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NEWS CLIPPINGS

01 August 2018

Wednesday



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SUICIDE BOMBING EYED IN BASILAN ATTACK

STORY BY JULIE ALIPALA AND DJ YAP

The military is trying to calm fears that the powerful blast that killed 11 people, including the suspected bomber, might be a prelude to more such terrorist actions against other targets.

A6

FROM A1

By Julie Alipala and DJ Yap
@Team_Inquirer

ZAMBOANGA CITY—In what could be the first suicide bombing in the country, a powerful blast killed at least 11 people and wounded nine others early on Tuesday in Lamitan City, Basilan province, raising fears of more such attacks.

Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay said only 10 were killed when the bomb in the vehicle blew up a few meters from the Magwakit Patrol Base of the 19th Special Forces Company at Bulanting village.

"We don't count the life of a demon," an angry Furigay told the Inquirer, referring to the bomber.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a for-

mer national police chief, said the blast could be the "first known suicide bombing case in the Philippines," representing a new type of threat that might spread to urban centers if left unchecked.

"If it can be established that it was indeed a case of suicide bombing, it is frightening to say the least as, and God forbid, it could start a trend of a series of such terroristic acts that could hit other highly populated urban centers," he said in a text message to the Inquirer.

Lacson, chair of the Senate public order committee, said the bombing "should prod government to step up intelligence and security capabilities to address this new deadly threat."

The military immediately tried to douse speculations that the blast was a suicide attack.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson, Col.



BLAST SITE Mayor Rose Furigay of Lamitan City in Basilan province inspects the site where a powerful explosion on Tuesday left at least 11 people dead and a small crater a few meters away from the military's Magwakit Patrol Base at Barangay Bulanting. —PHOTO COURTESY OF LAMITAN CITY GOVERNMENT

Edgard Arevalo, said security forces were still investigating and so far, there was no basis to conclude that the incident was a suicide bombing or was carried out by a foreigner as early reports indicated.

Homemade bomb

"It is possible that the driver detonated the IED (improvised explosive device). It is possible that the bomb was accidentally set off by the cell phones of the people manning the checkpoint. There are many possibilities but we do not want to speculate," he said.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, the public affairs officer of Western Mindanao Command, said it was premature to say who was responsible for the attack.

"Let us (just call them), peace spoiler," he said. "We cannot [immediately] say it's the Abu Sayyaf or IS (Islamic State) because once we identified this [attack] to their group, it would be like praising them."

'War crime'

One soldier, five militiamen and four civilians, including a mother and her child, were killed in the blast, military officials

said. The driver, the only person in the van, also was killed.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque called the attack a "war crime."

"It's an indiscriminate attack," Roque said. "Under IHL (international humanitarian law), you must limit your attacks pursuant to military objectives. You must limit it to military targets. You must avoid protected individuals, including civilians."

'Test mission'?

Muntinlupa Rep. Ruffy Biazon said if the blast proved to be

a suicide attack, this would indicate "a leveling up of terrorism in the country, opening up a whole new dimension on how the government's forces will prevent and pursue terrorism."

Biazon said authorities should check if the real target was the checkpoint or if the attack was a "test mission" to recruit and train extremists to carry out other attacks.

It could also have been a botched mission that was intended for a bigger target, he added.

Furigay said the bomb could have been intended for a parade of more than 3,000 schoolchildren in the center of the city, about two kilometers from Bulanting, later on Tuesday morning to celebrate the culmination of a nutrition program.

He called the militiamen and soldiers who stopped the van "heroes" for preventing what could have been massive casualties.

'Like a 500-pound bomb'

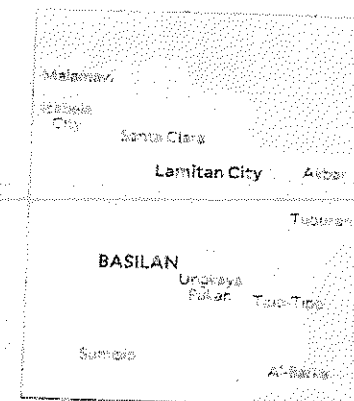
Col. Montano Almodovar, commander of the 3rd Scout Ranger Battalion, said the explosion happened around 5:45 a.m., just a few meters away from the checkpoint manned by militiamen and Scout Ranger and Special Forces troops.

"It was a powerful explosion," Almodovar said. "It was like a 500-pound bomb that was rigged in the van."

He said the militiamen decided to stop the van when they saw "two big containers and big kettles with wires inside."

He said the driver "looked more like a foreigner and could not speak the local dialect."

The militiamen requested assistance from their superiors because they could not commu-



BLAST SITE

INQ GRAPHICS

nicate with the driver, Almodovar said.

"Our Rangers were proceeding to the area. When they were about 20 meters distance, the van went off," he said.

Abu Sayyaf plot

Some farm animals also were killed in the blast, which obliterated the van and gouged a small crater on the ground.

