

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



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28 May 2017

Sunday

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

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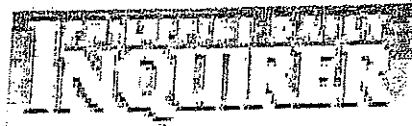
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | MAY 23, 2017 | SUNDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

SOUTHWEST MONSOON AFFECTING WESTERN SECTION OF LUZON AND VISAYAS (As of 5:00 AM - May 27, 2017)

LAOAG CITY 26 - 32 °C	TUGUEGARAO CITY 25 - 33 °C
BAGUIO CITY 17 - 23 °C	TAGAYTAY CITY 23 - 30 °C
SBMA/CLARK 26 - 33 °C	LEGAZPI CITY 26 - 33 °C
METRO MANILA 26 - 34 °C	TACLOBAN CITY 26 - 32 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 26 - 33 °C	METRO CEBU 26 - 32 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 26 - 33 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO 25 - 32 °C
ZAMBOANGA CITY 25 - 33 °C	METRO DAVAO 26 - 33 °C

SUNRISE	SUNSET
5:26 AM	6:21 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
7:46 AM	8:58 PM
NEW MOON	FIRST QUARTER
MAY 26 5:44 AM	MAY 28 6:51 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH HARBOUR	
7:29 PM	11:01 AM
-0.24 Meter	+1.55 Meter

Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rain showers and/or thunderstorms

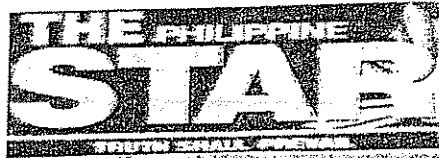
Cloudy skies with rain showers and/or thunderstorms

	MAY 25	MAY 26	MAY 27	MAY 28	MAY 29	MAY 30		
METRO MANILA	25 - 34 °C	25 - 34 °C	TAGAYTAY	24 - 31 °C	24 - 31 °C	TACLOBAN	26 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
TUGUEGARAO	25 - 33 °C	25 - 34 °C	LEGAZPI	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
LAOAG	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	26 - 33 °C	26 - 33 °C	METRO DAVAO	26 - 32 °C	26 - 33 °C
BAGUIO	17 - 23 °C	17 - 24 °C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	26 - 32 °C	26 - 33 °C	ZAMBOANGA	25 - 32 °C	25 - 33 °C
SBMA/CLARK	26 - 34 °C	26 - 34 °C	METRO CEBU	26 - 32 °C	26 - 32 °C			

SAGOT KO, PADALA MO!

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Gov't panel suspends peace talks with Reds

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO
and CHRISTINA MENDEZ

Peace negotiations between the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF) were suspended anew yesterday due to the continuous attacks by rebel forces against government troops in the countryside.

Presidential adviser on the peace process Jesus Dureza said the government peace panel would not participate in the scheduled fifth round of peace talks unless the CPP ensures that it can stop its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), from launching offensives.

Two civilian auxiliary officers were wounded yesterday in an attack by suspected NPA guerrillas in Bukidnon.

The fifth round of talks was set from May 27 to June 1 in Noordwijk in the Netherlands.

This was the second time that the peace talks hit a snag. In February, President Duterte suspended the talks after the NPA violated the unilateral ceasefire and launched attacks which killed several soldiers

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and police officers.

NDF senior adviser Luis Jalandoni first told journalists that the government panel had cancelled the talks.

Jalandoni said the government cited the continuing NPA offensives for calling off the talks. "But they did not mention the concrete reality on the ground that requires the NPA to defend the people on the ground," he said.

Dureza and government peace panel chairman Silvestre Bello III denied Jalandoni's claims, saying the government will wait for the CPP-NDF to recall the NPA offensives before they would return to the peace table.

"We are not cancelling the peace talks. We are waiting for the recall of the NPA intensified attacks," Dureza said.

In Manila, presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella questioned the sincerity of the CPP-NDF in pursuing peace efforts.

The CPP-NDF earlier ordered the NPA to intensify attacks after President Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao due to the Marawi siege.

Dureza said the government is willing to wait for another two days for the CPP-NDF to order their forces on the ground to stop the attacks.

Dureza cited what he described as the "defiant, blatant and serious challenge" hurled by the CPP-NDF at the government.

He said the communist rebels have failed to reciprocate the personal show of goodwill and trust extended by the President to their leaders.

"The government panel is now left without any other recourse but to announce, with due respect to our counterparts and to our facilitator, the Royal Norwegian government, that it will not proceed to participate in the scheduled fifth rounds of peace negotiations until there are clear indications that an enabling environment conducive to achieving just and sustainable peace in the land through peace negotiations across this table shall prevail," Dureza said in a statement sent from the Netherlands.

Dureza thanked the Royal Norwegian government for "steadfastly" and fully supporting the joint work for peace.

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"I trust it will understand why the Philippine government arrived at the decision," he said.

Saying the road to peace is not well paved, Dureza urged the CPP-NDF to "stay the course in this not-so-easy road to peace in our land."

At the start of his statement, Dureza voiced optimism there would be developments in the peace negotiations. But he noted the "upscale of incidents of offensive attacks by the New People's Army throughout the country."

The government panel also cited the perception that the NPA has openly defied the President's call for peace.

Dureza expressed concern over the admission of some CPP-NDF panel members that their leaders have no control over their forces on the ground.

"While we have gone this far and the Filipino people are rooting or supporting us, there are challenges that we must together address as we meet here today on the scheduled fifth round of peace negotiations," Dureza said in his opening statement.

Jalandoni said despite the government's ultimatum, the rebel attacks would continue.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior and Local Government ordered the police to be on alert following the suspension of the peace talks.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV expressed support for the decision of the administration to suspend the peace talks.

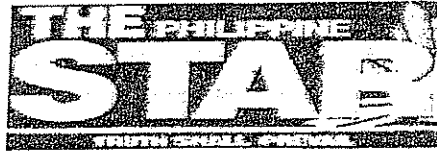
"The communists have been taking advantage of the talks by consolidating their ranks and attacking government troops," Trillanes said.

He urged the administration to remove key government officials who were former members of the communist movement.

"The administration must kick out secretaries Mariano and Taguiwalo since they have been using their positions to further the cause of the CPP-NPA," Trillanes said, referring to Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael Mariano and Social Welfare and Development Secretary Judy Taguiwalo.

Mariano and Taguiwalo are yet to be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments. - With Emmanuel Tupaz, Marvin Sy, AFP

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AFP turns to heavy firepower vs Maute

By ROEL PAREÑO and JAIME LAUDE

The military unleashed heavy firepower - including guided rockets fired from helicopters - for the first time yesterday on Maute positions in Marawi City in a

bid to end the siege by the terror group once and for all.

This came amid growing confidence that the location of the man believed to be the leader of the Islamic State (IS)-inspired fighters, Isnilon Hapilon, has been pin-

pointed in the city.

"We are trying to use our maximum force," said Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez, chief of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom).

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Ramadan, Islam's holy month of fasting and prayer, began yesterday. It has special significance in Marawi, which has a predominantly Muslim population in a largely Catholic country.

The Maute rebels' hold of Marawi City and the government's announcement that Indonesians and Malaysians were among the fighters have raised alarm about the prospect of the IS's radical ideology gaining traction in Southeast Asia.

"I saw two jets swoop down and fire at rebel positions repeatedly," Alexander Mangundatu, a security guard, said as a plume of black smoke billowed in the distance. "I pity the civilians and the women who were near the targeted area. They're getting caught in the conflict and I hope this ends soon."

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año said

"The main purpose of the offensive is to suppress the lawlessness and to maintain normalcy in Marawi so that our people here, our countrymen, can return, especially by Ramadan," he said.

He said the presence of the terrorists in their midst was preventing Muslim residents of the city from peacefully observing Ramadan.

"It is in this light that there is a need to deliberately employ forces and air assets to target with precision selected, identified and already isolated terrorist locations," Galvez said.

He said even Muslim soldiers deferred their observance of Ramadan so they could help defeat the terrorists and restore normalcy in the city

Hapilon is still hiding out in the city under the protection of gunmen who are desperately trying to find a way to extricate him. He said Hapilon suffered a stroke after a government airstrike wounded him in January.

Año predicted that the military operation would take about a week as soldiers go house to house to clear the city of militants.

Solicitor General Jose Calida said foreigners were fighting alongside the gunmen in Marawi, including Indonesians and Malaysians.

"We suspect that, but we're still validating," he said on reports that foreign fighters were helping the Maute militants.

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Resituto Padilla said government forces were working to "clear the city of all remnants of this group."

He said some civilians refused

and in the rest of Mindanao.

"Our Muslim soldiers for now need to give their share of sacrifices in order to make sure that Islam believers from Marawi can soon go back to their homes and observe Ramadan," the Westmincom chief said.

"Our Muslim soldiers who are in Marawi need to sacrifice for now and defer their religious practice until we can address the situation in Marawi," he pointed out.

Galvez said civilians are enduring "extreme deprivation" because government services are unavailable and shops are closed.

"These terrorist atrocities continue to sow terror and confusion even to non-combatant Muslims and Christians," he said in a statement.

to evacuate because they want to guard their homes, slowing down government operations.

"But that's fine as long as civilians are not hurt," Padilla said.

"In as much as we would like to avoid collateral damage, these terrorists are forcing the hand of government by hiding and holding out inside private homes, government buildings and other facilities. Their refusal to surrender is holding the city captive," he said.

"We appeal for everyone's understanding as we take the necessary steps to accomplish our mission and prevent the loss of more innocent lives and damage to property," Padilla said.

Open to dialogue

At Malacañang, President Duterte's spokesman Ernesto Abella said the Chief Executive is open to negotiation with the terror group in the spirit of Ramadan.

"In this spirit of Muslim peace, the President has offered the hand of peaceful dialogue to terrorist groups, to avoid bloodshed in this time of prayer, fasting and mercy," Abella said yesterday.

"With all faiths, we pray that God restore and preserve peace in Mindanao," he said.

The Palace issued a statement of solidarity with the Muslim community as Islam's observance of Ramadan began yesterday.

"We stand with Muslim Filipinos in their reverent observance of the holy month of Ramadan. Together we pray for an end to terrorism that falsely claims to advance Islam and seeks to subjugate our land to the brutal IS," Abella said.

The Palace also took time to pray for the policemen killed in the initial fighting with the Maute group.

"We take a moment to remember some of the first casualties in the May 23 attacks in Marawi City; Marawi City Police Senior Insp. and Intelligence Unit chief Freddie Manuel Solar, from Baguio City, and two members of Special Forces, First Lt. John Carl Morales and Special Forces Marlon Baldovino, both of Kabacan, North Cotabato," Abella said.

While claiming he is open to dialogue, Duterte said on Friday he had instructed the military to kill anyone brandishing unlicensed firearms in Mindanao, especially if they resist when accosted.

The Maute group has emerged from the glut of bandit and separatist groups in Mindanao. It is seen as a tactically smart, social media savvy group eager to align with IS militants.

Security experts say Mindanao could become a draw for regional extremists and the Maute's alignment with the IS and its ability to take on the military could support moves to secure funding and recruit foreign and local fighters.

A city of 200,000 people, Marawi is mostly deserted, with officials saying "80-90 percent" of the population has been evacuated.

Some residents remain in relatively safe neighbors but others are trapped close to the fighters from the Maute group and other militants from the area.

IS's *Amaq* news agency claimed responsibility for the Marawi unrest, although that came more than a day after it started.

The military said Maute has yet to be endorsed by the IS as one of its affiliates.

The militants have control of some government buildings, including a jail, which was seized on Tuesday, leading to the escape of more than 100 prisoners, including some Maute members.

"I saw them near the highway. I saw ISIS there. I could tell because they wore black headbands with the ISIS signs," said one man fleeing Marawi by foot, who identified himself as Musa. "They were also riding around my area on motorcycles."

Jo-Ar Herrera, a military spokesman, said 41 militants had been killed, with 10 more deaths after heavy fighting on Friday. Two more soldiers died, bringing the total of those killed in action to 13. Forty-five military personnel had been wounded.

Asked whether the military had located the whereabouts of Hapilon in Marawi, Herrera answered "yes."

"They can run but they can't hide," he said, adding that it was only a matter of time before Hapilon is captured or killed.

Hapilon, a leader of another Mindanao-based rebel group Abu Sayyaf, pledged allegiance to IS last year and has formed an alliance with Maute.

The military said he is still wounded from a January air strike and the fierce Maute resistance is aimed at protecting him.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Hapilon received \$2 million from Syria to fund his campaign in Mindanao.

Sidney Jones, a regional security expert, said it was not clear that Hapilon was calling the shots in Marawi.

Abdullah Maute, one of two brothers that formed Maute, may be setting the overall strategy.

"He's smarter, and the fighters are in his territory. So no, Hapilon's death would not cripple the movement," Jones said.

- With Christina Mendez, Reuters, AP

24 May 2017



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More air strikes in Marawi

Civilians wave white flags 42 trapped teachers rescued

BY AFP/AP and WIKI/CRISMUNDO

Security forces on Saturday dropped more bombs at positions of the Islamic State (IS) linked Maute Group in a bid to wrest full control of besieged Marawi City where they have been battling Islamist militants for six weeks, working to set up despite the start of Ramadan.

The city from which the Islamic militant group has been under siege for six weeks in Mindanao, Philippines, and the surrounding area, has been hit by a series of air strikes, including one that killed a child, according to a Washington Post report. The group has been fighting since the start of the siege, and it has been loyal to the group, and it has been burning buildings and seizing about 400 people, according to a report. The group has been hit by a series of air strikes, including one that killed a child, according to a Washington Post report.

“I saw two jets swoop down and fire at rebel positions repeatedly,” Alexander Mangundatu, a security guard, told The Associated Press in Marawi as a plume of black smoke billowed in the distance. “I pity the civilians and the women who were near the targeted area. They’re getting caught in the conflict and I hope this ends soon.”

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said government forces are working to “clear the city of all remnants of this group.”

He said some civilians refused to evacuate because they want to guard their homes, which is slowing down the government operations.

“But that’s fine as long as civilians are not hurt,” Padilla said.

President Duterte declared martial law in the entire Mindanao in response to the clashes, which have claimed at least 48 lives and he has said are part of a campaign by the Islamic State group to establish a local caliphate.

“We have identified where they are consolidating so we are doing surgical air strikes to destroy the local terrorist group,” local military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Jo-ar Herrera said.

More Marines deployed

Thuckloads of extra marines were also seen driving into Marawi, one of the biggest Muslim populated cities in the mainly Catholic Philippines with about 200,000 residents.

The fighting erupted on Tuesday when dozens of gunmen went on a rampage throughout Marawi in response to an attempt by security forces to arrest Hapilon.

They planted black IS flags, took a priest and up to 14 other people hostage from a church, and set fire to buildings.

Thirteen soldiers, two policemen, and 31 militants have died in the fighting, according to authorities.

Two civilians were also confirmed killed inside a hospital that the gunmen had occupied on Tuesday, and the military has said it was investigating reports that nine people were murdered at a checkpoint the militants had set up.

Yesterday, Malacañang took time to remember some of the members of the government forces who perished during the attacks in Marawi City.

"We take a moment to remember some of the first casualties in the May 23 attacks in Marawi City," Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said in a statement Saturday morning.

"May they rest in peace, and may we be faithful to honor the ultimate

sacrifice of their lives in the service of their country," he added.

Out of harm's way

All 42 teachers who were trapped following the fire fight between government security forces and the Maute terrorists were already rescued, it was learned yesterday. They belong to the Department of Education's (Dep-Ed) in Wao, Lanao del Sur district.

An official of the Mindanao State University (MSU) in Marawi City said non-Maranao students, faculty, and staff are now out of the beleaguered city.

MSU university crisis committee said the students, faculty, and staff were transported beginning Wednesday in 20 vans to Iligan City.

Rescue buses from the provinces of Agusan del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte and Butuan City were also sent to Iligan City to fetch the MSU students and taken back to their respective places in the Caraga region. There are at least 500 students from various places in Caraga region who are studying in MSU, it was gathered.

Wrest control of Marawi

Duterte has vowed to extinguish the threat of the militants, whom he has said belong to the local Maute terrorist group but are being backed by criminals in the area.

Duterte told soldiers in Iligan, a city near Marawi, that he had long feared that "contamination by ISIS" loomed in the country's future, using the acronym for the Islamic State group. "You can say that ISIS is here already," he said.

He gave his troops a free hand to wrest control of Marawi. "You can arrest any person, search any house without warrant," said Duterte, who has been criticized for the deaths of thousands of people in a crackdown on illegal drugs.

But the military battling the Maute Group admitted it may take some time before the city is neutralized.

