparing for his retirement," Martinez said.

The capture of Paredes happened just as the NPA fighters raided a security agency office, while their comrades set up a blockade on a portion of the highway in that area last Friday.

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Efforts to free abducted soldier underway

By **MIKE U. CRISMUNDO**

BUTUAN CITY – The city and provincial crisis management committees (CMCs) and a religious group on Monday disclosed that there were joining hands to negotiate for the safe release of an Army soldier who was abducted by New People's Army (NPA) last May 5 in Poblacion, Valencia City, Bukidnon province.

The Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the main convener of Sowing the Seeds of Peace in Mindanao, along with the CMCs in Valencia City and Bukidnon are now closely coordinating for possible contact with the NPA custodial force that is reportedly holding Technical Sergeant Joseph Paredes of the Army's 8th Infantry battalion (8th IB) hostage.

Paredes was on off-duty when he was abducted by a rebel-manned checkpoint near Juanilla Subdivision in Valencia City, where the rebels conducted a raid at an office of a security agency.

In that raid, the guerilla force carted away several high-powered firearms, such as AK 47 and M 16 rifles, shotguns, handguns and assorted live ammunitions on Friday night, police and military report said.

Paredes was abducted by NPA rebels, who disguised themselves as policemen conducting an anti-illegal drugs campaign, or Oplan "Tokhang," in Bukidnon province, the report added.

The third party facilitator will be led by Iglesia Filipina Independiente Bishop Felixberto Calang, who is already contacting the kin of the abducted soldier for possible assistance.

The CMCs vowed to help the family of captive soldier, who already called him for help. "On the basis that we are continuing our advocacy for peace talks, we will respond favorably, we will help them. This is also an opportunity of confidence-building for the continuation of peace talks," Calang said.

CMCs urged field unit commanders of the AFP and PNP in Bukidnon to temporarily stop tactical operations in Bukidnon as peace negotiation for the safe release of Paredes will soon be underway.

Meanwhile, a suspected NPA rebel perished in an encounter with soldiers of the Eighth Infantry Battalion (8th IB) in the outskirts of Lagaslasan area in Barangay Kulaman, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon province, Capt. Norman M. Tagros, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer of the Army's 403rd Infantry (Peacemaker) Brigade said.

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Pahina. 6

Mining equipment sinunog ng NPA

Nasa P109 milyong halaga ng mining equipment na ginagamit ng isang nickel mining company ang sinunog ng mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) sa Mati, Davao Oriental kamakalawa.

Sinasabing nasa 27 mga sasakyan at equipment na pagmamay-ari ng Mil-Oro Mining Corporation sa Purok Saling-komot, Sitio Magum, Barangay Macambol, Mati City sa Davao Oriental

ang sinunog ng nasa 15 rebelde.

Sa ulat ng 701st Infantry Brigade, umabot sa dalawang oras ang pagkubkob ng mga rebeldeng saan pumasok ang mga ito sa compound dakong alas-kwatro ng madaling-araw at walang nagawa ang mga guwardiyang kompanya.

Sinabi rin ni Chief Insp. Leonilo Lad, Mati City deputy police chief, dinanila ng NPA sa kanilang

pagtakas ang limang shotguns at dalawang carbine rifles na pagmamay-ari ng Mil-Oro guards.

Maliban sa mga armas, kinuha rin ng rebeldeng grupo ang siyam na handheld radios, tatlong GPS (global positioning system) gadgets, laptop computer, printer, digital camera, dalawang relo at sapatos.

Nagpapatuloy pa ang hot pursuit operations ng militar. (Betchai Julian)

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POLICE FILES

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Bakbakan ng militar at NPA sa Samar at Davao

Noong nakaraang Sabado, April 29, matagumpay na ipinaglaban ng ating mga kasundaluhan ang kanilang detachment sa San Jose de Buan, Samar laban sa pag-attack ng NPA. Sila ay kabilang ng 52nd Infantry Battalion na buong tapang nilang nakipagbarilan sa mga NPA. Naging sanhi sa pagkamatay ng dalawang rebeldeng NPA at pagkasugat ng limang sundalo.

Hindi talaga matapos-tapos ang pag-atake ng NPA sa ating mga kasundaluhan habang ang kanilang mga lider sa Communist Party of the Philippines at National Democratic Front ay nakikipag-usap sa gobyerno hinggil sa kapayapaan. Lumalabas at nakikita natin talagang walang control ang mga lider na ito sa kanilang armed components, ang NPA. Mababalitaan mo na lamang na umaatake ang NPA sa nais nilang sakupin at ihaharas. Ganoon din ang nangyari sa Pangyan, Calinan, Davao City.

The same date, 29 April. Hindi ang mga sundalo ang inatake kundi ang Lapanday Foods Corp. (LFC). Isang kompanya ng banana plantation at cattle ranch. Inatake rin ang box plant sa Mandug at plastic plant sa Bunawan, Davao City na kapwa pag-aari ng Lorenzo clan. Kung may kasalanan ang mga may-ari, bakit idadamay ang mga manggagawa? Ngayon wala nang mapapasukan ang mga manggagawa. Iyan ba ang sinasabi nilang social justice? Ilang trabahador ang nawalan ng trabaho? Ilang pamilya ang magugutom? Ito ba ang social justice ng NPA? Tama si Defense Chief, Delfin Lorenzana, ang NPA ay “anti-progress, anti-development and anti-people”. Huwag po nating suportahan ang mga NPA na ito. Salot po sila sa ating lipunan. – ANDREWA. DANTIS, Mati, Davao City

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Balikatan 2017 to focus on terror threat

By **MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN**

This year's Balikatan exercise between US and Philippine military forces, while veering away from the usual focus on territorial defense and maritime security, is timely and will put more attention on the global threat of terrorism.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the joint military exercise for 2017 is "different" but is actually "more special" because it will concentrate on humanitarian assistance, disaster response (HADR) and counterterrorism.

