

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



TEAM ARMY

Serving the people. Securing the land.

oacpa.army2012@gmail.com
OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

16 October 2017

Monday

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

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INQUIRER

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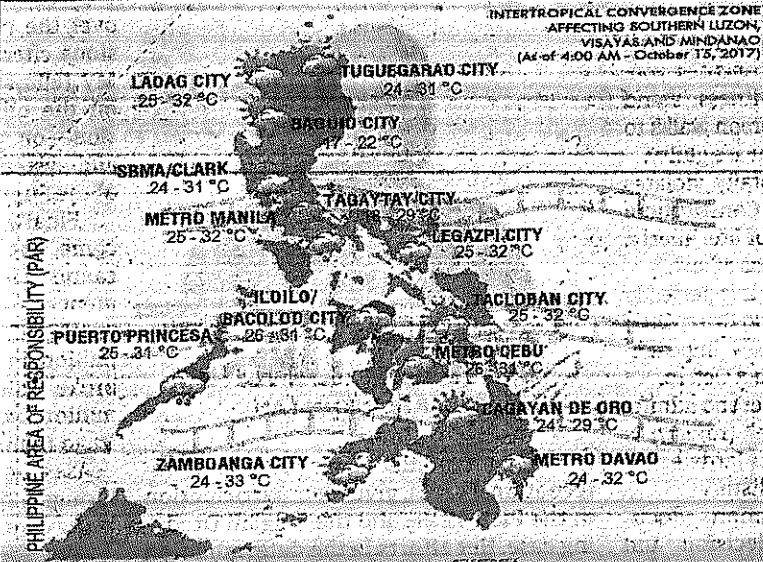
www.panahon.tv /PanahonTV









PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | OCTOBER 16, 2017 | MONDAY

INTERTROPICAL CONVERGENCE ZONE AFFECTING SOUTHERN LUZON, VISAYAS AND MINDANAO (As of 4:00 AM - October 15, 2017)













PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)











SUNRISE	SUNSET
 5:48 AM	 5:36 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
 2:32 AM	 3:18 PM
HAST-QUARTER	NEW MOON
 OCT 12 8:26 AM	 OCT 20 1:30 PM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
 MANILA SOUTH HARBOR 2:29 PM 0.09 Meter	 6:30 AM 0.99 Meter

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









OCT 17

METRO MANILA	 25 - 32 °C	 26 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	 24 - 31 °C	 24 - 30 °C
LADAG	 25 - 32 °C	 25 - 33 °C
BAGUIO	 17 - 22 °C	 17 - 23 °C
SBMA/CLARK	 24 - 32 °C	 24 - 33 °C

OCT 18

TAGAYTAY	 18 - 29 °C	 17 - 28 °C
LEGAZPI	 26 - 33 °C	 26 - 32 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA	 24 - 30 °C	 25 - 30 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD	 26 - 31 °C	 26 - 30 °C
METRO CEBU	 25 - 31 °C	 25 - 30 °C

OCT 17

TACLOBAN	 25 - 34 °C	 25 - 33 °C
CAGAYAN DE ORO	 24 - 30 °C	 24 - 32 °C
METRO DAVAO	 24 - 32 °C	 25 - 34 °C
ZAMBOANGA	 24 - 32 °C	 24 - 32 °C

DZRHNEWS TELEVISION

MONDAY - FRIDAY
11 AM & 5 PM

PILIPINAS HD

WEEKDAYS
6 AM, 6:30 PM & 9 PM
WEEKENDS
6 AM

10 October

INQUIRER

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Jeep strike: Schools, gov't offices closed

FROM A1

By the Inquirer Staff
@Team Inquirer

Suspending work and classes nationwide today shows that Malacañang "is nervous" about the two-day transport strike protesting a program phasing out jeepneys at least 15 years old, the leader of the mass action said yesterday.

Already, the Land Registration Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said the mass action could be part of destabilization efforts.

"We are receiving reports that the transport strike tomorrow led by Piston (Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Tsiper and Operator Nationwide) will be supported by other left-leaning groups. Allegedly, the plot is to destabilize the government," an LTFRB board member, Aileen Lizada, said on the eve of the strike.

Piston claims 200,000 members nationwide.

Palace, number coding

More than a week ago, President Duterte, facing accusations of amassing wealth he did not declare and facing mounting criticisms of his war on drugs, claimed that the Left and the political opposition had forged an alliance to oust him.

Work at all branches of gov-

ernment and classes in all school levels nationwide are suspended today due to the transport strike. The number coding in Metro Manila and trading on the Philippine Stock Exchange are also suspended.

Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella yesterday said that Malacañang was leaving it up to Congress, the Supreme Court and constitutional commissions, as well as the private sector to decide whether their employees should come to work.

Work in all courts and in the Senate was also suspended following the Palace announcement.

Message to Piston members

Piston president George San Mateo said members of the group should not be discouraged by the cancellation of work and classes as "this just shows that the government is nervous [about] the strike."

In a message to Piston members, San Mateo said: "We should treat this as a challenge to continue with our strike on Oct. 16 and 17... We are supported by a lot of our countrymen who understand our plight."

The phaseout of old public utility vehicles (PUVs) is not a new program, according to Senen Manalastas, Piston-Pampanga coordinator.

"[It] was first done on old buses, then taxis and school ser-

vices. [Operators] did not protest because they were not unified. We don't want this to happen to PUJs (public utility jeepneys)," he said.

Pampanga

In Pampanga, more than 7,000 jeepney drivers plying the San Fernando-Angéles City route said they would join the transport strike.

Manalastas said jeepney federations operating outside the two major cities would also take part in the strike.

Piston leaders said the Po-

rac-Guagua and Porac-Dinalupihan routes would be crippled by the strike, affecting commuters at Porac, Santa Rita and Floridablanca in Pampanga, and Dinalupihan in Bataan.

In Metro Cebu cities, at least 200 drivers belonging to Piston would not ply their route this morning to join a rally on Colon Street in downtown Cebu City.

But they are expected to go back to work at 1 p.m. after the rally, said Greg Perez, Piston-Cebu president.

Perez said Piston had no plans to paralyze transporta-

men as one group only wanted to air its side against the plan to modernize PUVs in the country.

On Panay Island, at least 20 jeepneys are to join a protest caravan, which includes stopovers in transport terminals, said Edgar Salarda, Piston coordinator in Panay.

Salarda said transport groups in Panay had already held two strikes – in February and June – against the phaseout of jeepneys.

Modernization program

Piston is protesting the PUV modernization program aimed at phasing out old PUVs, including 200,000 jeepneys. The government plans to replace the jeepneys with “eco-friendly” PUVs.

The program seeks to provide safe and comfortable transportation for the public, and ensure disciplined and competent drivers.

The new PUVs will replace vehicles that have been operating for at least 15 years, according to the Department of Transportation.

Part of the program is treating jeepney drivers as employees, providing them salaries and benefits instead of the status quo in which they compete for passengers because of the boundary system.

But transport groups branded the scheme as “antipoor.”

In a radio interview, San Ma-

teo said Piston wanted the program to be “people-centered” that would not disenfranchise up to 300,000 small operators or dictate on the transport sector.

“The program will bury the jeepney operator in debt as he’ll have to pay P800 per day for seven years [for each new jeepney] and the operator will be required to get 10 units per franchise,” he said.

The Piston head said the government’s subsidy was for the seller of the new jeepneys and not for the operators.

Manalastas of Piston Panganga said the protest was in defense of the livelihood of drivers. He noted that the loan of P80,000 to be offered by Landbank was not enough to purchase a Euro 4 fuel-powered vehicle worth P1.6 million.

To help stranded commuters, the LTFRB is deploying up to 70 buses in seven staging areas in Metro Manila. The buses will charge P12 for air-conditioned units and P10 for ordinary ones.