Problem of urban warfare

And more than three years after the Zamboanga City siege, urban warfare predicaments are resurfacing.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eduardo Año said government troops may have the upper hand, but the area, an urbanized city, has proved to be difficult to penetrate.

"We are in total control of the whole area but it's not cleared due to the urban terrain," Año said at the sidelines of the visit of President Duterte to the Philippine Army's 2nd

Mechanized Battalion headquarters in Barangay Maria Cristina, Iligan City, Friday afternoon.

Año has placed the number of the Maute Group currently occupying some structures and houses within Marawi's downtown to, at least, more than 100, but the challenge is the insurgents' position.

"We have to clear one step at a time, house to house, block by block," he said, adding that military operations will not be easy in an urban terrain as compared to the rural area.

He said soldiers use simple tactic in operating in a rural setting, which cannot be applied in a city battle. "Here (Marawi) all it takes is for an armed person to position himself inside a building. It would take time before it could be cleared."

The clearing operation of the military, Año said, needed more soldiers to be sent to Marawi.

"We have enough troops, but we need additional reinforcement to speed up our clearing," he said without divulging the actual number of soldiers deployed to Marawi.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the situation in Marawi will be normalized before the 60-day Martial Law declared by Duterte expires.

Ready to talk peace

While Duterte vowed to extinguish the threat of the militants, he also said Friday that he was prepared to talk with the group's leaders.

Abella said this was partly an offer made in the spirit of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which began in the Philippines on Saturday.

"In this spirit of Muslim peace, the President has offered the hand of peaceful dialogue to terrorist groups, to avoid bloodshed in this time of prayer, fasting and mercy," he said.

On Friday afternoon, Duterte said he is willing to have a dialogue with the terrorist groups in an attempt to solve the armed conflict in Marawi City without having any more collateral damage.

“With all faiths, we pray that God restore and preserve peace in Mindanao,” Abella said.

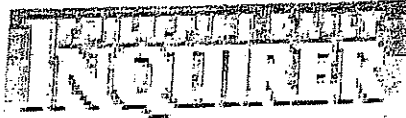
However, there appear to be an extremely small chance of talks, unless they are to negotiate the release of the hostages.

Military spokesman Herrera said the security operations to rid Marawi of the gunmen would continue despite the start of Ramadan.

“It is painful for the Maranao (the name for local Muslims) that it is Ramadan but our action now is to protect Marawi,” Herrera said.

“These are the impacts of the local terrorist group’s actions.” (With Camcer Ordoñez Imam and Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos)

24 May 2017



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Gov't cancels talks, blames NPA order to attack

FROM AI

By **Karlos Manlupig**
@kmanlupigINQ

NOORDWIJK, THE NETHERLANDS—The peace talks between the government and communist insurgents could be the first major casualty of President Duterte's declaration of martial law in Mindanao.

Government negotiators on Saturday withdrew from the latest round of talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) after communist rebels announced they would intensify operations against government forces in response to the martial law declaration.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza announced that with the "defiant, blatant and serious challenge" by the rebels despite the gains in the talks, the government panel decided "not to proceed to participate in the scheduled fifth round of peace negotiations until such time as there are clear indications that an enabling environment conducive to achieving just and sustainable peace is attained."

The announcement was made at the beachside venue for the fifth round of talks in the Dutch city of Noordwijk where govern-

ment and NDFP representatives had gathered to discuss the details of the Comprehensive Agreement on Socioeconomic Reforms, the Comprehensive Agreement on Political and Constitutional Reforms, and the proposed bilateral ceasefire agreement.

In Manila, presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella also issued a statement saying the government "will not proceed" with the scheduled talks.

"We question the sincerity of the CPP/NPA/NDFP, if they truly are in pursuit of peaceful coexistence. The Duterte administration would rather pursue the path of genuine dialogue to build a nation worthy of its citizens," he said.

NDFP senior adviser Luis Jalandoni informed reporters during a break in their preliminary meeting that the government panel sought the "cancellation" of the latest round.

Dureza explained that the order of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), to intensify attacks against government forces put the talks in "great jeopardy."

The CPP issued the order after the President placed the entire Mindanao under martial law to deal with Islamic State-inspired terrorists belonging to the Abu Sayyaf and the Maute group that

besieged Marawi City on Tuesday. The CPP-NPA formed the main armed resistance to the martial law regime of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and expanded their forces during the dictatorship.

Jalandoni said the CPP directive to intensify attacks was not intended to undermine the negotiations but was a response to statements by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana that the NPA would be a target of martial law.

Dureza said, however, that martial law was "principally directed at extremists and terrorists."

The chief government negotiator, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, said Lorenzana later clarified in a statement "that martial law is not intended for the NPA."

On Friday, CPP founding chair Jose Maria Sison acknowledged the clarification and said the NDFP panel had recommended to the CPP to reconsider its order to the NPA.

"There is still hope that is why we are waiting for them. It is a reality that armed conflict exists that is precisely why we are talking," Bello said.

NDFP chief negotiator Fidel Agcaoili also expressed optimism. He said the NDFP panel would formally respond to the government's cancellation of the latest round of talks. INQ

28 May 2017

The Manila Times

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More bombs drop in Marawi

BY AL JACINTO

MARAWI CITY/ZAMBOANGA CITY: Military aircraft continued to bomb terrorist targets in Marawi City as security forces battled the Islamic State (IS)-linked Maute group and their armed supporters fighting for the establishment of a caliphate in the restive Muslim region of Mindanao.

Several houses, including one owned by a lawmaker, were blasted on Saturday as television crew members sneaked into Bangon, one of villages bombed by the air force.

One villager guiding journalists said the bomb destroyed the house of a lawmaker. A video of the aftermath of the air strike was also uploaded on social media and showed the house hit by the bomb still burning.

"The village is empty. Everybody has evacuated. That house is also empty, but they still bombed it," the guide said.

The Western Mindanao Command confirmed the air strikes and said they targeted Maute fighters hiding out in different houses and buildings there.

"As fighting continues in Marawi, our units are constrained to launch air strikes to identified specific targets occupied by the [Maute] terrorist group. These terrorist atrocities continue to sow terror and confusion even to non-combatant Muslims and Christians," said Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez, chief of the Western Mindanao Command.

He also sought the help of the Moro National Liberation Front and rival Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and apologized to tens of thousands of people affected and displaced by the war.

He said troops would also be deployed securing the land.

► Bombs A2

■ BOMBS FROM A1

More bombs

to different mosques to protect Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan.

The military said 13 soldiers, two policemen and 31 terrorists, including foreigners, have died in the fighting.

Two civilians were also confirmed killed inside a hospital that the gunmen had occupied on Tuesday, and the military has said nine other people may have been murdered at a militant checkpoint.

"As of this report, 31 terrorists were already neutralized and six high-powered firearms were recovered by the troops. Our troops are doing deliberate operations in areas we believe are still occupied or infested with the terrorists' presence. I specifically ordered our soldiers to locate and destroy these terrorists as soon as possible," said Brig. Gen. Rolando Bautista, commander of military forces fighting the Maute group.

With security forces unable to end the crisis and the gunmen believed to be holding up to 15 hostages, the military warned on Saturday that it would step up the bombing assaults.

"In as much as we would like to avoid collateral damage, these rebels are forcing the hand of government by hiding and holding out inside private homes, government buildings and other facilities," military spokesman Brig. Gen. Resituto Padilla said.

No bodies?

It was unclear where the casualties reported by the military were based, as fewer bodies of militants had reportedly been recovered by troops.

Malaysian media—quoting unnamed intelligence sources—reported that two Malaysians, Abdulrahman Asmawi from Kelantan and Kamsa Yahya from Kedah; an Indonesian militant, Shei Ayman Marjukki; and an Arab sheik, Ahmad Balkafi—were among those killed in Marawi.

Malaysian newspaper The Star

also reported that former Universiti Malaya lecturer Mahmud Ahmad, also known as Abu Handzalah, was also in Marawi and helping Abu Sayyaf chieftain and local IS leader Isnilon Hapilon in putting up a caliphate in the southern region.

Troops were trying desperately to drive the militants out in the open as security forces cordoned off Marawi to prevent the jihadists from escaping. But there were no signs of the militants backing down, although they earlier threatened to execute over a dozen civilian hostages, including a Catholic priest, should security forces continue with their assaults.

The fighting began on May 23 when militants occupied Marawi, the capital of Lanao del Sur in the Muslim autonomous region. Photos of militants surfaced on social media with one picture showing three heavily armed jihadists posing on top of a destroyed army tank in Marawi. Other photos showed the militants manning roadblocks in the city.

The militants, who have pledged allegiance to the IS, have forged

an alliance with various jihadist groups, including the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and the notorious Abu Sayyaf terrorist and kidnap group.

Galvez again appealed to citizens to help them fight terrorism by providing intelligence on the militants. He earlier vowed to crush the Maute group in two days.

"We once more call on the people in the community to join us fight terrorism. Provide your security forces with information that will contribute to the neutralization of these agents of deaths and destruction. We will exhaust all efforts to crush the remaining Maute members so that the people of Marawi City can go back to their homes the soonest," he said.

The siege of Marawi by IS fighters forced President Rodrigo Duterte to cut short his four-day visit to Russia last week. Before heading back to the Philippines, Duterte declared a 60-day martial law in the whole of Mindanao in an effort to destroy the Maute group and end the violence in Marawi.

WITH AFP

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Army, police in north, central Luzon ordered to block terror groups

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO —Although martial law covers only Mindanao, Army and police officials in northern and central Luzon ordered their units to step up intelligence gathering to prevent terror groups from entering the regions and sowing fear there.

Leon said in a statement.

He said security operations have been undertaken in critical infrastructure and government projects to "prevent the [New People's Army] from conducting criminal acts."

De Leon urged vigilance among civilians, asking them to

Maj. Gen. Angelito de Leon, commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Division based in Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija province, announced the enhancement of intelligence efforts after a meeting of the joint peace and security coordinating center on Friday.

report unusual activities in their communities.

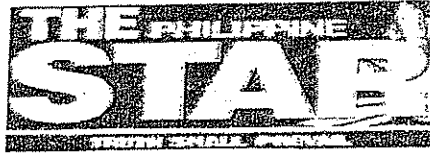
Chief Supt. Aaron Aquino, Central Luzon police director, have placed all police officers on full alert status since May 24. Police personnel were directed to "strengthen target hardening on all vital installations, economic

"While there are no monitored terrorist plans in the [area of responsibility] similar to the [Maute group's attacks] happening in Mindanao, the [division] in tandem with the Philippine National Police will initiate visibility patrols and checkpoints in various areas as needed." De

key points as well as places of convergences and ensure high state of operational readiness to thwart any hostile action that may be launched by terror groups."

Aquino also canceled all leaves and passes of policemen in the region. —TONETTE OREJAS INQ

23 May 2017



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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

NPA rebel, 12, rescued

CATBALOGAN – A 12-year-old boy, alleged to be a member of the New People's Army (NPA), was rescued by government troops in Northern Samar on Friday.

Soldiers reportedly found the boy in Barangay De Tubang, Silvino Lobos carrying a sack half-filled with rice, weapons and ammunition.

Maj. Gen. Raul Farnacio, 8th Infantry Division commanding officer, said the boy is among 30 children recruited by the NPA in Mapanas and Palapag towns.

Farnacio said the boy was turned over to the provincial office of the Department of Social Welfare and Development for debriefing and medical examination.

He said rescue operations for other child combatants of the NPA are underway.

– Miriam Desacada

24 May 2017



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Military beefs up security in Quezon City

The military has started to beef up security in Quezon City over the weekend after Mayor Herbert Bautista, in his capacity as chairman of the Regional Peace and Order Council, has appealed to tighten security and thwart attempts to disrupt peace and order.

Brig. Gen. Jesus Mananquil, commander of the military's Joint Task Force-National Capital Region (NCRPO), said soldiers and military K-9 units were already sent to augment the Quezon City Police District last Friday.

"We have sent troops to Quezon City Police District. We will fight the intention of those who want to sow terror. We are always in support as far as safety and public order is concerned in Metro Manila," Mananquil said at a news conference that followed the special meeting of the Metro Manila Council held Friday at the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) office in Makati.

Quezon City—the biggest and most populous city in Metro Manila—hosts several critical installations like La Mesa Dam, the House of Representatives, the Bangko Sentral, major broadcast networks, specialty hospitals and dozens of national government agencies.

Aside from soldiers, the military also deployed bomb-sniffing dogs in bus terminals and commercial centers in Quezon City.

Bautista directed the NCRPO to intensify mobile and foot patrols and set up checkpoints as a precautionary measure following the escalation of hostilities in Marawi City that prompted President Duterte to declare martial law in Mindanao.

He explained the move to ramp up security measures was not meant to scare people.

"*Hindi natin kailangan maging alarmists para doon sa mga mamamayan natin.* Everything is ok naman dito. But we have to be prepared," Bautista said.

"We are saddened by what happened in Marawi. We are praying that it will be solved as soon as possible time. But we are vigilant *na hindi ito mangyari sa Metro Manila,*" he added. **PNA**

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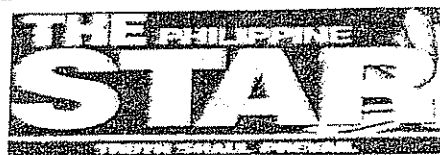
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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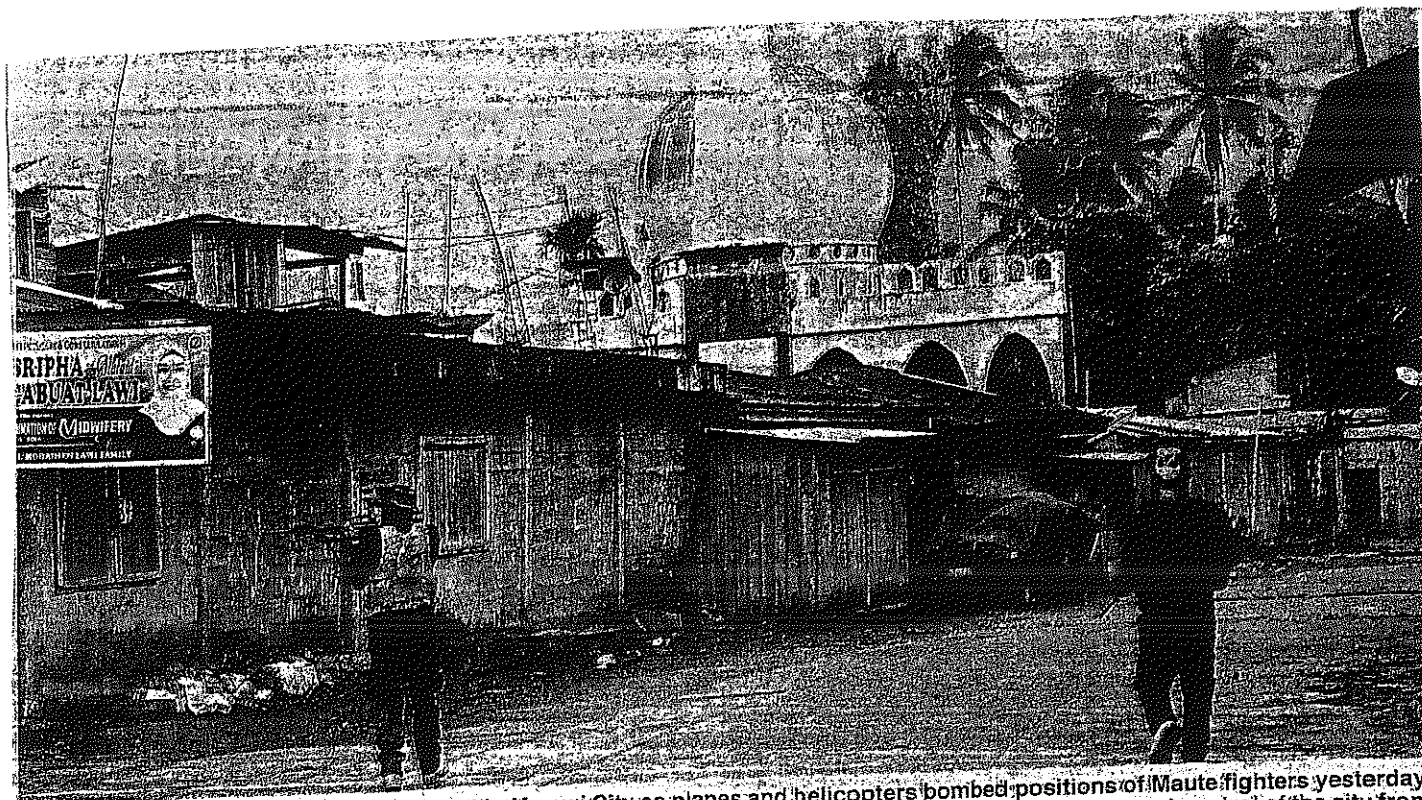


A TIME FOR HEROES — President Duterte salutes fallen Sergeant Marlon Baldovino at his wake at St. Peter's Funeral Homes in Iligan City on Friday night. Baldovino, who was killed in the initial attack of Maute Group bandits in Marawi City last Tuesday, may well be one of those Duterte had spoken about in his litany about 'a time for everything' — like being a hero to the nation. (Presidential Photo)

24th May 2017

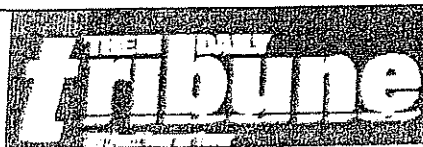


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Government troops patrol a deserted street in Marawi City as planes and helicopters bombed positions of Maute fighters yesterday. Civilians waved white flags from their windows to show they were not combatants as soldiers fought to wrest control of the city from gunmen linked to the Islamic State.

