

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



TEAM ARMY

Serving the people. Securing the land.

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

08 April 2018

Sunday

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

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PILIPINAS
MONDAY - FRIDAY
11 AM & 5 PM
WEEKDAYS
6 AM, 6:30 PM & 9 PM
WEEKENDS
6 AM

APRIL 08, 2018 | SUNDAY

AFFECTING NORTHERN AND CENTRAL LUZON
at 4:00 pm - April 7, 2018

LAOAG CITY 21 - 30 °C	TUGUEGARAO CITY 20 - 30 °C
BAGUIO CITY 14 - 21 °C	
SBMA/CLARK 21 - 31 °C	METRO MANILA 21 - 31 °C
TAGAYTAY CITY 19 - 29 °C	LEGAZPI CITY 22 - 30 °C
ILOILO/BACOLOD CITY 25 - 31 °C	TACLOBAN CITY 22 - 31 °C
PUERTO PRINCESA 24 - 30 °C	METRO CEBU 25 - 31 °C
ZAMBOANGA CITY 24 - 33 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO 23 - 30 °C
	METRO DAVAO 25 - 33 °C

AREA	APR 7	APR 8	APR 9	AREA	APR 7	APR 8	APR 9
METRO MANILA	21 °C 30 °C	22 °C 31 °C	23 °C 32 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	24 °C 30 °C	25 °C 31 °C	25 °C 32 °C
TUGUEGARAO	20 °C 29 °C	21 °C 31 °C	22 °C 32 °C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	25 °C 31 °C	26 °C 32 °C	26 °C 33 °C
LAOAG	20 °C 29 °C	21 °C 30 °C	21 °C 31 °C	METRO CEBU	25 °C 31 °C	25 °C 32 °C	25 °C 32 °C
BAGUIO	14 °C 20 °C	15 °C 21 °C	15 °C 22 °C	TACLOBAN	21 °C 30 °C	22 °C 31 °C	24 °C 32 °C
SBMA/CLARK	21 °C 30 °C	22 °C 31 °C	23 °C 32 °C	CAGAYAN DE ORO	23 °C 31 °C	23 °C 32 °C	24 °C 32 °C
TAGAYTAY	19 °C 28 °C	20 °C 30 °C	20 °C 31 °C	METRO DAVAO	25 °C 32 °C	25 °C 33 °C	25 °C 33 °C
LEGAZPI	21 °C 29 °C	22 °C 30 °C	23 °C 31 °C	ZAMBOANGA	24 °C 32 °C	24 °C 33 °C	24 °C 34 °C

Partly cloudy to at times
cloudy with rainshowers

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

Cloudy clear with rain
and/or thunderstorms

Light rain

08 April 2018

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER

Page: A1

Duterte: Reds, gov't panel have 60 days to restart talks

STORY BY DJ YAP

President Duterte wants peace negotiations resumed within two months, promising freedom of movement to rebel consultants. Exiled Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria Sison is asking the government to withdraw the proclamation ending the peace

FROM A1

By DJ Yap
@deejayapINQ

President Duterte has set a two-month deadline for the resumption of peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), saying that it was the rebels who had been pushing to reopen the negotiations.

He said he was giving the government and the NDFP peace panels "a timeline of something [like] two months, 60 days" to return to the negotiating table.

"We're good or we break off," he added.

He said he could host the discussions and take care of arrangements.

"I can foot the bill," he said during a dinner party late on Thursday at the Sofitel Hotel organized for him by his allies in Congress.

Mr. Duterte had promised to end the nearly 50-year Maoist rebellion, which has killed more than 40,000 people, by finding a political solution but he abandoned the peace efforts in November, complaining of repeated rebel attacks.

In February, his administration petitioned a court to declare the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's

Army (NPA) terrorist organizations. It also sought to tag about 600 people, including about two dozen rebel consultants in the talks, as terrorists.

Exiled CPP founding chair Jose Maria Sison who now serves as political consultant for the NDFP peace panel, welcomed Mr. Duterte's announcement directing his peace adviser to find ways to restart the negotiations.

Sison urged government and rebel negotiators to immediately set a meeting to discuss issues blocking the early resumption of the talks, including conditions set by the President—a stop to all rebel attacks and "revolutionary tax" collections and the dropping of any demand

for a coalition government.