In Manila, the city government readied two trucks to offer free rides to commuters, particularly women and children, elderly and people with disability. —REPORTS FROM JEROME ANING, PHILIP C. TUBEZA, PATRICIA ANN V. ROXAS, AIE BALAGTAS SEE, TONETTE OREJAS, NESTLE SEMILLA, NESTOR P. BURGOS JR. AND DEXTER CABALZA INQ

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Lifestyle checks on for BIR, BOC officials

By MARY GRACE PADIN

The Department of Finance has intensified its efforts to weed out corrupt personnel under its umbrella through a lifestyle check on its officials and employees, particularly in the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

In an interview Friday night, Finance undersecretary Bayani Agabin said the Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS), the anti-corruption arm of the DOF, is investigating officials and employees under the department and its attached agencies.

The RIPS is looking deeper into the statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs) of officials and employees to verify if they are living within their means or to find out if they have hidden wealth.

"What we do is we look up the SALNs of everyone under our umbrella — those are BOC, BIR, (Bureau of Local Government Finance), (Securities and Exchange Commissioner), (Insurance Commis-

sion) and all treasurers and then compare them, look at the trend," Agabin told reporters.

He also bared that upon investigation, some personnel were found to have inconsistencies in their SALNs or are not declaring some properties and assets.

"Some are, let's say, earning P20,000 a month, but you can see year-on-year there's a big jump in their SALN. Then, we also have authority to ask for certificates of titles in their name. We discovered that they do not declare in their SALN some properties," Agabin added.

The investigations were conducted based on the complaints and anonymous tips received by the RIPS as well

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ers might say we're targeting only those in the lower level," he added.

Agabin also said that if the DOF finds enough evidence against these employees, the agency has to file a case either with the Office of the Ombudsman or the Civil Service Commission.

Fighting corruption is one of President Duterte's campaign promises.

In line with this, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III earlier ordered its attached agencies, particularly the BIR and the BOC, to intensify its efforts to flush out corrupt officials.

Recently, Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña assured that BOC officials and employees would be subject to lifestyle checks amid corruption allegations being thrown at the bureau in light of the issue on the P6.4-billion shabu smuggled into the country.

as news articles citing alleged hidden wealth of their employees, according to Agabin.

About five officials have been recommended for dis-

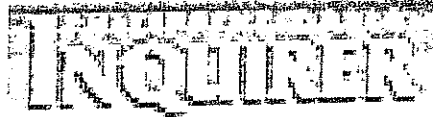
missal recently after the RIPS conducted a lifestyle check.

The investigation has also flagged some high-ranking of-

ficials within the DOF and its attached agencies, but Agabin declined to name them pending the completion of the investigation.

"(There are) a couple (of high-ranking officials). We cannot tell you until we file. (For) me personally, it's better the higher the rank because off-

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Army judgement key to fate of martial law in Mindanao

General says review to determine which areas will stay under military rule

MARAWI CITY—The future of martial law in Mindanao could hinge on a military assessment of which areas would be removed from martial law coverage once the war on terror in this city was over, according to a high ranking military official.

Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., commander of the Philippine Army's Western Mindanao Command, said military officials involved in the fight here would make an assessment of which areas could be removed from martial law coverage after they were done with the campaign to flush out terrorists from this city.

Fighting escalated into full war on May 23 after members of homegrown crime groups Maute and Abu Sayyaf tried to set up an Islamic State (IS) province in this predominantly Muslim city.

"We would like to consult first our ground commanders," Galvez said.

"After the Marawi siege, we will make a thorough assessment of what areas we can recommend to remain under martial law," he added.

Keeping martial law

He said, though, that "a lot of government officials" had expressed desire to keep martial law in place in this city and the entire province of Lanao del Sur, which geographically has jurisdiction over Marawi.

Congress had extended the

effectivity of martial law in Mindanao, declared by President Duterte through Proclamation No. 216, until December because of the continuing war here.

But Jerome Succor Aba, chair of the group Suara Bangsamoro,

said in a statement that the effects of martial law were not to bring peace or stability in Mindanao. Aba said the opposite happened—an unstable peace and order situation.

He said martial law simply justified the militarization of

urban areas in Mindanao and heightened military operations in the region.

"We fear the effects of war on the civilian population," Aba said.

He cited the case of the 2013 Zamboanga siege where dis-

placement, death, hunger and poverty continued to hurt civilians a year after the conflict.

Zamboanga example

Followers of Moro leader Nur Misuari occupied Zamboanga City in a bid to declare an independent state, leading to a massive operation by the government to retake the city from Misuari's men.

"Our utmost concern is the lives and livelihood of the civilians if the Duterte administration chooses to proceed with urban militarization and aerial bombings," said Aba of the Suara Bangsamoro.

"War in this context is unnecessary and solves nothing," Aba said.

Shortly after IS followers Maute and Abu Sayyaf established positions in Marawi, Mr. Duterte responded by declaring martial law in the entire Mindanao island.

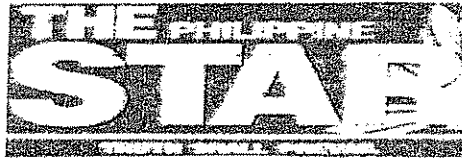
The war that followed flattened the predominantly Muslim city once dotted by minarets and where Muslims and Christians coexisted peacefully.

The President had repeatedly made public his thoughts about extending martial law coverage nationwide, drawing criticisms from Church and civil society leaders.

Critics of Mr. Duterte vowed to fight a declaration of nationwide martial law and warned it would lead to massive protests.

—JEFFREY MAITEM INQ

16 October 2017



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Troops capture wounded rebel

By JOHN UNSON

NORTH COTABATO - Army troopers captured a wounded New People's Army (NPA) guerrilla and recovered several improvised explosive devices (IEDs) following a firefight in Makilala town here on Saturday.

Randy Indo, 42, of the NPA Guerrilla Front 51, was taken to a hospital for treatment by soldiers from the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion (IB).

Indo was reportedly among 30 guerrillas who figured in a clash with pursuing troopers in Barangay Batasan.

The hostilities erupted when Indo and his companions reportedly opened fire at

a group of soldiers and militiamen who were responding to a report that armed men were extorting from villagers at gunpoint.

Two soldiers were wounded in the firefight, according to Lt. Col. Harold Argamosa, chief of the 39th IB.

Indo was abandoned by his fleeing comrades in nearby Barangay Biangan.

Troopers recovered an M-16 rifle and three IEDs along the rebels' escape route.

"We treat wounded enemies in compliance with international humanitarian laws. Indo will be turned over to the Makilala municipal police or the North Cotabato provincial police office," Argamosa said.

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The Manila Times

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Wounded NPA rebel nabbed in NCotabato

SHARIF AGUAK, Maguindanao: A wounded member of the New People's Army (NPA) was captured by the military during a gunfight in Makilala, North Cotabato on Saturday.

The rebel was identified as Randy Anggit Indo, 42, of the Guerilla Front 51. Recovered from him were several roadside bombs.

Indo was brought by personnel of the 39th Infantry Battalion (39IB) to a hospital for treatment of the wounds he sustained.

He was among the more than 30 NPAs who figured in running gunbattle with members of the 39IB on Saturday in Barangay Batasan in Makilala, one of the towns in North Cotabato where NPA guerrillas operate.

The hostilities erupted when Indo and his companions opened fire on soldiers and militiamen dispatched to check the reported presence of NPAs in the village allegedly collecting protection money from residents at gunpoint.

Two soldiers were wounded in the ensuing skirmishes, according to Lt. Col. Harold

Argamosa, 39IB commander. According to village residents Indo was one of five NPAs wounded in the encounter. He was abandoned by his fleeing comrades in nearby Barangay Biangan.

Argamosa said the rebels also left an M-16 assault rifle and three improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along their escape route as they fled in haste.

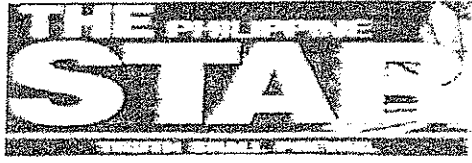
"We treat wounded enemies with compassion in keeping with International Humanitarian Laws. He (Indo) will be turned over properly either to the Makilala municipal police or the North Cotabato provincial police office," Argamosa said.