"I think we have to devote more resources and time to this kind of activity and also to counterterrorism," he said during the opening ceremony of the Balikatan exercises in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday.

US Ambassador Sung Kim described this year's exercises, set to run from May 8 to 19, as proof of the strong military partnership and friendship between the two nations.

He said American and Filipino soldiers would learn a lot from the activities that have been lined up to "help save lives and rebuild devastated communities."

"But from my perspective, it's more than that. Balikatan has a very special meaning for the embodiment of our robust bilateral relationship and reflects not only our strong military partnership but also the deep friendship between our two peoples," Kim added.

Lorenzana related that he has talked with the defense ministers of China, Russia and those of the Middle East and all their concerns centered on terrorism.

"I think it's a global threat. I think America is also buckling both at home and abroad. And so this year's exercise provides both the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the US armed forces the necessary capability training in responding to disasters and rescue operations during crisis and meeting the challenges of violent extremism," he stressed.

Balikatan 2017 will involve the participation of 2,600 US soldiers and 2,800 Filipino soldiers who will work together in addressing a disaster scenario wherein a super storm hits the country and devastates Metro Manila.

For Kim, the HADR and counterterrorism focus would allow the US and Philippine military forces to deliver a much stronger response to challenges and react more quickly and effectively.

He said American and Filipino soldiers would be "training shoulder to shoulder, as friends, partners and allies" and along the way "build trust and relationships that will help them deal effectively together with the full range of challenges here in the Philippines and beyond."

Balikatan exercise directors Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao of the AFP and Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson of the US armed forces both explained that while the previous exercises focused on territorial defense



US Marine Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson and Philippine Army Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao arrive for the opening ceremony of the Balikatan 2017 at the AFP headquarters in Quezon City yesterday.

EPA

and the US has “withstood the test of time,” adding that despite the shift, the exercises have been an avenue to enhance the cooperation between the two military forces, mutually developing teamwork.

He noted that recent global and local events, like the tornado outbreak and floods that affected the Central US, have tested the preparedness of the emergency response capability of the US.

In the Philippines, he identified Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013 and the latest typhoons

that devastated the country as having left valuable lessons in disaster preparedness.

He added that the recent series of earthquakes around the Philippine archipelago has been a blatant warning of the eventual occurrence of the big one “that we hope it would not come, thus prompting us to increase our disaster readiness.”

The Philippines has recently warmed its ties with China and Russia following President Duterte’s charting of an independent foreign policy.

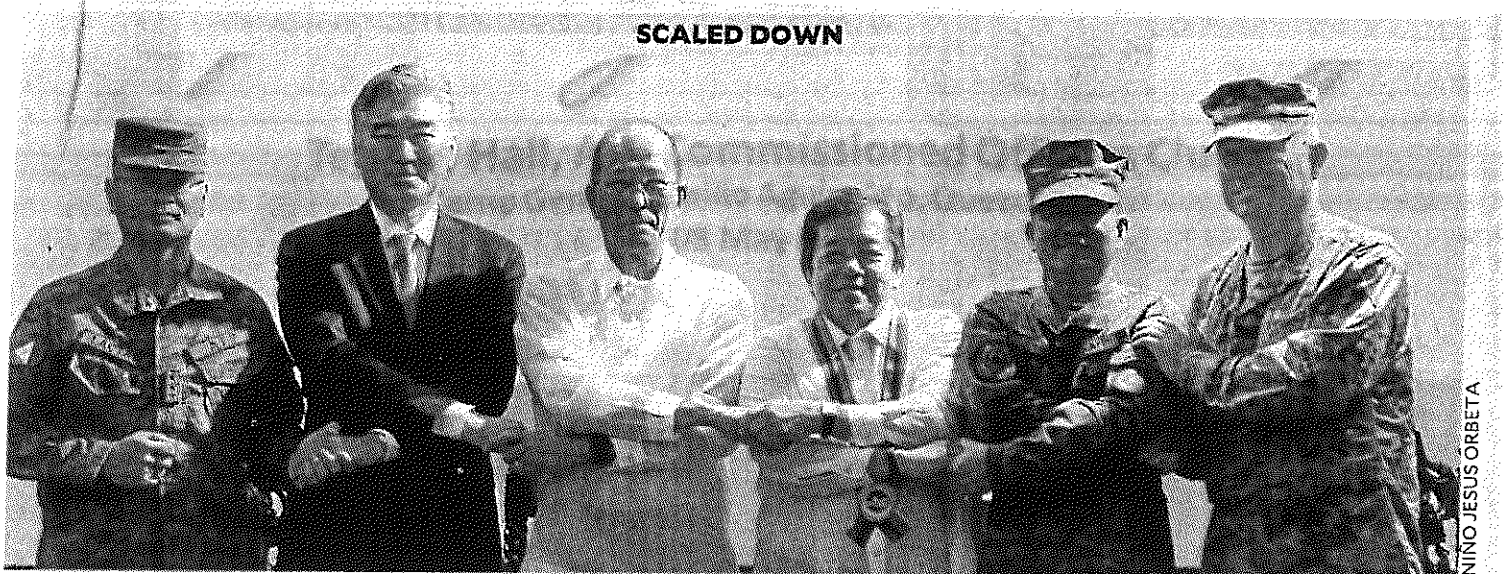
and maritime security, they also follow the directions of political and civilian leaders to give importance to humanitarian exercises.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año said the alliance between the Philippines

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SCALED DOWN

NINO JESUS ORBETA

BALIKATAN OPENING (From left) Balikatan 2017 codirector Lt. Oscar Lactao of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, US Ambassador Sung Y. Kim, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Foreign Undersecretary Ariel Abadilla, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Eduardo Ano and Lt. Gen. Lawrence D. Nicholson of the US Marine Corps link arms during the opening ceremonies of Balikatan in Camp Aguinaldo.