Mr. Duterte said it was the rebels who wanted the resumption of the talks.

"You can read in between the lines. They are really asking for talks to resume," he said.

"Look at the text: 'Salamat, President Duterte for returning to the negotiating table,'" he said, without identifying the sender of the message or when it was sent.

'Big deal'

He said the message was "so important" and a "big deal" to the rebels.

Even soldiers preferred talking over fighting, he added.

He had asked government

troops whether they wanted to continue fighting or resume negotiations. He said he was told: "Sir, if you ask us, if we are ordered, we will fight. But if we can avoid killing, sir ..."

Reaffirm agreements

"I said, 'OK, let's talk,'" he said.

Sison on Saturday urged the government to reaffirm all previously signed agreements to remove all obstacles to the negotiations.

"This means that the government should withdraw Proclamation 360 and 374 and its proscription petition so that the NDFP consultants who were arrested and being hunted

could come out and participate in the peace negotiation," Sison said in an online interview.

On Nov. 23, 2017, Mr. Duterte signed Proclamation No. 360 that terminated the talks. On Dec. 5, 2017, he issued Proclamation No. 374 declaring the CPP and NPA terrorist organizations under the Human Security Act.

Duterte said he would give Sison and other rebel negotiators the freedom to move around "during the truce period."

"And if we fail, then I will be happy to send you off to the airport. But do not ever, ever come again, because the next time, I will personally shoot you," he said he told Sison. —WITH REPORTS FROM DELFIN T. MALLARI JR. INQ

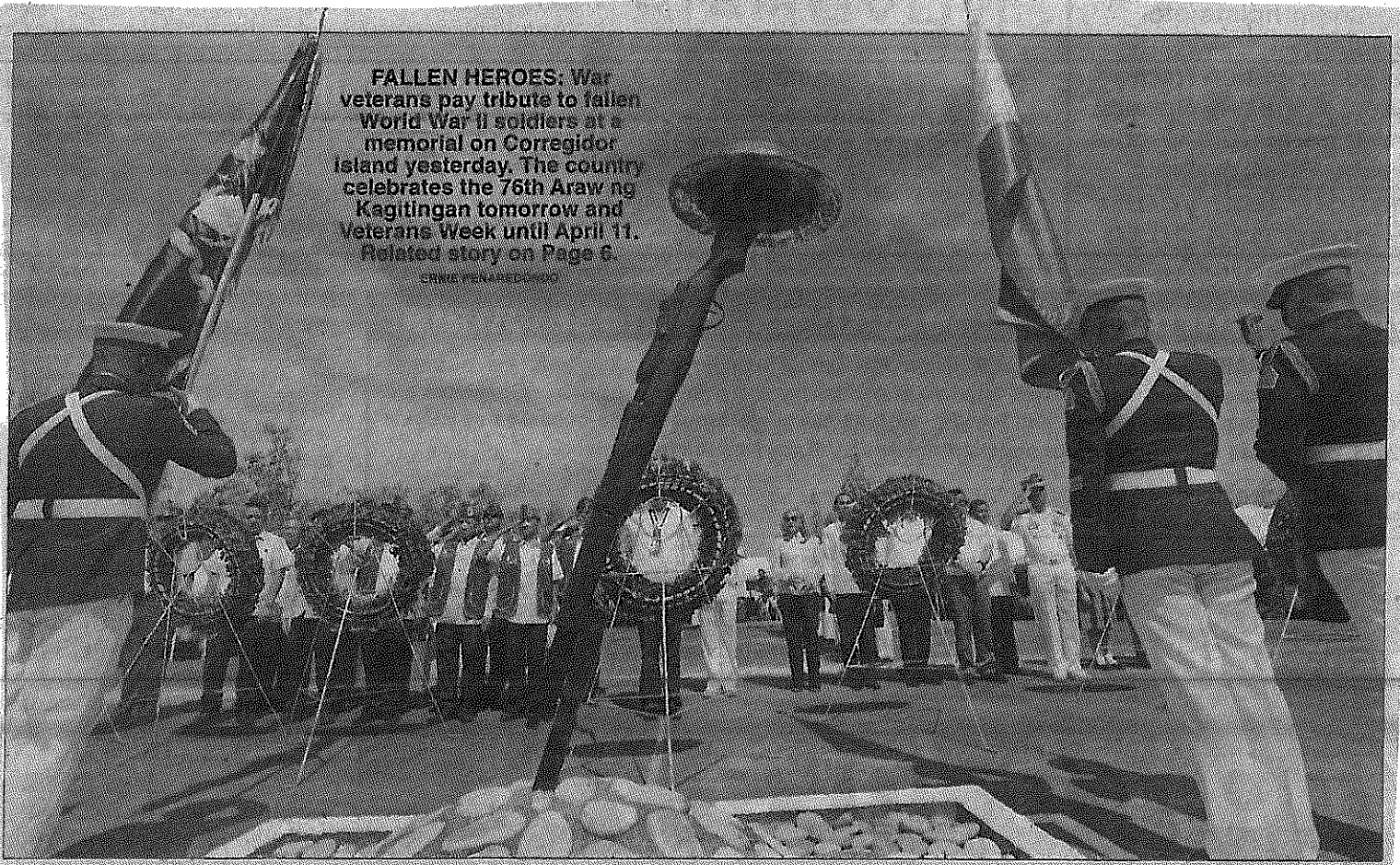
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FALLEN HEROES: War veterans pay tribute to fallen World War II soldiers at a memorial on Corregidor Island yesterday. The country celebrates the 76th Araw ng Kagitingan tomorrow and Veterans Week until April 11. Related story on Page 6.