Ordnance experts immediately deactivated the IEDs that soldiers recovered at the scene of the encounter.

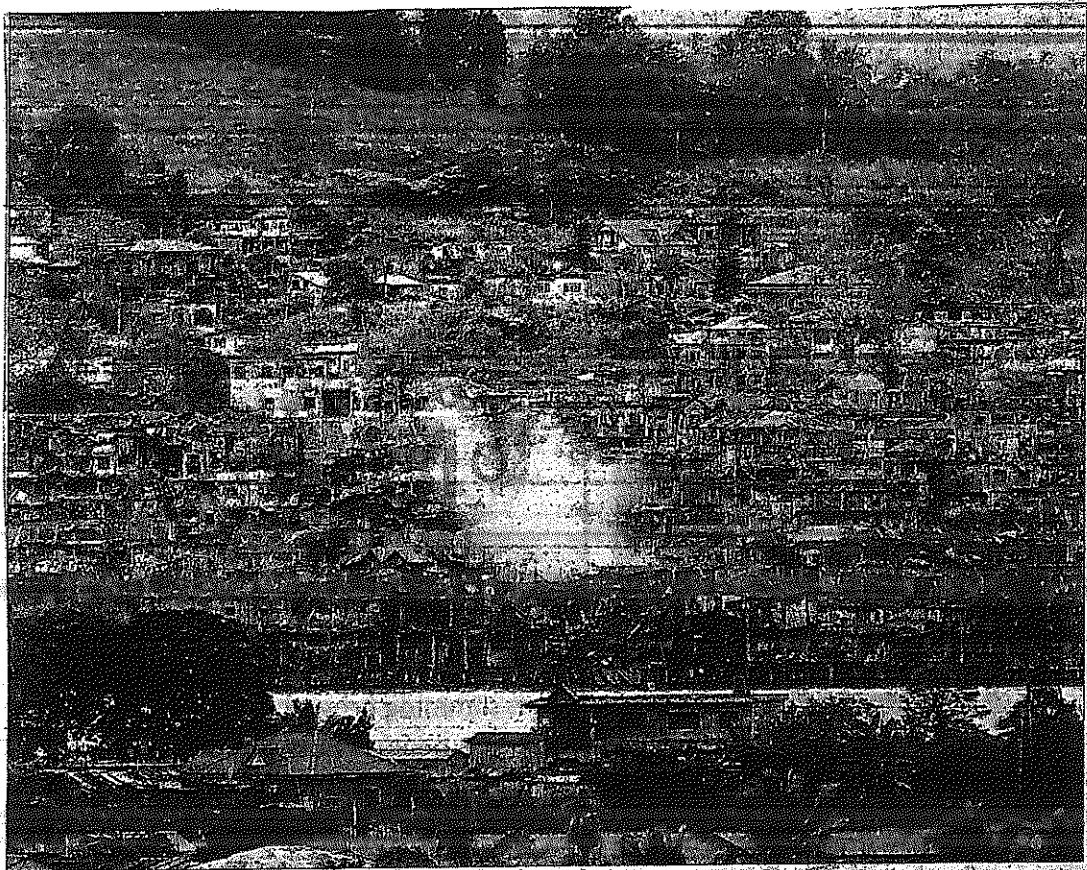
The NPAs, according to the military, are known for their wanton use of "victim-activated" IEDs, such as booby traps and roadside bombs, against villagers they suspect of conniving with the military.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

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Smoke billows from destroyed buildings after government troops fired mortars at a Maute position in Marawi yesterday. The military said the fighting would end very soon. Story on Page 7. AFP

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INQUIRER

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A government soldier enters a house previously occupied by Islamic State (IS) followers in Marawi, where entire structures (top photo) had been flattened in the war to stop IS from setting up a province in the predominantly Muslim city. —PHOTOS BY GEOFFREY MAITEM

16 October

INQUIRY

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AFP again misses deadline to end fighting in Marawi

By Allan Nawal,
Jeffrey Maitem
and Richel Umel
@inqmindanao

MARAWI CITY—Government security forces on Sunday bombed Islamic State (IS)-inspired terrorists who had held out for over four months in Marawi and the military said the battle for the city would be over "very soon."

The military previously set a deadline of Sunday to end the fighting in Marawi, which had left more than 1,000 people dead.

Troops have missed previous deadlines to flush out the Maute and Abu Sayyaf gunmen who had pledged allegiance to the Middle East-based IS jihadist group.

House-to-house fighting

On Sunday, FA-50 fighter jets flew over Marawi as troops engaged the terrorists in house-to-house combat in an area that had now shrunk to about 2 hectares, said Col Romeo Brawner Jr, deputy commander of Task Force Ranao.

"We are hoping that we will end this Marawi siege very soon," Brawner told reporters.

He said troops pushed hard into the battle zone to confront the terrorists who had "dug themselves in and used basements" to defend their positions.

During heavy fighting on Saturday, more than 20 soldiers were wounded and one died as the Army Scout Rangers assaulted the terrorists' positions, Brawner said.

Among those injured was a battalion commander whose name Brawner did not disclose.

The terrorists seized parts of Marawi on May 23 to establish an IS enclave in Southeast Asia.

Since then 822 terrorists, 162

soldiers and policemen and 47 civilians have been killed in the fighting for control of the city.

The terrorists have withstood a relentless US-backed bombing campaign and intense ground battles with troops that have left large parts of Marawi resembling devastated cities in war-torn Syria and Iraq.

'Almost over'

Military commanders last week set a target of Oct. 15 to

end the conflict and President Duterte on Friday said that the battle was "almost over."

Brawner said 40 terrorists remained in the conflict area, including leaders Omarkhayam Maute of the Maute terrorist clan and Isnilon Hapilon of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group, who is on the United States' list of most-wanted terrorists with a \$5-million bounty on his head.

There were also 100 civilians in the battle zone, including

hostages and families of the terrorists, Brawner added.

"Women and children are now forced to fight together with the Maute fighters. These are desperate measures the Maute are doing. This is their last defensive stand," he added.

Brawner said troops managed to rescue a child from the battle zone on Saturday.

The 16-year-old girl was the 21st hostage to be rescued by troops this month, he said.

Seventeen hostages, nine of them women, emerged from the battle zone amid government airstrikes on Oct. 4.

Days later, three more captives were intercepted by troops as they fled the conflict zone.

Brawner said the military hoped the civilians who remained in the battle area—16 women and about 11 children—were still alive.

'Target,' not 'deadline'

As Sunday drew to a close, it was clear that the troops in Marawi had missed the ending earlier projected by Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez, chief of the military's Western Mindanao Command.

Brawner said, however, that what the troops really had was only a "target," not a "deadline."

"It's difficult if we say it's a deadline, because it would mean we would try to push our soldiers harder. You know, their lives are also at stake here," he said.

Quite important, too, is the safety of the hostages, Brawner added.

The Maute is now using the hostages as human shields and baits to pinpoint the location of our soldiers," he said.

But Brawner insisted the military was really "closer to liberating the city."

That was evident in the military clearing most of the villages that had been held by the terrorist and trapping the gunmen in a small pocket of the city, he said.

Mr. Duterte on Thursday warned against celebrating the eventual liberation of Marawi, citing the deaths and devastation there.

"When we leave Marawi, we go quietly. We do not want to show any kind of celebration or happiness," he said.

PORT FROM AFP INQ

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16 October 2017



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AFP misses another deadline to end Marawi siege

"We are hoping that we will end this Marawi siege very soon," Col. Romeo Brawner, deputy commander of the task force battling the militants, told reporters.

Pro-IS gunmen occupied parts of Marawi, the Islamic capital of the mainly Catholic Philippines, last May 23. At least 822 militants, 162 government forces and 47 civilians have been killed since, according to Brawner.