Arevalo told reporters the AFP had received intelligence information that the Abu Sayyaf group under Furuji Indama was planning to bomb various parts of Basilan.

"This terrorist group of Furuji Indama is losing ground, swiftly losing ground. That's why they are now resorting to this desperate moves in order to disrupt the mass surrenders of ASG members in Basilan and in Sulu," he said.

In June, more than 200 Abu Sayyaf men surrendered in Basilan, according to Maj. Gen. Juvymax Uy, head of the antiterror Joint Task Force Basilan.

Uy estimated that at least 40 remained in the Basilan group, too small to affect peace and order in the province. —WITH REPORTS FROM BONG SARMIENTO, LEILA B. SALAVERRIA, JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE, JULIUS N. LEONEN AND JULIE M. AURELIC IN MANILA, AP, AFP AND REUTERS INQ

Basilan car bomb kills 11

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY — A suspected foreign suicide bomber yesterday morning set off a bomb in a van and killed 11 people, including himself, and wounded eight others at a military checkpoint in Lamitan City, Basilan.

The bombing occurred at about 5:50 a.m. near the Scout Ranger detachment in the tri-boundary of barangays Bilanting, Colonia and Maganda, which serves as the main thoroughfare to the towns of Mohammad Ajul and Akbar, said Lamitan Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay.

Lt. Col. Montano Almodovar, commander of the 3rd Scout Ranger Battalion, said the foreign-looking suspect was driving a white van that was pulled over by members of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit

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Basilan From Page 1

(CAFGU) manning the checkpoint at Sitio Magkawit.

The CAFGU members pulled the van aside to interrogate the driver who could not speak Filipino or any of the local dialects. As the suspect with Middle Eastern features appeared to alight the van, the vehicle exploded.

Killed in the bombing were Corporal Samad Jumrah, CAFGU Active Auxiliaries (CAA) Adzlan Abdula, Muñd Manda, Titing Omar, Hermilito Gapo Jr. and Jerry Inso, who died in hospital.

The civilians who were killed include the wife of Omar, Hadja Radia Manda, and their 10-year-old son Garry; Rosa Inso and Rosida Titing.

Those wounded were CAA Wilbert Garcia as well as Corporal Romeo Tabon Jr., 1Lt. Rojean Rodriguez, Sgts. Mike Elumba and Renante Escañan, Privates First Class Romeo Frias and Jeffrey Martecio and civilian Angelina Inso.

"The regular forces and the CAFGU (members) were supposedly responding when the explosion occurred. They sustained wounds from the shrapnel," military authorities told **The STAR**.

They tagged the Abu Sayyaf behind the bombing and believed that the target was the center of Lamitan.

They said the bomber, who was torn to pieces, could not be identified.

"At this point we can attribute this as the work of the (Abu Sayyaf)," a military official said.

Military authorities re-

vealed that the bandit group has been attempting to sneak improvised explosives into Lamitan, considering its porous boundary.

"That's why we have heightened our checkpoint and security operation, which prevented the van from getting (into the city)," the official added.

The wounded were airlifted to Camp Navarro General Hospital in the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) for treatment.

The explosion damaged a mini-truck, motorcycle and killed some farm animals. It tore the van apart and left a three-meter-wide, one-meter-deep crater on the road.

Lamitan Councilor Ajid Dalawis told a local radio station that he was jogging when he heard the explosion, three kilometers away.

Security measures

As this developed, the city government of Lamitan offered cash incentive for information leading to the arrest of the plotters of the suicide attack.

Local officials have also urged security forces to maintain their alert status and vigilance due to the volatile security in the region.

Among them was Rep. Celso Lobregat who issued the call following the deadly bombing.

"We cannot afford to become collateral damage of the acts of terror being perpetrated by lawless elements in the nearby provinces. All of us must be extra vigilant to

include the civilian populace," Lobregat said.

Lobregat said he will meet with the leaders of Westmincom, Joint Task Force Zamboanga and Philippine National Police (PNP) to discuss the security situation.

The lawmaker also commended the heroism of CAF-GU members and Scout Rangers who sacrificed to save more innocent lives while he consoled with the families of those who were killed.

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) PNP director Chief Supt. Graciano Mijares has ordered all police officers to strengthen checkpoints in the region.

"Police personnel manning checkpoints should be on alert of any vehicle with (only the driver inside or) foreign nationals (as passengers)," Mijares said in a report submitted to Camp Crame in Quezon City.

"In view of the Lamitan bombing incident, PNP units (are initiating) security measures (also strengthening) checkpoints in key cities and municipalities," said Senior Insp. Jemar delos Santos, ARMM-PNP spokesman.

Delos Santos said the ARMM-PNP chief has deployed the maximum number of foot and mobile patrols, particularly in highly populated areas.

