

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



TEAM ARMY

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16 May 2017

Tuesday

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

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BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MAY 16, 2017 | TUESDAY

AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF MINDANAO
(As of 5:00 PM - May 15, 2017)

EASTERLIES

CELEBEN SEA

SUNRISE	SUNSET
5:28 AM	6:17 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
10:38 PM	9:32 AM
FULL MOON	LAST QUARTER
MAY 11 5:42 AM	MAY 19 8:33 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH HARBOR	
9:20 PM	12:32 PM
-0.03 Meter	1.04 Meter

Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

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

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INQUIRER

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House committee kills impeach rap vs Duterte

By Nikko Dizon
@NikkoDizonINQ

The first impeachment complaint against President Duterte did not survive even for one day on the House of Representatives committee on justice, which called the accusations leveled by Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano against Mr. Duterte “multiple hearsay.”

The committee declared the impeachment complaint sufficient in form but insufficient in substance. Forty-two congressmen stood to manifest their vote on the issue of substance.

Alejano accused the President of a litany of “high crimes” including hiding wealth, ordering police to murder criminals and of making clear his intention not to protect Philippine maritime sovereignty.

“This is multiple, quadruple hearsay. And it is difficult to drag the whole House into things like this and you are expecting that we will issue the subpoena. Only the impeachment court could issue the subpoena if we [send] this to the Senate,” said Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas.

The complaint would have been subjected to a plenary vote had the committee found it sufficient in substance. A one-third vote of the 292-member House is needed to automatically send the complaint to the Senate for trial.

Following the dismissal of the impeachment complaint, presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella said the allegations in the complaint were from “rehashed, trumped-up charges aimed at undermining the duly constituted government.”

Other modes

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV is banking on “other modes” to go after the President.

The senator said the crimes against humanity case against Mr. Duterte filed in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague was one of those modes.

“They don’t have control over there and hopefully they’re more objective,” Trillanes said, referring to the ICC.

At the onset of the hearing, Fariñas wanted to have the complaint declared insufficient in form when he grilled Alejano on whether he had “personal knowledge” of the allegations he made in his impeachment complaint.

These included knowing the circumstances of the killings of more than 8,000 drug suspects in the Duterte administration’s war on illegal drugs; the more than 1,400 murders carried out by the so-called Davao Death Squad (DDS); the alleged P2.2 billion ill-gotten wealth of the President and his family; and the Chinese incursions into Philippine territory supposedly with Mr. Duterte’s consent.

Sufficient in form

The committee declared the complaint sufficient in form after holding an hourlong executive session, prompted by the motions of other committee leaders that the impeachment complaint be accepted as sufficient in form.

They cited the committee tradition of applying “liberality” in recognizing impeachment complaints, at least in form.

Mindoro Oriental Rep. Reynaldo Umali, chair of the justice committee, said Alejano’s original and supplemental impeachment complaints were deemed one because they were both transmitted to the committee on May 9.

At a press conference, Alejano slammed the committee’s

swift killing of the impeachment complaint.

Probable cause

He said Fariñas, by insisting that his complaint was based on hearsay, effectively proceeded to the determination of probable cause instead of establishing first if the complaint was sufficient in form and substance.

Fariñas and Umali had a difficult time extracting a “yes” or “no” answer from Alejano, a battle-scarred Marine officer.

Alejano insisted that more than a yes or no, he should be allowed to explain his answers.

He said that while he did not have firsthand knowledge of the murders, he had witnesses he could present.

He obtained the official copies of Mr. Duterte’s speeches, as well as records of the Senate investigation of allegations that the President, when he was Davao City mayor, ordered the DDS to liquidate suspected criminals as alleged by confessed hit men Edgar Matobato and Arturo Lascañas.

Contents verified

“I affirm the contents of the verification that I have personal knowledge based on facts culled from authentic records,” Alejano said.

“I went through the records, the testimonies of the witnesses, I checked it and verified it and for the statements of the President I even went to the extent of

getting official records from the PCOO (Presidential Communications Operations Office). And when I checked them, I believed in them..." he said.

Alejano cited the impeachment against President Joseph Estrada, saying that none of the complainants and endorsers of the complaint had personal knowledge of the bribery charge but relied on the testimony of the main witness, Luis "Chavit" Singson.

Fariñas said Lascañas and Matobato should have been the complainants in the impeachment against Mr. Duterte.

The majority leader also assailed Alejano's use of the confessed hit men's affidavits, which were supported by the lawmaker's ally Trillanes in the Senate investigation, saying that an affidavit is "hearsay" until it has been subjected to cross-examination.

Open source

Fariñas further criticized Alejano's use of open source, such as news accounts of the alleged extrajudicial killings. He described Alejano's complaint against Mr. Duterte as propaganda.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman of the independent minority bloc urged the committee to listen to Alejano's recitation of facts to prove that his complaint was sufficient in substance.

"While it is true that an impeachment proceeding is a political exercise, it is not a partisan enterprise. A political process entails an exercise of values, advocacies and judiciousness. Partisanship is the direct opposite," Lagman said.

But it was, ironically, Minority Leader Danilo Suarez who sounded the death knell for the impeachment complaint at the start of the proceedings by noting "we are impeaching a President with an 80.3-percent acceptance and popularity rating."

"I have never seen a President, well he isn't a year yet in office, who is not interested in enriching himself and that is one quality that we need: an honest President... At the end of the day, my honest opinion is, this impeachment will not fly," Suarez said. --WITH REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND REUTERS INQ

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FIGHT VS TERROR GROUPS

MAUTE MEMBERS NABBED IN LANAO

COTABATO CITY—The military on Monday arrested 11 suspected members of the Maute terror group in a remote village in Lanao del Sur province, a Philippine Army officer said.

Maj. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, 6th Infantry Division commander, said a combined team of policemen and soldiers raided a safe house in Barangay Maragondong in Marogong town and recovered high-powered firearms and bullets from the suspects.

Dela Vega said the group had been placed on a weeklong

surveillance after residents informed authorities about the presence of armed men in their village.

Seized from the group were a homemade sniper Barrett rifle, a 60mm mortar launcher, an M-60 cal. machine gun, an M-14 rifle, an M-16 rifle, a Garand rifle, a carbine rifle and bullets.

"It was a bloodless operation since the targets were caught flatfooted. They were surprised [by the raid] and failed to [retaliate]," Dela Vega said. —EDWIN

O. FERNANDEZ INQ

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Army arrests 11 Maute members in Lanao del Sur

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao (PNA) – Eleven suspected members of the Lanao del Sur-based Maute terror group were arrested by the military Monday morning, an official said.

The raiding team, composed of personnel from the Sixth Infantry Battalion (6IB), also confiscated eight unlicensed high-powered firearms in the 5:15 a.m. raid on three houses in the village of Maragondong, Marogong town in Lanao del Sur, said Major General Arnel dela Vega, commander of the 6IB “Kampilan” Division.

Dela Vega said the military re-

ceived a tip from local residents about the presence of “new faces” in their communities who were “armed to the teeth.”

After receiving the information and verified through a week-long surveillance, a law enforcement operation was carried out.

Dela Vega said the guns recovered from the arrested suspects include a homemade sniper Barret rifle, 60 mm mortar launcher, a cal. M-60 machine gun, M-14 rifle, M-16 rifle, M1 Garand rifle, carbine and ammunition.

Dela Vega said the operation “was bloodless because the suspects were

caught by surprise and failed to react.”

The names of the arrested suspects were not available as of posting time, as follow-up operations are still ongoing.

Dela Vega said the suspects are now undergoing interrogation at the 6IB’s main camp in Malabang, Lanao del Sur.

Also seized from the suspects were flags used by the Maute Group – which pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – mobile phones and military fatigue uniforms. The Maute Group is also allied with the Abu Sayyaf Group.

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NPA admits abducting miner in Agusan del Sur

By ROEL N. CATOTO

Surigao City – Communist guerrillas in Caraga region have confirmed “arresting” a businessman-miner in Agusan del Sur Saturday in what the New People’s Army (NPA) Front 14 described as “punitive action for the long record of his abuses to the broad masses.”