The insurgents have withstood a relentless US-backed bombing campaign and intense ground battles with troops that have left large parts of Marawi resembling devastated cities in war-torn Syria and Iraq.

Military commanders last week set a target of Oct. 15 to end the fighting. Last Friday,

Military troops yesterday bombed Islamic State (IS)-inspired terrorists who have held out for over four months in Marawi City as the Armed Forces of the Philip-

pines (AFP) said the conflict would be over "very soon."

The army previously targeted yesterday as the day to end all the fighting that has already killed more than 1,000 people in the country's southern city. Troops have missed previous deadlines to flush out the militants who intended to establish a local IS caliphate.

Yesterday, a number of FA-50 fighter jets flew over Marawi as soldiers fought the terrorists house-to-house in an area that has shrunk to about two hectares, a military spokesman said.

most wanted terrorists with a \$5-million bounty, and Omarkhayam Maute, whose group had pledged allegiance to IS.

- AFP

President Duterte said the battle was "almost over."

Twenty soldiers were wounded last Saturday in a sign that troops were pushing hard to end the

battle, Brawner said.

He added that at least 40 militants remained in the conflict area, including leaders Isnilon Hapilon, who is on America's list of

16 October 2017

Malaya
The National Newspaper

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Intense fighting continues in Marawi City

BY VICTOR REYES

INTENSE fighting yesterday marked the day government forces were supposed to have ended the battle with the terrorist Maute Group in Marawi City.

"The day is not yet finished, there is still a chance (to meet the deadline)," said Col. Romeo Brawner, deputy commander of the military's Joint Task Force Ranao, in a phone interview at around 4:30 p.m. yesterday.

In a press conference Monday last week, AFP Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez said the troops' "deadline" is to end the armed conflict not later than October 15. Galvez has said he was confident of meeting the deadline, noting that the en-

See INTENSE > Page B6

INTENSE

emy's area was down to four to five hectares. He said AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año had been informed of the deadline set on the ground.

Año's target date or deadline is before he bows out of the service, which is on October 26 when he reaches the mandatory retirement date of 56.

The conflict started on May 23.

Zia Alonto Adiong, spokesman of the crisis management committee of Lanao del Sur and assemblyman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said the military is not setting another deadline because this only creates undue pressure on the troops, and disappoints civilians if the deadline is not met.

"They are not setting a deadline to avoid pressure on the advancing troops. This causes casualties on their side because they (troops) are pressured to beat a deadline. This only leads to KIAs (killed in action) and WIAs (wounded in action)," he said.

President Duterte and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana have also set various deadlines or projections as to when the conflict would end.

Brawner said the fighting was ongoing and "intense."

"They're doing their best, the troops said they will do their best (to accomplish the deadline)," he said.

Brawner also said around 20 soldiers were wounded in the fighting with the 40 to 50 Maute remnants last Saturday. The size of the main battle area, he said, is now down to two hectares, from two to three hectares as of Monday last week. He said the Maute is holding 40 to 60 hostages.

Brawner reiterated the presence of the hostages is hampering the military's mission to end the armed conflict. He said the military is very deliberate in the conduct of the operations to ensure the safety of hostages.

"Yesterday we rescued a hostage. According to her, they (hostages) are being used by the enemy as bait. They are asked to run outside. If soldiers open fire, they'll (enemy) know that soldiers are around the area," said Brawner.

"Also, the enemy have asked their families to join the fight. The women and the children are asked to fight, they're now combatants," Brawner also said, quoting the

rescued hostage.

Officials have said that some of the terrorists brought family members with them when they attacked the city.

Since the conflict started, 822 Maute members have been killed, and 162 soldiers and policemen, and 47 civilians.

Adiong said about 392,000 people remain in evacuation centers. He said the military has yet to give the green light for the residents to return to their homes, specifically in the areas that are already under military control, because the "situation is still volatile."

"What if they are able to again enter (the controlled areas)?... If ever that happens, it's hard to go on evacuation mode again. Until such time that the fighting has ended, the JTF (Ranao) is not advising the return of the people," he said.

"But we already have plans for their return as soon as the conflict ends. We have prepared mechanisms on how these people would return in the controlled areas. There's a clustering of barangays so that there will be smooth and orderly return of the evacuees," he said.

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Military struggling, but says battle for Marawi to end soon

Government troops yesterday bombed militants loyal to the Islamic State (IS) group who have held out for over four months in Marawi City and the military said the conflict would be over "very soon."

The Army previously set a target of Sunday to end the fighting in the beleaguered city, which it said has killed more than 1,000 people.

Troops have missed previous deadlines to flush out the militants whom authorities said intended to establish a local IS caliphate.

On Sunday FA-50 fighter jets flew over Marawi as soldiers fought the militants house-to-house in an area which has now shrunk to about two hectares, a military spokesman said.

"We are hoping that we will end this Marawi siege very soon," Col. Romeo Brawner, deputy commander of the task force battling the militants, told reporters.

Pro-IS gunmen occupied parts of Marawi, the Islamic capital of the mainly Catholic Philippines, on May 23.

Since then 822 militants, 162 government forces and 47 civilians have been killed, Brawner said.

The insurgents have withstood a relentless US-backed bombing campaign and intense ground battles with troops that have left large parts of Marawi resembling devastated cities in war-torn Syria and Iraq.

Military commanders last week set a target of October 15 to end the fighting and President Rodrigo Duterte last Friday said the battle was "almost over."

Twenty soldiers were wounded on Saturday in a sign troops

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were pushing hard to end the battle, Brawner said.

He said 40 militants remained in the conflict area, including leaders Isnilon Hapilon, who is on America's list of most wanted terrorists with a \$5-million bounty, and Omar Maute, whose group had pledged allegiance to IS.

There were also 100 civilians in the zone including hostages and families of the militants, he added.

"Women and children are now forced to fight together with the Maute-ISIS fighters. These are desperate measures the Maute-ISIS are doing. This is their last defensive stand," Brawner said, using another acronym for IS.

Volatile situation

Zia Alonto Adiong, spokesman of the Provincial Crisis Management Committee, for his part, said civilians are still barred from returning to their homes even at the military controlled areas

"The situation is still very volatile," he noted.

The official said about 392,000 civilians are still staying in evacuation centers.

Adiong, however, stressed the committee has already laid out mechanisms for the return of the displaced residents of Marawi City to be implemented when the fighting dies down.

The October 15 "target" date to liberate Marawi City was announced by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana two weeks ago - citing briefing from military ground commanders.

The military subsequently clarified that it does not impose any deadline but stressed it has targets when to finish the mission in Marawi City.

It was not the first time that government authorities failed to meet their self-imposed "deadline" or "targets." Immediately after the siege erupted last May 23, Lorenzana himself said it will not

last long.

The siege was launched while the President, Lorenzana and other top-ranking government officials were in Russia.

Initially, the military said only around 20 armed men were involved in the conflict and that it was sparked by attempt by government troops to arrest Hapilon, the designated emir or leader of the ISIS in Southeast Asia.

But it turned out that the siege was well-planned as evidenced by the continued resistance of the terrorists - almost five months after it started, apparently they still enjoy supply of ammunition and high-powered firearms.

Mr. Duterte has earlier warned against celebrating the eventual liberation of Marawi, citing the deaths and devastation there.

"When we leave Marawi, we go quietly. We do not want to show any kind of celebration or happiness," he said.

Mario J. Mallari / AFP

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Gov't mulls sale of military assets

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendevera@INQ

On top of the plan to establish a new pension system for uniformed personnel, the government will also sell, lease or enter into joint ventures to commercially develop former military camps to augment ballooning costs for the benefits of retired officers, according to Budget Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno. During a Cabinet meeting this month, economic managers presented to President Duterte

military assets in Fort Bonifacio, the Visayas, as well as Mindanao, that could be disposed off to fund not only the Armed Forces of the Philippines modernization program but also the uniformed personnel's pension.

Asked about the President's response, Diokno said that they had yet to discuss with Mr. Duterte the problem on ballooning military pension, which could cost as much as P7.8 trillion.