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Awarded President Duterte awards a wounded personnel medal to Cpl. Jovelou Caka when he visited the wounded law enforcers at the Adventist Medical Center in Iligan City last Friday. Caka was wounded when terrorists attacked Marawi City on May 23. PNA

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JETS, CHOPPERS RAIN ROCKETS ON MAUTE GROUP

By Jeffrey Maitem and Richel Umel @InqNational

MARAWI—Military jets and helicopters fired rockets at militant positions on Saturday as soldiers fought to retake control of a southern city from Maute and Abu Sayyaf gunmen linked to the Islamic State (IS) group, while civilians waved white flags from their windows to show they were not combatants, witnesses said.

The city of Marawi, home to some 200,000 people, has been under siege by Maute and Abu Sayyaf fighters since a failed raid on Tuesday night on a suspected hideout of Isnilon Hapilon, who is on Washington's list of most-wanted terrorists with a bounty of \$5 million for his capture.

The fighters loyal to him took over parts of the city, burning buildings and seizing about a dozen hostages, including a priest, whose condition has remained unknown.

The violence prompted President Duterte to declare martial law in the country's south, where a Muslim rebellion has raged for decades.

"I saw two jets swoop down and fire at rebel positions repeatedly," Alexander Mangunatu, a security guard, told The Associated Press in Marawi as a plume of black smoke billowed in the distance. "I pity the civilians and the women who were near the targeted area. They're getting caught in the conflict and I hope this ends soon."

Maj. Gen. Carlito Galvez, who heads the Western Mindanao



Command, said the purpose of the airstrike was to restore full government control and ensure the terrorists are flushed out.

"The main purpose of the offensive is to suppress the lawlessness and to maintain normalcy in Marawi so that our people here, our countrymen, can return, especially by Ramadan," he said, adding that the military would use its "maximum force." On Friday, President Duterte ordered his troops to crush the terrorists, warning that the country is at a grave risk of "contamination" by IS.

At least 44 people have died in the fighting, including 31 terrorists and 11 soldiers, officials say. It was not immediately clear whether civilians were among the dead. The violence has forced thousands of people to flee and has raised fears of growing extremism.

In Manila, presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella called for an end to the violence even as he said the government was open to talk to the gunmen.

"Together we pray for an end to terrorism that falsely claims to advance Islam and seeks to subjugate our land to the brutal IS," Abella said. "In this spirit of Muslim peace, the President has offered the hand of peaceful dialogue to terrorist groups, to avoid bloodshed in this time of prayer, fasting and mercy."

Mr. Duterte told soldiers in Iligan, a city near Marawi, that he had long feared that "contamination by IS" loomed in the country's future, using the acronym for the Islamic State group. "You can say that IS is here already," he said.

"You can arrest any person, search any house without warrant," said Mr. Duterte, who has been criticized for the deaths of thousands of people in a crackdown on illegal drugs. Still, he also offered dialogue to terrorists who are not on the streets fighting.

"We can still talk about it," Mr. Duterte said. "But those who are out-and-out terrorists, and you cannot be convinced to stop fighting, so be it. Let us fight."

Hapilon, who is believed to have received \$2 million from IS to fund his campaign here, is still hiding out in the city under the protection of gunmen who are desperately trying to find a way to "extricate" him, the country's military chief said.

"Right now, he is still inside (Marawi). We cannot just pinpoint the particular spot," said Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año, adding that Hapilon was believed to have suffered a stroke in January after being wounded in a government airstrike.

Año predicted that the military operation will take about a week as soldiers go house to house to clear the city of terrorists.

"We will make this their cemetery," he said. "We have to finish this."

The terrorists have control of some government buildings, including a jail, which they seized on Tuesday, leading to the escape of more than 100 prisoners, including some Maute members.

In a sign that the long-standing problem of militancy in the South could be expanding, Solicitor General Jose Calida earlier said foreigners were fighting alongside the gunmen in Marawi, including Indonesians and Malaysians.

Hapilon, an Islamic preacher, is a commander of the Abu Sayyaf militant group that pledged allegiance to IS in 2014. He also heads an alliance of at least 10 smaller militant groups, including the Maute, which have a heavy presence in Marawi and were instrumental in fighting off government forces in this week's battles. —WITH REPORTS FROM JIGGER JERUSALEM, EDWIN FERNANDEZ, ALLAN NAWAL, REUTERS AND AP INQ

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Airstrikes stepped up to flush out terrorists

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), yesterday, intensified a bombing campaign on homes and other buildings in Marawi city where they have been battling Islamist militants for five days, and warned there may be collateral damage.

President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law across the southern third of the Philippines in response to the clashes, which have claimed at least 48 lives and he has

said are part of a campaign by the Islamic State (IS) group to establish a local caliphate.

Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla, AFP spokesman, said surgical air strikes were the best way to flush out the terrorists who were hiding and holding out inside private homes, government buildings and other facilities.

"Their refusal to surrender is holding the city captive. Hence, it is now increasingly becoming necessary

to use more surgical air strikes to clear the city and to bring this rebellion to a quicker end," he said.

And while not giving specifics on what type of aircraft are being used for these operations, the AFP is known to operate MG-520 and AW-109 attack helicopters along with OV-10 and SF-260 light bombers in the region for counter-terror and anti-insurgency strikes.

"We desire to free Marawi City of these evil forces and make way

for a peaceful Ramadhan for our citizens there who have supported our efforts. We appeal for everyone's understanding as we take the necessary steps to accomplish our mission and prevent the loss of more innocent lives and damage to private and public property," Padilla said.

Most of the 200,000 residents of Marawi, one of the major Muslim cities in the mainly Catholic Philippines, fled the city

Turn to page

From page 1

because of the fighting as the military used air raids and engaged in street-to-street battles to flush out the militants.

But, with security forces unable to end the crisis and the gunmen believed to be holding up to 15 hostages, the military warned on Saturday that it would step up the bombing assaults.

"In as much as we would like to avoid collateral damage, these rebels are forcing the hand of government by hiding and holding out inside private homes, government buildings and other facilities," Padilla said.

The violence erupted on Tuesday when dozens of gunmen went on a rampage throughout Marawi in response to an attempt by security forces to arrest Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilón Hapilon, a veteran Filipino militant regarded as the local leader of IS.

The gunmen planted black IS flags, took a priest and up to 14 other people hostage from a church, and set fire to buildings.

13 soldiers, 31 terrorists dead

Thirteen soldiers, two policemen and 31 militants have died in the fighting, according to authorities.

Two civilians were also confirmed killed inside a hospital that the gunmen had occupied on Tuesday, and the military has said nine other people may have been murdered at a militant checkpoint.

Duterte has vowed to extinguish the threat of the militants, whom he has said belong to the local Maute terrorist group but are being backed by criminals

in the area.

Nevertheless, Duterte also said on Friday that he was prepared to talk with the group's leaders.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said this was partly an offer made in the spirit of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which began yesterday.

"Together we pray for an end to terrorism that falsely claims to advance Islam and seeks to subjugate our land to the brutal IS," Abella said in a statement.

"In this spirit of Muslim peace, the president has offered the hand of peaceful dialogue to terrorist groups, to avoid bloodshed in this time of prayer, fasting and mercy," he said.

However, there appeared to be an extremely small chance of talks, unless they were to negotiate the release of the hostages.

Local military spokesman military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Joar Herrera told AFP the fighting could not stop because of Ramadan.

"It is painful for the Maranao (the name for local Muslims) that it is Ramadan but our action now is to protect Marawi," Herrera said.

"These are the impacts of the local terrorist group's actions," he added.

The battle to clear the city of the gunmen was proving hard because they had scattered into small groups and were moving to different houses and setting up sniper positions, according to the military.

"They also have sympathisers from private armed groups," Herrera said.

Islamist militants working with criminals and corrupt politicians is common across Mindanao, where

a Muslim separatist rebellion has claimed more than 120,000 lives since the 1970s.

The Maute, Abu Sayyaf and other small hardline groups are not interested in negotiating peace and have in recent years looked to IS to help them.

OVP appeals for donations

The Office of the Vice President (OVP), meanwhile, appealed for more donations to assist residents in conflict-ridden Marawi City and near municipalities following ongoing clash between terrorist Maute group and government forces.

In an interview, OVP Advocacy and Programs Officer Raffy Magno confirmed that Vice President Robredo has already started relief operations in the area.

"Since the spark of Marawi Clash, Vice President Robredo initially instructed her disaster response team to provide immediate assistance to IDPs (Internally Displaced People) in Marawi," he said.

However, much of the affected people are still in need of basic necessities and food to survive in their stay at the evacuation centers in Mindanao.

"We continuously ask of our citizens to donate more halal and non-pork goods that are na easy to open, easy to eat," Magno said.

As of May 26, Magno mentioned that OVP started its operation center in partnership with Xavier University to source out donations and at the same time repack goods to ship in Iligan and Marawi City.

Currently, their target for a day alone is 1,500 food packs. "The Office

of the Vice President prepositioned 5,000 food packs that will be delivered in different evacuation centers in coordination with ARMM, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, and the two cities, Iligan City and Marawi City," he said in detail.

Robredo last May 23, following the declaration of Martial Law in Mindanao, appealed to the public for prayers and support on government efforts to normalize situation in the region.

"We urge everyone to pray for our men and women who are protecting the people of Marawi. We also pray for our fellow Filipinos caught in the cross fire," she has said. "We call on all sectors of society who can extend assistance to respond as soon as possible," she added.

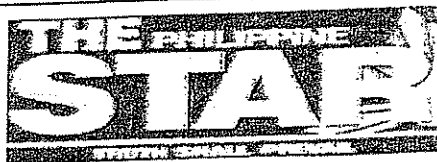
Government forces continue to pursue the terror group allegedly linked with international extremists Islamic State, and on this note, Robredo asked "unity" in firm condemnation against any form of terrorism.

Earlier, the official was briefed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and was given an assurance that military are now in control and that the conflict will be suppressed at the soonest possible time.

"We fully support the efforts of the AFP and PNP (Philippine National Police) to neutralize the enemies that have sowed terrorism in Marawi City and to stabilize the situation at the soonest possible time. We must be united in our firm condemnation against any form of terrorism."

Joyce Ann Rocamora

24 May 2017



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AFP in control of Marawi City but...

By GERRY LEE GORIT

ILIGAN CITY – As the fighting between government forces and gunmen of the Islamic State-inspired Maute group entered its fifth day, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Eduardo Año predicted the military operation will take about a week as soldiers go house to house to clear Marawi City of militants.

Año said although the troops have the upper hand, it is proving difficult for them to engage in urban warfare as the militants have taken tactical positions in almost every house in the city.

"We are in total control of the whole area but it's not cleared due to the urban terrain," Año told reporters on the sidelines of President Duterte's visit to the Army's 2nd Mechanized Battalion headquarters late Friday.

Año, however, vowed to crush the militants and end the siege.

"We will make this their cemetery," he said. "We have to finish this."

Troops often encounter sniper fire as they advance slowly to clear the city of rebels.

"We have to clear one step at a time, house to house, block by block," Año said.

Año pointed out the troops are used to fighting in the jungle but not in close combat encounters with gunmen in an urban setting.

"Here (Marawi) all it takes is for an armed person to position himself inside a building (as a sniper)... it would take time before it could be cleared," he said.

Año said they have to send in more troops to help in the clearing operations. "We have enough troops but we need additional reinforcement to speed up our clearing," he said.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said government forces are working to "clear the city of all remnants of this group."

Padilla said some civilians refused to evacuate because they want to guard their homes, which is slowing down the government operations.

"But that's fine as long as civilians are not hurt," he said.

On Friday, Duterte ordered the military to crush the militants, warning that the country is at a grave risk of "contamination" by the Islamic State (IS) group.

At least 44 people have died in the fighting, including 31 militants and 11 soldiers, officials said. It was not immediately clear whether civilians were among the dead.

The violence has forced thousands of people to flee and raised fears of growing extremism.

Duterte told the troops here that he had long feared that "contamination by ISIS" loomed in the country's future, using the acronym for the Islamic State group. "You can say that ISIS is here already," he said.

He gave the troops a free hand to wrest control of Marawi. "You can arrest any person, search any house without warrant," Duterte said.

The city of Marawi, home to some 200,000 people, has been under siege by IS-linked militants since a failed raid Tuesday night on the suspected hideout of Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the notorious Abu Sayyaf group.

Hapilon got away and fighters loyal to him took over parts of the city, burning buildings and seizing about a dozen hostages, including a priest. Their condition is unknown.

Hapilon is still hiding out in the city under the protection of gunmen who are desperately trying to find a way to "extricate" him, Año said.

"Right now, he is still inside (the city). We cannot just pinpoint the particular spot," he said.

Año said Hapilon suffered a stroke after a government airstrike wounded him in January.

Año also said foreign fighters were believed to be among the militants still holding out in the city.

"We suspect that but we're still validating," he said. – With Jaime Laude, Evelyn Macairan, John Unson, Lino dela Cruz, Christina Mendez, AP

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The Manila Times

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Terrain a challenge for soldiers in Marawi

ILIGAN CITY: As the fighting between members of a local terror group and the armed forces in Marawi City reaches its fifth day, a military official has admitted it might take some time before the area could be considered fully neutralized.

Lt. Gen Eduardo Año, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said government soldiers might have the upper hand but the area had proved to be difficult to penetrate.

"We are in total control of the whole area, but it has not been cleared of the terror group because of the urban terrain," Año told reporters on the sidelines of the visit of President Rodrigo Duterte to the Philippine Army's 2nd Mechanized Battalion headquarters in Barangay Maria Cristina late Friday afternoon.

Año has placed the number of the Maute Group occupying some structures

and houses within Marawi's downtown at less than a hundred, but the challenge is the insurgents' position.

"We have to clear one step at a time, house to house, block by block," he said, adding that the military operations will not be easy in an urban terrain as compared to the rural area.

He said the soldiers used simple tactic in operating in a rural setting which cannot be applied in a city battle. "Here (Marawi) all it takes is for an armed person to position himself inside a building... it would take time before it could be cleared."

To fast track the clearing operations of the military, Año said they had sent more soldiers to Marawi.

"We have enough troops, but we need additional reinforcement to speed up our clearing," he said without divulging the actual number of soldiers deployed to Marawi.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the situation in Marawi would be normalized before the expiration of the 60-day martial law declared by Duterte.

As of press time, civilians from Marawi continue to arrive at various evacuation sites in neighboring towns and in Iligan City.

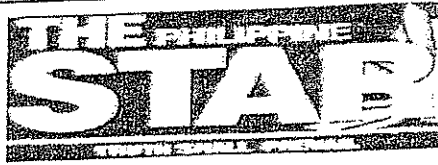
In Saguiaran, Lanao del Sur, for instance, there are about 1,300 families staying in the town gymnasium, according to the information provided by the Provincial Crisis Management Committee.

The municipality of Ditsaan Raman has some 2,737 households and around 13,000 individuals seeking shelter in the public gymnasium.

In Iligan, there are about 2,000 evacuees at the temporary shelter in Barangay Buru-un and more than a thousand in Barangay Maria Cristina.

PNA

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Speak out vs terrorists, Muslim leaders asked

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

As government troops continue their operations to flush out Maute militants from Marawi City, Malacañang called on Muslim leaders to denounce terrorism.

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella lamented that militants use their beliefs to sow terror in Mindanao.

"We call on Muslim leaders to speak out against terrorist groups who use religion to disguise their barbarity, staining the peaceful name of Islam with the blood of innocents during this holy month of Ramadan," Abella said yesterday.

Abella said he also hopes that like Ozamiz City Archbishop Martin Jumoad, other Catholic leaders would support the declaration of martial law in Mindanao and encourage citizens to

cooperate with the military.