Ka Ariel Montero, spokesperson of Regional Operational Command of NPA Northeastern Mindanao Region, said in the press statement issued yesterday that Carson Ceasar “Abud” Lademora, along with his aide Leonardo Cacao, were taken by their comrades from his mine site in Sinug-ang, Rosario, Agusan del Sur.

Lademora reportedly operates a mine in the high-grade gold rush area of Sinug-ang in the village of Bayugan 3 in Rosario town, which his family has claimed since the early 1980s.

The guerillas also seized 21 firearms when it raided the mine site without a single shot being fired at around 7 a.m.

Lademora is the youngest son of the late Constabulary colonel Carlos Lademora, leader of the dreaded Lost Command, which had reportedly lorded it over in the area in the 1980s.

“Through the continuing control of said armed forces and the remaining notorious Lost Command forces, the Lademora family monopolized mining in Sinug-ang, Bayugan 3 and deprived other people of livelihood. Residents feared the existence of said armed group controlled by the Lademoras,” Montero said.

Montero described the Lost Command as a ragtag band organized by the elder Lademora, which was composed of former Philippine Constabulary colleagues and criminal elements. He added that it functioned as a private army

of the National Guthrie Plantations Inc. (NGPI) and Agusan Plantation Inc. (API) to grab land from farmers in the towns of Rosario and San Francisco, for oil palm plantations.

Thousands of farmers were victimized and forced to sell or abandon their tracts of land for fear of harassment by the Lost Command, Montero said.

But the military top brass in the region has dismissed the kidnapping of Lademora as nothing but a desperate effort to raise ransom money because the NPA was already losing the support of the community.

“It is very clear that the NPA is losing the support of the people, particularly businessmen. That is why they are now resorting to kidnap-for-ransom activities,” said Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. Madrigal Jr., commander of the Fourth Infantry Division here.

Madrigal added that “the NPA has now resorted to banditry.”

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Army to keep Eastern Samar rebel-free

ORAS, Eastern Samar – The Army has intensified monitoring in upland communities in this province to deter activities of the New People's Army (NPA).

Lt. Col. Manuel Leo Gador, commander of the Army 14th Infantry Battalion based in Dao village in this town, said the entire province was peaceful after the military took full control of areas considered to be rebel-infested.

Of the 22 towns in Eastern Samar, only four (Jipapad, Maslog, Mac Arthur, and Giporlos) were not yet declared as man-

ageable conflict-affected and development-ready by the provincial government and military.

"The peace and order of Eastern Samar is manageable compared to other provinces in the region where the NPA rebels have been waging war against government troops over the past years," Gador told PNA on Monday.

He made the statement days after fresh clashes erupted between the military and communist rebels in neighboring Northern Samar and Leyte provinces as NPA tries to renew its presence in Eastern Visayas.

Gador also assured the safety of Amer-

ican troops participating in the Balikatan military exercise in Guiuan, Samar.

More soldiers have been deployed to secure Guiuan town where post-disaster rehabilitation activities are being conducted as part of the joint exercises between US and Philippine forces.

"We do value our relationships with the US Armed Forces and we are working together to accomplish common objectives of the Balikatan in Guiuan. Our intent is to do what is necessary to improve the stability and security of the province. It's by working together that we can achieve our goal of lasting peace," Gador added. (PNA)

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NPAs behind Laguna attacks hunted in Lucban, site of 'Pahiyas'

By **AARON B. RECUENCO**
and **DANNY J. ESTACIO**

Police and military forces in Laguna and Quezon provinces have been alerted to hunt down a band of New People's Army (NPA) rebels that attacked a construction firm in Majayjay town, Laguna last Sunday afternoon and reportedly crossed over to Lucban, where the Pahiyas Festival is being celebrated.

A report from the Philippine Army's 202nd Infantry Brigade (202 IB) said an army soldier and a Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) member were wounded in a separate attack by the same group of rebels at 5:40 p.m. Sunday at the CAFGU detachment in Barangay Piit, also in Majayjay.

Chief Superintendent Mao Aplasca, Police Regional Office 4-A director, said police are now on the lookout for the rebels last monitored to be heading to Lucban town in Quezon after the attacks in Majayjay.

"We have already alerted all chiefs of police in Laguna and Quezon to conduct mobile checkpoint in support

of the ongoing pursuit operations," said Aplasca.

The rebels were first reported to have burned heavy equipment in Barangay Piit in Majayjay town after the owner of a construction firm reportedly did not pay the revolutionary tax.

Security forces were then deployed in the area which resulted in a brief clash, said Chief Supt. Dionardo Carlos, Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesman.

"The incident caused a major traffic jam of vehicles in Majayjay heading to Lucban, Quezon where the annual Pahiyas Festival kicks-off today (Monday)," said Carlos.

Carlos said soldiers and policemen were deployed in Lucban town where the fleeing rebels group reportedly withdrew.

The Lucban Municipal Police Station (MPS), the 5th Maneuver Platoon of the Quezon Provincial Public Safety Company under First Lieutenant Valmonte, and the army's 80th Infantry Battalion under Lt. Col. Randolph Cabangbang are conducting the pursuit operations.

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The Manila Times

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3 wounded in Reds' attack in Laguna

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna: Majayjay municipality in Laguna was put on red alert after suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) attacked a military detachment in a village on Sunday wounding a soldier and two civil defense volunteers.

The clash happened at about 5:40 p.m. after the rebels attacked the Army's 202nd Brigade detachment in Barangay Piit. Wounded in the skirmish were Sgt. Pepito Rodriguez, Alvin Alsum, and Francisco Agencia, both members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit.

The rebels also torched a backhoe owned by Global Heavy Equipment, Inc. that operates Majayjay mini hydro plant in Barangay Ibabang

Banga before retreating.

The NPA has not issued statement on the attack as of this writing.

Majayjay Mayor Jojo Carlo Clado said the firm has been receiving threats from the rebels after its owners allegedly refused to pay revolutionary tax.

Clado in his Facebook page on Monday advised the public to avoid the village or stay indoors in the meantime as pursuit operations against the rebels continue.

However, later in the day, Clado said the situation was back to normal but the alert status stays as he ordered all village officials to coordinate with the police and the military to ensure the safety and security of residents.

ROSELLE AQUINO

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Malaya
The National Newspaper

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Bohol cleared of Abu Sayyaf

BY VICTOR REYES

THE last two members of the Abu Sayyaf group involved in the failed kidnapping of foreign and Filipino tourists in Bohol were killed in skirmishes with government forces in Calape town yesterday.

Lt. Gen. Oscar Lactao, commander of the military's Central Command based in Cebu City, said the first was killed by forces of the Army's 47th Infantry Battalion at

around 12:30 p.m. in Barangay Kahayag in Panganan island. Recovered from him was an M16 rifle.

The second initially escaped but pursuing soldiers caught up with him in Barangay Lawis at around 5:25 p.m., killing him during a firefight.

"This completes the job of neutralizing the 11 ASGs," said Lactao, referring to the number of Abu Sayyaf men that landed in Inabanga town last April 10, principally to kidnap tourists in Bohol.

On April 11, troops clashed with the group, killing four of them, including sub-leader and spokesman Muammar Askali alias Abu Rami. Also killed was an elderly couple believed to have provided sanctuary to the group.

On April 22, four more members were killed in clashes in Clarin town. The slain suspects included Joselito Millora, a Muslim convert and a resident of Inabanga town.

Last May 4, a ninth Abu Sayyaf

member, Saad Samad Kiram, was arrested by the military and police in Tubigon town. He was later killed as he reportedly tried to escape from police custodians.

"All accounted for. The threat from the group of Abu Sayyaf who went there (in Bohol) is already gone," said AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla.

In Tawi-Tawi, an Abu Sayyaf member was arrested Saturday on information provided by residents.

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Army conducts training to cope with disasters

CAMP LUKBAN, Catbalogan City – The Army's 8th Infantry Division (8ID), has joined hands with the ABS-CBN Sagip Kapamilya Foundation in conducting a Community-Based Disaster and Emergency Management Training over the weekend.

Major General Raul M. Farnacio, 8ID commanding general, told reporters the training session was attended by 131 participants from the municipalities of Sta. Rita, Basey, and Marabut Samar and selected personnel from the 52nd Infantry Battalion and 8ID Emergency

Response Company.