ERNE PERARODONGO



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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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'We are tired of war' – Lanao del Norte mayor

By BONITA L. ERMAC

MUNAI, Lanao del Norte – For this town's mayor, Casan Maquiling, the constant fear of violence and war is rooted in the thousands of loose firearms that are in the hands of criminal groups and even the civilian populace.

"For us here in Munai, we are all very tired of war," Maquiling said during the turnover of some 30 high-powered firearms, which were formally in the hands of the populace, to the Fifth Mechanized Infantry Battalion (5th Mech) last Friday.

Maquiling said his townsfolk decided to turn over the firearms

through the "balik baril" program instituted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Among the firearms surrendered were a caliber-50 sniper rifle, three caliber-30 Browning automatic rifles, seven M14 rifles, 15 M16 rifles, and four M653 Carbines.

"This is different where civilian individuals voluntarily turn over their firearms to the AFP," he noted.

Maquiling said it was his belief that the only way to eradicate criminal activities, resolve problems about peace and order, would be to surrender all loose firearms to authorities.

Munai now stands as among the first municipalities to respond to the

call of the government to take part in its "balik baril" program.

The turn-over ceremony was witnessed by Maj. General Roseller G. Murillo, commander of the Joint Task Force Zampelan, and Second Mechanized Infantry Brigade Commander Col. Robert C. Dauz, who is also the commander of the Joint Task Group Lanao del Norte.

Dauz said the loose firearms that have been turned over will be gathered at the 5th Mech headquarters before they are brought to brigade headquarters for possible presentation to President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

In Lanao del Norte alone, Dauz said there are an estimated 6,000 to 7,000 more loose firearms.

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Pahina. 2

ALBAYALDE, GALVEZ PINURI NI BONG GO

LALONG sisigla ang kampanya ng pamahalaan laban sa krimen at terorismo sa pagkakatalaga kina bagong Philippine National Police Chief Oscar Albayalde at Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief General Carlito Galvez, ayon kay Special Assistant to the President Christopher “Bong” Go.

Binati ni Go ang dalawang opisyal matapos ianunsyo ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte nitong nakaraang linggo ang kanilang pagkakatalaga.

Aniya, tiyak na mas magiging maayos ang pamamalakad sa PNP at AFP sa pagpasok ng

dalawang opisyal.

“With the years of experience they possess, I am confident that both General Carlito Galvez and Director Oscar Albayalde will be able to lead our Armed Forces and National Police,” pahayag ng opisyal ng Palasyo.

Matatandaang pinangalanan ni Duterte sina Albayalde at Galvez bilang kapell ni PNP Director General Ronald dela Rosa at AFP chief Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

Ayon kay Go, masusing pinag-aralan ng Pangulo ang kwalipikasyon ng dalawang opisyal kung saan kinakitaan sila

ng mga katangian ng isang mabuting lider.

Dinagdag pa ni Go na isa sa pinagbasehan ng Pangulo ay ang pagiging tapat sa tungkulin ng dalawang opisyal.