"We laud the good bishop's support for the President's war against violent extremism in Mindanao," he said. "We hope his fellow bishops and other clergy will follow his example for their parishes and prioritize the peace and safety of the people."

Abella assured members of the clergy that mechanisms are in place to prevent and address human rights abuses.

He said he believes bishops are not rejecting martial law when they called on the faithful to "be obedient to the just

commands of lawful authority and not to provoke violent reaction."

Some Mindanao bishops said they were not against martial law, but the declaration should be temporary. They also called on the public to be vigilant to prevent abuses.

In a pastoral letter issued on Friday, Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato acknowledged the questions raised against military rule, but noted that the answers to them were "speculative."

"We shall condemn any abuse of martial law and as in the past, (we) will condemn it outright if it goes in the way of evil. Let us be vigilant," Quevedo said.

Release hostages

Quevedo said Mindanao

bishops condemn the kidnapping of teachers and church personnel in Marawi and are appealing for their release.

"We pray for the safety of all those kidnapped, of Fr. Teresito Suganog and his companions. We appeal to the hostage takers to release all of them unharmed. The victims fear death, but they also have the courage to give ultimate witness to Christ," he said.

Suganog, parish priest of St. Mary's Cathedral, his two helpers and 10 parishioners were seized during novena prayers on Tuesday night.

Quevedo said they are also praying for innocent civilians killed in the attack and the protection of the families who fled their homes.

– With Evelyn Macairan

in Mindanao.

Duterte declared martial law and suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao for 60 days due to the ongoing clashes between the Maute Group and government security forces in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur.

Dureza underscored that Duterte's declaration of martial law was "principally directed at extremists and terrorists who openly and defiantly challenged the government and put to harm the Filipino people triggered by the still ongoing violent incident in the Islamic city of Marawi in Mindanao."

"We question the sincerity of the CPP-NPA-NDFP if they truly are in pursuit of peaceful coexistence," Abella said in a statement Saturday evening.

"The Duterte administration would rather pursue the path of genuine dialogue to build a nation worthy of its citizens," he added.

Bello also told mediamen that he could not comment on Abella's remarks from the Palace, saying he has

yet to receive any formal communication from the presidential spokesman.

"If there is any announcement that (the fifth round) is off, it will come from this panel," he maintained.

But Dureza reiterated that his statement and that of Malacañang was final. "That's it, it's cancelled as what I said from my statement."

Dureza said the government side was pulling out of the talks "until such time as there are clear indications that an enabling environment conducive to achieving just and sustainable peace in the land through peace negotiations across this table shall prevail."

Open defiance

Apart from the recent pronouncements from the CPP-NPA that were made in connection with the martial law declaration, Dureza also noted the "noticeable upscale of incidents of offensive attacks by the NPAs throughout the country" and the "seeming perception of the bigger public that these NEA operations are in open and public defiance of President Duterte, who has consistently accommodated them in unprecedented ways" as among the "serious challenges" to Duterte's commitment to pursue the talks.

He also pointed out that there have been "public admissions of some panel members of the CPP, NPA, and NDF that they have no control over their forces on the ground."

Duterte likewise cited "the sudden and perceptible erosion of public support to the peace talks with strong messages received from the public to altogether stop peace negotiations."

In the same press conference, the GRP said emphasized that only the fifth round of the talks will be cancelled should the NDFP fail to respond to its request, and that all standing agreements, including the safety and immunity guarantees for NDFP negotiators, will continue to be honored.

Both sides also remain open to return to the negotiating table that could possibly be restarted with another fifth round of talks.

"We could always talk and fight, as we did in the time of President FVR (Fidel V. Ramos) when we returned to the peace table," said Jalandoni.

"Let's all stay the course in this not-so-easy road to peace in our land," Dureza said.

In the meantime, both parties are staying put. None has checked out of their hotel rooms, no one has re-booked any flight.

But as of 1 p.m. here (7 p.m. Manila time), there was still no formal response from the NDFP.

NPAs warned

Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana warned the NPA not to get involved with the current Marawi City crisis, reiterating that the implementation of martial law in Mindanao will not target local communists.

"Gusto ko lang liwanagin ang mensahe ko sa CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines)-NPA. Huwag na kayong makigulo pa sa nangyayari ngayon sa Mindanao. It would like to make my statement clear to the CPP-NPA. Do not involve yourselves in what's happening to Mindanao," Lorenzana said.

"Do not force the government's hand. Immediately stop all illegal activities and abide by the true spirit of the peace process. This is the only way we can move forward," he added.

Lorenzana issued the statement in response to Sison's claim that the martial law implementation in Mindanao will also affect the NPA.

"We would like to make it clear that in the implementation of martial law in Mindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will not specifically target the New People's Army as alleged by NDFP chief political consultant Jose Maria Sison," Lorenzana said.

28 May 2017

The Manila Times

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Mindanao bishops not against' martial law

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

MINDANAO bishops are "not against" the imposition of martial law in Mindanao but said it should be "temporary" and the public should be vigilant against possible abuses.

The Palace welcomed the position of Mindanao bishops, even seeing it as a form of support for martial law in the Southern Philippines. "The government appreciates support from all sectors, no matter how nuanced," Palace spokesman Ernesto Abella said in a statement.

Cotabato Cardinal Orlando Quevedo said on Friday that action from the past," Abella said.

On Tuesday, President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao, following the clashes between government forces and Islamic State-inspired Maute group in Marawi City.

Maute reportedly torched several private and public establishments in the city, including a Church, and abducted parish priest Teresito Sukanob and a number of Church personnel and teachers.

The Palace official expressed hope that fellow Church leaders of Ozamiz City Archbishop Martin Jumoad would follow Quevedo's example and be supportive of Duterte's declaration of martial law.

"We laud the good bishop's

Catholic bishops in Southern Philippines do not oppose one-man rule in Mindanao, adding the Church has no "solid and sufficient" evidence to dismiss the proclamation of martial law there as "morally reprehensible."

He, however, said that martial law must only be "temporary" and must not be a gateway for abuses.

support of the President's war against violent extremism in Mindanao. We hope his fellow bishops and other clergy follow his example for their parishes, and prioritize the peace and safety of the people," Abella said.

"Placing his diocesan's well-being above all else, he [Jumoad] also encourages the citizens to be extra careful and to cooperate with the military," he added.

Abella also urged leaders of the Muslim community to speak out against terror jihadist groups and denounce their barbarity especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

"We also call on Muslim leaders to speak out against terrorist groups, who use religion to disguise their

"We have many fears but at present, we simply do not have solid and sufficient facts to absolutely reject the declaration of Martial law as morally reprehensible," Quevedo said in a pastoral guidance.

"We shall condemn any abuse of martial law and as in the past will condemn it outright if it goes in the way of evil. Let us be vigilant," he added.

Abella assured that mechanisms to prevent and address human rights abuses are in place.

He added that the current military operations at present are different from the past, or during martial law under the Marcos regime.

"Such mechanisms are in place, and this will differentiate this military

barbarity, staining the peaceful name of Islam with the blood of innocents during this holy month of Ramadan," Abella said.

Meanwhile, Abella urged the public to take a moment to remember some of the first casualties in the Marawi attacks. They are Marawi City Police Senior Inspector and Intelligence Unit Chief Freddie Manuel Solar, from Baguio City, and two members of Special Forces, First Lieutenant John Carl Morales and Special Forces Marlon Baldovino, both of Kabacan, North Cotabato.

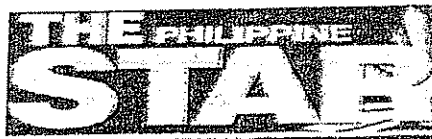
"May they rest in peace, and may we be faithful to honor the ultimate sacrifice of their lives in the service of their country," he said.

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

20 May 2017



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Groups step up help for Marawi evacuees

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is stepping up its response to help the residents of Marawi City trapped in the fighting between government forces and extremists since Tuesday.

Pascal Porchet, head of the delegation of ICRC in the Philippines, said a team had entered Marawi City to deliver relief goods and medical supplies to an evacuation center in nearby Saguiaran town.

The Lanao del Sur Provincial Crisis Management Committee said there are about 1,300 families staying in the town gymnasium.

The municipality of Ditsaan Ramain has some 2,737 households, while around 13,000 individuals are seeking shelter in the public gymnasium.

In nearby Iligan City, there are about 2,000 evacuees in the temporary shelter in Barangay Buru-un and more than a thousand in Barangay Maria Cristina.

Porchet said they were able to access Marawi with the help of some concerned groups.

He described the situation in Marawi as "very fluid."

"Residents are moving in and out of Marawi and we are seriously concerned about those who are trapped or have chosen to stay in the city, who are in need of food and water," he said.

The ICRC said it had prepositioned medical supplies to reinforce the capacity of rural health units in addressing the basic health needs of the evacuees in Iligan.

Civilians from Marawi continued to arrive in various evacuation sites in neighboring towns and in Iligan City.

With the ongoing hostilities in Marawi City, and with some people still trapped in their homes, Porchet urged those involved in the fighting to take the necessary precautions to spare civilians and their property. "International humanitarian law remains applicable in this situation, even after the declaration of martial law in Mindanao. As such, it must be respected at all times and by all the parties. People who may be arrested must be treated humanely and the ICRC will continue to monitor their

conditions and treatment," Porchet said.

The Office of Vice President (OVP) Leni Robredo said they started the delivery of food packs to the displaced residents of Marawi City.

OVP advocacy and programs officer Raffy Magno said they will deliver 1,500 halal food packs to Iligan City.

"The OVP prepositioned 5,000 food packs that will be delivered to different evacuation centers, in coordination with the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte and the two cities, Iligan City and Marawi City," Magno said.

The Department of Social Welfare and Employment (DSWD) has allotted some P19.08 million for the purchase of 40,000 family food packs for the families affected by the fighting in Marawi City.

Authorities said over a thousand people remain trapped in their houses in Marawi City as clashes between troops and the militants continue to rage.

The city of Marawi, home to some 200,000 people, has been under siege by IS-linked militants since a failed raid Tuesday night on a suspected hideout of Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the notorious Abu Sayyaf.

Hapilon got away after Maute fighters took over parts of the city, burning buildings and seizing about a dozen hostages, including a priest. Their condition is unknown.

The violence prompted President Duterte to declare martial law.

Officials of the regional Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said they will attempt to enter Marawi and rescue the residents still trapped there.

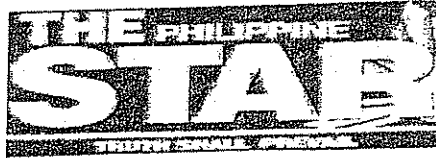
The LTFRB said there are at least 1,000 people holed up at the Lanao del Sur provincial capitol and several hundreds at the Mindanao State University (MSU).

LTFRB regional director Aminoden Guro said they requested six buses to pick up the residents.

Last Thursday, authorities did not allow the buses to enter Marawi due to the deteriorating security situation.

- With Gerry Lee Gorit, Janvic Mateo

25 May 2017



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DND: Reds won't be targeted under martial law

By JAIME LAUDE

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday assured the communists that they are not included in the target list of the martial law implementation in Mindanao.

Lorenzana, as the designated martial law administrator, said the enforcement of military rule in Mindanao will not specifically target the communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

"We would like to make it clear that in the implementation of martial law in Mindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will not specifically target the New People's Army as alleged by the National Democratic Front (NDF) chief consultant Jose Ma. Sison," Lorenzana

He said the AFP will fully comply with the directives of the President that martial law was declared to address radical Islamic terrorism and narco-terrorism in Mindanao.

He said the military would conduct all its operations in accordance with the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Sison earlier slammed the declaration of martial law, saying that NPA rebels are key targets of the military operations in Mindanao.

Lorenzana assured law-abiding citizens in Mindanao they need not fear the increased military presence and activities at their localities.

He said soldiers have been dispatched to various areas to secure and protect the people and maintain peace and order in their communities.

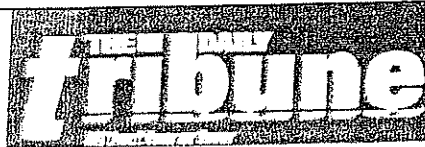
"Let me emphasize, however, that members of the NPA who will engage in criminal and illegal acts such as kidnapping, extortion, murder and the destruction of property will be dealt with, with or without martial law," Lorenzana said.

He called on the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the NPA, not to meddle in the fighting between government forces and the Maute group extremists.

"Do not force the government's hand. Immediately stop all illegal activities and abide by the true spirit of the peace process. This is the only way we can move forward," Lorenzana said.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla said the NPA, as well as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), are not covered by the military's call for citizens to surrender their firearms under martial law.

24 May 2017



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Mautes are terrorists, not extremists – analyst

There is a difference between religious extremism and terrorism.

This was pointed out by Singaporean political analyst, Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, during the "Extremism and Martial Law Forum" aired on the People's Television Network (PTV4) Friday night.

Gunaratna was interviewed live via Skype during the program and was asked to distinguish ideological or religious extremism from terrorism.

He said it has been a misconception among non-Islamic people that Islam preaches violence as invoked by radical groups, such as the Islamic State of Lanao

formed by the Maute brothers and under the command of Isnilon Hapilon.

Gunaratna explained that there is such a thing as ideological extremism, which can be interpreted as a more conservative practice of religion, such as that imposed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, where women are not allowed to get an education and are required to be fully covered up in public.

But he noted that the Islamic State of Lanao led by the Mautes is not an extremist group.

"They are a terrorist group because they have killed civilians. They have burned churches so they have

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From page 1

demonstrated that they have gone beyond the phase of extremism into violence, and this is now a terrorist organization and the state will have to deal with them in order to contain, isolate and eliminate the threat so they do not pose a future security threat to the Philippines," Gunaratna emphasized.

Terror trade mark

During the discussion, it was mentioned that a trademark of terrorist groups around the world is taking action against "soft targets" – civilians and non-military infrastructure. This brings to mind the Davao City Night Market bomb blast in September last year that killed 15 persons and wounded 69 others. A few weeks after the incident, defense officials presented to the media three members of the Maute Group said to be responsible for the blast.

Gunaratna further said that what happened in Marawi City was not a failure of intelligence, citing that since 2014, there has been information on the existence of the Maute Group.

"Last year, Isnilon Hapilon came from Basilan and he linked up with Omar and Abdullah Maute. So, I believe it is not intelligence failure. It is a failure to appreciate intelligence, and the government (Philippine) has to double up its capabilities to appreciate intelligence," he said.

"Unfortunately, the previous government did not acknowledge that ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq

and Syria) was recruiting and even government officials were saying there was no ISIS."

Since Tuesday, several hostages were reportedly taken by the group, among them a Catholic priest. The Catholic Church in Marawi City was burned down and several structures have been damaged, including a transmission tower, causing power outage in the city.

Two ambulance drivers were killed and their vehicles commandeered by the group. A senior police officer was also killed at a checkpoint manned by the Maute.

The violence has resulted in loss of life of both innocent civilians and government troops and has forced residents to flee to neighboring cities for their safety.

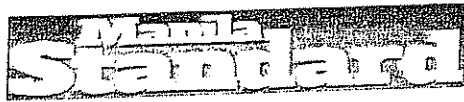
Those in the Muslim faith have professed that Islam is not about violence as some groups would like to portray and besmirch its good name. Native Maranaws from Marawi are saddened by the fact that their beautiful and peaceful city has become a battleground, especially on the eve of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Gunaratna said President Duterte's recognition of ISIS presence in the Philippines is critical to the solution.

The analyst also noted that although the country's military and police personnel are capable, they need to undergo retraining as they are dealing with terrorism.

They have to upgrade both their skills and equipment in fighting terrorism, he said.

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AÑO SEEKS TO END CRISIS IN LESS THAN 60 DAYS

By F. Pearl A. Gajunera, Maricel V. Cruz, John Paolo Bencito and Sara Susanne Fabunan

DAVAO CITY—Martial Law's designated implementor Gen. Eduardo Año said that they only have a simple guideline to follow for the 60 days Martial Law in the entire Island of Mindanao following the Marawi siege.

Año said that the military's guideline is to end the Marawi siege as soon as possible and to finish all the lawless groups in the island. Curfews will be implemented in selected areas only.

"Basta tapusin namin yung Marawi crisis at destroy all lawless elements in Mindanao," Año said in a text message. [We'll just have to end

Turn to A2

the Marawi crisis and destroy all lawless elements in Mindanao.

Asked if the guideline is applicable to the New People's Army, Año said they will deal with the rebels differently.

"Our actions towards the NPA will depend on the ongoing peace negotiations, aside from them, we will destroy the others," he said.

Año said the military will still abide with the result of the peace talks between the Communist Party of the Philippines National Democratic Front and the Government of the Philippines.

The GRP and CPP-NDF panel are now on the 5th round of peace talks in The Netherlands which is slated on May 27 to June 1.