Farnacio said the training focused on the importance of community preparedness, particularly on disaster management mitigation, early warning device system, and first-aid techniques.

Brig. Gen. Cesar M. Idio, 8ID assistant division commander, told the participants to "work hand-in-hand to overcome the challenges that confront us in times of calamities. Thus, proactive preparedness is the key factor that will guide us and reinforce our actions

in life-saving situations." (Restituto A. Cayubit)

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The Manila Times

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2 NPA REBELS SLAIN IN ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: The Joint Task Force Zampelan under Brig. Gen. Rolly Bautista encountered about 30 New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Barangay Guinoman, Diplahan, Zamboanga Sibugay, killing two rebels and seizing several firearms. Soldiers of the 44th Infantry Battalion engaged the rebels under Feliciano Bravo of the Western Mindanao Regional Party Committee, according to Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command. She said soldiers found two dead NPA rebels and were able to recover two high-powered firearms – an AK47 and an M16 Armalite rifle. Two local civilian volunteers operating with the soldiers were wounded during the firefight, Petinglay added. The group was reportedly led by NPA leaders Ka Tibo and Ka Henry. Bautista, also commander of the Army's 1st Infantry (Tabak) Division, said the group under Feliciano Bravo is involved in numerous atrocities particularly arson, extortion, killings and abductions.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

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2 NPA rebels slain in clashes

Three New People's Army (NPA) rebels died in encounters with government troops in Zamboanga del Sur and Kalinga on Saturday.

An alias Tibo and an alias Henry of the Western Mindanao regional party committee clashed with soldiers of the 44th Infantry Battalion in Sitio Malagak, Barangay Guinoman in Diplaha town.

Brig. Gen. Rolando Joselito Bautista, commander of the First Army Division and Joint Task Force ZampeLan (Zamboanga peninsula, Lanao), said an AK47 and an M16 rifle were recovered at the scene.

Bautista said two civilian volunteers were wounded and brought to a hospital for treatment.

Rudy Miguel, with aliases of Marcial, Dek and Alay, of the Marcial Daggay Command was killed in an encounter with soldiers belonging to the 50th Infantry Battalion in Sitio Ibong, Barangay Balbasalang, Balbalan. Pvt. First Class Robin Managuelod was wounded in the clash.

– Roel Pareño, Raymund Catindig, Artemio Dumlao

11 Maute group members fall

LANAO DEL SUR – At least 11 suspected members of the Maute group were arrested during a raid on three houses in Marogong town yesterday.

Policemen and personnel of the Army's 6th Infantry Battalion recovered a 60 millimeter mortar launcher, an M60 machine gun, a .50-caliber Barrett rifle, an anti-tank launcher as well as an M14, an M16, a .30-caliber Carbine and an M-1 Garand rifle from the militants.

Chief Superintendent Reuben Theodore Sindac, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao police director, said they received reports on the presence of the group in Barangay Romagondong.

Officials said a certain Gaos, an alleged drug pusher and cultivator of marijuana plantations, was the target of the operation.

– John Unson, Michael Punongbayan

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BEACH LANDING – Filipino and American soldiers disembark from an amphibious landing craft on the shores of Casiguran, Aurora as part of the civil-military activities that was held under the 17th Philippines-US Balikatan Exercises. (Alvin Kasiban)

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Malaya

The National Newspaper

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Helping hand.
Army reservists lend a hand in the Brigada Eskwela program at the Rosauro Almario Elementary School in Manila.

PHOTO BY JONAS SULTI

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BALIKATAN

PH, US TROOPS TRAIN FOR RELIEF OPERATIONS

**By Frances Mangosing
@FMangosingINQ**

CASIGURAN, AURORA—Filipino and American troops on Monday simulated relief operations in the wake of a supertyphoon scenario, highlighting the focus of this year's Balikatan exercises on disaster response as the usual territorial defense maneuvers took a back seat.

The shift was on orders of President Duterte, who earlier directed the scrapping of the Balikatan exercises but later relented.

The Balikatan is part of a Mutual Defense Treaty between the two countries signed in 1951.

"The military is always dictated by the guidance of political leaders and we comply with that," the Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, said on the sidelines of the event.

This year's Balikatan involved about 5,000 troops (2,800 Filipino and 2,600 American), fewer than some 9,000 American and Filipino soldiers who took part in exercises last year.

"It turned out this Balikatan is a little smaller, 2/3 of size compared to last year ... but there is no policy that says that it will be small," said Brig. Gen. John Jansen, commander of US Joint Task Force.

Barangay Dibacong in Casiguran, the venue of the main event for the joint drills, was supposedly hit by a supertyphoon and there was no other way to bring relief to residents but by air and sea.

The Philippine Navy's biggest ship, the BRP Tarlac, was used as a supply vessel and ferried troops for the event dubbed "Civil Military Activities from the Sea." The Philippines also used its Huey helicopters.

The US forces used V-22 Osprey and UH-60 Black Hawk choppers for the insertion of troops and casualty evacuation. They also used the USNS Sacaewa, a cargo ship, to ferry personnel and relief supplies.

The troops also sponsored a medical and dental mission, and taught residents expedient water collection and purification, health and safety management and other topics related to calamities. INQ

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POLITICAL PRISONERS

4 NDFP CONSULTANTS ARRESTED, REMAIN IN DETENTION

Four leaders of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) have been arrested and detained since February this year even after President Duterte promised to release 14 political prisoners to further boost the peace talks, according to a leftist rights watchdog.

The human rights group Karapatan said two consultants of the NDFP, the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), were arrested last week while two others were nabbed in February.

"These are clear violations of agreements between the gov-

ernment of the Republic of the Philippines and the NDFP on safety and immunity guarantees and on human rights and international humanitarian law," Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay said.

Karapatan said NDFP consultants Rommel Salinas and Bishop Carlo Morales of the Iglesia Filipino Independiente were accosted in an Army checkpoint in Gango, Ozamiz City, on May 11.

They were charged the next day with illegal possession of firearms and explosives, a non-bailable offense.

Palabay said the guns and

explosives were planted in Salinas and Morales' belongings.

Karapatan also reported that Promencio Cortez was arrested on Feb. 9 in Baguio City while Ferdinand Castillo, a campaign officer of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, was arrested on Feb. 12 in Caloocan City.

The two NDFP consultants are still detained, according to Karapatan.

Karapatan said NDFP ranking members Benito and Wilma Tiamzon also reported being tailed by suspected military agents last week.

Benito Tiamzon, alleged CPP

chair, is a member of the NDFP negotiating panel while his wife Wilma is a consultant.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines, however, denied on Monday that its members "tailed" the Tiamzons.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, AFP public affairs chief, said the military had not spied on the Tiamzons after they met President Duterte in Malacañang on May 9.

"For the record, we deny any efforts being alluded to the military that we are trailing or spying on the Tiamzon couple," Arevalo said. —DONA Z. PAZZ-

IBUGAN AND PHILIP C. TUBEZA INQ

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Abu Sayyaf crisis in Bohol ends as last 2 men killed

Bandits take Calape resident, son hostage, but government troops corner them in a mangrove area

By Leo Udtohan
@leoudtohanINQ

CALAPE, BOHOL—The two remaining Abu Sayyaf members hiding in the island province of Bohol were killed on Monday afternoon, after more than a month on the run following a foiled attempt to set up a local base.

Abu Ubayda and another member identified only as "Asis" were killed in a pursuit operation that started past noon and ended at 5:35 p.m.

Both died from bullet wounds in the head. Ubayda was unrecognizable after he was repeatedly shot in the face.

Their deaths ended a crisis that started on April 10 when a group of 10 Abu Sayyaf members entered Barangay Napo in Inabanga town to set up base there and conduct terror activities on nearby islands.

Residents tipped off the police about the presence of armed men in their community. The police, in turn, relayed the information to the military.

A gun battle ensued on April 12, leaving three Abu Sayyaf members dead, including their leader, Abu Rami.

The remaining members of the group fled to nearby Clarin town and hid inside a cave in Barangay Bacani.