"I am sure he [the President] will appreciate that. In fact, the military appreciates it that

we're addressing this problem. We want a secure, sustainable pension system for them," Diokno told reporters recently.

Joint venture

He said there was close to 200 hectares of military land in Fort Bonifacio in Taguig City, huge chunks of land in the Visayas, as well as about 200,000 hectares of property near Bukidnon, some of which could be sold, leased for long term or developed through a joint venture with the private sector.

At present, proceeds of the properties being disposed by the state-run Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) go to the AFP modernization program, as mandated under the BCDA charter.

Diokno said they needed to pass a law that would also allow part of the proceeds from disposition of properties to fund military pension.

The budget chief was optimistic that they could soon find a sponsor in Congress for the proposed legislation. "It's really

urgent," he said.

The government was also looking into a new pension system for uniformed personnel, possibly by including them under the coverage of the state-run pension fund Government Service Insurance System.

Ballooning pension

For next year, P75 billion would go to uniformed personnel's pension payments and could balloon up to 80 percent of the AFP's annual budget if left unaddressed, Diokno said.

The Duterte administration was worried about the ballooning pension of uniformed personnel, such that the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee is pushing for a seed fund worth trillions of pesos that will generate income for retired military officers.

Early this month, Mr. Duterte urged the military to lease out its remaining lands in Fort Bonifacio to raise more funds for its modernization program. INQ

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Military assets eyed to fund AFP pension

BY MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO

THE government is planning to utilize some military assets to fund the ballooning pension of uniformed personnel, according to a Cabinet official.

Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno said the government discovered that the military has pieces of real-state property all over the country that can be sold, leased for the long term or developed through joint ventures.

"For example, we will let developers like Andrew Tan to develop the assets. There is a Marines Fort Bonifacio property. They also have housing property in the area. They can develop that," he told reporters in an interview.

"They also have pieces of prop-

erty in the Visayas and Mindanao. Some of them are located in urban areas," Diokno said.

By utilizing these assets, he added, the government would be able to ensure an annual flow of funds for the military.

"The future flows would fund, in part, the modernization of the Armed Forces and the pension reform," Diokno said.

The Budget chief, however, added that legislation would be needed for the government to pursue this plan.

Earlier, Diokno said the government will propose this year to Congress a measure that will allow the military pension to be transferred to the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) during the Duterte administration.

"The transfer will require a law so we are also drafting legislation into that. Before the end of the year [we will propose it to Congress]," he added.

Under the proposal, newly recruited uniformed personnel will be required to contribute to the state-run GSIS.

"That's the unfortunate part. Right now they are not paying anything for their contribution to the military pension fund. Under the GSIS, they will have to contribute," Diokno added.

Pensions paid to retired soldiers and policemen are sourced from the

national budget, which the Budget department says is not sustainable.

"Based on my recollection, pensions paid every year is about P70 billion to P90 billion. So if we don't correct this now, the day will come when about 60 percent to 70 percent of the budget of the military will just go to pension," Diokno said.

"We are going to address this under this administration, otherwise this will balloon into such a mess that maybe half of our budget will go to the military," he added.

In a fiscal risk statement for 2017, the Bureau of Treasury said ballooning military pensions were a fiscal risk.

The problem was traced to "features" such as automatic pension adjustments mandated by the military's retirement rules.

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Gov't to sell more military assets

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE government is eyeing to sell, lease or enter into joint ventures for some of the military's assets, with the proceeds to be used for the modernization program of the armed forces and for the uniformed personnel's pension reform.

Benjamin Diokno, budget secretary, said the move to dispose, rent out and develop some of the military assets has already been discussed in the recent Cabinet meeting.

"They have a lot of properties. Maybe we can sell, some we can long term lease, or joint venture. For example, the developer will develop the asset. So there will be an annual flow," Diokno said.

"(The proceeds from those) assets, part of that, under the law, part of that should be used to modernize the armed forces. Part of it will be for the pension reform," he added.

Diokno identified several assets, including 200 hectares in Fort Bonifacio. He added that there are a lot of military assets in Mindanao.

"We also have some in Visayas that's quite big. In Mindanao, if I remember it correctly, there's 200,000 hectares in Bukidnon," Diokno said.

"Some of them are in urban areas, like the one in Hacienda Luisita," he added.

Initial estimates for the proposal to include the uniformed personnel in the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) may require as much as P7 trillion.

"Part of the proceeds will require legislation. But we will address it. Next year, the budget is P75 billion, that's only for pension. We cannot afford that annual appropriation because it will eat up all the budget," Diokno said.

"I am sure he (President Duterte) will appreciate that, in fact the military appreciates it, that we are addressing this problem. So we want a secure, sustainable pension system for them," he added.

According to the Fiscal Risks Statement 2015-2016 released by the Development Budget Coordination Committee last year, the pension costs of all uniformed services are rapidly increasing every year.

The report said the problem is mainly attributable to the features present in all existing retirement laws of the uniformed services:

- a) pension entitlement of a retiree is automatically adjusted based on the prevailing scale of base pay for similarly ranked active personnel;
- b) pension is non-contributory in nature hence budget comes from the annual general appropriations of the government; and
- c) early

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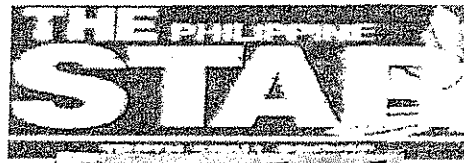
entitlement to pension benefits even before attaining the compulsory retirement age of 56.

In the previous administration, a technical working group

composed of the GSIS and the Departments of National Defense, Budget and Management, Finance, and the Interior and Local Government recommended the creation

of a seed fund necessary for the purpose of generating sufficient interest income to fund the annual pension requirements of all uniformed services.

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AFP to back PDEA in drug war

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will continue to support the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) as it takes the lead in the national government's fight against illegal drugs.

AFP chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Año said they are ready to provide soldiers to support anti-drug operations, citing an existing memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the PDEA.

In line with the February 2017 MOA, the AFP has been a significant force provider to the anti-illegal drug operations, especially in conflict-affected areas, particularly where conditions for insurgency, secessionism and

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terrorism persist," Año said yesterday.

Now that the Philippine National Police (PNP) is taking a backseat on the campaign, he said the AFP is reaffirming the military's commitment to the country's war on illegal drugs.

AFP public affairs office chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said President Duterte has directed the PNP, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Customs and all other government agencies to leave to the PDEA the conduct of all campaigns and related operations.

To help the national government, the AFP expanded its joint counterintelligence task force NOAH, an ad hoc unit created and mandated by the AFP to conduct OF drug-related counterintelligence

operations, aside from the establishment of regional task groups, Arevalo added.

The AFP cited recent data from regional task groups showing 6,981 operations jointly conducted from July 2016 to September 2017 and resulting in the arrest of 1,241 drugs suspects and the killing of 146.

Joint raids of drug laboratories also yielded a total of P1.9 billion worth of shabu manufacturing equipment, significantly crippling the production of methamphetamine in the country. More than 52 kilos of shabu were confiscated in the operations.

Arevalo said internal security operations against terror groups have also resulted in the neutralization of several drug suspects in Mindanao, including Abu Sayyaf group kidnap-for-ransom leader and illegal drug pusher Butchoy

Hassan alias Black/Bocci in Sitangkai, Tawi-tawi and Al-sharif Ajibon alias Panda in Indanan, Sulu.

The AFP said 18 drug personalities were also captured in Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte last December and another 11 in Pikat, North Cotabato last March 17. At least P1-million worth of shabu was also confiscated in the Pikat raid.

"I commend our soldiers for their professional and efficient intelligence and manpower support afforded to the PDEA and the PNP in their anti-illegal drugs operations," Año said.

"Rest assured that despite the focus of our mandate to address internal and external threats to the country, we will not lose sight on the drugs scourge and will actively support PDEA in its endeavors," he added.