The panel will tackle socioeconomic reforms, and the bilateral ceasefire.

On Saturday, NDF peace panel Chairperson Fidel Agcaoili issued a statement that the NDF is ready to unite with the GRP in fighting against the terrorist groups.

"The NDFP is prepared to unite with the GRP in the fight against groups that are terrorists because they mainly target, terrorize and harm civilians," Agcaoili said.

Agcaoili, however, urged the GRP to reconsider the declaration of Martial Law in Mindanao, since it will not solve the social, economic and political problem of the country.

He also calls on the CPP to reconsider their call of intensified offensive operations in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, two opposition lawmakers on Saturday supported President Duterte's declaration of martial law in the entire Mindanao following the attacks by the Maute terrorist group.

Buhay party-list Rep. Litó Atienza appealed to the public to trust the President's decision.

"We have to trust the President's judgment on this crucial issue. He is the only one in possession of the complete data and intelligence on exactly how serious this problem is. Our present Constitution has enough safeguards and limitations to ensure against abuse," Atienza, a House deputy minority leader, said, stressing that the President's declaration of martial law in Mindanao is subject to review and is limited to 60 days unless extended by Congress.

Atienza, who fought against martial law then, said the framers of the 1987 Constitution were wise enough to make sure that the traumatic experience of the 1972 martial law will never be repeated.

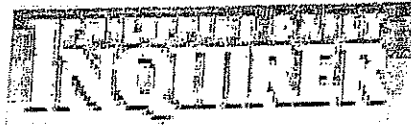
"First of all, the declaration of martial law under the present Constitution has to be affirmed by Congress sitting as one, within 48 hours after the President declares such and the President has to justify his declaration before Congress either in person or in writing," Atienza said.

"Unlike in the 1935 Constitution which was the basis of the declaration of martial law in 1972, only specific areas can be placed under martial law and not the entire country," Atienza added.

More importantly, Atienza said the other branches of the government: the legislative and the judiciary remain functional even under a state of martial law.

Atienza also pointed out that we should continue to be vigilant and monitor the effects of this declaration on the civilian population including the business sector not only in Mindanao but the whole country.

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CALMING MARAWI FEARS

PALACE WARNING TO MEDIA: DON'T REPORT FAKE NEWS

By DJ Yap

[@deejayapINQ](mailto:deejayap@inq.net.ph)

Power has been restored to 95 percent of Marawi City after the government, through its Inter-Agency Task Force on Securing Energy Facilities, secured the compound, Abella said in a statement.

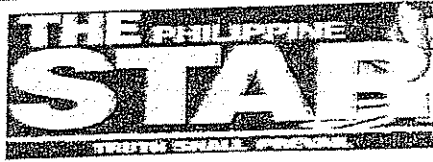
"This development should allay fears stirred by alarmist and untrue reports of Lasureco coming under attack," he said.

"Given the gravity of the situation in Marawi City, we urge the public to remain calm and not to spread unverified or incomplete news items, even as we urge media practitioners not to report such items that can easily be misinterpreted or sensationalized," he said. INQ

The Office of the President on Saturday urged the media not to report fake and unsubstantiated news on the escalating situation in Marawi City and asked the public to keep calm amid the proliferation of "alarmist and untrue reports."

Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella made the call following reports that the Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative (Lasureco) had been attacked by Maute militants who had laid siege to Marawi City over the past few days.

26 May 2017



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Trapped in Marawi, 30 civilians call for rescue

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY — At least 30 construction workers trapped by Islamic State-inspired Maute militants in Marawi City yesterday appealed to the Armed Forces for immediate rescue.

The workers yesterday called up their families in a last-ditch effort to reach the government forces.

Joy Maralino said her husband Romar, his brother Romer, Michael Casimiro, Jimmy Esperat and about 26 other workers were renovating a building along Rajah Madaya

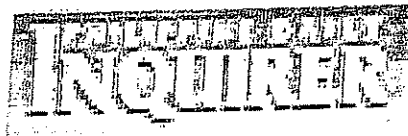
Perez street when militants showed up.

"As of this noon my husband called up and pleaded for immediate rescue because the terrorists have already surrounded the building and were destroying the gate to barge in to take them hostage," Maralino said.

Capt. Jo Ann Petinglay, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, said the ground forces have been alerted for the rescue of the trapped workers.

Petinglay also said the ground forces continue to comb all sections where the Maute militants were holed out.

28 May 2017



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ICRC starts rescue of stranded residents

By Julie Alipala
@alipalajulieINQ

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has started efforts to extract some 30 civilians hiding in a building in downtown Marawi City for fear of the Maute group.

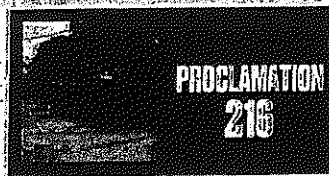
John Louie Balagot, assistant Cabinet secretary of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), said the ICRC extraction efforts were ongoing.

Go-signal

"The latest development is that the ICRC already has clearance from Malacañang and will talk to the military next. The ICRC also has a go-signal from the other side," Balagot said, referring to the Maute group.

If initial efforts failed to push through on Saturday, the ICRC might be able to move in today, he added.

The civilians in hiding included children, construction workers who had gone to Marawi to earn better wages, and workers of former politician Alibasias Knife Lucman. A driver for the Lucman family,



which owns the compound where the civilians are hiding, said the family decided to move out on Monday when they sensed that armed men were coming.

Tata Lucman, a member of the family, said they intentionally left their workers behind because it was more dangerous for them to leave the compound as gunmen from the Maute group were roaming the streets and setting up checkpoints to flush out Christians.

Trapped

Aleta Esperat, whose husband, Jimmy, was among those in hiding since May 23, said she hoped help would not come too late for him and the 29 others. She said she had lost contact with her husband on Saturday morning.

Joy Marjalino, whose husband, construction worker Ro-

mar, was among those trapped, said the last message she got on Saturday morning was that "the Maute people were trying to destroy the gate of the building where the civilians are hiding."

Another trapped civilian, Jimmy Sakay, had earlier warned that their mobile phones were running low on power and their only means of communication might soon get cut off. It would then get more difficult to locate them, he said.

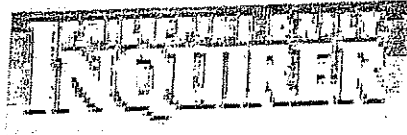
Cell phones not ringing

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman said he had tried to call the numbers provided by the trapped civilians on Saturday "but none of (the phones) were ringing anymore."

"We have sent rescue teams (and) we keep sending people to locate areas where there are trapped civilians. We hope to (find) and rescue them all," Hataman said.

Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza meanwhile told the Inquirer that Armed Forces Chief Gen. Eduardo Año had pledged to take care of the trapped civilians. INQ

26 May 2017



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MARTIAL LAW REACTION

NPA WARNED: DON'T JOIN MINDANAO FRAY

The military is not specifically targeting the communist New People's Army (NPA) in Mindanao but criminal acts would be "dealt with" as usual, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Saturday.

The defense chief reiterated that Mindanao was placed under martial law to deal with Islamist terrorism and not really against the NPA or the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

"Let me emphasize, however, that members of the CPP-NPA who will engage in criminal and illegal acts such as kidnaping, extortion, murder and the destruction of property will be

dealt with, with or without martial law," Lorenzana said.

"Don't join the fray in Mindanao... Do not force the government's hand," Lorenzana said after the IGGP ordered the NPA to intensify operations in protest of martial law in Mindanao.

Lorenzana reiterated that Mindanao was placed under martial law "to address radical Islamic terrorism and narco-terrorism in Mindanao."

Instead of aggravating the situation in Mindanao, Lorenzana called on the communist insurgents to "stop all illegal activities and abide by the true spirit of the peace process."

—JAYMEET.GAMIL INQ

28 May 2017

The Manila Times

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Troops secure mosques vs terror threats

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE AND PNA

GOVERNMENT troops have been ordered to secure mosques and other places of worships in the wake of threats from extremist groups as the observance of the holy month of Ramadan started on Saturday.

"All our personnel in the Western Mindanao [Command] (WestMinCom) were ordered to carry out security measures to ensure that the vicinity of mosques (masjids) will be secured and the Islamic faithful will be free to go there to exercise their religion," Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., WestMinCom chief said.

In his Ramadan message, Galvez also gave the assurance that the military was taking all the necessary precautions to prevent collateral damage in its efforts to flush out the remaining members of the Maute group in Marawi City.

Ramadan is a holy month of fasting, introspection and prayers for the followers of Islam.

"As fighting continues in Marawi, our units are constrained to launch airstrikes to identified specific targets occupied by the Maute/IS terrorist group," Galvez said.

"The terrorists' actions prevent their fellow Muslims from peacefully and solemnly observing Ra-

madan as they continue to occupy buildings and structures in Marawi City. They serve to impede our troops in restoring peace and order in that city," he added.

"These terrorist atrocities continue to sow terror and confusion even among non-combatant Muslims and Christians. Establishments remain non-operational and government services are unavailable, causing extreme deprivation and hardships to the people," Galvez said.

He added that normally, a Ramadan break was granted to Muslim soldiers but for now they need to make sacrifices to ensure that Islam believers from Marawi City could return home soon and observe the holy month.

The fighting in Marawi City started on May 23 when Maute group members laid siege on the city after government troops raided the hideout of Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, whom the group is protecting.

Meanwhile, Palace spokesman

Ernesto Abella on Saturday said electricity services in Marawi City have been almost fully restored following reports that Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative (Lasureco) was occupied by the Maute bandits.

The government, through its Inter-Agency Task Force on Securing Energy Facilities, has secured the Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative compound, and the National Electrification Administration and Lasureco have reported that 95 percent of electricity service has been restored in Marawi," Abella said.

The Palace official also told the media to be more discerning in reporting information from the ground.

"Given the gravity of the situation in Marawi City, we urge the public to remain calm and not to spread unverified or incomplete news items, even as we urge media practitioners not to report such items that can easily be misinterpreted or sensationalized," he added.

The National Grid Corporation of the Philippines initially reported a lower electricity demand in Lanao del Sur reaching only 5 megawatts (MW) on Wednesday, which increased to 11 MW on Thursday, lower than the usual demand of 17 MW.

When the Maute Group started occupying Marawi on Tuesday, a blackout hit the city.

15 May 2017



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Troops ordered to protect mosques amid terror threats

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Government troops have been ordered to secure mosques and other places of worships amid threat from extremist groups as the observance of the holy month of Ramadan started yesterday.

"All our personnel in Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) were ordered to carry out security measures to ensure that the vicinity of mosques (masjids) will be secured and the Islamic faithful are free to go there to exercise their religion," said Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Westmincom chief.

In his Ramadan message, Galvez also assured that the military was taking all necessary precautions to prevent collateral damages in its efforts to flush-out remaining members of the Maute group in Marawi City.

Ramadhan is a holy month of fasting, introspection and prayers for the followers of Islam.

"As fighting continues in Marawi, our units are constrained to launch airstrikes to identified specific targets occupied by the Maute/ISIS terrorist group," Galvez said.

"The terrorists actions prevent their fellow Muslims to peacefully and solemnly observe Ramadan by continuing to occupy buildings and structures in Marawi City. They serve to impede our troops in restoring peace and order in that city," he said.

"These terrorists atrocities

continue (to) sow terror and confusion even to non-combatant Muslims and Christians. Establishments remain non-operational and government services unavailable causing extreme deprivation and hardships to the people," he added.

He said normally, a Ramadan break was granted to Muslim soldiers but for now they need to give their share of sacrifices to ensure that Islam believers from Marawi City could return home soon and observe Ramadhan.

He added Muslim soldiers were given time to practice their faith but were ordered to be on assignment.

He vowed they would not allow the Maute group to ruin the lives of the Filipinos and "give Islam a bad name."

"It is in this light that there is a need to deliberately employ forces and air assets to target with precision selected, identified, and already isolated terrorist locations," he said.

The fighting in Marawi City started on May 23 when the Maute group members laid siege after the troops raided the hideout of Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, who is being protected by the group.

The fighting escalated as Maute group members have occupied several establishments and took civilians, including a priest, as hostages.

26 May 2017

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'PRAYERS FOR PEACE END TO TERRORISM'

By John Paolo Bencito and Vito Barcelo

DESPITE the imposition of martial law in Mindanao, Malacañang on Saturday called for prayers so that peace will reign in Mindanao in time for the observance of the holy month of Ramadan.

"Together we pray for an end to terrorism that falsely claims to advance Islam and seeks to subjugate our land to the brutal IS [Islamic State]," Presidential Spokesperson Ernesto Abella said in a statement.

"In this spirit of Muslim peace, the President has offered the hand of peaceful dialogue to terrorist groups, to avoid bloodshed in this time of prayer, fasting and mercy," he added.

Ramadan is the ninth of the 12-month Hijra lunar-based calendar and is considered the holiest month in Islam, as it was during this month that God's Revelations in the Qur'an were completed, according to the history of Islam.

Muslims fast daily from dawn to dusk in 29 to 30 days in absolute ab-

stinence from food, drink and from daytime marital sex.

"Muslims are trained to fast from a young age, as taught in the Qur'an: 'Fasting is prescribed unto you, as it was prescribed unto those before you, that ye may learn self-restraint in piety.' (2:128)

Days before the one-month-long fasting, Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao on May 23 and cut short his trip in Russia following the Maute group's attack in Marawi City.

In a separate statement, the Palace hailed troops killed in clashes against the Maute group in Marawi City.

"We take a moment to remember some of the first casualties in the May 23 attacks in Marawi City;

Marawi City Police Senior Inspector and Intelligence Unit Chief Freddie Manuel Solar, from Baguio City, and two members of Special Forces, First Lieutenant John Carl Morales and Special Forces Marlon Baldovino, both of Kabacan, North Cotabato," Abella said.

"May they rest in peace, and may we be faithful to honor the ultimate sacrifice of their lives in the service of their country," he added.

As of May 26, the military said that around 31 members of the bandit group and 11 soldiers and two policemen have been killed since the attack on Tuesday.

The Maute group have also taken hostage 15 people in Marawi City, including a Catholic priest and parishioners.

Duterte told Congress that the Maute terrorist group wanted to turn Mindanao into a separate Islamic state as he justified the declaration of martial law in the south.

In a seven-page report to Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III and House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, Duterte said several lawless groups had taken up arms in a rebellion to remove Mindanao, starting with

Marawi City in Lanao del Sur, from its allegiance to the Philippine government and create a separate Daesh wilayat or Islamic State province in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, Cotabato Cardinal Orlando Quevedo said he agrees with President Rodrigo Duterte's decision to declare martial law in Mindanao and said that let the government pursue what leads to peace in the country, particularly in Marawi City.

"Let us pray for peace and work for peace," the Cardinal said in a pastoral statement.

"The President of the Philippines has responded to the Marawi crisis by declaring Martial Law in the entire Mindanao. Many criticize the decision as reminiscent of the horrors of a past dictatorship. Others support the decision as justified," the prelate said.

He said the church is aware that the problems of peace and order, of the continuing disruptive activities of other rebel groups, the problems of criminality and drugs, of corruption and underdevelopment are in every nook and corner of Mindanao.

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Quezon PPO creates force to augment Marawi troops

BY DANNY J. ESTACIO

CAMP NAKAR, Lucena City — The Quezon Police Provincial Office (PPO) has created a provisional police company ready to augment government forces fighting the terrorist threat posed by the Maute and Abu Sayyaf Groups in Marawi City.

Senior Superintendent Rhoderick C. Armamento, provincial director (PD), revealed yesterday that the police company consists of 120 members of various public safety companies in the PPO.

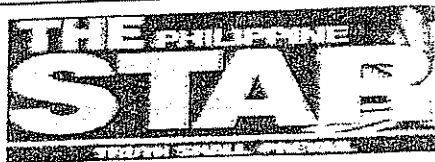
"They are ready for deployment as per order of the PNP higher command," said Armamento, noting that the entire police force in Quezon has been on high alert since a day after last Tuesday's siege of Marawi.

Lt. Gen. Ferdinand Quidilla, who heads the military's Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM), also confirmed his command is on full red alert and that field commanders are ordered to keep watch of possible areas to be targeted by terrorist groups.

Likewise, the security alert is the same in Cavite, where Sr. Supt. Arthur V. Bisnar ordered the PPO units to implement tighter security measures to thwart any terror or crime threats in the province.

"There will always be a threat anywhere from both crime and terror groups, PRO 4-A (Police Regional Office 4-A) and the Cavite PPO are implementing security measures to detect and disrupt this (the threats), Bisnar said. (With a report from Anthony Giron)

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Malaysia offers help in Phl fight vs terrorists

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has expressed full support for the Philippines following the terrorist attack in Marawi City that prompted President Duterte to declare martial law in the whole of Mindanao.