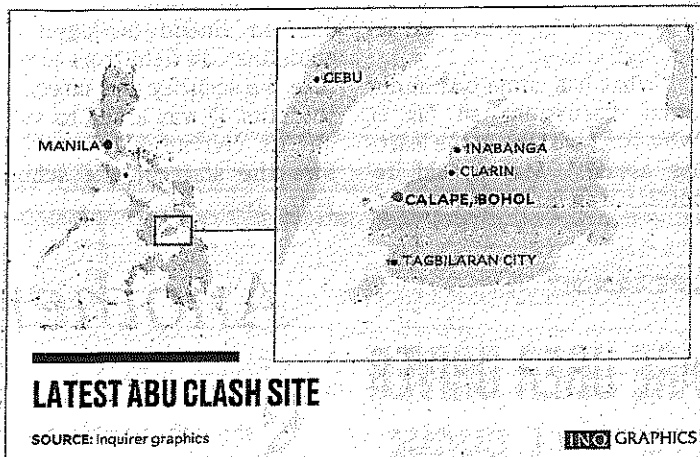
Discovered

But government troops discovered their hiding place on April 22 after receiving a tip from a *habal-habal* (passenger motorcycle) driver and three residents.

Another clash broke out, leading to the deaths of four bandits, including Joselito Meloria, a subleader of the group who guided the bandits to his hometown of Inabanga via Barangay Napo.

Another Abu Sayyaf member, Saad Kiram, went out of hiding and asked for food from residents in Tubigon town on May 4.

He was arrested and taken to a police camp in Tagbilaran City for interrogation. Howev-



er, he was killed the next day after he fought it out with policemen while trying to escape.

On May 10, the police and the military cordoned off Pangangan Island in this town after receiving reports of the presence of the two remaining Abu Sayyaf bandits.

On Monday morning, Hilario Toloy and his 7-year-old son were gathering seashells along the mangrove forest here when the bandits appeared and pointed their guns at them.

The two asked the father

and son to give them food, according to a relative of the Toloyos.

Hostage

Reports said the bandits took Toloy's son hostage to make sure that he would return with the food.

Toloy went home to Barangay Kahayag, just a few meters from the mangrove area, and brought with him rice and catfish stewed in vinegar for the bandits.

Hilario's wife, Imelda,

however, reported to the Kahayag village captain, Ian Bahandi, that her husband and son were being held hostage by the bandits.

Bahandi, in turn, reported the matter to government troops who went to the mangrove area.

As a shootout ensued, the father and son scampered for safety while the two Abu Sayyaf bandits ran to nearby Barangay Lomboy where they took a resident's motorcycle.

They headed to Barangay Lawis only to find themselves facing a police checkpoint.

They abandoned the motorcycle and ran, returning to the mangrove area in Lawis.

Government troops pursued them and cornered them in the mangrove area, where the bandits were killed in separate areas.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson, said no one among the government forces was hurt. —WITH A REPORT FROM PHILIP C. TUBEZA INQ

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Another Sayyaf man in Bohol killed

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

One of the two remaining Abu Sayyaf bandits who entered Bohol last month was killed in a government operation yesterday.

The fatality and his cohort, who have yet to be identified, were spotted in Barangay Kahayag on Panggagan island at around 12:30 p.m.

"They initially took a resident hostage, whom they later abandoned, and commandeered a motorcycle when they sensed that the troops were arriving," Chief Superintendent Noli Taliño, Central Visayas police director, said.

Taliño said the bandits parted ways to avoid a checkpoint, triggering a shootout

with responding police and military personnel.

Pursuit operations are underway for the bandit who escaped.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman, said soldiers and policemen launched the operation based on a tip from a concerned citizen.

The two bandits were with a group who stormed Inabanga town last month allegedly to stage kidnappings.

Five Abu Sayyaf bandits, including sub-leader Muamar Askali, alias Abu Rami, who was reportedly involved in the beheading of two Canadians and a German hostage, were killed in a military offensive on April 11. Four other bandits were later killed in Clarin town.

More than a week ago, Saad Samad Kiram, alias Abu Saad, who was arrested in Barangay New Lourdes, Cortes, was killed by his police escorts while allegedly trying to escape.

Meanwhile, in Tawi-Tawi, Sahidul Bandhala Jikiri, with aliases of Idul, Jamiri Saidul and Saidul-Idul, was collared in an operation of Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi in Barangay Sipangkot, Sitangkai.

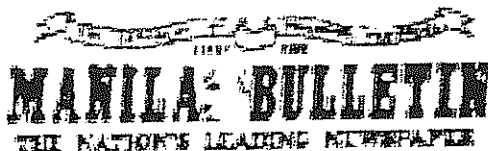
Jikiri admitted that he is with the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Idang Susukan and Sihata Latip who are behind kidnappings in Sulu.

Jikiri said he also had contacts with sub-leaders Salip Susung and Abraham Hamid as well as Nixon Mukdadil and his brother Brown, who were behind cross-border kidnappings and hijackings.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, Western Mindanao Command spokesperson, said at least 18 bandits have been arrested, 48 surrendered and 56 killed in areas under Westmincom's operation since January.

— With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Roel Pareño

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Another Sayyaf killed in Bohol encounter

By **AARON RECUENCO**

Another fleeing Abu Sayyaf member was killed in a clash with police and military forces in Panggangan town, Bohol, Monday afternoon.

Chief Supt. Noli Talino, director of the Central Visayas regional police, said the killing of the terrorist leaves just one more member of the group on the run.

"The pursuit of the remaining ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group) is ongoing," said Talino.

He said the encounter erupted when two Abu Sayyaf were spotted in Barangay Cahayag, Panggangan.

The two belonged to the small band of terrorists that landed in Inabanga town of Bohol last month.

At least eight Abu Sayyaf, including the leader and the local who led the group to Bohol, were killed in separate fighting in Inabanga and Clarin towns.

"Initially, they took a hostage, a

resident of the barangay, but later they left the hostage and commandeered a motorcycle," said Talino.

Encountering a checkpoint, the two separated, but Talino said residents reported their presence to authorities.

Talino said police and military forces were immediately sent to the area and engage one of the gunmen.

"A firefight ensued and this led to the death of the ASG," said Talino.

The group has shifted its attention to tourist spots in Central Visayas areas after being driven out in Malaysia where they usually take their foreign hostages.

A few weeks after the Abu Sayyaf group landed in Bohol, a female police official was arrested allegedly for trying to rescue trapped and wounded terrorists in Clarin.

Security forces have begun to focus on Palawan after intelligence reports disclosed the Abu Sayyaf was planning to send fighters there to carry out kidnappings.

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PUNISHMENT FOR ABUSE

NPA 'ARRESTS' MINE OWNER IN AGUSAN DEL SUR RAID

SAN FRANCISCO, AGUSAN DEL SUR—Communist rebels on Monday confirmed that they “arrested” a small-scale gold mining operator in this province on Saturday, saying the move was meant to punish him for the long record of abuse by his family on farmers in the province.

Ka Ariel Montero, spokesperson of Regional Operational Command of New People’s Army (NPA) Northeastern Mindanao Region, said a group of rebels took Carson Ceasar “Abud” Lademora and his aide, Leonardo Cacao, after they raided the mine site in the subvillage of Sinug-ang in Rosario town.

Lademora operates small-scale mining tunnels in the high-grade gold rush area of Sinug-ang in the village of Bayugan 3 in Rosario, which his family has been claiming since the early 1980s.

The rebels also seized 21 high-powered guns and bullets during the raid.

Lademora, who is in his 40s, is a son of the late Philippine Constabulary (PC) Col. Carlos Lademora, leader of the dreaded “Lost Command,” whose reign in this town in the 1980s had sown terror on residents.

“Through the continuing control of ... the remaining notorious Lost Command forces, the Lademora family monopolized mining in Sinug-ang, Bayugan 3 and deprived other people of livelihood. Residents feared the existence of [the] armed group controlled by the Lademoras,” Montero said.

In a local radio interview, Ka Sandara Amihan, spokesperson of NPA Northeastern Mindanao Region, said Lademora would be investigated and presented before the people whom his family had allegedly abused.

She said it would be up to the people to decide on Lademora’s fate.

Efforts by the Inquirer to reach the Lademora family on Monday failed.

Amihan dismissed earlier media reports that Lademora was a victim of kidnapping, saying “it would never be [in the] vocabulary of the revolutionary movement.”

Montero described Lost Command as a ragtag band of former PC soldiers and suspected criminals organized by the elder Lademora.