PH, US BALIKATAN EXERCISES OPEN WITH FEWER TROOPS

By Philip C. Tubeza
@pctubezaINQ

The annual military exercises between the United States and the Philippines, called "Balikatan [shoulder-to-shoulder]," opened in Quezon City on Monday, but on a smaller scale, amid the government's declared pivot to China and Russia.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana led the opening ceremonies of the 33rd Philippine-US Balikatan military exercises at Camp Aguinaldo.

Exercise Balikatan 2017, which will run from May 8 to 19, was scaled down from almost 10,000 soldiers last year to 5,400 troops but will also include 80 troops from Australia, 20 from Japan and observers from Southeast Asian countries.

The trainings will be held in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija; Casiguran, Aurora; Upi, Isabela; Guiuan, Eastern Samar; and

Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

"Let us [keep] in mind that we are doing this exercise as a tool for peace-building ... May the United States and Philippines continue to have stronger ties and bilateral relationship. Allow me to express my appreciation to the US troops who are here. We are thankful for your demonstration of friendship and goodwill," Lorenzana said.

"Balikatan is obviously a very important military exercise. But from my perspective, it's more than that," said US Ambassador Sung Kim.

"Balikatan is a very special meaningful embodiment of our robust bilateral relationship and reflects not only our strong military partnership but also the deep friendship between our two peoples," Kim added.

This year's exercises will focus on humanitarian aid and disaster response (HADR) and counterterrorism, compared to

last year's emphasis on territorial defense.

"The political authorities provide us guidance. The priority of [President Duterte] is HADR and counterterrorism so that's the thing we are focusing [on]," said Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao, codirector of the exercise for the Philippines.

Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson, the exercise codirector for the US, said American soldiers were not disappointed with the scaled-down exercises.

"I can tell you that every Marine, sailor, soldier that's coming for the exercise are not disappointed," Nicholson said.

"Again, the scope of this year's exercise has changed and HADR and counterterrorism are two critically important areas of concern for both of our nations, for all other nations," he said.

"I think there's a lot of work to be done. There's a lot of shar-

ing of techniques, tactics and procedures so we're excited by the work that we're going to do, and [we] think in the years ahead there will be different focuses for Balikatan," Nicholson added.

The exercises were scaled down on the orders of Mr. Duterte, who was angered by US criticism of his war against drugs.

During his visit to China last year, Mr. Duterte also said he wanted to chart a more independent foreign policy from Washington.

But Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Ariel Abadilla said the defense cooperation between Manila and Washington was "not aimed at any particular country."

"The defense cooperation between the Philippines and the United States is a longstanding arrangement not aimed at any particular country or group of countries," Abadilla said. —WITH

A REPORT FROM AFP INQ

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PH, US scale down Balikatan war games

THE Philippines and United States launched annual military exercises in Manila on Monday but the longtime allies scaled them down in line with President Rodrigo Duterte's pivot to China and Russia.

Duterte has in his 10 months in office sought to weaken ties with the United States, the Philippines' mutual defense treaty partner and former colonial ruler that he has said is diminishing as a global superpower.

The 12-day "Balikatan" war games that opened on Monday will involve fewer than half the number of soldiers than in 2015, when they were steered by Duterte's pro-American predecessor, Benigno Aquino.

There will also be no focus on boosting the Philippines' maritime defense capabilities, which in previous years had been widely seen as a show of

strength against Beijing over competing claims in the South China Sea.

Duterte has reversed Aquino's policy of challenging China forcefully on the territorial row, electing to instead pursue closer economic, political and military relations with Beijing.

While on a trip to Beijing last year Duterte, a self-described socialist, announced that he was in the "ideological flow" of China's communist rulers.

Much of Duterte's criticism appeared to have been triggered by American criticism of his drug war, which has claimed thousands of lives and been

condemned by rights groups as a possible crime against humanity.

- Focus on China, Russia -

Duterte responded to criticism from then-US President Barack Obama by describing him using an offensive epithet and threatening to sever defense relations completely between the two nations.

Bilateral ties have warmed under Obama's successor, Donald Trump, but Duterte has continued to signal his preference for building stronger relations with China and Russia.

Duterte is due next week to visit China for a second time as leader, and is also expected this month to travel to Moscow for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Duterte last week said he may be too busy to accept an invitation by Trump to visit Washington, even though no date had been proposed for the trip.

Previous editions of the Balikatan exercises involved large-

scale joint operations in or near the South China Sea, which China claims nearly in its entirety.

This year the exercises will focus only on counter-terrorism and disaster relief, the heads of the Philippine and US delegations said at the opening ceremony at the national military headquarters in Manila.

They will involve 2,600 American soldiers and 2,800 Filipino troops, according to both sides.

This is down from 12,000 in the 2015 edition of Balikatan, which means shoulder-to-shoulder.

The American co-director of this year's Balikatan, Lieutenant General Lawrence Nicholson, said the US military hoped the exercises would grow again in future editions.