He noted that local police commanders were also directed to coordinate with private security providers and managers to establish and enhance joint protocols.

Delos Santos added that local police have also intensified intelligence monitoring and

sharing of information with other units.

For its part, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) yesterday beefed up security in Southwestern Mindanao.

"I have already directed all operating units, particularly Southwestern Mindanao, of increased security operations in view of the Basilan bombing," PCG commandant Admiral Elson Hermogino told *The STAR*.

Zamboanga City Mayor Maria Isabelle Climaco called for an emergency meeting with Task Force Zamboanga yesterday.

"Before, the regulation only covered conducting inspection of vessels departing Zamboanga, but now we would also be inspecting vessels from island provinces such as Basilan, Jolo in Sulu and other neighboring islands," said PCG Southwestern Mindanao acting commander Captain Joseph Coyne.

Condemning the attack

Officials yesterday condemned the bombing.

ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman, chairman of the ARMM inter-agency peace and order council, said Westmincom and the regional police are now investigating the incident.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the incident, if it is established to be a case of suicide bombing, would be the first of its kind in the country and as such should be a cause for concern for all Filipinos.

"If it can be established that it was indeed a case of suicide bombing, considering that it was the first of its kind in the country, it is frightening to say the least as, and God forbid, it

could start a trend of a series of such terroristic acts that could hit other highly populated urban centers," Lacson said.

Lacson said the incident should prompt the government to step up its intelligence and security capabilities in order to address this new deadly threat.

"I would say, proactive offense prompted by good intelligence is still our best defense," Lacson said.

Sen. Sonny Angara echoed the statement of Lacson, saying the intelligence efforts of the government should be strengthened in order to prevent a similar incident in the future.

He aired his suspicion that the incident may be linked to the recent approval of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Sen. Risa Hontiveros also condemned the attack, which she said should be investigated thoroughly.

"The administration must secure the peace in the region. It must see to it that this incident will not derail our efforts to achieve peace and prosperity in the region, especially with the passage of the (BOL)," Hontiveros said.

Sen. Nancy Binay condemned the bombing, saying it has no place in a civilized society.

"The Filipino people must stand united to fight violence and collectively condemn this cowardly act," Binay said. "I stand with the people of Mindanao at this critical time. I join them in condemning this kind of violent extremism."

"We join the Filipino nation in strongly condemning this dastardly act of taking human lives for whatever motive its perpetrators may have," PNP

spokesman Senior Supt. Benigno Durana Jr. said.

Durana said the incident was unfortunate as it comes on the heels of the historic ratification and enactment of the (BOL), the government's "grand gesture" of sincerity to establish lasting peace and sustainable progress in Muslim Mindanao.

"We will mobilize all available resources at our disposal to bring the authors of this crime before the bar of justice," Durana added.

"We urge the peace-loving people of Basilan not to be cowed by this single act of heinous terror but to keep calm but vigilant against any attempt to sow violence and disrupt our normal lives," he added.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday tried to downplay the suicide bombing even as it called for public vigilance against suspicious individuals in their communities.

"The AFP has successfully performed its mandate of protecting the people and at the cost of the lives of its gallant men," said Col. Edgard Arevalo, AFP spokesman.

Arevalo enjoined the media as well as the public to refrain from speculating that the suicide bombing was carried out by a so-called "lone wolf" as investigation is still being carried out.

Such speculations, he claimed, will only terrorize the people.

Previous intelligence reports showed that the Abu Sayyaf, headed by Furuji Indama, was plotting to bomb downtown Lamitan. - With John Unson, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Evelyn Macairan, Marvin Sy, Paolo Romero, Jaime Laude

PH airs concern over Chinese radio warnings

The Philippines has expressed concern to China over an increasing number of Chinese radio messages warning Philippine aircraft and ships to stay away from newly fortified islands and other territories in the South China Sea claimed by both countries, officials said on Monday.

A Philippine government report seen by The Associated Press (AP) showed that in the second half of last year, Philippine military aircraft received Chinese radio warnings at least 46 times while patrolling near artificial islands built by China in the South China Sea's Spratly archipelago.

The Chinese radio messages were "meant to step up their tactics to our pilots conducting maritime air surveillance in the West Philippine Sea," the report said, using the local name for waters within the country's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

Talk with Chinese

Philippine officials have raised their concern twice over the radio transmissions, including in a meeting with their Chinese counterparts in Manila earlier this year that focused on the Asian countries' long-unresolved territorial disputes, according to two officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the issue publicly.

It's a new problem that emerged after China transformed seven disputed reefs into islands using dredged sand in the Spratlys, where the new islands now stand in close proximity to islands occupied by Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan.

Malaysia and Brunei are the other claimants to the chain of islands and barren islets and atolls.

The messages used to originate from Chinese Coast Guard ships in past years. But military officials suspect transmissions now are also being sent from the Beijing-held artificial islands, where far more powerful communications and surveillance equipment has been installed along with weapons such as surface-to-air missiles.