“They are both loyal and are men of honor and integrity. And more importantly, the President trusts them,” din pa ni Go. “I congratulate them and wish them all the best on their new assignments,” dagdag pa niya.

Kapag-naupo na, manu-

nungkulan si Albayalde hanggang ika-8 ng Nobyembre 2019.

Ipagpapatuloy aniya ang programa sa internal cleansing ng PNP at mas palalakasin pa at palalawakin ang pagdidisiplina sa mga kasapi ng pambansang pulisya.

Nangako si Albayalde na ipagpapatuloy ang aobokasiya ng administrasyong Duterte laban sa krimen, ilegal na droga at iba pa.

Sa kabilang dako, si Galvez ay dating pinuno ng Western

Mindanao Command at ang isyung nahirang mula sa tatlong pinagpiliang kandidato para sa pagkapinuno ng military.

KRIS JOSE

08 April 2018

Manila
Standard

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AFP, PNP HEADS CHOSEN FOR INTEGRITY

SPECIAL Assistant to the President Christopher "Bong" Go on Saturday said newly-named Philippine National Police chief Oscar Albayalde and Armed Forces of the Philippines chief General Carlito Galvez were picked for their loyalty and integrity.

Go, who congratulated the two officials following President Rodrigo Duterte's announcement, also expressed confidence that both will be able to effectively handle their respective commands.

"With the years of experience they possess, I am confident that both General Carlito Galvez and Director Oscar Albayalde will be able to lead our Armed Forces and National Police," said the Palace official.

Duterte earlier announced that Albayalde is the next PNP chief, replacing Director General Ronald dela Rosa. The president also designated Galvez as the new head of the 130,000-strong military, replacing Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

According to Go, the President himself thoroughly vetted the two before making his final decision. He said both possess the qualities of a good leader, besting others who were eyeing the positions.

"They are both loyal and are men of honor and integrity. And more importantly, the President trusts them," stressed Go.

"I congratulate them and wish them all the best on their new assignments," he stressed.

Albayalde, who is set to retire on Nov. 8, 2019, promised to continue with their internal cleansing program to instill discipline among police ranks.

According to Albayalde, he was elated and overwhelmed by the trust and confidence Duterte has given him.

"I will continue and fully support the advocacy of the administration of our President," he said.

Meanwhile, Galvez was the commander of the AFP Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) who topped the list of three key contenders who were recommended by the AFP Board of Generals.

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Members of terror groups send surrender feelers

Members of terrorist organizations have indicated their willingness to surrender to authorities, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said Friday.

"We have received feelers that members of terrorist organizations will turn themselves over to the authorities," Joint Task Force Lanao deputy commander Col. Romeo Brawner said in a Bangon Marawi media briefing at Malacañang Palace.

Brawner did not provide further details but he said the task force had already sought the help of local government units (LGUs) in the provinces of Lanao del Sur and del Norte.

"We have made arrangements with the LGU for them to help us in the processing, as well as in the provision of medical, financial and psychological support for the fighters," he said.

He also attributed to the local executives and residents the task force's efforts in recovering loose firearms, noting that these had "yielded significant gains."

Brawner said a total of 295 high-powered and low-powered firearms have been turned over by LGU officials in Piagapo, Marantao, Masho, Maguing and Lumba-Bayabao.

"In line with this, we are encouraging the other municipalities and cities in Lanao Del Sur and Lanao del Norte to join us in our

campaign to get rid of loose firearms in our area. This will lead to a decrease in the incidents of "rido" or clan wars, and also of criminality and terrorism," he said.

The military official also appealed to local residents not to join the terrorist organizations nearly a year after the ISIS-inspired Maute groups seized Marawi City.

The attack had led to a five-month war between government troops and the ISIS-inspired terrorists, leaving more than 1,000 people dead and over PHP17 billion in property damage and opportunities lost.

"We are appealing to our Maranao brothers and sisters not to allow other interest groups to agitate them into doing illegal acts or joining terrorist organizations," Brawner said.

According to the Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM), at least P75 billion will be needed to rebuild the war-torn Marawi City.

TFBM chairman Eduardo del Rosario said the rebuilding of Marawi's most affected area is expected to commence in the first week of June this year and is poised to be completed in the last quarter of 2021.