"Malaysia condemns the attack on Marawi City by groups linked to Daesh that led to casualties of government forces

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and displacement of civilians," Razak tweeted on Thursday, using another name for the Islamic State.

"I have full confidence in the Philippines and will offer our full support," he added.

He also stressed that the crisis must not derail the ongoing Mindanao peace process.

Malaysia has served as facilitator during the peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Razak came to the Philippines in 2014 when the peace agreement was signed between the negotiating panels in the presence of former president Benigno Aquino III.

Meanwhile, the Canadian government on Friday issued a travel advisory warning its citizens not to travel to Mindanao following the declaration of martial law.

"Global Affairs Canada (GAC) advises against all travel to the Mindanao region (excluding urban areas of Davao City) due to the serious threat of terrorist attacks and kidnapping," it said in its updated advisory.

"The government of Canada's ability to provide consular assistance in this region is limited," it added.

The GAC also advised its citizens against non-essential travel to Davao City "due to security concerns and the implementation of martial law in the Mindanao region."

It also reiterated its warning against traveling to the Sulu archipelago and through the southern Sulu Sea, including the waters off southern Palawan Island, due to the threat of piracy and kidnappings in this area.

"There is a serious risk of terrorist attacks and kidnappings in this region. Bombs causing deaths and injuries have exploded in public areas of major centers, including the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, General Santos, Isabela, Jolo, Kidapawan and Zamboanga," said Canadian government.

Canada said its citizens visiting or living in Mindanao despite the advisory should regularly review their security situation and take appropriate precautions, especially when visiting places frequented by foreigners.

"Davao City authorities have released guidelines discouraging non-essential travel to and from the city while the city remains in a state of martial law. Avoid crowded places and remain indoors as much as possible," it added.

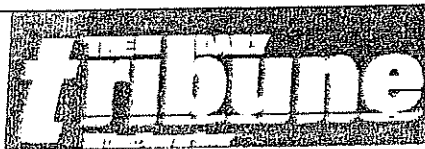
Earlier, the United States and United Kingdom also issued travel advisories following the clashes in Marawi City and the subsequent declaration of martial law.

"While the US embassy has no information that the events in Marawi City represent a direct threat to US citizens or US interests in the Philippines, we encourage US citizens to review personal security plans, avoid large crowds and gatherings and remain vigilant at all times," the US embassy in Manila said.

Meanwhile, the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office said it continues to advise against all travel to western Mindanao, including Marawi City.

It urged its citizens in Marawi to remain indoors, monitor media and follow the advice of authorities. - Janvic Mateo

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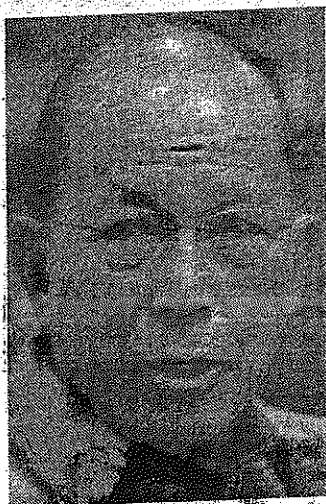
Russia wants more engagements with Asean nations – Lorenzana

Russia wants more engagements with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) member states, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has said.

"I think they would like to have an engagement with Asean and since we are the chairman now, maybe they would like to have a foothold maybe to deal with the other members of the Asean," Lorenzana said when asked about the warming of security and defense ties between the Philippines and Russia in an exclusive interview in Moscow, Russia last Tuesday.

"In fact, they are already dealing with other members of Asean, like Vietnam, because they had a close relationship before. In fact, Vietnam has bought from them some military equipment."

Lorenzana was part of President Duterte's four-day visit to Russia, a trip that was cut short by the fighting between Maute Group terrorists and military units



LORENZANA

in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur.

Earlier, the two nations signed an Agreement on Defense Cooperation that will pave the way for more exchanges between their defense establishments.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and

Industry (PCCI) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation gathered last Thursday at the Four Seasons Hotel with Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez at the helm to build up confidence in robust trade and business prospects of signed agreements between the two countries.

Lopez spoke to represent Duterte, who had to cut short his visit to Russia, following the eruption of violence in Marawi City.

"We want to assure everybody that the government is in control of the situation and it is business as usual," Lopez said before hundreds of businessmen in Russia.

He noted the robust economy in the Philippines and continued confidence of the people in President Duterte's administration despite the situation in Mindanao.

Deputy Minister Alexander Tsybulsky of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation welcomed the

Filipino delegation and conveyed condolences and understanding of the emergency situation in the Philippines.

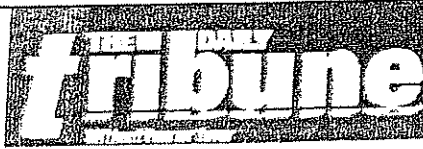
The business forum celebrated the signing of agreements between the two chambers with George Barcelon of the PCCI, Presidential Consultant on Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion, and Secretary Fortunato de la Peña of the Department of Science and Technology among the witnesses.

Describing the Philippines as a "bright spot in Asia," Lopez shared the Duterte administration's economic program, which goal is to empower the country's micro, small, and medium enterprises and provide more job opportunities for the people.

In summary, Lopez said the economic program of the Duterte administration ultimately seeks to bring "growth and prosperity and better economic life for all Filipinos."

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AFP: Foreign terrorists in Marawi clash involved in illegal drug trade

DAYAO CITY — Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman Desislamo Padilla yesterday announced that foreign terrorists among those who aided the Maute group in the siege of Marawi City.

"There are certain foreign elements here who have been in the country for a long time, aiding those terrorists in skills related to terrorism, particularly self-propaganda," Padilla said.

According to Padilla, there have been reports of 12 Maute members neutralized in the ongoing clearing operations, half of them were Singaporean, Indonesian and Malaysian nationals.

"Some have been here a long time, some of whom have been here helping, teaching, aiding, connecting them and linking these groups," Padilla said.

While they have yet to confirm the identities of those foreign terrorists who have only just entered the country, the general said that those who have resided here may have been "trying to escape the long arm of the law in their respective countries."

He also added that most of the members of the Maute Group have

been used as an illegal source to generate money and to improve their skills.

"In many of the instances where their camps have been overtaken by our troops, there is evidence of the presence of drug paraphernalia, particularly with this Maute Group, such that our soldiers have been reporting that they've been fighting suicidally, meaning, without any regard for their own safety and like zombies."

On the other hand, a total number of 11 soldiers and two policemen were killed as of Saturday midnight, one was brutally beheaded.

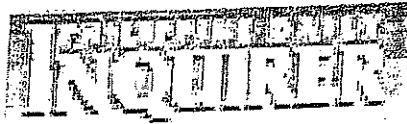
"Our men and women in the Armed Forces are committed to this mission. Because of this commitment, it is sad that we have to offer lives in order to accomplish that," said Padilla, adding that it is for the exact reason why it's important for civilians to cooperate.

He also added that now more than ever, it is important for the country to become a member of nations who are collectively working to fight terrorism and extremism.

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EDITORIAL

Saving lives

With Marawi City in turmoil, thousands of residents fleeing for their lives, gun battles between government troops and the terrorist Abu Sayyaf and Maute Group, and air strikes on the terrorists' positions, the need to save lives has become paramount.

The announcement of Health Secretary Paulyn Ubial that all government hospitals in Mindanao are "fully operational" is thus reassuring in this distressing time. "We are confident that our hospital personnel possess the necessary competence to carry out immediate measures, facilitate recovery efforts, and reduce the impact of any emergency event that may arise," she said in a statement, the implementation of which is devoutly wished.

Additionally and importantly, Ubial said the Department of Health would be there for all Filipinos regardless of creed or belief. "The [DOH] will certainly not discriminate against any sector of the Filipino population in the performance of its duty, whether the patients be on the government side or otherwise, especially when it comes to health-related emergencies," she said.

According to Lt. Col. Jo-Ar Herrera, spokesperson for the Army's 1st Infantry Division, 15 government men—13 soldiers and two policemen—have been killed, and 45 have been wounded. As many as 41 from the enemy camp have been killed. But here's the unfortunate thing: The number of slain civilians is uncertain.

The fighting has triggered a wave of evacuations, with everyone capable of leaving, including children and the elderly, striving to get out of the embattled city. More than half of Marawi's over 200,000 residents were said to have fled by the end of the week. They set out on the road to Iligan City—and hopefully, safety—with only what they could carry with them. In a heartening act, volunteers lined the road to hand out food and water to the fleeing Maranaw, many of whom would walk 10 arduous hours to get to the neighboring city.

The sentiment was best expressed by the Facebook post of Amir Riga: "For those going to Iligan to Marawi. There's free food for you. We will endure rain and being tired just so we can ensure that you won't get hungry in traffic for more than 10 hours. Take care." Riga also called for food donations for the refugees, showing that while times of crisis bring out the worst in people, they also bring out the best.

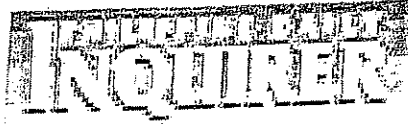
But what about those who are unable to leave Marawi, trapped by gunfire and the fires set by the Maute Group? Civilians are waving white flags from their widows to indicate that they are not combatants. "At night, we can hear the gunfire. I'm just praying that the bullets will not find their way to my house and hit us. I hope that the bombs will not land nearby and harm us," said resident Mohammad Usman. The bombs he is talking about are those being dropped by the military in "surgical air strikes," according to the 1st Infantry Division's Herrera.

As military jets flew over Marawi and tanks rolled into the streets, people may be reminded of similar scenes of destruction: In September 2013, forces identified with the Moro National Liberation Front entered Zamboanga City and took over several areas. It took 4,500 government soldiers and policemen three weeks to wrest back the city, leaving 10,000 houses razed, 218 people dead, hundreds injured, and more than 100,000 residents displaced. Zamboanga City still has to fully recover from that nightmare today, and MNLF founder Nur Misuari has yet to be brought to account for his men's crimes.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has reminded both government forces and terrorists in Marawi to spare civilians in the fighting. "International humanitarian law remains applicable in this situation, even after the declaration of martial law in Mindanao. As such it must be respected at all times and by all the parties," said Pascal Porchet, head of the ICRC delegation in the Philippines.

In resisting the advance and rooting out the agents of terrorism in Marawi, it is important that lives, especially of noncombatants, be protected and saved. It is also important that in the imposition of martial law in the whole of Mindanao, the abuses for which Ferdinand Marcos' martial law was notorious be prevented and avoided. And no, rape jokes certainly do not help.

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Flashback to Marawi in '72

A sense of *déjà vu* overwhelmed me as we drove through the streets of Marawi City on Day 3 of the siege. We were headed to City Hall, where Mayor Majul Gandamra and his relatives had dug in. It felt weird to see a situation almost the same as that almost 45 years ago, starting on Oct. 21, 1972, or a month after then President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law.

Rebels calling themselves "Iklas" had attacked Marawi and declared Moro independence. Banggolo, the busy commercial center, was empty, as now. Fully armed rebels occasionally marched on the streets, as now. Then Mayor Omar Dianalan, now deceased, held temporary office at Plaza Cabili surrounded by his relatives and a few policemen (the chief of police had earlier defected to the rebels), while frantically asking for reinforcements from a nearby military camp. Now, Mayor Gandamra was holding fort at City Hall surrounded by his two police escorts and his personal security group of relatives (the deputy chief of police was killed in action), and likewise seeking help from military authorities.

I wrote this as skirmishes continued, with government troops starting mop-up operations against the rebels. The 1972 rebellion lasted for about three days. I remember it clearly:

It was a quiet, chilly morning. We were walking briskly from the mosque toward

COMMENTARY

MACABANGKIT B. LANTO

home after *Soboh* (dawn) prayers when we met a ragtag group of boys in full battle gear marching and shouting *Allah Ho Akbar* (God is Great). They were led by one Commander Mino. They overwhelmed the local police forces and overran government installations and facilities. At the radio station dxSO, the boys, some of them my students at Mindanao State University, took turns declaring on air the start of the Moro revolution and ranting nonstop about Moro grievances. Marawi came close to falling into their hands but for Camp Keithley (renamed Anaipakpak), where outnumbered government forces fought valiantly.

There was a clear stalemate, a scene one sees in the movies. The rebels had regrouped and were targeting the camp; the government forces resisted fiercely. It was promising to be a drawn-out battle but the arrival of then Brig. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos on the third day broke the impasse. News of Ramos' "reinforcement" spread fast and reached the rebels. It dampened their fighting spirit and deterred the reinforcement of other rebel groups, who believed that the general had come with battalions of soldiers to defend the camp. It was psywar in action.

I learned later from official documents that Ramos was then "on routine inspection of the local constabulary units based in Cebu City" and flew to Marawi with only his staff when he learned of the siege.

But his presence proved to be the tipping point. The camp defenders' flagging morale was lifted when they saw their chief among them. True to his sobriquet, "Steady Eddie" was in his element commanding and rallying the soldiers. He "personally reorganized the defenses by strengthening fighting positions and realigning the troops in key areas, and rallied the men to carry on the fight." The rebels eventually withdrew. For this singular feat, Ramos was awarded the "Distinguished Conduct Star" on July 1, 1986, "for conspicuous courage and gallantry in action."

These came to mind as I pondered on how to end the violence in Marawi. Maybe the wisdom and courage of a General Ramos is needed? Maybe it requires one decisive and surgical military operation, avoiding hitting civilians, to drive away the outnumbered and underpowered terrorists? But I am only a trained litigator, not a soldier.

Macabangkit B. Lanto (amb_mac_lanto@yahoo.com), UP Law 1967, was a Fulbright Fellow to New York University for his postgraduate studies. He has served in the government in various capacities

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INQUIRER

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How we lose our freedoms

From the perspective of President Duterte and his advisers, there's probably no better time than now to determine what else he can do, or how far he can go, as president of this country. Declaring martial law in Mindanao is his way of testing the outer limits of his political prerogatives. This course of action, as I'll try to show, will put a stress on political legitimacy rather than on strict legality—on what the people appear to be willing to accept, rather than on what the law says.

Our current political milieu, I'm afraid, favors the populist language of willful leadership, of final solutions to festering problems, and of abiding trust in those who are prepared to break the rules in order to destroy the status quo once and for all. Accordingly, it sees the legal system as the last refuge of a dysfunctional Establishment. It regards all assertions of individual freedoms, and of civil and political rights, as selfish, mistaken, unpatriotic, and delusional.

The detested "Establishment" includes everything and everyone Mr. Duterte and his followers have mocked since the 2016 electoral campaign: the political oligarchy led by the Aquinos that came to power after Edsa 1, the business elites that benefited from and supported the latter, the Catholic bishops, the mainstream media, the Western press, the global advocates of democracy and civil liberties, the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations.

As a legal instrument in the hands of the chief executive, martial law itself is no longer what it used to be. The framers of the 1987 Constitution essentially stripped it of extraordinary powers by explicitly subjecting it to review by coequal branches of the state, namely the legislature and the judiciary.

But, as a political concept, ML draws its considerable sting not so much from its constitutional basis as from the remembrance of its past uses and abuses—its rationalization as a tool of last resort, memories of the unspeakable brutality it brought out among its enforcers, and the enduring terror it instilled in our people.



PUBLIC LIVES

RANDY DAVID

Was it a coincidence that the very first thing Mr. Duterte conjured after announcing ML in Mindanao was the image of martial law under Marcos? That, instead of assuring ordinary Filipinos of the continuing protection of their liberties in the face of a perceived threat against the state, he chose to warn them that he will be "harsh"? Hardly.

Speaking to the troops in Iligan City on May 26, three days after declaring ML in Mindanao, he said: "I am here to say to you, fight and I will pray for you, and I will answer for everything. *Wag na kayo magalala.* (Don't worry.) During martial law, your commanders, you, can arrest any person, search any house, *wala nang* (no need for a) warrant."

I am not a lawyer but, as far as I know, the 1987 Constitution does not give the President such powers under martial law. Nor does it free soldiers and police officers who act illegally—whether on orders of their superiors or not—from criminal liability. Martial law does not suspend the Bill of Rights, nor does it replace civilian courts with military courts. It obligates the President to report to Congress, and the latter to assess ML's factual basis.

We have been assured that the guidelines issued by the Armed Forces of the Philippines are more mindful of the restrictive provisions of the new Constitution. Still, I am alarmed by the AFP spokesperson's warning that they reserve the right to "censure" (sic) published material and restrict the freedom of expression. I don't think the law allows them.