"Our ships and aircraft have observed an increase in radio queries that appear to originate from new land-based facilities in the South China Sea," Cmdr. Clay Doss, public affairs officer of the US 7th

Fleet, told AP by e-mail in response to questions about the Chinese messages.

"These communications do not affect our operations," Doss said.

Freedom of navigation

Although the United States lays no claim to the strategic waterway, its Navy has deployed ships and aircraft in operations to promote freedom of navigation and overflight, but which China protests as foreign meddling in an Asian dispute.

US Navy ships and aircraft communicate routinely with regional navies, including the Chinese Navy.



**They do that
because of their
claim to that area
and we have a
standard response
and proceed with
what we're doing**

Lt. Gen. G. Kintanar Jr.
PAF chief

"The vast majority of these communications are professional, and when that is not the case, those issues are addressed by appropriate diplomatic and military channels," Doss said.

A Philippine Air Force (PAF) plane on patrol near the Chinese-held islands received a particularly offensive radio message in late January when it was warned by Chinese forces that it was "endangering the security of the Chinese reef. Leave immediately and keep off to avoid misunderstanding," according to the Philippine government report.

Shortly afterward, the plane received a veiled threat: "Philippine military aircraft, I am warning you again, leave immediately or you will pay the possible consequences."

The Filipino pilot later "sighted two flare warning signals from the reef," said the report, which identified the Chinese-occupied island as Gaven Reef, known in the Philippines as Burgos Reef.

Chinese Embassy officials did not reply to requests for comment, but Beijing officials have repeatedly said they have the right to build on what they say is their territory and defend their sovereignty at all costs.

PH pilots just proceed

Lt. Gen. Gaitelo Gerard Rio Kintanar Jr., PAF chief, said Filipino pilots responded calmly to the Chinese radio messages and proceeded with their mission as planned, adding that the higher number of reported radio challenges reflected the Philippine military's commitment to protect the country's territorial interests through intensified patrols.

"They do that because of their claim to that area and we have a standard response and proceed with what we're doing," Kintanar said.

Arsenio Andolong, spokesperson for the Department of National Defense, said the Chinese radio warnings were not considered alarming.

He said there were no reports of physical challenge to Philippine aircraft or vessels following verbal warnings.

According to Andolong, the Philippines also challenges unknown aircraft and ships that enter the country's airspace and territorial waters.

'Normal response'

"It is normal response [for countries] to challenge aircraft or vessels through verbal warnings," Andolong said.

In April last year, Chinese forces attempted by radio to drive away two Philippine military aircraft carrying the country's defense and military chiefs, along with other top security officials and about 40 journalists, to Philippine-occupied Thitu island, which the Philippines refers to as Pag-asa.

Thitu is more than 22 km from Subi Reef (Zamora Reef), once a coral outcrop that now resembles a small Chinese city with a runway and skyline visible from the Philippine-held island when its lights glow at night.

China warned the Philippine planes that they were straying into its territory, and that they should turn around to avoid any mishap.

The aircraft responded by saying they were flying over Philippine territory. —REPORTS

FROM AP AND JEANNETTE I. ANDRADA INQ *hr*

Cayetano claims wrong info being spread on WPS issue

By RUDY SANTOS

Former president Benigno Aquino III and Vice President Leni Robredo were fed with wrong information about the country's negotia-

tions with China, Foreign Affairs Secretary Ajan Peter Cayetano said yesterday.

Cayetano, who left on a Philippine Airlines flight for Singapore yesterday morning to attend the 51st Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting, was reacting to Aquino's call on the Duterte administration to be more transparent in its negotiations with China regarding the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) issue.

"On the contrary, maybe Aquino should ask former (foreign affairs) secretary Albert del Rosario, 'Were you transparent with me?'" Cayetano said prior to his departure.

"They want to impose their strategy on this administration. The problem is their strat-

egy is not working," Cayetano said, referring to the Aquino administration's approach to the South China Sea issue.

During the Liberal International's awarding ceremony where detained Sen. Lela de Lima was bestowed the Prize for Freedom award, Aquino criticized the statement of a government official who said Filipino fishermen are anyway permitted by China to fish in Famatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

The former chief executive stated that after the arbitration, China and the Philippines have started conducting preliminary meetings on the creation of the code of conduct in South China Sea. He wishes to know how far the Duterte administration has gone in terms of drafting the rules.

Robredo, on the other hand, said China's presence in the South China Sea is the most serious external threat since World War II. She added that asserting the country's rights over the disputed waters goes beyond the welfare of

Filipino fishermen.

Meanwhile, on the joint exploration for oil and gas, Cayetano said, "We are very serious about the protection and enjoyment of our sovereign rights. And territorial rights or property rights are not debatable. Property rights are economic rights. The concept of joint exploration and development is one mechanism of cooperation."