Meanwhile, Brawner said a total of 1,835 families were able to visit their houses and properties for the past four days under the Kambalingan and Kambisita programs. **PNA**

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Lorenzana supports increase of veteran's pension to P20K

By RIC SAPNU

BALANGACITY – President Duterte has the welfare of World War II veterans at heart and will fully support them, said Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Friday.

He is confident that Duterte would approve into law the bill, pending at the Senate and the House of Representatives, that seeks to increase the pension of war veterans from its current P5,000 to P20,000 per month.

"This (P5,000) has a very small value nowadays. We will increase this so our veterans would not have a hard time," said Lorenzana, who was the guest of honor in the Parangal sa mga Beterano held here as part of the observance of the 76th year of Araw ng Kagitingan tomorrow.

He pointed out that the veteran's monthly pension was first given by for-

mer president Corazon Aquino and has diminished in value over the years.

"Once Congress approves this, I know that the President will sign it. He knows how to take care of our veterans and soldiers," he added.

Lorenzana said Duterte has released an amount to buy some equipment for the Veterans Memorial Center in Quezon City. He also plans to talk to Department of Health Secretary Francisco Duque III on the possibility of having veteran's wards in the country's district and provincial hospitals.

Bataan Rep. Geraldine Roman announced that she has filed a bill in Congress that seeks to raise the monthly pension of WWII and Korean war veterans from P5,000 to P20,000.

A counterpart bill was filed in the Senate by Sen. Gregorio Honasan, she

Turn to Page 7

Lorenzana

From Page 6
added.

Bataan Gov. Albert Garcia lauded the veterans as he cited the province's tribute

to the heroes through the transformation of Mount Samat through the Tourism Infrastructure Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) into a world-class shrine. Several events, including the parade of floats, will also be held tomorrow.

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INQUIRER

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JAPAN ACTIVATES FIRST MARINES SINCE WW2 TO BOLSTER DEFENSES AGAINST CHINA

SASEBO/TOKYO—Japan on Saturday activated its first marine unit since World War II trained to counter invaders occupying Japanese islands along the edge of the East China Sea that Tokyo fears are vulnerable to attack by China.

In a ceremony held at a military base near Sasebo on the southwest island of Kyushu, about 1,500 members of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB) wearing camouflage lined up outside amid cold, windy weather.

Critical mandate

"Given the increasingly difficult defense and security situation surrounding Japan, defense of our islands has become a critical mandate," Tomohiro Yamamoto, vice defense minister, said in a speech.

COMBAT READY Members of Japan's first marine unit since World War II gather at a ceremony activating the brigade on April 7. —REUTERS



The troops conducted a 20-minute mock public exercise recapturing a remote island from invaders.

The formation of the

Japanese marine brigade is controversial because amphibious units can project military force and could, critics warn, be used to threaten

Japan's neighbors. In its post World War II constitution, Japan renounced the right to wage war.

The brigade is the latest

component of a growing marine force that includes helicopter carriers, amphibious ships, Osprey tilt-rotor troop carriers and amphibious assault vehicles, meant to deter China as it pushes for easier access to the Western Pacific.

2,100 strong ARDB

The activation of the 2,100 strong ARDB takes Japan a step closer to creating a force similar to a US Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) able to plan and execute operations at sea far from its home base.

"They've already demonstrated the ability to put together an ad hoc MEU. But to have a solid, standing MEU capability requires concerted effort," Grant Newsham, a research fellow at the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies.

"If Japan put its mind to it, within a year or year and a half it could have a reasonable capability."

Newsham, who helped train Japan's first amphibious troops as a US Marine Corps colonel liaison officer assigned to the Ground Self Defense Force (GSDF), said Japan still needs a joint navy-army amphibious headquarters to coordinate operations as well as more amphibious ships to carry troops and equipment.

Amphibious ships

Japanese military planners are already mulling some of those additions. Its Air Self Defense Force (ASDF) wants to acquire F-35Bs to operate from its Izumo and Ise helicopter carriers, or from islands along the East China Sea, sources have told Reuters. —REUTERS

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MARITIME SECURITY DOWN SOUTH – Philippine Navy personnel lead a simulated inter-agency capability demonstration drill in the waters off Oslob, Cebu yesterday. Personnel from the Philippine Coast Guard, Central Visayas police, Bureau of Fire Protection and Oslob Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office likewise took part in the maritime exercises that highlighted their rescue, response and anti-terrorism capabilities. (Juan Carlo de Vela)

8 April 2018



Pahina. 6

Ex-Cafgu niratrat ng NPA

Dead-on-the-spot ang isang mangingisda na dating kasapi ng Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit o Cafgu matapos ratratin ng pinaniniwalaang liquidation squad ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army habang nakikipista sa Brgy. Panan-awan sa bayan ng Cawayan, Masbate kamakalawa ng gabi.