He said it functioned as a private army of two firms in the province that was used to grab land from farmers in the towns of Rosario and San Francisco.

Montero said thousands of farmers were forced to sell or abandon their lands for fear of harassment from Lost Command.

Amihan said the rebels seized the firearms of the Lademora family since these were used to terrorize the people.

She assured that Lademora would be given the best medical care while under captivity.

Rosario Mayor Jose Cuyos Jr. has activated the municipal crisis committee to reach out to NPA rebels and seek Lademora’s release. —CHRIS V. PANGANIBAN INQ

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PH, US troops train for disaster response in Aurora

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

CASIGURAN, Aurora – More than 500 Filipinos and American troops engaged yesterday in joint Civilian Military Activities from the Sea or “CMA-S” in this town in preparation for a powerful typhoon, similar to “Yolanda,” that

could hit any part of Luzon.

Major Celeste Frank Sayson, “Balikatan 2017” spokesman for the Philippines, said the CMA-S also forms part of the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations for this year’s annual joint training between the militaries of the United States and the Philippines.

As such, air and sea assets of both the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) its US counterpart were utilized.

On the Philippine side, assets used include the Philippine Navy’s strategic sea lift vessel (LD-601) “BRP Tarlac,” two UH-1D Huey transport helicopters; a Landing Craft Utility (LCU), a type of boat used by amphibious forces to transport equipment and troops to the shore; and a rigid-hulled inflatable boat (HRB) or rigid inflatable boat (RIB).

On the other hand, US air and

naval assets used in the exercise included a Sacagawee (T-AKE-2); a Lewis and Clark-class type dry cargo ship; a Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey; a Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk; and a Boeing CH-47 Chinook.

Sayson said the new activity was aimed at providing support to the communities devastated by typhoons through the conduct of health education and first-responder Bilateral Subject Matter Exchange Events (SMEE) in order to increase readiness of the AFP, local government units (LGUs), the local populace, and other partici-

pating government agencies and civil society volunteers.

The activities tested the combined capabilities of the AFP through the joint coordination of the AFP Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) and the United States Forces in HADR operations in responding to an area struck by a Category 5 typhoon or super-typhoon.

“For the first time nakapunta dito ang LD601 natin, ang BRP Tarlac mismo dito sa (our BRP Tarlac reached the) Port ng Dibacong to conduct resupply mission.”

6 May 2017

The Manila Times

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ASG member nabbed in Tawi-Tawi

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: A member of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) involved in kidnapping for ransom was arrested by the Joint Task Force Tawi-Tawi (JTF Tawi-Tawi) after villagers tipped off the military about his involvement with the notorious group tied to the Islamic State.

Capt. Jo-ann Petinglay, Western Mindanao Command spokesman, said Marine Battalion Landing Team 10 (MBLT-10) troopers on Saturday arrested Sahidul Bandhala Jikiri, alias Idul/Jamiri Saidul/Saidul Idul/Jikiri Saidul, of Barangay Sipangkot in Sitangkai town after residents identified him as a member of the

ASG/KFRG operating in the area.

Brig. Gen. Custodio Parcon, JTF Tawi-Tawi commander, said the information about Jikiri was volunteered during a dialogue with residents.

"In coordination with the police, we immediately invited Jikiri for an interview and he confessed to be an ASG/KFRG member under sub-leaders Indang Susukan and Sihata Latip whose groups are operating in Sulu Province," Parcon added.

Jikiri also revealed his role alongside other ASG/KFRG sub-leaders Abraham Hamid, Sallip Susung, Nixon Mukta dil and Brown Mukta dil in kidnapping and cross-border seajacking, mostly targeting foreign nationals in the

Philippine and Malaysian seas.

He also has affiliations with other ASGs such as the Raden Abu group and Alden Bagade group, acting as an errand man in procuring speedboats and other requirements to support kidnapping activities.

Meanwhile, government soldiers also seized over the weekend an Abu Sayyaf encampment on a remote hilltop village in Sumisip, Basilan and recovered homemade bomb components left behind after a firefight by the terrorists under Puruji Indama.

**JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL
AND AL JACINTO**

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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CONTROVERSIAL TRADER TO SUPPLY WEAPONS TO PH

By Roy Stephen C. Canivel
@roycanivel_INQ

BEIJING—Poly Technologies Inc., a controversial Chinese arms trader, will provide military equipment to the Philippines under a \$500-million loan agreement between Beijing and Manila, according to the Philippines' Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Speaking at a press briefing on Sunday night, Lorenzana said the Chinese company provided a letter of intent for an arms supply deal.

Poly Technologies officials met with President Duterte on Sunday, Lorenzana said.

'Wide array'

Mr. Duterte was in Beijing to attend the two-day Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, joining delegates, including some heads of state,

from 28 other countries.

Lorenzana said Poly Technologies was offering the Philippines "a wide array of defense equipment" for some of which the Chinese government offered a \$500-million loan.

A subsidiary of China Poly Group Corp., Poly Technologies, was sanctioned by the United States in 2013 for violating the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act.

The law imposes sanctions on private and public entities that provide equipment or technology that could have a "material contribution" to the development of weapons of mass destruction or cruise or ballistic missile systems to rogue states.

The sanctions on Poly Technologies were lifted in 2015.

Lorenzana said the Philippines would send a technical working group to China to look

at the equipment being offered by Poly Technologies.

He could not say what weapons the Philippines needed, as these would depend on the recommendation of the Army, Navy and Air Force.

"We are not saying that we will buy from them or we will not buy from them, but if we need anything from the Chinese defense industry then we're going to procure using the loan that they are going to offer to us," Lorenzana said.

Territorial defense

The Philippines needs warships and multirole jet fighters to defend its territory in the South China Sea.

China claims almost all of the South China Sea, a claim that the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague invalidated last year in a challenge brought by the

Philippines after Beijing seized Panatag Shoal, a rich fishing ground off Zambales province, after a two-month maritime standoff in 2012.

China rejected the ruling, insisting on bilateral talks to settle rival territorial claims.

Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan also have claims in the South China.

But while it offers talks, China is building artificial islands in the South China Sea and topping them with military facilities, including runways and missile batteries.

Unlike Vietnam, which has fought naval battles with China over territory in the South China Sea, the Philippines has nothing to defend its own territory in the globally important waterway.

not relate the South China Sea dispute with the modernization of the Philippine military.

"I think we should separate our dispute from the South China Sea from our relationship with the Chinese," he said.

He said China also offered \$14 million in December last year, although he did not clarify if this was also a loan.

He said the money would be used to purchase four fast boats, 200 sniper rifles and several hundred grenade launchers with ammunition—all of which would be delivered by the end of the year. INQ

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NPA justifies kidnap of Agusan trader

By **BEN SERRANO**

BUTUAN CITY – The New People's Army (NPA) justified its kidnapping of Agusan del Sur trader Carzon Ceasar Lademora over the weekend, saying the "arrest" was part of the group's punitive actions against alleged abuses of the Lademoras.

The Front Committee 14 of the North-eastern Mindanao Region also admitted that they confiscated from Lademora's group a total of 21 firearms, according to a press statement dated May 14 and sent via e-mail. It was signed by NEMR Regional Operational Command spokesman Ariel Montero.

The NPA's statement added that when the rebels raided Lademora's mining tunnel in Sitio Anoling, Barangay Bayugan 3, Rosario, Agusan del Sur in the morning of May 13, not a shot was fired.

Montero identified the seized high-powered firearms as two M16s, one AK47, one BAR, one M14, one Garand rifle, four carbines, three M79 launchers, three shotguns, four .45 caliber handguns and one .38 caliber revolver. Assorted ammunition,

magazines and other military supplies were also taken away.

"The confiscation of firearms from the armed forces of the Lademora family is a punitive action of the NPA for the long record of abuse, crime, destruction of people's livelihood and exploitation of small miners committed by the Lademora family. The raid and arrest served also as justice for the victims," the NPA's statement read.

"Continuing control of armed forces and the remaining notorious Lost Command forces of the Lademora family monopolized mining in Sinug-ang, Barangay Bayugan 3 and deprived other people of livelihood. Residents feared the existence of said armed group controlled by the Lademoras," it further stated.