The code of conduct in the South China Sea will be tackled during the ministerial meeting in Singapore where member-nations are hoping to expedite negotiations with China, according to the foreign affairs chief.

"We're hoping that it will be completed this year," Cayetano stressed, adding that the Philippines is taking a crucial role in the ASEAN dialogue with China as country coordinator.

"The only way to have peace and stability in South China Sea is to have claimants and non-claimants in the region to come together," Cayetano said.

'50 to 100' protests

As this developed, Robredo's spokesman, former Akbayan party-list representative Barry Gutierrez, yesterday challenged Cayetano to make public the so-called "hundreds" of diplomatic protests which the latter has claimed were filed by the Duterte administration against China for violating the country's sovereignty.

Gutierrez made the statement after Cayetano insisted that the administration of President Duterte has always been transparent on its foreign policy.

"If Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano really wants the public to have correct information about the intrusion of China in the West Philippine Sea, he should start by making public the '50 to 100' protests which were allegedly filed by the DFA against China," Gutierrez said.

"(Cayetano) should give document, not just story. We will wait for that," he said.

Robredo has also been urging the present administration to file diplomatic protest against Beijing and assert the country's arbitration victory against China.

In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration issued a landmark ruling invalidating Beijing's nine-dash line claim over the South China Sea.

The Duterte government chose to shelve the ruling in exchange for better ties with China. ♪ - With Helen Flores

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Govt will protect PH territory —Cayetano

FOREIGN Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano reiterated the Duterte administration's commitment to protect the country's territory and economic rights in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

"We are very serious about protection and enjoyment of our sovereign rights. And territorial rights or property rights is not debatable. Property rights are economic rights," he said.

Cayetano, who will be attending the 51st Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) in Singapore, said "the concept of joint exploration and development is one of mechanism of cooperation."

He said Asean leaders will discuss the code of conduct during the ministerial meeting in Singapore.

"The only way to have peace and stability in the South China Sea is to have claimants and non-claimants in the region to come together," Cayetano said.

BENJIE L. VERGARA

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SCS code of conduct completion eyed

FOREIGN Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano yesterday expressed hope that the Code of Conduct (CoC) in the South China Sea (SCS) will be completed this year.

In a briefing before leaving for the 51st Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting and Related Meetings in Singapore, Cayetano said "we're all hoping that it's either completed or substantially completed this year. The hope is that by November when our leaders meet, we will have it."

Leaders of the ASEAN and China will convene negotiations this August for the crafting of a CoC.

Cayetano admitted that all parties are still facing challenges on the substance of the CoC but gave assurances that the Philippines was keen on pushing for a substantial document.

Cayetano stressed they want an effective CoC, something that would be beneficial to everybody.

Cristina Lee-Pisco

Give 'hot cars' to AFP, PNP – Rody

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin
and Anthony Ching

What the smugglers lost in Cagayan Province could be considered gains by the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as President Rodrigo Duterte considered to turn over confiscated vehicles at Port Irene for possible use in combat and security operations.

The President spared several sports utility vehicles, including a military-grade Hummer, during yesterday's destruction of smuggled cars and motorbikes worth P207.55 million in Sta. Ana, Cagayan.

The Chief Executive then suggested that the spared vehicles be turned over to the PNP and the AFP for official use.

Special Assistant to the President (SAP) Lawrence "Kuya Bong" Go confirmed the President's message, saying Mr. Duterte ordered to check the legal procedures for the spared vehicles' transfer to the AFP and the PNP.

"President Duterte immediately asked if there will be legal impediments to the donation of these vehicles to the AFP and the PNP," Go said. "If there would be none, he asked

Turn to page 2

Give 'hot cars' to AFP, PNP

From page 1

Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (CEZA) Administrator Raul Lambino to immediately consider its donation for combat use and for operations."

According to Go, Lambino immediately sent notice to the Office of the Executive Secretary, which in turn replied that the CEZA has disposition on the vehicles.

"The donation is within the CEZA's discretion. It means the vehicles could be donated to the AFP and PNP," Go said. "The CEZA would have encountered prohibition if these were donated to non-government agencies. But these are the AFP and the PNP. The Hummer and the SUV could be used by the police and the military."

Go said only the luxury vehicles,

including a pricey Lamborghini, were destroyed by a bulldozer and cranes with President Duterte, himself, administering the destruction of 68 smuggled cars and eight luxury motorbikes on Monday.

These were the second batch of condemned vehicles following the destruction of 27 other vehicles last March.

Also last May, the President witnessed the destruction of more than 100 smuggled vehicles worth P34 million at the Bureau of Customs in Port Area, Manila.

Go on Tuesday said that the President is very serious in his campaign to end illegal smuggling in the country. The condemnation of these hot cars is a testament to government's strong drive against smuggling, he said.