"If you look back on 33 years of Balikatan, they are all different. There are any number of ways it can change. It can be bigger, it can be smaller. We hope it gets bigger," Nicholson told reporters.

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RP-US Balikatan exercises kick off, focus on disaster response



This year's "Balikatan" exercises, while low on offensive military maneuvers, will provide both American and Filipino units with the necessary capabilities needed to respond to disasters and calamities.

This was stressed by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana during the opening ceremonies of the 33rd iteration of the annual maneuvers yesterday.

"This year's exercise (will) provide both the Armed

Turn to page 3

RP-US Balikatan exercises kick off, focus on disaster response

From page 1

Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the US Armed Forces the necessary capability, training in responding to disasters and (conducting) rescue operations," he said.

Balikatan is noted for having mostly high-impact humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) drills which include urban search-and-rescue (including collapsed structure rescue in event of earthquakes), and landing of relief units and goods should in a typhoon-isolated area.

HADR is one of the missions President Rodrigo Duterte wants the AFP to be more proficient in along with counter-terrorism.

Lorenzana said the shift is very timely considering that calamities and disasters are becoming more severe worldwide.

The same can be said for terrorism.

"I think under the current situation in the world when calamities (are) becoming more severe, I think we have to devote more resources and time to this kind of activity and also to counter terrorism. I talked to the defense ministers of China, Russia and all the defense ministers all over in the Middle East and the concern is terrorism. I think it's a global threat," the Defense official stressed.

Lorenzana said the focus on anti-terrorism operations by both US and the Philippines in the ongoing

Balikatan exercises will provide the militaries of the two nations with the capability to deal effectively with terror threats.

"Let us point in mind that we are doing this exercise as a tool for peace building and for this exercise may the United States and the Philippines continue to have stronger tie(s) and bilateral relationship," he added.

But the American co-director for Balikatan, Lt. Gen Lawrence Nicholson, said the US hoped the exercises would expand again.

"If you look back on 33 years of Balikatan, they are all different. There are any number of ways it can change. It can be bigger, it can be smaller. We hope it gets bigger," Nicholson said.

When asked on whether US troops are feeling disappointed due to the focus on HADR and counter-terrorism, Nicholson said this is not the case.

"I can tell you that Marines, sailors, soldiers, men that's coming to the Philippines for the exercise are not disappointed, they are looking forward, again as I said HADR and counter-terrorism are two critically important areas of concern for both of our nations, for all other nations, so I think there's a lot of work to be done," he noted.

"There's a lot of sharing of techniques and tactics and procedures so we're excited by the work that we are going to do, and yes absolutely we think in the years ahead there will be different

focuses for 'Balikatan,' so I'm confident that this year's (will be a) success," he added.

Militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), however, noted that Mr. Duterte failed to materialize his desire to cut military ties with the US.

"In allowing the war games to proceed, Duterte is bending backwards to accede to the demands of the pro-US sections of the Philippine military," Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes said.

"The shift from maritime exercises to humanitarian assistance and disaster response does not make the current iteration of the Balikatan exercises any less violative of our sovereignty," he stressed.

He added Balikatan runs counter to the President's vow to uphold an independent foreign policy.

"The war games must be seen in the context of US regional dominance, which also run counter to Philippine interests. The US wants to drag us into regional conflicts not of our choosing," Reyes said.

"The US seeks interoperability between their armed forces and ours so that they can involve the AFP in US-instigated conflicts," he added.

Participating troops involve 2,600 American soldiers and 2,800 Filipino counterparts compared to a total of 12,000 in the 2015 edition of Balikatan. **Ted Tuvera, AFP and PNA**

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5,400 US, PH troops in Balikatan this year

Five thousand four hundreds soldiers – 2,800 Filipinos and 2,600 Americans – are participating in this year's Balikatan or shoulder-to-shoulder military exercises.

The 33rd Exercise Balikatan between the Philippines and the United States formally started yesterday at the AFP Commissioned Officers Club in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Major Celeste Frank L. Sayson, Exercise Directorate, said 80 Aus-

tralian and 20 Japanese soldiers are also participating in the almost two-week exercises.

Sayson said that they will not participate in counter-terrorism drills but on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief activities only.

He also said that the AFP has invited military forces from several other nations to be part of the International Observers Program.

(Francis T. Wakefield)

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Balkatan exercises. Lt. Gen. Lawrence Nicholson (center) of the US Marines and his counterpart from the Armed Forces, Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao (left), unfurl the Balkatan flag during the opening ceremonies of the Philippines and US military joint exercises at Camp Aguinaldo Monday. Story on Page B6.



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OFF

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

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AFP eyes surrender of Sayyaf leaders

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The military has expressed confidence it can beat the deadline set by President Duterte to defeat the Abu Sayyaf by June 30.

Aside from ground operations, the military is working for the surrender of the leaders of the bandit group, Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Western Mindanao Command chief, said yesterday.

Galvez did not identify the Abu Sayyaf leaders, but there were earlier reports on the possible surrender of Radulan Sahiron.

Sahiron's surrender is seen to decimate the group, with only Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan as its leader.

Galvez said 60 militants have been killed, 13 arrested and 41 surrendered

in military operations since January.

He said 35 other bandits were wounded and 67 firearms recovered in the operations.

Galvez said some of the surrenderees are helping the military locate the leaders of the bandit group. He said they are also working for the surrender of 21 Abu Sayyaf members in Sulu.

"We see that the will of the enemy is now beginning to crumble," he said. "We have reached the tipping point of the Abu Sayyaf. No matter what they do they cannot recover."