The statement also clarified that Abud Lademora is the brother, not the son as earlier reported, of former San Francisco, Agusan del Sur mayor Carl Lademora. He is the son of the late and former Philippine Constabulary colonel Carlos Lademora.

Lademora will face charges filed by victims before the NPA justice system, according to the rebel group.

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Asean defense chiefs hold Manila meet

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

Defense and military chiefs of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are in the Philippines for a high-level meeting to discuss humanitarian assistance and disaster response, piracy and counterterrorism.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año will hold discussions with his counterparts from May 17 to 19, with some preliminary talks starting yesterday.

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said the 2017 Chiefs of Defense Forces Informal Meeting (ACDFIM) is held annually with ASEAN countries taking turns hosting the event.

"It has started. General Año's counterparts are coming to the country, the defense chiefs, the heads of ASEAN armed forces," he told **The STAR**.

"We have 10 countries in ASEAN so all those 10 chiefs will be coming to meet with their counterparts and the meeting will be hosted by the Philippines this time through General Año. They started arriving Sunday night," he said.

Padilla said the chiefs of operations and the chiefs of intelligence of the various armed forces of ASEAN countries would also join the meetings.

"This year, we will discuss HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster response), how we can facilitate our partnerships, how to help each other during calamities. It's anchored on the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Center," he said.

Padilla added that the high-level meeting will also talk about anti-piracy matters and counterterrorism, which are also the focus of the 2017 Balikatan Exercises between the United States Armed Forces and the AFP, but the ACDFIM will not involve actual command post exercises and field training exercises as it will be just discussions among high-ranking military officials of the ASEAN region.

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**MANILA BULLETIN**
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● **PMA visit**

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Mindanao Command (AFP WestMinCom) welcomed on Thursday cadets of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) who arrived here as part of a five-day tour of the various military installations and landmarks in the city. WestMinCom Chief Lt Gen. Carlito G. Galvez, Jr., said the activity also aimed to assist the cadets on their choice of branch service when they graduate in 2019. Galvez met the PMA officials, cadets and company marchers in his office at Camp Navarro here. The "Southern Tour" was also meant to orient the 284 PMA second-class cadets of the military units and provide them a better view of the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP) organizations. (Nonoy Lacson)

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Sanctioned China firm eyes AFP deal

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

BEIJING – A state-owned Chinese firm that was sanctioned by the United States for allegedly supplying weapons of mass destruction to Iran has expressed its intention to supply military hardware to the Philippines to boost the country's defense capability.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana announced yesterday that state-owned conglom-

erate China Poly Group Corp. has expressed intent to supply arms and other equipment to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The offer casts a shadow of concern raised by China's militarization in the South China Sea, which also comes on the heels of President Duterte's pivot to China.

Duterte received officials of the China Poly Group Corp. and Poly Technologies Inc. who

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paid a courtesy call on him at the Grand Hyatt Hotel here last Sunday.

"It's not yet a document. It's a letter of intent to deal with them because they're offering us a lot, a wide array of defense equipment," said Lorenzana, who was present during the Poly Technologies' call.

This is different from the \$14-million grant and another \$50-million loan offered by Beijing last year during Duterte's visit here.

The fast boats, sniper rifles and ammunition under the \$14-million grant will be delivered by yearend, the defense chief said.

Concerned parties were set to sign the letter of intent yesterday.

In an interview on the sidelines of the two-day Belt and Road Forum here, Lorenzana said the country could

take advantage of China's offer to improve its resources, especially in dealing with terrorist groups in the South.

"This is an intent and we are going to send here a technical working group to look at the equipment and see what we need," Lorenzana added.

In looking at Beijing to supply the needs of the AFP modernization, Lorenzana noted how arms are cheaper in China compared to other suppliers.

Practicality

Lorenzana was quick to defend the Philippines' dealing with China on arms purchase despite the Philippines' claim over disputed islands at the South China Sea.

"Actually, we are not warring with China on the issue of South China Sea. That's only a dispute," he said.

He echoed Duterte's state-

ments to set aside the dispute temporarily, adding that these concerns can be addressed amicably.

"We believe that would be settled through dialogue, bilateral or multilateral (talks) with other claimants. China is open about it," he added.

"Everybody is pragmatic here. Nobody would like to go into a shooting war with anybody. That's bad. You will just be spending resources and men for nothing if we have any shooting," Lorenzana said.

However, reports said China Poly Group Corp. was among the four Chinese firms slapped with sanctions by the United States in 2013 for selling items to Iran, which is banned under US laws aimed at curbing Iran's missile program.

The Chinese firms violated the rules of the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Nuclear Suppliers

Group and other international programs aimed at curbing the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, wire reports said.

But China had earlier asked the US to revoke its sanctions, criticizing America's misguided policy.

In contrast to the United States, the Philippines' longest defense ally, Lorenzana noted the stringent conditions imposed by the US that are attached to arms procurement.

"The problem with the United States... the process there is very slow because it has to go

through (US) Congress, and they demand some conditions. They ask like, what do you do with these equipment? Do you use it against drugs?" he added.

"That's why we are discouraged to get from them because of some conditionalities," Lorenzana said.

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PH mulls over purchase of military assets from China

By GENALYN D. KABILING

BEIJING — The Philippine government is considering the acquisition of military equipment, including fast boats and drones, from China's biggest arms exporter to enhance anti-terrorism and security capability.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the government intends to forge a letter of intent with China on Monday to negotiate the possible purchase of military assets, assuring that it would go for quality goods at a reasonable price.

The possibility of a military purchase was raised after the President met with top officials of the state-owned China Poly Group Corp. and Poly Technologies, Inc. on the sidelines of an international trade summit here.

"It's not yet a document. It's a letter of intent to deal with them because they're offering us a lot – a wide array of defense equipment and a loan from the Chinese government at the tune of about US\$500 million," Lorenzana

said in a media interview in Beijing last Sunday night.

As part of the "letter of intent," Lorenzana said the government will send a technical working group to China "to look at the equipment and see what we need" this year. Such process of shopping and reviewing the equipment offer will likely take a few months, he added.

"And after that, we'll go from there. We are not saying that we will buy from them or we will not buy from them," Lorenzana said.

"But if we need anything from the Chinese defense industry then we're going to procure using the loan that they are offering us," he added.

Asked about the equipment being considered, Lorenzana said he would still inquire from the Philippine Army, Philippine Navy, and the Philippine Air Force about the equipment they need.

"We are not going to choose for them. They are going to choose for themselves, what they need from the Chinese defense industry," he said.

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BusinessMirror

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A PUBLICATION OF THE ARMY

South China Sea update: Several countries hold military drills in disputed sea

UNITED State marines joined with forces from Japan, France and Britain for live-firing exercises on the American territory of Guam that are intended to show support for the free passage of vessels in international waters amid concerns China may restrict access to the South China Sea.

The drills are being held around Guam and Tinian islands about 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) south of Tokyo and east of Manila.

The exercises feature two French ships currently on a four-month deployment to the Indian and Pacific oceans. Some 50 Japanese soldiers and 160 Japanese sailors were due to participate, along with UK helicopters and 70 UK troops deployed with one of the French ships.

The drills had been halted temporarily on Friday after a French landing craft ran aground. US officials said they stopped the drills so they could assess the situation. They moved ahead as scheduled on Saturday.

Ships from Thailand, Singapore join US Navy in South China Sea drills

SHIPS from the navies of Thailand and Singapore completed a three-day exercise with the US Navy in the South China Sea last week aimed at boosting their ability to work together on a broad range of maritime tasks.

supplies had arrived on the island. About P1.6 billion (\$32 million) has been earmarked for the construction that will also include a fishing port, solar-power

The exercises, termed Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, have been held since 1995 with Thailand and Singapore as original participants.

“Our sailors certainly are learning extensively from this tremendous experience,” Cmdr. Doug Meagher, who commands the littoral combat ship USS *Coronado*, was quoted as saying by the web site *navy.mil*.

Singapore and Thailand sent frigates to take part in the drills, which also included the US Navy’s Arleigh Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS *Sterett*.

Along with operating together at sea, the exercises included boarding, search and seizure, joint flight operations and communications drills.

Philippines begins moving troops and supplies to reinforce island holding

THE Philippines has started transporting troops and supplies to a disputed island in the South China Sea in preparation for construction work that includes reinforcing and lengthening an airstrip and building a dock.