Clashes show NPA rejects localized talks

By Maricar Cinco
@maricarcincoINQ

SAN PEDRO CITY—Clashes between government soldiers and communist rebels continued in the provinces of Batangas and Quezon amid a shift in counterinsurgency tactics by the Duterte administration to luring New People's Army (NPA) units to what officials called "localized peace talks."

Soldiers combed parts of Batangas and Quezon to hunt down NPA members operating in Southern Luzon and believed to be involved in a series of clashes with government troops.

In San Juan, Batangas, the Philippine Army and local police on Tuesday set up checkpoints on possible escape routes of rebels after soldiers claimed they overran an NPA camp in the village of Balsa around noon on Monday.

No casualty

The military operation on Monday lasted about an hour and was able to drive out a

group of rebels who left behind one ArmaLite rifle, six backpacks, bullets and homemade bombs, according to the Army.

The military said no soldier was wounded during the operation.

"We are still connecting the dots," said Lt. Col. Jonathan Manio, head of the Army's 1st Infantry Battalion, on the possible connection between Monday's clash and another clash between soldiers and rebels on Friday.

On Friday, soldiers clashed with another group of NPA rebels, who were believed to be under a bigger NPA unit operating in Southern Tagalog, in the towns of Padre Burgos and Arimonan in Quezon province.

The military claimed one rebel was killed in Friday's clash.

New strategy

In a phone interview, Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, head of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, said the clashes with NPA rebels were results of civilian tips.

Prior to the clash in Batangas, soldiers learned of an NPA

plan to attack an Army detachment in the village of Balsa in San Juan which was thwarted.

Amid the clashes, Parayno said the military continued to reach out to rebels to engage them in local peace talks, which was now the strategy adopted by the Duterte administration following a collapse of peace talks with National Democratic Front of the Philippines, which represents all underground rebel groups.

NPA leaders in Southern Tagalog early this month issued statements rejecting local peace talks.

Parayno said that while "there are no definite guidelines" for local peace talks, soldiers under him "want to exhaust every possible channel like priests, local governments, media, even schools" to open avenues for peace talks with local rebel units.

Rebels, he said, have different reasons for remaining in the movement and local peace talks would be a "realistic" way to bring them back to the folds of the law. INQ A7



2 hurt in Rizal roadside bombing

Two persons were wounded when an improvised explosive device believed planted by New People's Army (NPA) rebels exploded along the road in Sitio Calumpang, Barangay San Jose, Antipolo, Rizal at around 11:10 a.m. yesterday.

The victims were in a tricycle when the bomb went off.

Chief Superintendent Edward Carranza, Calabarzon police chief, said a marked vehicle of the Army's 80th Infantry Battalion was the target of the attack.

Carranza said the military vehicle had overtaken the tricycle when the bomb exploded.

- Non Aquitran,
Cecille Suerte Felipe, Ed Amoroso

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NPAs are robots fighting for bankrupt mind - Duterte

BY ARYLL B. GEDUCOS

Only days after saying that he is not giving up on peace with communist rebels, President Duterte has compared members of the New People's Army (NPA) to robots who are fighting for nothing but a bankrupt mind.

Duterte, in a speech in Sta. Ana, Cagayan, claimed that the NPA ▶ 6

NPAs are robots fighting... ◀ 1

has been working overtime, has become arrogant anew, and is looking for war.

"I know that the NPAs are working over time... And you're starting to be arrogant again and you want war. So another 50 years of slaughtering your own countrymen," he said Monday.

"If that is what you want and you stymie the development of this nation not for you but for your children and your grandchildren now, it's your take. Whatever you want, then so be it," he added.

According to Duterte, the NPAs should start reflecting on what they believe in as the President stressed that the armed group has been fighting for nothing but the ideals of Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Joma Sison, who is not even in the country.

"I mean Sison is there... Do you believe in the - what is in his head? I listened to him and I believed him many years ago. But you know there is always a time to reflect and review what we have in this life. You have been doing it for 50 years. You have stymied the ambitions of the people," he said.

"Wala naman talaga yan si Sison (Sison is really nothing). Unreasoned position. They cannot really carry a fight," he added.

"When you're able to shoot somebody, kill civilians, kill soldiers, for nothing. For nothing. Not even an ideology. There is actually none at all," he continued.

The Chief Executive also compared the NPAs to robots who move at the wave of the hand of Sison.

"You're fighting for a bankrupt mind. Isang tao lang ang nag-iisip (It's only one person who is coming up with all this). There's only one person using his goddamn gray matter between his ear. Para kayong robot, kung ano'yung inuutos (You are like robots which obey at any order)," he said.

"Kayo, mga robot (You robots), it's

all, what? 50 years? Everybody dies. Ikaw, in a bad day, na-engkwentro mo mga marines at mga pulis, it's either you or sila (In a bad day, if you encounter the marines and the police, it's either you or them). And that is your life story," he added.