Galvez said the morale of soldiers are boosted whenever the President visits ground troops and wounded soldiers.

– Roel Pareño

9 May 2017



Pahina. 6

60 Sayyaf patay sa military offensive

Umaabot na sa 60 miyembro ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ang napapaslang ng tropa ng militar sa piraigting na operatiba ng tropa ng militar sa Sulu, Basilan at Tawi-Tawi.

Ito ang nabatid ka-hapon kay AFP West-

ern Mindanao Command Chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., kaugnay ng direktiba ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na durugin ang nalalabi pang-miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf

Ang nasabing bilang ng mga napaslang na bandido ay simula Enero

ng taong ito hanggan sa buwang kasalukuyan.

Naitala naman sa 13 Abu Sayyaf ang nasakote at 41 pa ang nagsisuko sa batas.

Sinabi ni Galvez na positibo siyang konting panahon na lamang at tuluyan nang malilipol

ang mga bandidong grupo na sangkot sa serye ng paghahasik ng terorismo.

"It is a matter of time. We have reached the tipping point of the ASG meaning they could no longer carry out significant attacks", giit pa ni Galvez.

Sa kasalukuyan, nasa mahigit pang 20 hostages ang hawak ng mga ban-

dido na target masagip ng tropa ng militar.

Idinagdag pa ng opisyal na patuloy sa pagdanas ng dagok ang mga bandido sa pagkamatay ng kanilang mga lider kabilang si Abu Sayyaf Sub-Commander Alhabsy Misaya sa bakbakan sa Indanan, Sulu (*Joy Carlos*)

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'8 terrorists seeking Phl sanctuary'

By DELON PORCALLA

At least eight terrorists – including those from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – are seeking sanctuary in the country, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) intelligence officer Maj. Gen. Felimon Santos Jr. confirmed before a committee in the House of Representatives yesterday.

Santos made the disclosure after he was asked about the presence of foreign terrorists who may be in collusion with local rebels.

Malaysian authorities, he added, discovered that terrorists have been using Sabah to enter the country.

He also told lawmakers that the Duterte administration's relentless campaign against the Abu Sayyaf bandits has been intensified, although they are still holding at least 27 hostages.

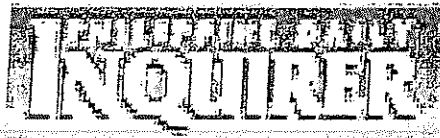
AFP chief of staff General Eduardo Año said the Abu Sayyaf has been attempting to expand its terrorist activities outside central Mindanao to show that their operations are getting wider.

It even targeted Metro Manila, he added, but government forces were able to thwart their attempts.

The Abu Sayyaf's operations allegedly remain largely in central Mindanao, particularly in Lanao province where the bandit group has established its stronghold.

Reports said that foreign terrorists are being coddled by the Abu Sayyaf and other rebel groups in Basilan, Sulu and Central Mindanao.

9 May 2017



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Reopen probe of junk PAF choppers

The UH-1D chopper that crashed in Tanay, Rizal, on Thursday, killing the pilot and two crew members, was among the defective helicopter shipment foisted upon the Philippine Air Force (PAF) by then Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin during the administration of President Noynoy Kuyakoy.

Another chopper from the same batch crash-landed after catching fire over Sarangani province in November last year. Fortunately, no one was injured in that crash.

A total of 13 choppers were bought from Rice Aircraft Services, a run-of-the-mill aircraft maker in California, at a cost of P2.1 billion.

They were pieces of junk scavenged from a junkyard of the German military, shipped to the Rice Aircraft hangar, pieced together into helicopters, and then delivered to the PAF, ac-

ording to whistleblower Dory Alvarez, former Rice Aircraft representative in the country.

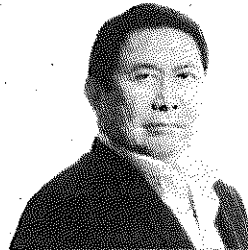
Alvarez, an employee of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), said the helicopters underwent further repairs at the PAF base inside the Clark Economic Zone in Angeles City.

There was public furor over the Alvarez exposé, which led to an investigation by the Senate blue ribbon committee.

But the committee, under then Sen. TJ Guingona, never reached a resolution.

Aside from Gazmin, the others who allegedly financially benefited from the purchase were then Defense Undersecretary Fernando Manalo, former Defense Assistant Secretary Patrick Velez, then Brig. Gen. Conrado Parra, and then PAF chief Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Delgado, according to Alvarez.

Parra, then chair of the Air



ON TARGET

RAMON TULFO

Force technical working group that received the choppers, is now PAF vice commander.

Since Gazmin and Noynoy are no longer around, there's no reason for the Air Force to continue flying those junk choppers.

The Senate should reopen the investigation and file charges against those responsible.

Must there be loss of more

soldiers' lives before those junk choppers are grounded?

Alvarez was then placed by Guingona under the Witness Protection Program.

But she's no longer under the protective mantle of the government.

Some motorcycle-riding gunman might just pop a few rounds to silence her.

Lawyer Nasser Abinal, the BIR's revenue district officer (RDO) in Manila, was allegedly the target of the bomb placed inside a box which exploded in his office premises in the Muslim area of Quiapo, Manila.

Abinal's office as RDO is in Intramuros, far from the bomb explosion.

Why does Abinal still hold office in the Muslim area in Quiapo when he's a BIR official with an office in Intramuros?