Pag-asa has been home to Filipino soldiers and fishermen for decades, but is also claimed by Beijing.

Lt. Gen. Raul del Rosario, head of the Philippine military’s Western Command, said last week that troops and initial

generators, a water-desalination plant, the refurbishment of housing for soldiers and the construction of facilities for marine research and tourists.

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China's construction of seven islands nearby in the Spratly archipelago has dwarfed similar activities by rival claimants, including the Philippines, whose frosty relations with Beijing have improved significantly under President Duterte.

Japan, India affirm plans to strengthen military cooperation

JAPAN and India affirmed plans last week to strengthen their military cooperation amid rising tensions in the South China Sea and elsewhere in Asia.

Indian Defense Minister Arun Jaitley told his Japanese counterpart, Tomomi Inada, in Tokyo that his country hopes to pursue a strategic partnership with Japan for regional peace and stability.

Jaitley welcomed a planned trilateral naval exercise among the US, India and Japan in July as a way of strengthening cooperation in the Asia Pacific.

Japan and India have been stepping up defense cooperation amid China's increased assertiveness in the South China Sea and moves to establish a more permanent presence in the Indian Ocean. China regards Japan as a historical rival for dominance in northeast Asia and is embroiled in long-standing border disputes with India, with which it fought a brief but bloody frontier war in 1962. AP

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The Manila Times

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ARMM enlists Islamic scholars vs terrorism

BY JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

COTABATO CITY: The three-day Ulama Summit Against Terrorism has made a declaration that Islam is a religion of peace and should be used to counter terrorism and extremism as well.

Sheikh Abdulrahman "Abu Hurayra" Udasan, mufti (jurist) of the Darul-Ifa (House of Opinions) of the Bangsamoro, said "there should be a distinction between the normative teaching on Islam that is based on the glorious Qur'an and the cultural practices of the Muslims which may or may not be consistent with the normative teaching of Islam."

Udasan pointed out that Islam

means peace and this can automatically counter terrorism and extremism, because "peace in Islam is a key of association not isolation; it is a key of accommodation not marginalization."

The summit that gathered around 300 Ulama (Islamic scholars) from across the country was an initial step of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to enlist the support of

Islamic scholars to combat extremism and terrorism.

The Ulamas also underscored that reeducation is necessary to rediscover Islam, specifically its underlying principles of justice, compassion, peace, and harmony.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman said terrorists use inappropriate interpretations of Islamic principles to strengthen their cause and encourage the commission of vicious acts.

"We urge our Ulama that if we are on the right position, we should move to show what is right, and let's condemn what is wrong," Hataman said.

The Philippines ranked 12th among the countries heavily affected by terrorism in the 2016

Global Terrorism Index of the Institute for Economics and Peace, and the presence of the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Maute group in at least two of its provinces puts ARMM at the forefront of the fight against terrorism in the country.

Hataman said Muslim scholars can contribute to the advocacy against terrorism by educating people about the true teachings of Islam.

The national government considers terrorism as an urgent and critical national security threat.

The summit was also attended by local and regional government officials, the military and police, representatives from civil society organizations and members of the media.

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China, Vietnam agree to keep South China Sea tensions in check

CHINA and Vietnam will manage and properly control their maritime disputes, avoiding actions to complicate or widen them, so as to maintain peace in the South China Sea, the two nations said in a joint communique China released on Monday.

Vietnam is the Southeast Asian country most openly at odds with China over the waterway since the Philippines pulled back from confrontation under President Rodrigo Duterte.

After what China said were “positive” talks on the South China Sea last week between President Xi Jinping and Vietnamese

President Tran Dai Quang, the joint statement stressed the need to control differences.

Both countries agreed to “manage and properly control maritime disputes, not take any actions to complicate the situation or expand the dispute, and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea”, it added.

The document, released by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said both had a “candid and deep” exchange of views on maritime issues, and agreed to use an existing border talks mechanism to look for a lasting resolution.

China claims 90 percent of the

potentially energy-rich South China Sea. Besides Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Taiwan lay claim to parts of the route, through which about \$5 trillion of trade passes each year.

Last year, tension between Beijing and Hanoi rose after Taiwan and U.S. officials said China had placed surface-to-air missiles on Woody Island, part of the Paracels archipelago it controls.

Vietnam called China’s actions a serious infringement of its sovereignty over the Paracels.

In 2014, tension between the two communist countries peaked more dramatically when China moved

an oil rig into disputed waters and protests broke out across Vietnam.

Relations have gradually improved since, with exchanges of high-level visits, though the regional military buildup continues, including China’s construction of airstrips on man-made islands in the busy waterway.

Quang arrived in Beijing last week for a state visit and to attend a two-day conference ending Monday on an ambitious scheme proposed by Xi to build a new Silk Road connecting China to Asia, Europe and beyond, through massive infrastructure investment. — Reuters

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No bells and whistles as Philippines, U.S. hold Balikatan

From Rappler (May 15). No bells and whistles as Philippines, U.S. hold Balikatan

Despite the Duterte administration's shift in foreign policy, officials deny the military exercises with the United States were downsized



BALIKATAN. Philippine Marines alight from a landing craft utility boat onto the shores of Casiguran, Aurora. Photo by Bea Cupin/Rappler

AURORA, Philippines – It was an odd command to hear as a landing craft utility boat carrying Filipino soldiers was about to dock onto the sandy shores of Casiguran town for military exercises between the Philippines and the United States.

"Lakad, wag kayong tumakbo (Walk, don't run)!" said a commander, one of the many Philippine Marines stationed aboard the BRP Tarlac.

There was no need to be on guard, after all.

The military drills in Casiguran, Aurora were meant to simulate a joint response to the aftermath of a catastrophic typhoon or earthquake – not a country invasion, as in the previous year.

On Monday, May 15, the two militaries staged a Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Response (HADR) exercise in the disaster-prone coastal town of Casiguran, one of the highlights in this year's Balikatan exercises.

The joint drills, a yearly tradition of the two allies, are aimed at strengthening coordination in times of distress.

But this year, the distress came months before the scheduled exercises, after Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in October 2016 said there would be no war games during his term. He also threatened to "forget" an existing defense agreement that would expand American military presence in the Philippines.

Duterte was eventually convinced to let the Balikatan continue, but with major changes. The Balikatan this year does not include an exercise to counter an invader on Philippine shores – a potentially touchy issue given the dispute between the Philippines and China over the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea).

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What downsizing?

Even if this year's exercises only involve two-thirds the American troops as last time, and only two Philippine area commands instead of 4, military and government officials from both countries insisted there was no downsizing at all.

Up to 2,600 American soldiers are in the Philippines for the Balikatan with more than 2,800 Filipino military men and women.

"I'd like to correct that impression. We have not downsized," said Brigadier General Restituto Padilla, spokesperson for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), in an interview on the sidelines of the disaster response exercise.

"Same thing. There was no direction to downsize. Nobody told us that there had to be fewer people, there had to be smaller exercises," echoed US Marines Brigadier General John Jansen.

A Philippine government official insisted the same thing.

"Did we downsize?" quipped the Philippine foreign department's Cesar Ramboanga, executive director of the Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement, when asked in a separate chance interview.

He added: "Of course, this year we're stressing the importance of humanitarian assistance and disaster response, so we adjust to that. You don't just dump all the troops there."

Disaster response exercises were also held in Eastern Samar, Isabela, Cagayan, and Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija. In Casiguran, American troops conducted first aid seminars for locals as well.

Duterte has promised to forge an "independent foreign policy" that sees the country moving away from the US and closer to China and Russia. As the Balikatan exercises were taking place, Duterte was in China for the forum promoting the Asian powerhouse's massive economic plan.

"What we do as a military is always dictated by guidance from our political leaders and we comply with that, and I believe the US can also speak the same way," explained Padilla, expounding on the 2017 Balikatan setup.

Ramboanga downplayed any effect Duterte's rhetoric against the US may have on the long-standing relationship between the two countries.

"That's the president. So we have to adjust to our new president because he declared that we'd have an independent foreign policy. And it's very acceptable among Filipinos, isn't it?"