The President also said that he does not want to kill his fellow Filipinos, especially if it is over a worthless fight.

"So what's the point of killing people, killing the police, for what? For nothing. And you have not been able to realize even in a scale of one to 10, hanggang 1.1 lang kayo hanggang ngayon (that you are just a 1.1 until now)," Duterte said.

"And yet you insist on fighting government. Ako ayaw ko ng pumatay ng Pilipino (I don't want to kill a Filipino). Be very sure of that, ayaw ko talaga (I really don't want to). And the Moro. And I appeal to them - you enjoy killing your own countrymen? Is that what you want?" he added.

Duterte, meanwhile, appealed to the people in Cagayan to not be influenced by the NPAs, but instead work hard to get out of poverty.

"Kayong mga taga-rito kung man, wala kayo sa NPA, hindi kayo lalabas dito (Those who are from here, if you believe in the NPA, you will never get out of this place)," he said.

"If you do not shape up, we will never get out from the rot of poverty. You will just have to trust government," he added.

After cancelling the peace talks in November last year, Duterte decided to give the negotiations with the Reds another try in March this year. However, CPP founder thumbed down one of Duterte's conditions that the talks should be held in the country.

Sison also said that the Reds would no longer talk of peace with the government under the leadership of President Duterte, and would instead support efforts to oust him.

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Gov't soldiers take NPA camp

By DANNY ESTADIO

CAMP NAKAR, Quezon: Government troops crushed a camp of the New People's Army (NPA) after a six-hour battle Monday in San Juan, Marikina, the southern Luzon Command (SAC) reported Tuesday.

Soldiers from the Army's 1st Infantry Battalion, backed with gunships from San Antonio Military Area Office of the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee (STRPC).

There were no casualties on the army's side in the encounter that took place at San Mateo's Barangay House, the report said.

It was during the battle that the army killed at least 10 NPA fighters, captured 100 magazines and 100 rounds of ammunition, and destroyed 100 magazines and 100 rounds of ammunition.

Major General Roderick B. Torres, commander of the 1st Infantry Battalion, said the encounter was a result of the army's operations in the area.

AFP overruns NPA camp in Agusan

By MIKE U. CRISMONDO

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City — Troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) overran a Communist New People's Army Terrorists (CNTs) camp in Cogon-cogon area, Barangay Tingnamarkay, Tubay, Agusan del Norte, military official reported Tuesday.

Capt. Al Anthony B. Puelas, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer of the Army's 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade told The Manila Bulletin that a gunbattle ensued before the combat maneuvering troops of the 29th Infantry Battalion (29th IB) were able to seize the CNTs encampment.

The seized camp, which can accommodate 60 to 70 persons, has make-shift huts and kitchens and listening posts believed to belong to SPP 16-A of Guerilla Front Committee 16 of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC).

Troops of the 29th IB seized from the camp some bomb-making materials in-

cluding 100 meters trip wire, improvised explosive devices, one AK 47 rifle loaded with 30 rounds of live ammunitions, backpacks and personal belongings.

Responding troops arrived in reported Cogon-cogon area at 2:20 p.m. on Thursday and a heavy firefight immediately ensued which lasted for almost 30 minutes, the 402nd Brigade CMO officer further claimed.

No casualty or loss was incurred by the government forces.

In Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat, two former NPA combatants yielded to military authorities after they were persuaded by their father who is also an NPA surrenderer, to return to the folds of the law.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, 33rd Infantry Battalion commander identified the NPA surrenderees as Ato, 18, and Boyet, 19 both surnamed Ador, residents of Senator Ninoy Aquino, Sultan Kudarat and members of NPA Guerilla Front 78 operating in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat and South Cotabato. (With a report from Joseph Jubelag) *Jr*



AFP overruns rebels' camp

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City - Combat maneuvering troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) overran a Communist New People's Army Terrorist (CNTs) encampment in Cogon-cogon area, Barangay Tagmamankay, Tubay, Agusan del Norte, military official reported Tuesday. Capt. Al Anthony B. Pueblias, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer of the Army's 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade said a gun battle erupted before the combat maneuvering troops of the 29th Infantry Battalion (29th IB) seized the CNTs encampment. The seized camp, which can accommodate 60 to 70 persons has some make-shift huts and kitchens and listening posts believed to belong to SPP 16-A of Guerilla Front Committee 16 of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC). Initially operating troops of the 29th IB seized inside the camp some bomb materials including 100 meters trip wire, improvised explosive devices, one AK 47 Rifle loaded with 30 rounds of live ammunition, backpacks and personal belongings. (Mike Crismundo) 4

Gunman in Cagayan town official killing falls

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan: One of the suspects in the killing of a Rizal town official was arrested on Monday night during a follow-up operation in Solana town.

Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino, Police Regional Office 2 director, said suspect Jessie Labang who was earlier identified by witnesses only as "Jesse" was arrested at about 9:30 p.m. in Barangay Sampaguita in Solana.