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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

WAR ON DRUGS

PDEA takes lead, but AFP waiting in the wings - Año

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The Philippine National Police, the Bureau of Customs (BOC), and even the

National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) might well be out of the picture as the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) took "sole jurisdiction" of the

government's war on drugs; but the military remains waiting in the wings.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff officer-in-charge when asked for the number of bodies brought in as a result of police encounters in Manila. **▶6**

The funeral parlor receives all cadavers from police operations including those in drug operations.

At the height of the police campaign against illegal drugs, Castro recalled that about four or five bodies would be taken to the morgue in a day.

Then the number decreased in the later months with 10 bodies a week taken to the morgue. "Let's say the other bodies were for medico-legal cases, but seven or eight of them were related to Oplan Tokhang," he said.

Pau Ballesteros, a licensed embalmer, said that the largest number of bodies that he handled was 14 in just one night.

Although this week, Ballesteros has not handled any body from a police operation, he noted. (With reports from Chito A. Chavez and Dhel Nazario)

General Eduardo Año reaffirmed yesterday the military's commitment to the country's war on illegal drugs, citing the February 2017 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the PDEA.

AFP Public Affairs Office Chief Marine Colonel Edgard Arevalo said Año's pronouncement puts in perspective the memorandum signed by President Duterte last week which tasked the PDEA as the sole agency to conduct the anti-illegal drugs campaign of the government.

"The AFP has always been in support role to PDEA, Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in any illegal drugs operations, unless we are otherwise requested to lead especially in conflict-affected areas," Arevalo said.

The recent memorandum from the Commander in Chief signed on Oct. 10, 2017 directs the "PNP, NBI, Bureau of Customs, and all other government agencies to leave to the PDEA the conduct of all campaigns and operations."

"In line with the February 2017 MOA, the AFP has been a significant force provider to the anti-illegal drugs operations, especially in conflict-affected areas, particularly where conditions for insurgency, secessionism, and terrorism persist," Año said.

The AFP also expanded the Joint Counterintelligence Task Force (JCTF) NOAH, an ad hoc unit created and mandated by the AFP to conduct drugs-related counterintelligence operations.

NOAH assists law enforcement agencies in the identification, investigation, and neutralization of persons in the use, sale, manufacture, and distribution of illegal drugs.

Regional task groups under the AFP Unified Commands were also established

to coordinate direct action, intelligence, legal support, and community relations to PDEA, as force employer, and its regional offices nationwide.

Recent data from the regional task groups show a total of 5,981 operations have been jointly conducted since July 2016 to September 2017, resulting to the arrest of 1,241 drugs suspects and killing of 146.

Joint raids of drug laboratories also yielded a total of P1.9 billion shabu manufacturing equipment, significantly crippling the production of methamphetamine in the country. More than 52 kilos of shabu were also confiscated in the operations.

PDEA satellite offices

Meanwhile, the lean but mean 1,100-strong PDEA will set up satellite offices at the BOC and the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) as it tries to maximize its efforts in the anti-illegal drug war.

PDEA Spokesman Derrick Carreon said it was discussed among officials of the BOC and the BuCor to put up PDEA offices in their offices "hopefully within the coming months."

Carreon said PDEA is keen on putting up the dedicated offices in both agencies describing them as critical areas with the rampant drug-related incidents in these offices.

The undermanned agency has been hardpressed to solve the illegal drug riddle in the country.

Zero deaths

In Manila, the official morgue of the NBI where bodies of supposed drug pushers and users killed in anti-narcotics operations of police are taken has noted the change in the climate of the war on drugs.

"From Monday up to Sunday, zero," was the answer of Tom Z. Castro Jr., Archangel Memorial Chapels assistant

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5 fishermen kidnapped in Sulu

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

A military official said five fishermen were snatched by suspected members of a kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) group in waters off Pangutaran town, Sulu, Saturday night.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu, identified those abducted as Pagadian City fishermen Jushua

Ybanes, 23, single; Emo Fausto, 63, married; Junald Minalang, 24, single; and Spriano Sardido, 53, married. The fifth victim was Vergel Arquino, 25, single, from Davao City.

Sobejana said that based on reports they received, the abduction took place at 8:15 p.m. Saturday while their fishing boat - "F/B Danvil 8" (catcher) - was taking shelter from bad weather near the port of Poblacion in Pangutaran.

Boat owner Danvil Gatol Yanoc said F/B Danvil 8 was in the company

of "F/B Danvil 2" and nine light boats when the armed kidnappers, aboard two motorized bancas (one blue, the other white) and forcibly took the fishermen.

"Upon receipt of information, JTF-Sulu in coordination with the Philippine Coast Guard Western Mindanao District, immediately responded to the reported incident through intensified hot pursuit operation to interdict the perpetrators and safely rescue the kidnap victims," Sobejana said.

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146 killed in military drug ops since 2016

MILITARY drug operations jointly conducted with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and PNP have resulted in the killing of 146 drug peddlers and users since President Duterte assumed the presidency last year.

AFP public affairs chief Col. Edgard Arevalo said the joint operations have also resulted in the seizure of P1.9 billion worth of equipment used in the manufacture of shabu and 52 kilos of shabu.

"Recent data from the regional task groups show a total of 6,981 operations have been jointly conducted since July 2016 to September 2017, resulting to the arrest of 1,241 drugs suspects and killing of 146," said Arevalo.

The regional task groups were established by the AFP as part of its commitment to support the government's war on drugs. Duterte has directed the military to play a role in his thrust to rid the country of illegal drugs.

Joint raids of drug laboratories also yielded a total of P1.9-billion shabu manufacturing equipment, significantly crippling the production of methamphetamine in the country. More than 52 kilos of shabu were also confiscated in the operations," said Arevalo.

The value of the shabu seized during joint military, police and PDEA operations is worth around P260 million. A kilo of shabu has a street price of P5 million.

Arevalo said some of the anti-drug operations targeted members of the Abu Sayyaf Group, including sub-leader Butchoy Hassan, alias Black and Bocci who was nabbed in Tawi-tawi Tawi-Tawi in March last year.

Hassan is wanted by Malaysian authorities for his involvement in the abduction of Taiwanese Chang An Wei, alias Evelyn Chan, at the Pom Pom Island Resort in Sabah in November 2013.

AFP chief Gen. Eduardo Año re-affirmed the military's commitment to the PDEA in the campaign against illegal drugs. The military signed a memorandum with PDEA in February 2007 to support the agency in the war against drugs. - *Victor Reyes*

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ASG men abduct 5 crew of fishing boat off Sulu

By Mario J. Malalri

Suspected Abu Sayyaf armed men snatched five crew members of a fishing boat off Pangut, a town in Sulu province on Saturday.

Report from the Sulu Provincial Police Office identified the victims as Vergel Arquino, 25, from Davao City; Joshua Ybanez, 23; Eno Fausto 63, Jonald Mina Lang, 24, and Sepriano Sardido, 53, all the four are from Pagadian City.

Initial investigation showed that the victims were abducted at around 8:35 p.m. in the vicinity of Sitio Manubal, Barangay Siambahan.

Authorities are now investigating the incident to determine the motive of the kidnapping and identify the suspects.

Sulu is a known stronghold of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf group under Radillan Sahiron.

The latest kidnapping happened despite the intensified military operations against the ASG in compliance to the directive of President Duterte.

Three more members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) have surrendered as government offensive continued against them in the province of Sulu, a top

military official said Friday.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Joint Task Force Sulu commander, identified the three surrenderees as Ajimad Musnali, Nanah Amdad Tunggal and Hasiri Sabirin.

Sobejana said they are followers of ASG sub-leader Asbi Misuari, who surrendered earlier to the government authorities.

Sobejana said they surrendered at around 8:30 a.m. Friday to the Joint Task Force Sulu troops in Barangay Bulibangao, Banguingui (formerly Tongkil), Sulu.

He said they yielded three high-powered firearms, consisting of two

caliber .30 springfield rifles and a caliber .30 M1 Garand rifle.