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/169944-no-bells-whistles-philippines-united-states-balikatan-duterte-foreign-policy>

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More soldiers deployed to Davao

From the Mindanao Times (May 15): More soldiers deployed to Davao
THE ARMED Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has deployed a battalion of soldiers as additional force in Davao region, particularly in the city.

Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio has requesting the AFP for additional force in the city to combat insurgency and terroristic attack.

General Eduardo Año, AFP chief of staff, told TIMES yesterday that the troopers of the 16th Infantry (Maglilingkod) Battalion (IB) will serve as an additional troop to the 1003rd Infantry Brigade (IB) under the 10th Infantry Division (ID), which covers the whole area of Davao.

"So far, that's the additional force until we will hold our security assessment this June," Año said.

Maj. Gen. Rafael Valencia, 10th ID commander, said some of the Maglilingkod troopers arrived in the region last Friday from Western Mindanao Command (WesMinCom).

Valencia said they are still conducting evaluation on where to deploy the additional battalion.

"No specific area (where to assign them) but we will adjust accordingly," Valencia said, adding that the additional soldiers will possibly be deployed to areas without security forces in the city.

The 16th IB is under the 2nd ID, the Army's Jungle Fighter Division based in Tanay Rizal. Before coming to Davao, they were assigned at the WesMinCom based in Zamboanga City.

At WesMinCom, the Maglilingkod soldiers served under the operational control of 1st ID in Sulu in running after Abu Sayyaf Group in the area.

The Maglilingkod also served in Surigao del Sur under the 4th ID, helping pressing the insurgency situation in the area.

For now, the 16th IB will augment the 1003rd IB of 10ID.

The Davao-based 10 ID (Agila) is composed of one task force, four brigades, 11 battalions and two engineer battalions, covering the Region XI and parts of Region 12. It has a capacity of around 6,000 soldiers.

Each battalion is composed of about 500 soldiers.

Valencia said they already requesting to recall back to Davao three 10th ID battalions that have been detailed Sulu since last year.

"Through the cooperation with the local government and businessmen, we will activate additional SCAAs (militias) and later on, we will return the troops that we sent to Sulu here (in Region XI)," Año said.

The additional deployment of government troopers in Davao came after the recent attacks staged by the New People's Army (NPA) in the city.

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Capiz nakabenepisyo sa 'Balikatan'

From the Philippine Information Agency (May 15): **Capiz nakabenepisyo sa 'Balikatan'** (Capiz benefits from "Balikatan")

Duha ka mga pampubliko nga eskwelahan sa Capiz ang nakabenepisyo sa programa sang Balikatan Exercise sini nga tuig.

Ang Duran Elementary School sa banwa sang Dumalag kag Malitbog Elementary School sa banwa sang Tapaz ang nakaagom sang tag-isa ka bag-o nga school building.

Ang konstruksyon sang amo nga mga classroom building ang ginpatigayon sang mga soldado gikan sa Estados Unidos sang Amerika kag sang pungsod Pilipinas.

Ginpahayag ni 1st Lt. Hazel Joy Durotan, tagpamaba sang 61st Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army, nga kalakip sa mga ginpatigayon sa idalom sang Balikatan Exercise 2017 ang paghatag ihibalo kag paghanas sa mga pumoluyo, lideres sa komunidad, health workers kag iban pa nga mga service providers tuhoy sa pagpanghanda sa tion sang kalamidad.

Kalakip man sa amo nga paghanas ang sa Basic Life Support, basic hand washing, food storage, food safety kag DRR management and response.

Tinutuyo man sang amo nga Balikatan Exercise ang paghatag sang ila ihibalo sa mga pumoluyo tuhoy sa humanitarian assistance kag disaster relief, counter-terrorism kag ang madasig nga pagresponde sa emerhensya.

Sang nagligad nga tuig, ang buluthuan sa Barangay Jaena Norte sa banwa sang Jamindan kag sa San Nicolas sa Tapaz ang nabuligan man sang Balikatan Exercise 2016 para sa pagpakaayo sang ila eskwelahan kag iban pa nga mga programa subong sang pagpanghanda sa kalamidad kag para sa ikaayong-lawas.

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CMA-S activities off Aurora unrelated to Benham Rise issue

From the Philippine News Agency (May 15): **CMA-S activities off Aurora unrelated to Benham Rise issue**

The decision to hold Civil-Military Activities from the Sea (CMA-S) off Casiguran town, Aurora has nothing to do with the country's decision to highlight its jurisdiction of the resource-rich Benham Rise.

This was stressed by "Balikatan" Philippine spokesperson Major Frank Sayson Monday during the sidelights of the CMA-S activities which was held off Barangay Dibacong which was hypothetically devastated and isolated from help by a "Category 5" typhoon.

The latter event is one of the key features of the 33rd iteration of the "Balikatan" exercises which started May 8 and will end on the 19th.

This year's maneuvers are heavy on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions as per the request of the Philippine government.

Sayson said the area was selected by planners for the CMA-S exercises as it is one of the most easily isolated areas in the country in the event of major calamity as roads leading to it are cut down the mountains and could be easily blocked by debris, making it the ideal location for the exercise.

He said that aid and resupply to Dibacong could only be done through air and sea hence Monday's exercises centered on using naval and air assets of American and Filipino to relieve the hypothetically devastated area.

Assets used by Philippine and US troops in Monday's CMA-S activities off Barangay Dibacong, Casiguran town include the brand-new strategic sealift vessel, the BRP Tarlac (LD-601), AgustaWestland AW-109 "Power" combat utility helicopters, landing craft utilities, and rigid-hull inflatable boat for the Filipino side and the USNS Sacagawea (T-AKE-2), a Lewis-and-Clark class dry cargo ship, the Bell Boeing V-22 "Osprey" tilt-rotor aircraft, Sikorsky UH-60 "Blackhawk", and Boeing C-47 "Chinook" helicopters.

These assets were used to bring relief goods, aid, medical and dental care and other necessities which are instrumental in stabilizing the typhoon devastated community of Dibacong, Sayson pointed out.

He also said the above-mentioned operations are seamless as they are inter-service in nature.

Prior to the exercise, Sayson said US subject matter experts briefed their Filipino counterparts on various tactics and strategies which can expedite in providing relief aid to the typhoon devastated community.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php/articles/987810>

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DND chief signs letter of intent with Chinese arm exporter Poly Group Corporation

From the Philippine News Agency (May 15): DND chief signs letter of intent with Chinese arm exporter Poly Group Corporation

The Department of National Defense (DND), representing the Philippine government, has signed Monday a letter of intent (LOI) for the purchase of weapons and other equipment from China's arms exporter, Poly Group Corporation.

This was confirmed by DND Secretary Delfin Lorenzana saying this is separate from the USD14 million grant given to the Philippines last year.

"Yes, I signed a letter of intent with Poly Group. No specific equipment or arms yet. We'll let the services decide what they want to acquire from China. This is not the USD14 million grant. It is a separate deal," he said.

Signing on behalf of Poly Group Group was it's president, Zhengao Zhang.

When asked whether it is in the interest of the Philippines to acquire Chinese-made weapons when most of the equipment of the Armed Forces of the Philippines is Western made, the DND chief said it will not be a problem.

"Weapons (nowadays) are all similar. They are used the same way. They can also be tailor-made for our specific requirements. Doctrine and training is peculiar to an Army so it won't be affected," he said.

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Military denies spying on Tiamzon couple

From the Philippine News Agency (May 15): Military denies spying on Tiamzon couple

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) strongly denies allegations that its operatives are tailing or spying on National Democratic Front (NDF) consultants Benito and Wilma Tiamzon.

This was disclosed by AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo in an interview Monday.

"For the record, we deny effort being alluded to the military that we are tailing or spying on the Tiamzon couple." he said.

The Tiamzon couple were among the jailed 21 peace consultants who were granted conditional bail so they can participate in the peace talks.

Arevalo stressed that the AFP, as a whole, remains committed to primacy of the peace process and will not do anything to sabotage this.

He also called the NDF accusation as baseless as the group does not have enough basis or evidence to support their accusations other than that they saw two riders aboard aboard a motorcycle allegedly tailing them.

Arevalo also said the AFP is focused on ensuring the safety and security of the Filipino people against terrorism and other threats to just tail members of the NDF consultants for no apparent reason.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php/articles/987844>

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