Nasawi noon din dahil sa tama ng bala sa iba't-ibang bahagi ng katawan ang biktima si Mario Dayco, 35- anyos, tubong Brgy. Balatucan sa bayan ng Mobo at kasalukuyang naninirahan sa naturang barangay.

Sa police report na nakarating sa Camp Gen. Simeon Ola, dakong alas-

11:30 ng gabi, habang masayang nakikipaghuntahan si Dayco sa ilang mga kaibigan nang biglang dumating ang ilang armadong mga NPA at saka pinagbabaril ang biktima.

Marami umano ang mga nakasaksi sa pamamail pero wala ni isang nakakilos para tumulong dahil sa takot. Makaraang masigurong patay na ang biktima ay tumakas ang mga rebelde patungo sa bulubunduking lugar ng barangay.

Ayon sa inisyal na im-
bistigasyon ng mga pulis, dati na umanong binalaan ng mga rebelde ang biktima na umalis na sa lugar pero binalewala lang nito. **Jorge Hallare**

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Page. 5

2 BIFF naaktuhang nagkakabit ng bomba

NI FER TABOY

Inaresto ng militar at pulisya ang dalawang umano'y miyembro ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) nang maaaktuhan umanong nagkakabit ng bomba sa Barangay Poblacion, Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao, nitong Biyernes ng gabi.

Sa report ng Shariff Aguak Municipal Police, nakilala ang dalawang dinakip na sina Esmal Abdulkarem, 44, ng Shariff Aguak, at Boy Kamid, 52, ng Datu Hoffer, Maguindanao.

Ang dalawa ay kaanib umano ng paksiyong Karialan.

Pinaghahanap pa rin ng militar at pulisya ang dalawa pang kasamahan ng mga ito matapos makatakas, sakay sa motorsiklo.

Inihayag ni 6th Infantry (Kampilan) Division spokesman Capt.

Arvin Encinas na namataan ng mga miyembro ng Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) ang apat na tao na nagkakabit ng bomba sa ticket booth, malapit sa kanilang outpost sa Bgy.

Poblacion, Shariff Aguak, dakong 9:15 ng gabi.

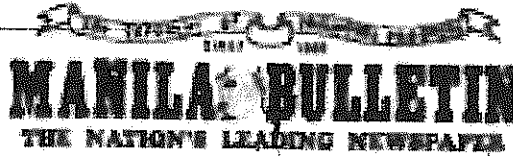
Matapos humingi ng tulong, nagresponde sa lugar ang mga tauhan ng pulisya at military at naaresto ang dalawa.

Nasamsam ng pulisya ang isang .45 caliber pistol at mga bala nito.

Kaagad namang na-defuse ng mga tauhan ng Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team ng Philippine Army (PA) ang bomba, na gawa sa granada at sa isang bala ng 60 mm mortar.

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Bombing attempt foiled in Shariff Aguak

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao (PNA) – Alert police force multipliers and Army bomb experts foiled Friday night a bombing attempt here, and arrested two of four suspects, the military has said.

The improvised explosive device (IED) concealed inside a small box was left at about 6:30 p.m. by four men beside a terminal ticket booth, near an outpost of the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT). The Army's Explosive and Ord-

nance Division (EOD) defused the IED about an hour later, according to Capt. Arvin John Encinas, Army's Sixth Infantry Division spokesperson.

He said alert BPAT members told the military they saw four men leave a suspicious package at the ticket booth, and quickly left on board two motorbikes.

The BPAT members immediately informed Shariff Aguak Vice Mayor Akmhad Ampatuan who, along with the BPAT, chased the suspects.

They arrested two suspects on the first motorbike, but failed to catch up with the others.

Encinas identified the arrested suspects as Esmael Abdulkarem, 44, a resident of Shariff Aguak, and Boy Kamid, 52, of Datu Hoffer, both in Maguindanao. Two .45-caliber pistols were found in their possession.