He said the surrender was facilitated by the troops of the 545th Engineering Construction Brigade and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Southwestern Mindanao command.

Sobejana said the surrenderees will undergo custodial debriefing at the headquarters of Joint Task Force Sulu in Camp General Teodoro Bautista.

Of the 120 surrenderees since January this year, 65 surrendered in Basilan, 31 in Sulu, 21 in Tawi-Tawi, and two in Zamboanga City.

With PNA

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5 fishers kidnapped in Sulu

HEAVILY armed unidentified men snatched five fishermen while they were taking shelter from bad weather at port Poblacion in Pangutaran, Sulu on Saturday night.

Reports reaching Chief Insp. Tara Lea Cuyco, spokesman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Police Regional Office, identified the five as Vergel Aquino, 25, of Davao City; and Joshua Ybanez, 23; Emo Pausto, 63; Jonald Minalang, 24; and Spriano Sardido, 53; all from Pagadian City.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Sulu, said the five were aboard fishing vessels FB Danvil 8 and FB Danvil 2 taking cover from bad weather, along with nine light boats, when the armed men, aboard two motorized bancas, arrived and took them hostage.

The owner of the fishing boats, Danvil Gatol Yanoc, reported the kidnapping to the JTF Sulu.

Sobejana said the primary suspect is the Abu Sayyaf Group, which is currently holding 14 hostages in Sulu. – *Raymond Africa and Victor Reyes*

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The 'Bookkeeper' on the Armed Forces

In my lifetime, I have never seen so many full-page tributes to a single individual, particularly one from the private sector. The common thread that runs through all dwells on the wisdom, integrity, passion for excellence, and genuine caring for others of Washington Z. SyCip, founder of the SGV Group and chairman emeritus of the Asian Institute of Management. Although I had a few private moments with him, I would not say that we were personal friends. He was an icon in the business community. Our paths rarely crossed.

In a biography written by Jose Y. Dalisay Jr., SyCip refers to himself as "only a bookkeeper." Seeing his tiny and frail figure in photos covering his many public appearances, the thought that crossed my mind—borrowing a phrase of self-description by Gen. Carlos P. Romulo—is that of "a dime among nickels."



REVELLE
RAMON J. FAROLAN

Some years ago, Wash SyCip was the guest speaker at the annual general membership meeting of the Philippine Military Academy Alumni Association. The golden jubilee Class 1960 was the host for the event held at the Manila Hotel.

After brief remarks thanking the host class for its kind invitation, SyCip went on to say, "You may regret having me with you today." He then proceeded to outline his short stint in the US military.

"I was working on my dissertation in the Columbia University Library on the day when Pearl Harbor and Clark Air Base were bombed by the Japanese. To be more involved in the war effort, I enlisted in the army and after completing three months of basic training, we were all interviewed. Since I had the advantage of a better academic background and the highest IQ score in the regiment, I was told that the military was short of people for intelligence work. I was quickly transferred for eight months to a Japanese language school, then to cryptography school in Virginia. Eventually, I found myself in an air force unit in India working on Japanese air force codes in the China-Burma-India theater.

"So, here I am, a former staff sergeant, having the privilege of addressing the top officers of the Philippine Armed Forces."

Let me digress a bit. SyCip's work in cryptography during World War II reminded me of the successful breaking of Japanese war codes that brought about the death of Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, the brilliant commander of the Japanese Combined Fleet. On April 19, 1943, Yamamoto took off to inspect naval air bases in Bougainville, New Guinea. Through the work of allied cryptanalysts, Yamamoto's exact flight plan was known and P-38s from Guadalcanal intercepted his plane. The famed admiral, who had been the architect of the Pearl Harbor attack and was probably Japan's most brilliant naval officer, died in the flaming crash of his bomber, a victim of US fighter planes waiting in ambush.

SyCip's talk was more in the form of questions concerning PMA practices and traditions, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) leadership. Allow me to dwell on just two issues.

On the PMA. He noted that all members are identified by being a member of the class with which they graduate. His observation was that "while the identification-by-graduation class may promote cohesiveness, is this divisive relative to the whole organization? Does this prevent the rapid promotion of younger, more talented people of later classes?"

Perhaps the system is a reflection of a greater weakness. We have a weak sense of nationhood. We still think in terms of tribes and regions. And this is true all the way to the top as can be gleaned by many presidential appointments going to college schoolmates, fraternity brothers, and even dormitory roommates. This has been the standard for all administrations not just the present one. Oftentimes, we sacrifice greater talent and competence for comfort, comfort in the company of familiar and friendly faces.

SyCip also asked, "Is it proper for key government officials to be members (honorary) of a particular class?" President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is an honorary member of PMA Class 1978, and her last AFP chief of staff was Gen. Delfin Bangit, who belonged to the same class. President Duterte as a member of PMA Class 1967. A number of presidential candidates in the last elections were honorary members of different classes. One could almost predict who would occupy the top posts in the AFP by early identification with the winning candidate.

It is time to stop the practice of having honorary members for PMA classes, whether they come from government or the private sector. If any particular class wishes to honor certain individuals whom it admires, it can do so with testimonial functions and include them in class activities or gatherings. The present chair of the PMA Alumni Association, Gen. Melchor Rosales, has informed me that the practice of honorary membership has been suspended. It is hoped that final resolution will settle the matter permanently.

On the AFP leadership. SyCip noted, "We who are in the private sector wonder about the rapid changes in the military leadership. In the private sector, we will not have CEOs with one or two-year terms if we want reforms or proper planning for the future. Is it possible to carry out reforms in an organization as large as the Armed Forces when there is such rapid change in the leadership?"

I have stated it so often. We need fixed terms for the AFP chief of staff and the major service commanders to provide stability and greater certainty in carrying out future plans and programs. Marawi has shown that no one was looking beyond the horizon and preparing for what has happened. We thought and planned in terms of jungle warfare and what we have on our hands is an urban house-to-house conflict that we were unprepared for. Why should any AFP chief of staff plan for anything different when his term covers such a short period, just long enough to prepare for retirement?

One last word. After my columns on the "revolving door" practice covering the AFP leadership, I received a call from SyCip's office, inviting me for dinner. I thought it would be a gathering of mutual friends from the business community or the military. It turned out to be just the two of us at a Makati restaurant. I shall always treasure his kind words. This was a person who genuinely cared for his people, and the country he loved even more.

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SPEAKING OUT

Marawi siege — how will it end?



By IGNACIO R. BUNYE

strikes

Thus, the month-long Battle of Manila ended. In the process, one-tenth of the civilian population perished. Manila, the Pearl of the Orient, was left in total ruins. But the war was still far from over.

THE more than five-month battle to retake Marawi was quite a few similarities to the Battle of Manila which occurred 72 years ago.

The Battle of Manila which raged for more than a month in 1945 was the first and only urban warfare fought by the Allies in the Pacific theater.

All previous battles from Guadalcanal up to Leyte were fought either in jungles or open fields.

Nothing prepared the Allied troops in the Pacific for this type of warfare save for the theoretical training provided in field manuals. The GIs had to learn their lessons fast in actual combat.

One Allied field manual instructed troops on, among others, how to take buildings:

"Attackers should get into the highest floor possible immediately either going up stairs or directly up the walls, since once the upper floors are under control, the remaining enemy can be eliminated much easier. A point to stress — go into the building firing."

If memory serves, the only prior Philippine military experience in urban warfare was during the siege of Zamboanga City in 2013.

Feeling left out in the ongoing peace talks with the MILF, MNLF leader Nur Misuari started to make his presence felt once again by seizing Zamboanga coastal towns. The battle eventually spread to the city.

In Zamboanga, the final stages of the battle involved house-to-house clearing.

But unlike in Zamboanga, the takeover of Marawi appears better planned and the hostile forces came better prepared. The Mautes stocked up on arms and food which sustained them during the early stages. They even managed to dig connecting tunnels which protected them from air

The Mautes booby-trapped likely routes of government forces.

All these, plus the fact that hostiles held dozens of civilian hostages, have slowed down the advance of government troops.