But this is nothing compared to the way Mr. Duterte himself talks about martial law powers. Ironically, his portrayal of ML powers stands in sharp contrast to the careful legalistic language in which the 1972 proclamation of martial law is couched. Unlike Marcos, Mr. Duterte doesn't seem to care what the rest of the world thinks. Who will dare check him if the Filipino public thinks he's doing the right thing? Every opinion survey seems to confirm his continuing popularity, almost as if the public has given him blanket approval for every cause he chooses to champion.

He has sufficiently intimidated the Church, the mainstream media, the political opposition, and the business community. He has tamed the police and the military, charmed the armed left by inviting its nominees to sit in the Cabinet while they resume peace talks, and silenced the organized Moro liberation groups by dangling the prospect of concluding a peace agreement with them. As the US and the West signal their gradual disengagement from world affairs in the face of their own domestic problems, Mr. Duterte basks in his newfound friendship with the powerful rulers of China and Russia.

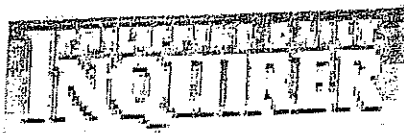
What better time, indeed, can there be for a Filipino autocrat to measure the metes and bounds of his actual powers?

It is wonderful to hear Ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales, Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, and Justice Antonio Carpio speak up boldly on crucial issues of law. But, as influential as they may be, their voices constitute only a small particle in a still evolving legal system. And, as I said, the prevailing political climate is not exactly hospitable to legal arguments. What is to be done?

Let Congress and the high court debate the justification for martial law. But, as citizens of this republic, let us not waste our breaths supplying the reasons for why we need martial law. That is how we get accustomed to losing our freedoms. Let us remain focused instead on what we need to do to defend what remains of our democracy.

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Joking about rape—again

Maybe we shouldn't be shocked any more by yet another outrageous statement from our motor-mouth of a President. Well, maybe we aren't shocked or surprised, but certainly, and given the occasion and the historical circumstance, the context of it, we are all the more angry, irate, offended and pained.

Speaking to soldiers who had survived the early skirmishes against self-proclaimed terrorists who had overrun the city of Marawi, the President "joked" on Friday that troopers could "rape up to three women" and he would take responsibility in their place, even do a stint in prison for them.

Note that the President didn't say this about soldiers killing or wounding any of the so-called terrorists, or even about violating the human rights of civilians or combatants. Instead, he brought up the possibility of women being raped by soldiers. Women are, it appears, in his view a "normal" target of abuse in times of war, even by soldiers. Was he not in effect giving the soldiers "permission" to rape any woman they encounter?

Even more offensive is the interpretation by some media outlets that Mr. Duterte made the comments about rape in jest "to lift the spirits of troops" charged with quelling this latest outrage, which led him to declare martial law throughout the island of Mindanao.

Whaaaat? Assurance of being exonerated should they commit crimes in the course of putting down the occupation of Marawi—specifically of getting away with rape—is all our soldiers and police need to lift their morale? Are we counting on defenders of democracy, or thugs obeying the harebrained orders of their boss, as we battle this terroristic outrage?



AT LARGE

RINA JIMENEZ-DAVID

What makes Mr. Duterte's remarks, even if, or especially if, he was joking, is that he made them in Marawi, which is one of the most conservative areas of Muslim Mindanao that has, of late, become even more fundamentalist.

Surely, the Maranaw who are the majority among the residents of Marawi will not take the mention of rape—especially when issuing forth from the mouth of a sitting President—as a joke or as a means of lifting the spirits of soldiers.

There are so many questions being raised about the need to declare martial law throughout Mindanao, with a very imminent threat of the declaration covering the Visayas and Luzon as well. But the President's attempt at humor at the expense of women needs to be denounced immediately.

Noteworthy is the fact that, instead of calling for immediate aid for the hapless civilians fleeing Marawi and facing shortages of water, food, medicines and

other necessities, not to mention risking their lives as they flee through combat zones, the President instead chose to provoke laughter at the expense of women. For that he declared martial law?

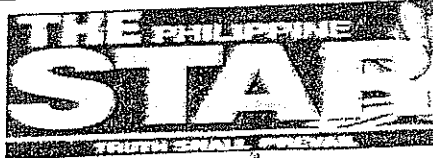
Of all the disinformation attempts spurred by the situation in Marawi, perhaps the most egregious was the "revelation" that Sen. Bam Aquino was "suspiciously" present in the city the day before the conflict broke out. This led to speculation that either Aquino alone, or the Liberal Party and even a conglomeration of Duterte opposition forces, conspired with the Maute Group to launch the destabilization attempt.

Now it turns out that Senator Bam was in Marawi on the invitation of the government itself. More specifically, the Department of Trade and Industry had to issue a clarification that Aquino, "along" with stakeholders in the military, the business sector and the local government, was in Marawi to attend the launch of the Negosyo (Business) Center of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the first in the ARMM but the 508th such center in the country.

Senator Bam had to be there, being the author of the Go Negosyo Law that directs the DTI to establish the centers in all municipalities "to give micro and small entrepreneurs access to entrepreneurship education, mentorship, money and markets."

Malice, my old journalism teachers taught us, is simply "knowing that something is not true but going ahead and publishing it as the truth." The "alternative facters" in this case are certainly guilty of malice, but in this age of trolls and antisocial media, can we expect anything better from them?

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BABE ROMUALDEZ

Mindanao martial law: Make or break for Rody

When Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, expectations were so high that so many people actually believed the country was poised to move on to a new beginning with Marcos' New Society slogan: "*Sangkawin lahat ng bayan, disiplinang kailangan*."



The New Society sought to curb violent crimes and stop communist insurgents and Muslim rebels from sowing chaos and disorder in the country. But it was only for a short period. Major abuses started to take place, the old oligarchy was replaced with the new oligarchy, and so forth and so on. Ultimately, the Marcos regime fell shortly after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino.

Following clashes between government troops and Maute group terrorists in Marawi City in Lanao del Sur — with the extremists attacking several facilities including the city jail and freeing more than a hundred inmates — President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao, triggering fears that history will repeat itself.

In his official report to Congress to justify his martial law declaration, President Duterte described the atrocities committed by the Maute group as attempts to remove Mindanao — starting with Marawi City — from its allegiance to the government and prevent the president from enforcing laws to maintain public order and safety. The violence displayed by the Maute terrorists and their act of hoisting the black flag of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in various private and government facilities is proof that the extremists want to establish an ISIS *wilayat* or province covering Mindanao — all of which effectively constitute rebellion. According to reports, foreign terrorists were also among those killed during the clashes — underscoring the link between Maute and international extremists.

Several groups are questioning the president's move, saying it was an overreaction that could pave the way for human rights violations by the military. But the fact of the matter is — the 1987 Constitution, which was a clear reaction to the Marcos era, has enough safeguards to prevent the abuse of power. For one, martial law is limited to a period of 60 days. The Supreme Court also has the power to review the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus or determine if the basis for the declaration is sufficient. Today's 1987 martial law constitutional provision compared to the 1935 Constitution is so diluted, it practically has no teeth.

Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno said, "the powers to declare Martial Law and suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus are expressly granted President Duterte under the Constitution. When properly implemented, this should not by itself unduly burden our country. This power was granted to allow the President to resolve the situation in case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it."

According to Sereno, "the 1987 Constitution in clear and unmistakable language rejects and absolutely prohibits the particular kind of martial law that began in our country in September of 1972."

The thing is, President Duterte continues to enjoy an extremely high approval rating with an informal survey conducted only yesterday showing that a majority, especially Mindanaoans, agree with the president's decision, saying this should have been done years ago to stop the lawless violence that has ravaged many parts of Mindanao. While it offers huge economic potential with many towns and cities that are progressive and peaceful, Mindanao continues to suffer from the reputation of being a "no man's land" where violence is the norm, with almost every other person carrying a gun — licensed or unlicensed.

Business groups like the Chamber of Commerce of the Philippine Islands led by Jose Luis Yulo stated their support for the president's decision in "defending and maintaining the safety of the Filipino people and proclaiming the sovereignty of the Republic against ISIS and all terrorists."

Philippine Hotel Owners Association president Arthur Lopez, who hails from Zamboanga City, thinks that the tourism industry could even surge as a consequence of placing Mindanao under martial law. "We have been getting a lot of bad publicity anyway with all these kidnappings in the south, the beheading of foreigners and the recent siege in Bohol. It's about time someone really took the bull by the horns," he said.

"The peace and order situation in Mindanao has deteriorated since 1986, and no administration has really taken decisive steps to end the insurgency problem in the south. I admire President Duterte for his guts, determination and decisiveness," Arthur said.

If there's anyone who knows about the situation in Mindanao very well, it would be none other than Rody himself since he hails from Davao and grew up in a place that was once known as the "Wild Wild West."

For many Mindanaoans, simply denouncing the atrocities of terrorists or employing "diplomacy" in dealing with rebel groups is no longer an option. The fighting has been going on for several decades, with many renegade and terrorist groups sprouting over the years, spreading chaos and displacing hundreds of thousands of people living in conflict-affected areas. Mindanaoans feel the time is right to place Mindanao under martial law, and agree that the president should be "harsh" in dealing with these barbarians.

Whenever President Duterte would exaggerate something and people believe him, he would caution his friends and Cabinet members, saying “*istorya man lang bay*” – meaning “it’s just a story, my friend.”

This time however, President Rodry’s martial law declaration is no longer “just a story” – it is for real. He has promised, “*tatapusin ko yan*, I will finish the lawlessness in Mindanao.” This is the story people want to hear from the man they voted for. Ultimately, it is also the story that could make or break his presidency.

Email: babeseyeviw@gmail.com

21 May 2017

The Manila Times

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The Land of Promise is once more a land of unfathomable tumult

AFTER the 2016 elections, many expressed a sense of celebration and hope. First over the fact that Mindanao, after decades in the leadership wilderness, finally got its president. Second was the intention of Mr. Duterte (an intention he later formalized), to staff his key positions with Mindanao natives. Third was this: the expectation that a Mindanao-centric development plan would finally be a major policy plank of the Palace.

I shared that sense of celebration, knowing how history has been unkind to Mindanao. I wrote one piece that had this essential theme. The 2016 elections broke the stranglehold of the Tagalog-Pampango areas on presidential elections, a development we should all welcome, I wrote then. The leadership equation had been skewed toward one particular part of the country and that was unhealthy for democracy.

Just look at this unhealthy leadership equation. The Commonwealth president was from Aurora province, now a part of Central Luzon. The president Mr. Duterte replaced was from Tarlac, also a part Central Luzon. The president before Mr. Aquino comes from Pampanga, Tarlac's neighboring province. Mindanao had never been given the leadership break it deserved.

What a relief that this stranglehold was finally broken in 2016. Finally, many said, the Land of Promise would get the development attention it deserved. Redressing a long record of neglect, whether this is ethnic or regional, is a mandate of the state.

Paying real attention to the development of Mindanao is an imperative, both a moral one and



SUNDAY
STORIES

MARLEN V.
RONQUILLO

an economic one.

The economic one is easy to explain.

With its agriculture sector fully developed, Mindanao can feed the whole country, it can function as the country's true bread basket. The soil is not only fertile and suitable for agricultural production on a massive scale. It is FMD-free, which makes it an ideal center for meat production and exports. We can't underestimate the commercial value of an FMD-free area. The precipitation level is better than most parts of the country. It is also the region least visited by devastating typhoons.

The unexplained anomaly that dry and drought-prone Pampanga is both a meat-processors' haven and a thriving area for poultry and hog production would finally cease to be an anomaly once Mindanao's livestock and poultry sector gets started. Because of the simple fact that Mindanao is the most ideal area for such purposes.

Mindanao is a land of migrants and this is the universally accepted truth. Areas peopled by migrants are daring, more predisposed to creativity and enterprise and more adventurous than areas not benefitted by massive waves of migration. Silicon Valley, the not-so-humungous enclave in and just off the California's Bay Area was built, in part, on the backs of driven migrants. More, Min-

danao has an excellent university system and Metro Davao is Exhibit A of that fact. Any and all efforts to build knowledge-based and technology enclaves in the region can get support from the university system.

The moral dimension is easier to explain.

Mindanao, the original Land of Promise, never got the adequate policy attention, resources and wherewithal to fully develop its potentials. The national government, from time immemorial and because of the failure of Mindanao to send leaders to Imperial Manila, just paid lip service to the region but failed to deliver the funding and the policy attention required. All talk, no real action.

In the Muslim Mindanao part of the region, the government just allowed political warlords and robber barons to run the place – the state's leadership proxy – until this part reached its apex of chaos and underdevelopment. Here is a region with poverty and illiteracy rates historically past the 50 percent levels.

Throughout much of the nation's history, Mindanao has been essentially the graveyard of grand but broken promises and fickle and flimsy government attention.

The recent decision of President Duterte to impose martial law on Mindanao is the supreme tragedy of the region – a native of the region imposing martial rule on the region to save it from a fall into the precipice. The great hopes of mid-2016 has turned into a martial law declaration. A president turns to martial law when no other governing alternative is left and this is now, apparently, the situation in the region. It is all

too clear, according to statements from the Palace, that Mr. Duterte has no other alternative except that recent one.

And the worst thing that could happen to a place in modern times – to be the operating territory for Islamic fundamentalists with links to the brutal and savage ISIS – happened in Mindanao, according to the presidential declaration. The Abu Sayyaf and the Maute groups have the conscience and cold-bloodedness of the fundamentalists sowing terror across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Those you see on the news that do beheading humans as routine as doing grocery.

A martial law declaration is always a blot on the innate civility of a democracy and democracy's supposed built-in capability to deal with major problems. Including the breakdown of peace and order. Senator Honasan has raised a good point. The failure of the intelligence bodies (they have funds and they have supposedly trained personnel) was very clear on the overnight rampage of the Maute Group. Whether the group has ISIS links or not is not even the issue. It is its capability to sow terror at will, and with hardly any prompt response from the concerned military units.

And this is the bigger point taught to us by history. Force, historically, has never been the harbinger for peace and for development.

That Mindanao has come to this is an unbearable burden on both Mr. Duterte and every Filipino who wants Mindanao to fulfill its great potentials. We can only pray that his martial law declaration will reverse the current chaos in the region.

May 2017

The Manila Times

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SOMEONE should tell the President to stop talking, and for his communications team to take control. Because the crisis in Marawi has revealed that he is preconditioned, at the worst time, to say the worst things.

It doesn't matter if he's here to begin with, or he's arriving from a foreign trip. It doesn't even matter that he has heard the public outcry against the martial law declaration, the fears that have been in the newspapers, on social media, out on the streets. He says what he wants. No one stops him.

Right there is why he is the worst leader to have at a time like this. There is no sense of control. No sense of order. There is no sense that he knows what he's doing. And it gets worse.

A Russian junket

It was bad enough that on May 23, no one was in charge.

The first news report declared that the firefight between the Armed Forces of the Philippines



RADIKAL CHICK

KATRINA STUART SANTIAGO

and the Maute fighters started at 2 p.m. When we started hearing about the Maute members being seen in different places in Marawi, it was in the afternoon. During that stretch of time, there was nothing to be heard from Malacañang - not a peep. By evening AFP spokesman Restituto Padilla declared that whatever was going on in Marawi was "AFP-initiated."

Soon after, ThinkingPinoy talks to National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. via Facebook live, and he contradicts Padilla: "No, no, no, no. What he meant might have been that the Armed Forces is actually in operations, they have ongoing operations against one very well-known terrorist leader, so *sila ang nagsimula no'n.*"

Out of control

Drawing the line between what was happening in Basak Malutlut where the AFP had ongoing operations to get the terrorist leader, and what was going on in Marawi, Esperon further said: "It could be related, (but) yung attack sa hospital could be a diversionary tactic, or there could be some situations that are developing simultaneously."

Soon after that interview with Esperon, Padilla released a written statement, repeating his earlier one about this being an AFP-initiated attack.

Silence from Malacañang. No one to clarify contradicting statements. Andanar, Abella and even Mocha were in Russia. *Walang tao sa tindahan. Nasa junket lahat.*

Repercussions, outcomes

Meanwhile, at around the same time that Esperon and Padilla were trying to allay our fears, media was interviewing the people of Marawi on live television, with

CNN Philippines taking the lead and with Pia Hontiveros at the helm. The latter is crucial because Hontiveros has the professionalism to get stories straight, asking the right questions so that we might have a better sense of what's happening on the ground.

And of course whatever we were hearing both from the news, and what was being posted on social media - credible and incredible - was enough for the rest of the country to take notice. What is going on in Marawi?

No one answers from Malacañang. At some point in the evening Armed Forces Chief of Staff Eduardo Año would start speaking for the AFP in different news shows, asserting that everything was under control.