Do you get the drift? INQ

ONLINE NEWS

09 MAY 2017

www.dwdd.com.ph

Bukidnon Clash | NPA Suffers Another Casualty

Camp Osito D. Bahian, Malaybalay City (DWDD) – A suspected member of the bandit group New People's Army died in an armed clash against soldiers of the 8th Infantry Battalion that is operationally controlled by the 403rd Infantry Brigade of the Army's 4th Infantry Division yesterday, May 5, 2017, around 4:30 pm, in the outskirts of Sitio Lagaslasan, Brgy. Kulaman, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon.

The incident took place after the troops who conducted focused military operations in the area were fired upon by more or less five (5) armed men. The operations were launched in response to the complaints of the local residents about the presence of armed men who are constantly threatening the civilians while asking for food and extorting money from the residents. Recovered from the possession of said bandit who died during the clash were one (1) bandoleer with four (4) magazines of AK-47 rifle loaded with 83 rounds of ammunition, an Icom radio charger, and several subversive documents. The identity of the bandit is yet to be identified as local officials of the nearest barangay are currently retrieving the cadaver of said suspected NPA member while the 8th Infantry Battalion have already coordinated with the PNP Crime Laboratory (SOCO) of Bukidnon for proper examination of the cadaver. Meantime, no casualties on the government side were reported.

Earlier, operating troops of the 8th Infantry Battalion engaged in a separate armed clash within the same vicinity around 10:45 am, May 5, 2017, when a group of armed men who are believed to be coming from the same bandit group fired upon the soldiers. No casualties on the government side were reported during the armed encounter while bloodstains were seen by the troops along the bandits' withdrawal route.

Meanwhile, in San Fernando, Bukidnon, another armed clash between soldiers of the 8th Infantry Battalion and suspected NPA bandits took place earlier on May 5, 2017, around 6:30 am, in a forested area near Sitio Salumayag, Brgy. Halapitan of said town. The troops responded to the reports of local residents near the area about the presence of an armed group who are threatening the civilians and while the troops were nearing the place, they were fired upon by more or less 10 armed men. Said bandits scampered towards different directions when the troops fired back. No casualties on the government side were reported during the encounter that lasted for about 10 minutes while the troops were able to recover one (1) US Garand Rifle, one (1) US Carbine Rifle and one (1) rifle grenade from the bandit group.

Colonel Eric C Vinoya, Commander of the 403rd Infantry (Peacemaker) Brigade, 4ID, PA, commended the troops of the 8th Infantry Battalion for yielding positive results in doing their task and assured the people of Bukidnon on the Brigade's commitment to secure the communities against threat and intimidation of the NPA. He also offered his sympathies to the family and relatives of the suspected NPA member who lost his life. In his statement, he mentioned, "*I congratulate our*

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Dependable soldiers of the 8th Infantry Battalion for successfully doing their task in securing the people, most especially our Lumad communities. However, we also would like to condole with the family and relatives of the suspected NPA member who died during the encounter. It is very unfortunate that such a meaningless loss of life would have to happen just because of the continued terroristic acts of the NPA and their leaders that threaten our people in the community. We also want our people to know that we will have no let up in our focused military operations if only to secure our communities from threats of intimidation, extortion, arson, kidnapping, murder and other terroristic and criminal acts of the NPA bandit group. 403rdIBde / MCAG

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CAPTURED | NPA Top Leader nabbed after raid of Police Outpost

CAMP MELCHOR F DELA CRUZ, Upi, Gamu, Isabela—“David Soriano a.k.a. Colly and Jerome Antonio, the top leader of the Komiteng Rehiyon ng Hilagang Silangan Luzon of the CPP/NPA, was actually captured in a pursuit operation launched by our troops immediately after they harassed the isolated outpost of the PNP in Amulung, Cagayan.

The Amulung PNP harassment transpired at around 5:00 PM but was followed by the capture of Communist Terrorist Leader(CTL) Soriano at around 5:45 PM last May 04, 2017 by the joint forces of 17th Infantry Battalion Soldiers and Peñablanca Police Municipal Office at the National Highway of Brgy Camasi, Peñablanca, Cagayan. The apprehension of Soriano will finally give justice to their victims and to the Cagayanos who suffered the most with their atrocities,”says Captain Jefferson Somera, 5ID spokesperson on the statement released on how the actual events unfolded last May 04, 2017.

The joint checkpoint operations setup by the Army and PNP that caught David Soriano and his companion, Jude Cipriano, was part of the pursuit operations of the government forces upon learning of the incident in Amulung, Cagayan.

Meanwhile, MGen Paul T Atal, D.P.A.AFP, 5ID Commander, condemned the incident questioning the sincerity of the communist terrorists/NPAs in the ongoing peace negotiation. “This incident has clearly placed doubts as to the sincerity of the rebels in the ongoing peace talks. Nevertheless, the 5th Infantry Division will continue to reach out to our misguided Filipino brothers and sisters to lay down their arms and abandon their armed struggle for the sake of Peace for Development to follow. These atrocities are counter-productive to the development of our region.”MGen Atal commented. **5DPAO / MCAG**

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PEACE THREAT | NPA Atrocities Hampers Growth of the People of Region 2

CAMP MELCHOR F DELA CRUZ, Upi, Gamu, Isabela (DWDD) –The series of attacks Committed by the Communist Terrorists (CTs) in the Provinces of Quirino and Cagayan last week had created negative impressions in the region of Cagayan Valley.

The incident in Amulung, Cagayan last May 4, 2017 coincided with the conduct of the News Conference of the National Statistics Office, Region 2. In the said occasion, NSO Region 2 declared the slow growth of the Region, which is 3.3 percent in 2016, against the 4.1 percent in 2015. The NSO had acknowledged the importance of looking into the security side, although it was not included in the presentation.