Several times, the declaration of cessation of hostilities was pushed back. Hopefully, it will come soon. The more protracted the battle becomes, the more international propaganda mileage the Mautes gain.

In Manila 72 years ago, here is how the month-long battle started and ended.

Admiral Sanji Iwabuchi, the Japanese commander, had ordered the fortification of several strong points in the center of Manila. Buildings of strong material were ringed by Japanese pillboxes. Streets leading to the mini-fortresses were mined and protected by barricades and barbed wire.

Initially reluctant to bombard Manila's landmarks, MacArthur later agreed to pull out all stops when Allied casualties started to mount.

The final assault by MacArthur's troops on the Japanese commander's suspected headquarters was described in a military journal as follows:

"On February 28, the regiment returned to the Agriculture Building with a three-hour artillery preparation. Point-blank 155mm howitzer fires alternated with point-blank tank and tank-destroyer fires.... Much of the Agriculture Building thus pancaked on its own first floor, and the 5th Cavalry Regiment assaulted into what was left." Iwabuchi's (the Japanese commander) remains were never recovered.

The fighting flared for three more days as the Allied troops tried to retake the last Japanese stronghold — the Finance Building. On Day 29, US troops cleared the last of the Japanese defenders.

Steven Seagal and President Rod

What do visiting martial artist Steven Seagal and President Rod Duterte have in common?

One, both are into fighting illegal drugs. Although in the case of Seagal, it is only via film.

Two, the President claims he is also a martial arts enthusiast, having taken up karate in his younger days.

Three, both are admirers of Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom they praised for his strong leadership. Seagal has gone as far as vocally defending Russia's policy on Ukraine.

Recall that President Rod was in middle of a state visit to Russia when the Marawi crisis started to unfold on May 23. This forced the President to cut short his Moscow trip.

Seagal's friendship with Putin arose from their shared love of martial arts. Seagal is a master of aikido while Putin is an active practitioner of judo. A video clip, which I recently enjoyed viewing, showed Seagal and Putin in a sparring session, to the delight of a small Russian audience.

Last year, Putin made Comrade Steven Seagal a Russian citizen, an act which did not sit well with Ukraine which has since declared Seagal a security risk.

Following the example of Russia, Serbia also granted Seagal Serbian citizenship, making Seagal, I believe, the one and only triple citizen in the world.

Note: You may email us at tot-ingbunye2000@gmail.com. You may also "like" us on Facebook at "Speaking Out."

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Duterte hopes to end Marawi siege soon

By Mary Judaline Partlow

DUMAGUETE CITY -- President Rodrigo Duterte has once again expressed optimism that the ongoing clash between government troops and extremist Maute Group terrorists in Marawi City will finally come to an end.

Speaking to a large crowd in Dumaguete City during Friday evening's opening ceremonies of the Buglasan Festival of Negros Oriental, the President talked about terrorism, specifically what had happened in Marawi City, as he announced that "we anticipate another assault" against the Maute Group who are still holed out there.

"We are now into the fourth month of fighting but hopefully it will be soon," said President Duterte.

He disclosed he will be going there again somehow in a few days "*ug matapos na unta na*" (and hopefully it will end), as he described the country's fight against terrorism "very much like that in the Middle East", saying that has slowed down the resolution of the Marawi City siege.

Speaking alternately in English and the Cebuano dialect, the former Davao mayor stressed that he has lost many troops because of sniper fire from the terrorists who have maintained a vantage point against government forces. "*Nganong*

"*Nganong nadugay kay ang away diha* (why has it dragged on... because the fight there) is very much like what is happening in the Middle East. Syria and Iraq are in shambles. Mosul and Aleppo, and to this day, *sige pa sila ug away* (the fighting continues) because there is a new development and it is urban terrorism", Duterte pointed out.

"*Nakapuwesto na sila sa mga building, ang ilang armas naa na sa underground* (they have pre-positioned themselves in buildings and their arms are underground) and they have the strategic point", he said.

"*Mao ng daghan kong patay nga mga sundalo kay ang ilang mga snipers nakapuwesto ug ilang gipalibutan ang lugar tanan ug IED* (that's why a lot of soldiers were killed because their snipers have pre-positioned themselves and all areas were bordered by IEDs)", he added.

Many casualties on the government side were not from armed confrontation but by terrorist snipers, he pointed.

Duterte said he is praying that the Marawi conflict will soon come to an end so that the country can move on. He promised that he will leave a "very strong military and police" when his term has ended.

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

"Paghawa nako (when I leave), hopefully... kelan yan ewan ko (when, I don't know), but sana (hopefully) before I leave I would be able to leave behind and very strong and well-equipped police and military men because terrorism will not disappear.

"We anticipate another assault, maybe this time (in) two or three other places in the Philippines. But we are prepared. We are not ill-prepared. And it's gonna be a long haul for all of us", he stressed.

According to him, he has told the government troops to approach with caution the remaining terrorists in Marawi to avoid unnecessary destruction of property in that besieged city.

"I've always cautioned them, kung maari lang (if possible), not to destroy the mosques, the shrines, to minimize... to do everything even at a great expense of lives na malibre ang mga hostages (so that hostages will be freed)", the President said.

Duterte, assisted by Gov. Roel Degamo led the awarding of Outstanding Oriental Negrenses, namely, Posthumous Award for Law and Jurisprudence to Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Felix V. Makasiar (and was received by his daughter, Mrs. Cynthia Makasiar-Sikat); and for Science and Environment, Dr. Hilconida

Calumpong, who heads the Silliman University Institute of Environmental and Marine Sciences.

The President also invited local singers Cristiani B. Rebada and Hannah Korin D. Castillo, who gave a song rendition during the Buglasan Festival opening program, to visit Malacañang.

Aside from Degamo, Dumaguete Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo and a majority of the mayors in Negros Oriental were on hand to receive the President.

Also present were Vice-Gov. Mark Macias, provincial board members, barangay chairpersons, heads of national government agencies and representatives from various sectors. **(PNA)**

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AFP reaffirms support to gov't anti-drug war

By Priam Nepomuceno

MANILA – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Sunday reaffirmed its commitment to the government's war against illegal drugs.

This came after President Rodrigo Duterte signed a memorandum designating the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) as the lead agency to carry out anti-illegal drugs operations in the country.

"The AFP has always been in support role to PDEA, Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in any illegal drugs operations, unless we are otherwise requested to lead especially in conflict-affected areas," AFP public affairs office chief. Col. Edgard Arevalo, said in a statement.

In February, AFP and PDEA signed a memorandum of agreement in a bid to strengthen anti-narcotics operations, especially in conflict-affected areas, particularly where conditions for insurgency, secessionism, and terrorism are prevalent.

The military also expanded the Joint Counterintelligence Task Force (JCTF) NOAH, an ad hoc unit created and mandated by the AFP to conduct drugs-related counterintelligence operations.

NOAH assists law enforcement agencies in the identification, investigation, and neutralization of persons in the use, sale, manufacture, and distribution of illegal drugs.

In addition, the military has also formed regional task groups under its unified commands to coordinate direct action, intelligence, legal support, and community relations to PDEA, as force employer, and its regional offices nationwide.

From July 2016 to September 2017, these task groups have conducted a total 6,891 operations which resulted in the killing of 146 drug suspects and arrest of 1,241.

Joint raids of drug laboratories also yielded a total of PHP1.9-billion shabu manufacturing equipment which have greatly hampered the production of methamphetamine in the country while more than 52 kilos of shabu were also confiscated in the operations.

Internal security operations conducted against terror groups also resulted in the neutralization of several drug suspects in Mindanao.

"I commend our soldiers for their professional and efficient intelligence and manpower support afforded to PDEA and the PNP in their anti-illegal drugs operations. Rest assured that despite our focus on our mandate to address internal and external threats to the country, we will not lose sight on the drugs scourge and will actively support PDEA in its endeavors," AFP Chief of Staff General Eduardo Año said. *(PNA)*