Close to midnight we (finally!) see Abella of the Presidential Communications Office, and all he had to say was that the President wanted him to announce that martial law was being declared in all of Mindanao - contradicting the idea

► Santiago A5

that things were "under control." Through to midnight, early morning, and until the following day, we would hear it being repeated by government officials and trolls: stop spreading false news! Here! Here's an official statement from the military! From the President's men! This is what we listen to!

But that is to put into question stories from the ground, first-hand information that was being gathered by mainstream media, from the people themselves: Mike Enriquez interviewing residents ready to evacuate, a priest talking about a Church being burned down. How could those stories not matter?

When you have a Presidential Communications Office that is deathly silent, we listen to people, and we cross our fingers that we're not being had.

Gag him

Meanwhile the President himself is being had. As of today, four days since he declared martial law because, among other things, the chief of police of Malabang, Lanao del Sur was beheaded, and a hospital has been taken over, both these narratives have already been put into question by people on the ground, and well, by the chief of police himself being alive

(Inquirer.net, 26 May).

But the real enemy might not be the wrong information being fed the President. It is the President himself.

Arriving from Russia, the President's strong man image was on overdrive, talking martial law, and throwing around a joke about having left the document behind, in a hotel room. A joke that was unnecessary, that was making light of a declaration that weighs heavy on the heart of the nation, and is reason for fear for everyone - writers and critics, activists and civilians. Fears of abuse and violence can make one lose sleep over this martial

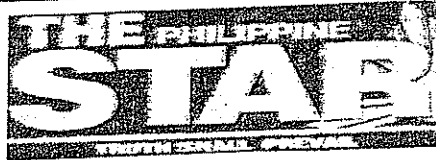
law declaration.

On May 26, the President comes out on television yet again, speaking with soldiers, his macho man image larger than life: he takes responsibility for all that will happen during martial law, he will go to jail for soldiers' indiscretions: "Ako na'ng magpakulong, pag naka-rape ka ng tatlo, aminin ko na akin 'yon."

You did not need to go there, Mr. President. And there is absolutely no excuse for statements like that one, said in jest or seriously, in a time of martial law and otherwise.

Your trolls ask that we stop criticizing you. You need to get a grip.

28 May 2017



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Eternal vigilance

EDITORIAL

The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Filipinos were often reminded about this during the struggle against the Marcos dictatorship, and even in the years after people power as the fragile democracy faced an unending stream of threats.

Today the admonition should again resonate even as many Filipinos express cautious support for President Duterte's approach to crushing violent extremism in Mindanao. Responding to attacks by the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups in Marawi City, the President declared martial law in the entire Mindanao, signing the proclamation even while he was still in Moscow where he aborted a four-day official visit.

Inevitably, concerns have been raised about the potential for abuse of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus. Civilian government and military officials have reassured the public that care will be taken to prevent abuses. But the best way to discourage abuses is public vigilance.

In this mission, the public has tools that were not available dur-

ing the Marcos regime, notably social media. The use of camera phones and closed-circuit television can be maximized to expose abuses.

These information tools, however, can also be used to assist the government in confronting the threat of extremist violence. The Maute has pledged allegiance to the terrorist Islamic State. For the IS, the ideal society is patterned after the brutally repressive one created by the Taliban in Afghanistan. This is completely contrary to the democratic way of life.

The IS and its militants continue to sow hate and terror all over the world. It is not farfetched for the group to extend its influence to the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao's conflict zones. Violent extremism feeds on poverty and social injustice, and some of the poorest areas in the country are in Mindanao. Those who feel that the state and the social system have failed them are vulnerable to radicalization by those who want to supplant open societies with Taliban-inspired control. This is a threat to freedom that also deserves almost eternal vigilance.

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MORE VITAL THAN EVER

Martial law 2017 vs martial law 1972



BY EDGARDO J. ANGARA
FORMER SENATOR

LAST week, the Maute Group—a local terrorist organization claiming to have ties with ISIS—took over Marawi City, leading to fire fights with the Philippine military, and sadly, killing 21 people, and wounding another 31.

President Duterte declared martial law and ordered the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus over all of Mindanao. Media quoted him as saying, “Martial law is martial law. It could not be any different from what President Marcos did.”

In making the comparison, President Duterte was undoubtedly thinking about the strictness and discipline the armed services exercised in Sept 1972; he's expecting the same standard the PNP and the AFP would observe during martial rule in Mindanao. There are, however, key differences with the martial law President Marcos declared on September 21, 1972.

For one, President Marcos declared martial law over the entire Philippines via Proclamation No. 1081, series of 1972. Such proclamation falls under the 1935 Constitution which stated that the President, as the Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces of the Philippines, may suspend the privileges of the writ of habeas corpus or place any part of the Philippines under martial law, “to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion, insurrection, or rebellion, or imminent danger thereof, when the public safety requires it.”

In contrast, President Duterte issued his declaration of martial law over Mindanao (Proclamation No. 216, series of 2017) under the 1987 Constitution, which limits the President's powers to put any part of the Philippines under martial law and suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, only during cases “of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it.”

Whereas the 1935 Constitution placed

no restriction on President Marcos' declaration, President Duterte's, under the 1987 Constitution, is subject to various checks and balances.

For one, the 1987 Constitution requires that within 48 hours from proclamation, the President should submit a report to Congress, either in person or in writing. Congress then has the right, voting jointly, by a vote of at least a majority of all its members, to revoke the proclamation or extend its validity beyond the 60-day limit set in the Constitution.

Should any citizen question the validity of the proclamation, the Supreme Court may review the factual basis of the proclamation of martial law and decide whether it is sufficient or not. The 1987 Constitution affirms that martial rule does not mean the courts or the legislative bodies cease to operate, or that the civil rights of citizens are suspended. Even in times of rebellion or invasion, the Constitution should still be upheld.

In fact, the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus shall only apply to those charged with rebellion or invasion. And those arrested under the suspension of the writ must be charged within three days or be released.

A clear change between the 1935 and 1987 Constitutions was the deletion of the phrase, “...or imminent danger thereof,” from the provision listing the conditions upon which martial law can be declared.

Not only does the 1987 Constitution limit the reasons the President can declare martial law, it takes away any arbitrariness to how those conditions can be interpreted or determined. In other words, only when it has been unequivocally established that the country is being invaded or that a rebellion taking place can martial law be legally proclaimed.

None of the aforementioned limits existed in the 1935 Constitution.

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24 May 2017

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Crucial meeting this week in the Netherlands

WHEN government peace negotiators and those of the National Democratic Front (NDF) resume their talks this week in Noordwijk Ann-see, Netherlands, it will be with a great deal of uncertainty and even tension in this fifth meeting.

For a time, they were not sure of meeting again after President Duterte stopped the talks last February following attacks by the New People's Army (NPA) in various parts of the country over the government's refusal to release some 400 political prisoners. After some back-channel talks, the two sides agreed to meet again for their fifth session May 26 to June 2.

But then last Tuesday, President Duterte proclaimed martial law in Mindanao, adding the next day that he may extend it to the entire country if the threat of terrorism posed by the Maute Group spills out of Mindanao. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) immediately countered on its website with a directive to the NPA to step up their offensives in the country.

Relations between the Philippine government and the CPP-NPA have always been problematic, which is probably why the NPA rebellion has lasted all these 47 years. President Duterte, counting on his close relations with Jose Ma. Sison, founding chairman of the CPP and now chief political consultant of the NDF, initiated the new peace talks

and even invited the movement to nominate some cabinet members. But Sison, in a recent interview with the Manila Bulletin, clarified that the negotiating panel only represents the CPP-NPA whose decision is what ultimately matters.

With the CPP directive to the NPA field forces to step up their attacks in response to the proclamation of martial law, what happens now to the peace talks?

Secretary Silvestre Bello III, chairman of the government negotiating panel, deplored the CPP reaction, saying it had made a false reading of the proclamation. Martial law, he said, is not aimed at the NPA, but at the Maute which is inspired by the extremist Islamic State movement. The CPP may well retort that in martial law, government operations without the normal judicial processes would affect all opposing the Armed Forces in the field.

There will be some effort to clarify matters at this week's fifth meeting of the negotiators in the Netherlands. Bello and the other government panelists will tell the NDF negotiators that the CPP-NPA should not feel threatened by martial law. It is uncertain if the NDF panel will see logic in this. In any case, as Sison had earlier clarified, it is the CPP-NPA in the field which will make the decision.

After all the progress that has been achieved in the previous four meetings, it would be truly unfortunate if all their efforts will now come to naught.

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ONLINE NEWS

(28 MAY 2017)

www.rappler.com

Lorenzana: Criminals, not NPA, target of martial law

Despite the back-and-forth between the CPP-NDF and defense officials, peace talks between the Philippine government and NDF continue in the Netherlands

Bea Cupin



SECURITY CHECKS. Government troops man checkpoints in Iligan City on May 24. Photo by Bobby Lagsa/Rappler

DAVAO CITY, Philippines – Martial law administrator and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Saturday, May 27, said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) “will not specifically target” the New People’s Army (NPA) as martial law is implemented in Mindanao.

Lorenzana issued the media statement following releases from the National Democratic Front (NDF) and NDF chief political consultant and Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria Sison hitting the defense chief for supposedly saying the NPA will also be a target of martial law.

In separate statements released on May 26, the NDF panel and Sison said the Philippine government had already said the NPA is not a target of martial law, “contrary” to Lorenzana’s statement.

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"The GRP side has clarified that the NPA is not a target. In fact President Duterte himself told Fidel Agcaoili in their recent meeting that the GRP and NDFP should unite against terrorist groups like the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf," said Sison in a statement.

Lorenzana, who reports directly to the President as defense chief and as martial law administrator, said they will follow President Rodrigo Duterte's directives on martial law which was imposed "to address radical Islamic terrorism and narco-terrorism in Mindanao."

Amid ongoing peace efforts between the Philippine government and the communists, Lorenzana, however, emphasized that NPA members who break the law will not be spared.

"Let me emphasize, however, that members of the CPP-NPA who will engage in criminal and illegal acts such as kidnapping, extortion, murder, and the destruction of property will be dealt with or without martial law," he said.

Following the announcement of martial law, the CPP directed the NPA to "accelerate the recruitment of new Red fighters" and "plan and carry out more tactical offensives across Mindanao and the entire archipelago."

Lorenzana said in his statement: "*Gusto ko lang liwanagin ang mensahe ko sa CPP-NPA. Huwag na kayong makigulo pa sa nangyayari ngayon sa Mindanao. Do not force the government's hand. Immediately stop all illegal activities and abide by the true spirit of the peace process. This is the only way we can move forward.*"

(I want to make my message to the CPP NPA clear: Do not add to the chaos in Mindanao.)

In a press conference on May 26, AFP spokesman Brigadier General Restituto Padilla gave the same warning.

"If the NPA continues to violate our laws and with impunity attack our forces, then we will deal with that accordingly," he said.

Despite the back and forth between the defense department and the military with the CPP-NDF and Sison, the ~~imposed martial law~~ talks between the Philippine government and the NDF were set to begin Saturday, May 27, in the Netherlands.

Partners versus terrorism

Both Sison and the NDF panel said that Duterte himself had told the NDF's Fidel Agcaoili that both sides should stand together against groups such as the "ISIS-affiliated and CIA-supported" Maute and Abu Sayyaf.

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Sison also noted that the NDF panel has called on the CPP's central committee "to reconsider" its orders to intensify NPA operations as a reaction to Lorenzana's supposed statement.

The military and the rest of the Philippine government have repeatedly downplayed fears of state abuses under martial law. Many Filipinos still carry with them the memories of human rights abuses during martial law under the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Philippine officials have insisted this will not be the case this time.

Duterte declared martial law and suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao, following clashes between government troops and Maute and Abu Sayyaf Group members in Marawi City on May 23. Police and military were conducting a "surgical strike" to neutralize Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, who is said to have direct contact with ISIS.

Government troops found themselves in clashes with members and supporters of the terror groups who had apparently embedded themselves in the city. Terrified Marawi residents posted photos of armed persons roaming the streets and hoisting ISIS flags in the city.

Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao while in Russia, less than 10 hours after the clashes began.

The Constitution sets the duration of martial law at 60 days maximum unless extended, subject to certain conditions. An extension requires congressional approval. The Supreme Court may also review the basis for Duterte's declaration. – Rappler.com

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www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

Pres. Duterte vows full support for troops fighting Maute

From the Philippine News Agency (May 27): Pres. Duterte vows full support for troops fighting Maute

President Rodrigo Duterte has promised full support for government troops fighting the Maute group in Marawi City in Lanao del Sur province.

"May full support kayo sa akin. (You have my full support.) I'm scraping the bottom of the barrel to look for money to see you through." President Duterte told members of the 2nd Mechanized Infantry Brigade in Maria Cristina, Iligan City Friday.

In his speech before the soldiers, he vowed that his administration will provide everything they need.

"And because we have the weapons and the equipment, and we have the air assets to help you, we will try our very best na magamit lahat (to use all of them) to protect you at the time when you are fighting." President Duterte said.

The Chief Executive also said he would take full responsibility for the outcome of martial law in Mindanao.

"Sasamahan ko kayo (I will be with you)... If you go down, I go down. But for this martial law and the consequences of martial law and the ramifications of martial law, I and I alone would be responsible. Trabaho lang kayo. Ako na ang bahala (Just do your job and I will take care of the rest)," he said.

For the wounded soldiers, the President said there is a modernized hospital for them and that he has bought all the equipment needed.

President Duterte later proceeded to the Mindanao Sanitarium and Hospital in Iligan City to visit 29 soldiers who were wounded in action, extending each a PHP100,000 check, part of the assistance they would receive.

He then went to St. Peter's Funeral Homes in Iligan City to pay his last respects to fallen soldiers and policemen.

For the family of each dead policeman and soldier, PHP250,000 will be extended upon completion of requirements.

He also visited the wake of two civilian casualties, an ambulance driver and an ambulance utility personnel.

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www.gmanews.com

Military sniper engages Maute group in Marawi City

Published May 27, 2017 12:01pm

Government troops on Saturday morning continued to clash with members of the terrorist Maute Group occupying strategic positions as they lay siege Marawi City.

An exclusive video by GMA News' Jun Veneracion showed a military blocking unit engaging snipers of the Maute group using the Philippine army's counter snipers.

Earlier, Marawi City mayor Major Usman Gancangra appealed to government troops to minimize the use of heavy artillery to avoid civilian casualties, as over a thousand residents are still trapped in their houses.

As of May 26, Friday the military said that around 31 members of the group have been killed, while 11 soldiers and two policemen died on the government side.

The Maute group have also taken 15 people in Marawi City hostage.

—Marlly Rome Bondoc/LBG, GMA News

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Military bombs terrorist positions in Marawi City

Published May 27, 2017 3:01pm

Philippine security forces dropped more bombs Saturday on Marawi City in Mindanao where they have been battling Islamist militants for five days, vowing no let up despite the start of Ramadan.

President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law across the southern third of the Philippines in response to the clashes, which have claimed at least 48 lives and he has said are part of a campaign by the Islamic State group to establish a local caliphate.

"We have identified where they are consolidating so we are doing surgical air strikes to destroy the local terrorist group," local military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Jo-ar Herrera told AFP.

Truckloads of extra marines were also seen driving into Marawi, one of the biggest Muslim-populated cities in the mainly Catholic Philippines with about 200,000 residents.

The fighting erupted on Tuesday when dozens of gunmen went on a rampage throughout Marawi in response to an attempt by security forces to arrest Isnilon Hapilon, a veteran Filipino militant regarded as the local leader of IS.

They planted black IS flags, took a priest and up to 14 other people hostage from a church, and set fire to buildings.

Thirteen soldiers, two policemen and 31 militants have died in the fighting, according to authorities.

Two civilians were also confirmed killed inside a hospital that the gunmen had occupied on Tuesday, and the military has said it investigating reports that nine people were murdered at a checkpoint the militants had set up.

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

Duterte has vowed to extinguish the threat of the militants, whom he has said belong to the local Maute terrorist group but are being backed by criminals in the area.

Nevertheless, Duterte also said on Friday that he was prepared to talk with the group's leaders.

His spokesman, Ernesto Abella, said this was partly an offer made in the spirit of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which began in the Philippines on Saturday.

"Together we pray for an end to terrorism that falsely claims to advance Islam and seeks to subjugate our land to the brutal IS," Abella said in a statement.

"In this spirit of Muslim peace, the president has offered the hand of peaceful dialogue to terrorist groups, to avoid bloodshed in this time of prayer, fasting and mercy."

However there appear to be an extremely small chance of talks, unless they are to negotiate the release of the hostages.

Military spokesman Herrera said the security operations to rid Marawi of the gunmen would continue despite the start of Ramadan.

"It is painful for the Maranao (the name for local Muslims) that it is Ramadan but our action now is to protect Marawi," Herrera said.

"These are the impacts of the local terrorist group's actions." —Agence France-
Presse

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