MGen Paul T Atal, D.P.A. AFP, Commander of 5ID, was actually looking at the economic implications of the attacks in the region. "The series of attacks perpetrated by the Communist Terrorist against the people and the PNP personnel of Region 2 had adverse effects to the desired development of the region due to its economic implication", MGen Atal said. "Their criminal acts had driven away probable investors that could have created jobs and opportunities for the people; jobs and opportunities necessary to uplift the lives of the ordinary people.", MGen Atal added.

The CTs are claiming that they were working for the advancement of the interest of the people, yet they are continuously hindering the development of the people of Region 2. "I appeal to the people of Region 2 to work hand-in-hand in denouncing these anti-development atrocities of the CTs. Let us encourage them to abandon their armed struggle and help in supporting development of our beloved country. Filipinos fighting each other should stop and instead, for us to prepare for the external threat which is far a more serious problem. Let us likewise explore ways on how we could end our differences in peaceful ways at the soonest possible time.", MGen Atal further stated.

Good day sir. Permission to make statement, sir. Sir, regarding po sa concept the PR natin, ok napo na hinde bangitin to the details, kasi alam napo ng lahat ang mga detalye tungkol sa magkasunod na atake sir, dagdag na mainit pa yung balita, sir. With regards po sa effect sir, naka pasok napo sa statement ni Com5. Na mas gusto po ng mge media friends, kasi gagawin nilang reference, kumpara po sa plain text lang. Regarding naman po sa statement ni Com5 sir, idinagdag ko po yung guidance nya, na palaging isama sa PR kung kaya pa, yung pag himuk sa mga CTs na magsurrender, sir.

Idea ko lang po sir, kapag ipinasok po natin lahat ng details, hinde po magkakasya sa 1 page. Sabi po kasi ng mga media, kapag sumobra sa 1 page ang PR, hinde napo nila pinapansin sir. Mahalaga po sir, yung statement ni Com5 na kahit papaano sir, regional ang concept focus po sa operational side ng issue, rather than tactical side sir. Salamat po sir. CPT SOMERA, Acting Chief,
DPAO. 5DPAO / MCAG

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www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

AFP sees no ISIS, Maute links to Quiapo blasts

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief General Eduardo Año echoes earlier statements of the PNP and Malacañang that terrorists were not behind the explosions



NO TERROR LINKS. AFP chief General Eduardo Año attends a briefing with lawmakers on May 8, 2017.

Photo by Mara Cepeda/Rappler

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief General Eduardo Año said the military has not seen any evidence linking the recent twin explosions in Quiapo, Manila to the Islamic State (ISIS) or to the local Maute Group.

"So far, sir, we haven't seen any connection to ISIS or Maute because the target is an imam... There are some factions that are at odds with this imam," Año said during a briefing with the House committee on national defense and security on Monday, May 8.

The AFP and Department of National Defense were briefing lawmakers on the state of security in the country as well as the status of the AFP modernization program.

"We are waiting, sir, for the investigation of the PNP (Philippine National Police). There are some personalities identified with Maute or the ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group), but that doesn't conclude that an ISIS cell is existing," added Año.

Two blasts struck the densely-populated Quiapo district on May 6, leaving 2 dead and 6 injured.

Police believe imam Nasser Abinal was the likely target of the attack, possibly due to personal reasons, his work, or his religion.

On April 28, an improvised explosive device also went off in Quiapo, injuring at least 14 people. The Manila police already nabbed one of the 4 suspects.

The Quiapo blasts were claimed by ISIS, but the PNP declared that there is not enough evidence to blame the incidents on the international terror group.

Malacañang has called for calm and urged the public to stop spreading "news from unverified sources."

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1st PH-US Balikatan exercises under Duterte open

(UPDATED) The annual activity adjusts to President Rodrigo Duterte's orders: Balikatan 2017 exercises will not focus on external defense or maritime security



JOINT DRILLS CONTINUE. Philippine and US officials link arms at the opening ceremony of Balikatan 2017. Photo by Jeff Digma/Rappler

(UPDATED) – After months of uncertainty, they made it.

Up to 2,600 American soldiers are in the Philippines to join the Balikatan 2017 exercises with 2,800 of their Filipino counterparts, an annual activity that President Rodrigo Duterte wanted scrapped last year as he threatened to cut ties with the United States.

A ceremony was held at 9 am on Monday, May 8, inside the Philippine military headquarters Camp Aguinaldo to formally start activities that will keep the ties between the two militaries strong.

The ceremony was attended by Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, US Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim, Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Kazuhide Ishikawa, Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Ariel Abadilla, and Armed Forces of the Philippines chief General Eduardo Año.

Kim said Balikatan is an "important military exercise" that has become a "meaningful embodiment of strong partnership" between the Philippines and the US.

Año underscored the long history of cooperation, fighting together during World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and the current global fight against terrorism.

"Balikatan literally means shoulder to shoulder... Our armed forces have continuously shared ordeals that have strengthened our bond. It is an avenue for us to enhance cooperation between our military forces and an opportunity to test and validate our forces' inter-operability," Año said.