Immediately, elements of the Army's 2nd Mechanized Infantry Battalion and the 57th Infantry Battalion cordoned off the ticketing booth area.

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Bomb attempt foiled, 2 nabbed in Maguindanao

SHARIFF AGUAK,

Maguindanao —

Alert police force

multipliers and Army

bomb experts foiled

Friday night a

bombing attempt

here and arrested

two of four

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military yesterday

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improvised

explosive device

(IED) inside a small box was left at about 6:30 p.m. by four men beside a terminal ticket booth, near an outpost of the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT). The Army's Explosive and Ordnance Division defused the IED about an hour later, according to Capt. Arvin John Encinas, Army's 6th Infantry Division spokesperson. He said alert BPAT members told the military they saw four men leaving a suspected IED at the ticket booth and quickly left on board two separate motorbikes. The BPAT members immediately informed Shariff Aguak Vice Mayor Akmhad Ampatuan who, along with the BPAT, chased the suspects. They arrested two on a motorbike but failed to get the two other suspects, who were on a separate motorcycle. Encinas identified the arrested suspects as Esmael Abdulkarem, 44, a resident of Shariff Aguak, and Boy Kamid, 52, of Datu Hoffer, both in Maguindanao. Two .45-caliber pistols were found in their possession. Immediately, elements of the Army's 2nd Mechanized Infantry Battalion and the 57th Infantry Battalion cordoned off the ticketing booth area. Encinas said the improvised bomb was fashioned from an MK2 fragmentation grenade and 60-mm. mortar explosive sans its fuse and tailfin. Major Gen. Arnel de la Vega, 6th ID chief, lauded the alertness of village watchmen as well as Vice Mayor Ampatuan for quickly responding to the incident and alerting the Army. The suspects have remained under close watch at the municipal police office here.

The powerful improvised explosive device placed inside

a small box left beside a ticket booth in Shariff Aguak,

Maguindanao.

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terminal ticket booth, near an outpost of the Barangay Peacekeeping Action

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PNA

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Lolo Atong: A hero for the ages

Text and photo by RAYMUND MAGNO GARLITOS



Liberato Gagalac Sandoy, better known as Lolo Atong, wore different hats when he was still alive — that of a father, a lover (he had three girlfriends after his wife passed away), an overseas worker, a water well 'engineer', and barangay arbitrator — till the last ounce of his breath.

But the one hat that he cherished wearing was his royal blue military beret, proof of his being a veteran of the last century's World War II. Morong may have a major place in our nation's history, but his epic story of courage is one for the books.

This writer was witness to his narrative of struggle and defiance — in a quest to liberate the Philippines from the Japanese Imperial Army — told in vivid detail that one can feel the urgency of his story as something that needed to be told to a future generation of Filipinos who may no longer relate to that darkest moment in the country's history. He was spritely then, not an inch close to senility, an eager storyteller.

On the very last day, I paid my

final respects to Lolo Atong, who passed away at 93 of age-related illnesses before the New Year.

"When he was still alive, he never stops telling his WW II stories," Rose Ann Jugueta, one of his grandchildren shared. "Though we have grown tired of hearing them, he still wants to tell them even to strangers. We are thankful that finally, someone sought him out to hear his story, that it will be shared long after he's gone."

No longer with us, Lolo Atong was a man who was every inch a hero in my eyes — a battle-scarred guerrilla, a loving and dedicated father, a man respected and revered in his community. That he was able to remember his story when memory would have failed him, I was very much humbled and privileged to have listened to his tale of gallantry and grace.

His story belongs to us, and may we never forget that time when men and women like him once fought for our freedom, and did not flinch in the face of death.

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Bataan Death March survivors recount tales of valor

By Ben Cal April 7, 2018, 1:55 pm



War veterans Col. Catalino del Rosario Ibañez and Col. Vicente Alhambra, Sr. recount their tales of valor during World War II. (PVAO photo)

MANILA – Of the estimated 80,000 Filipino and American prisoners of war (POWs), who took part in the infamous Bataan Death March 76 years ago, only three are still alive with their age past the century mark.

Records at the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) named the centenarian war veterans as Pfc. Juliano de La Peña, 107, Col. Catalino del Rosario Ibañez, and Col. Vicente F. Alhambra, Sr., 102.