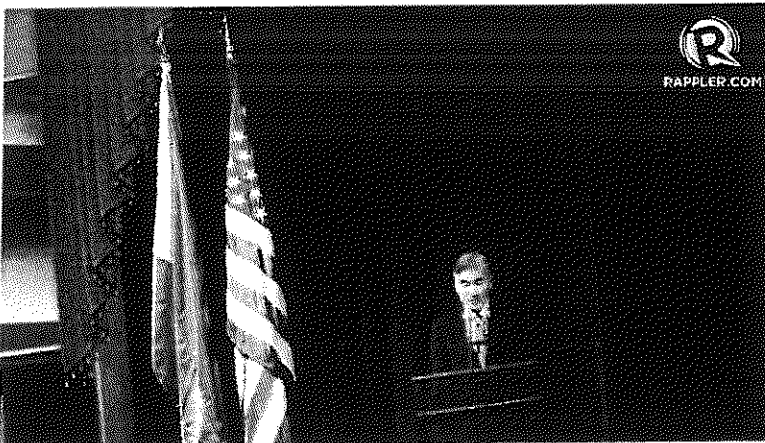
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The annual Balikatan exercises are aimed at making sure the militaries can work jointly in the event the two countries need to activate the Mutual Defense Treaty, a 66-year-old treaty that binds them to come to each other's defense if one or the other's sovereignty is threatened.

Duterte, known for his anti-US rhetoric since he was mayor, had said he wants the Philippines to be independent of its former colonizer. A staunch critic of US presence in the Philippines, he is warming ties with China and Russia. (READ: [Duterte's pivot to China won't be easy for Americanized PH military](#))

Adjusting to China



IMPORTANT EXERCISE. US Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim underscores deep ties between the two countries. Photo by Jeff Digma/Rappler

Duterte was persuaded to allow the exercises to continue so far, but adjustments were made to follow his orders. There are no more exercises in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea), for example.

Exercises in the West Philippine Sea were the highlight of Balikatan exercises in recent years, providing an opportunity to send China a message amid its aggressiveness in the disputed waters. (READ: [The 'last' war games in the West Philippine Sea](#))

Regular activities in previous Balikatan exercises included amphibious landing drills coming from the West Philippine Sea and live fire drills that involved training Filipinos to operate long-range missiles.

The commander of the Western Command, the military unit responsible for the West Philippine Sea, was also previously tapped to be exercise director.

This time, no more. Instead of joint exercises on external defense and maritime security, Balikatan 2017 will focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and combating terrorism.

Lieutenant General Oscar Lactao, the exercise director, said this is the direction that Duterte wants to take.

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AMERICAN MARINES. Lieutenant General Lawrence Nicholson of the US 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force is Balikatan exercise co-director. Photo by Jeff Digma/Rappler

Disaster preparedness

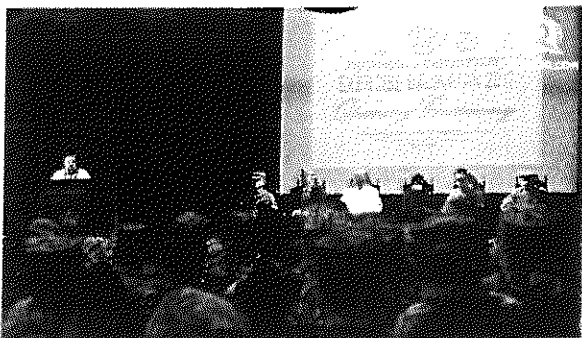
They will conduct mass casualty evacuation, urban search and rescue, underwater demolition, and fighting terrorism, among other activities to be held in the provinces of Samar, Cagayan, Isabela, Aurora, and Nueva Ecija.

Balikatan spokesman Major Celeste Sayson said the objective is to show that the Philippines is ready to address calamities, learning a lot from its experience with destructive Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) that killed around 6,000 people in 2013.

Exercises will also be held in Guiuan, Eastern Samar, where Yolanda made landfall. (READ: [Soldiers of the world unite for Haiyan victims](#))

A few dozen participants from Australia and Japan will also participate in the exercises.

Among the assets that the Philippine military will use in the joint exercises is the brand new BRP Tarlac, currently the biggest ship in the navy's inventory. The strategic sealift vessel (SSV) can serve as a base of operations at sea.



STRONG TIES. Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Ariel Abadilla reads the speech of Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo. Photo by Jeff Digma/Rappler

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Australia, Japan participate in Balikatan exercises

Australia is the only other country, aside from US, that has a visiting forces agreement with the Philippines



TREATY ALLY. Australian has 80 soldiers participating in this year's Balikatan exercises. Rappler photo
Eight other militaries, including the armed forces of Australia and Japan, are in the Philippines to participate in the annual Balikatan exercises between Philippines and the US.

Up to 2,800 Filipino soldiers and 2,600 American soldiers are participating in the exercises.

Australia is the only other country, aside from US, that has a visiting forces agreement with the Philippines. It sent 80 of its soldiers to participate in special operations exercises, according to exercise director Lieutenant General Oscar Lactao.

Japan has a memorandum of defense cooperation and exchanges with the Philippines. It sent 20 of its forces to participate mainly in exercises on humanitarian assistance and disaster response, Lactao said.



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MOA ON DEFENSE COOPERATION. Japan sent 20 soldiers to participate in the 2017 Balikatan Exercises. Rappler photo

Australia and Japan, both allies of the US, are among the countries that have been helping the Philippines beef up its military capabilities.

In 2015, Australia donated 2 supply ships to the Philippine Navy.

In March 2017, Japan transferred to the Philippine Navy 2 TC-90 transport planes. (READ: Small planes for PH Navy signal Japan's growing security role)

The previous Aquino administration also wanted a visiting forces agreement with Japan, but this has so far not been raised in the new government of President Rodrigo Duterte.

The other countries sent observers: United Kingdom, South Korea, Timor Leste, Brunei, and Thailand, Singapore.

This year's Balikatan exercises will focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster response and fighting terrorism.

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