Despite his age, de La Peña personally visited the PVAO on Thursday to receive a commendation for his honorable and great service to the country during the World War II and as survivor of the Bataan Death March.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who was guest speaker during the ceremony in Camp Aguinaldo, handed the plaque to de La Peña, and to 64 other war veterans who received the same commendation.

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Lacson was assisted by PVAO administrator, Lt. Gen. Ernesto G. Carolina (ret.).

Alhambra and Ibañez received their plaques last year.

In the case of Alhambra, he held the distinction as a veteran of three wars — World War II, Korean War and the Hukbalahap anti-insurgency campaign in Luzon.

Incidentally, this writer had the rare opportunity of interviewing Alhambra in his house in Cavite.

During the interview, Alhambra said his secret to longevity and how he survived against all odds, including the infamous "Bataan Death March", unscathed was because "God was on his side" all throughout the ordeal where many had died of exhaustion or were shot dead or bayoneted by the Japanese.

"Remain active but most of all be prayerful," Alhambra said.

It was in Bataan and Corregidor where Filipino and American soldiers made their last stand against the Japanese during the war, which lasted more than three months before they surrendered on April 9 and May 6, 1942, respectively.

Alhambra kept his photo albums of World War II, the Korean War in 1950-53, and the anti-insurgency drive against the Huks.

He said he prays to God for protection, which he confided is his secret weapon, especially during two wars and the fight against the Huks.

A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Class of 1942, Alhambra and all his classmates were automatically drafted into military service three months before graduation when World War II broke out following the bombing of the Philippines by Japanese planes on Dec. 8, 1941.

He said the entire PMA class of 1942, including Jose Crisol, who became defense undersecretary in post-war years, reported to then Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Mariano Castaneda for immediate deployment to fight the invading Japanese forces.

"We were the first PMA class called to active duty," Alhambra recalled.

He said Japanese warplanes bombed Baguio and Cavite where US naval forces were stationed at Sangley Point.

Alhambra said he was enlisted into the 2nd Regular Division of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) assigned in Mariveles, Bataan.

It was in Bataan that the bulk of Filipino and American forces stood their ground to defend the Philippines until they were forced to surrender on April 9, 1942 due to shortage of ammunition, food and medicines.

Alhambra vividly described the fall of Bataan as a "sad day" as he and his comrades-in-arms became prisoners of war (POWs) of the Japanese forces.

6 bandits surrender in Zamboanga Sibugay

By Teofilo Garcia, Jr April 7, 2018, 7:56 pm

Operations by government troops continue in a bid to locate and possibly rescue Laarni Buen, 38, secretary of Cebel's Marine Products, who was abducted by seven gunmen on Tuesday in Barangay Poblacion, Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay. *(Photo courtesy: PRO-9 PIO)*

ZAMBOANGA CITY -- Six armed men surrendered to government authorities in the province of Zamboanga Sibugay, a top police official announced Saturday.

Chief Supt. Edwin De Ocampo, deputy regional police director for administration (DRDA), identified the surrenderees as Esmael Cader, Abbas Kinawalan, Leden Abbas, Omar Abdurahim, Esmael Pangilan, and Aloy Pangilan.

De Ocampo said they surrendered to the joint police and military forces around 9 a.m. Friday at the coast of Barangay Sinusayan, Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay.

De Ocampo said the troops were on search and rescue mission when Sinusayan Barangay Chairperson Ibrahim Abbas presented to them the six lawless members, who signified their intention to surrender.

He said the surrenderees turned over two M-14 rifles, one Garand Springfield, two Shotgun, and a caliber .45 pistol as well as assorted ammunition.

He said the surrenderees and their firearms were taken to the Tactical Command Post of the Army's 44th Infantry Battalion.

The search and rescue operation is aimed to locate and possibly rescue Laarni Buen, 38 (not Laarni Bandi as earlier reported), the secretary of the Cebel's Marine Products.

The Cebel's Marine Products is engaged in the buy and sell of all kinds of marine products in the town of Malangas.

Buen was abducted by seven gunmen believed to be members of kidnap-for-ransom-group (KFRG) on Tuesday at Purok Maabiabihon, Barangay Poblacion, Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay.

De Ocampo said the six surrenderees were placed under investigation to determine whether they were involved in the abduction of Buen.

"It depends on the result of interrogation and possible account of witnesses," De Ocampo added when asked if they were part of the KFRG behind Buen's abduction. (PNA)