The victim's son, Franklin Alvarez, positively identified Labang based on the closed-circuit television footage. He also identified another suspect as Eloy Baloran of Barangay Gagabutan in Rizal.

Espino said Baloran is still the subject of a manhunt by the Cagayan police.

The victim, Councilor Alfredo Alvarez, 64, was riding a Honda Civic car on his way home to Barangay San Gabriel when shot several times by the suspects riding a motorcycle at about 6:45 p.m. on Sunday.

Five bullet shells for a caliber .45 pistol were recovered at the scene of the crime.

According to witnesses, both suspects are allegedly working for a politician in the same municipality where Alvarez is an incumbent councilor.

Police records show that Alvarez is the third councilor killed in less than a year in Cagayan.

Angelo Luis of Baggao town was gunned down in December 2017 while Zaldy Mallari of Allacapan town was also shot last May.

The New People's Army (NPA) owned up to the killings of Luis and Mallari whom they accused as military spies.

Meanwhile, the offices of the Cagayan governor and the Philippine Councilors League (PCL) Cagayan Chapter condemned the killing of Alvarez.

Gov. Manuel Mamba urged police officers to fast track the investigation as he expressed hope that such killing will not be repeated in the province.

Maila Ting-Que, PCL-Cagayan chapter president and ex-officio member of the provincial board, expressed disgust over the killing calling it "brutal" and "violent," and urged a speedy resolution of the case.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

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CALABARZON'S TOP 2 MOST WANTED NABBED

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna: Calabarzon's No. 2 most wanted person facing murder charges in Rizal was arrested on Sunday, identified by Chief Supt. Edward Carranza, regional director, as Raul Razo, alias "Ka Jade," a member of Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA). Razo, with P.5-million reward for his capture, was arrested at his hideout in South Villa 9, Barangay Pimugay, Baras in Rizal. Meanwhile in Batangas, troops from the 1st Infantry Battalion (1IB) clashed with the NPA terrorists for about one hour in Sitio Colatonto, Barangay Buisa in San Juan town on Monday. Lt. Col. Jonathan Manio, 1IB's commanding officer, said troops were on combat operation and traced the NPAs' temporary encampment with about 15 members under alias "Salma" of the sub-Regional Military Area 4C, Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee. One M16 rifle, six backpacks, a commercial radio, a bandoleer, six magazines and improvised explosive devices were recovered in the encounter site. No one was hurt on the government side. Major General Modesto Parayno, 2nd Infantry Division commander, said the troops are conducting massive pursuit operations against the terrorists. Check points were also expanded in the area.

ROSELLE R. AQUINO

Go: Peace talks still possible

By Mario J. Mallari

Special Assistant to the President (SAP) Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go yesterday provided a glimmer of hope that the canceled peace talks with communist rebels may resume. "It's still possible because the President has said he does not want Filipinos killing fellow Filipinos. Who wants war anyway?" asked Secretary Go.

But for peace talks to have any chance, the President's long-time assistant said the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) must match Duterte's sincerity.

“Duterte wants more time for consultations.”

"You will never talk to a president as sincere and as trusting as the President," said the Palace official, who cited at least 50 instances when he and Duterte as Davao City mayor went to NPA camps.

No rushing Rody

He said they went to rebel camps unarmed and without any bodyguard to receive "prisoners of war."

"That's why I am asking you (CPP-NPA) to also be sincere, give our President the chance, don't rush him because he has so many things to do," added Go.

The President has suspended peace negotiations between the government of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP)—the political wing of the CPP-NPA, last month.

Duterte said he wanted more time for public consultations regarding the agreements entered into by the Philippine government and NDFP peace panels during informal talks.

Prior to the suspension, the President called for the holding of the peace talks in Manila and

even invited CPP founding chair Jose Maria Sison to return home with assurance of his safety.

Sison, however, refused the invitation and started attacking the President with his media statements after the latter ordered the suspension of peace talks.

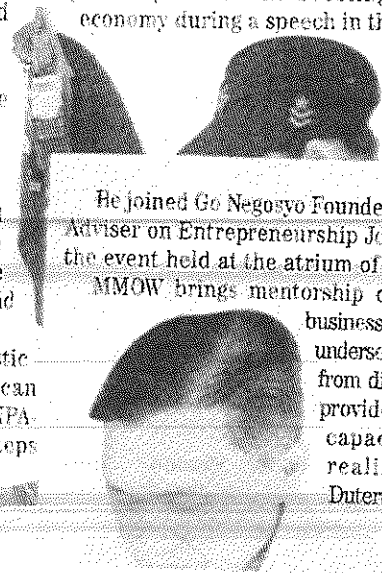
Local talks

Currently, Go said that local peace talks are being spearheaded by the Department of Interior and Local Government.

He stressed he is optimistic that a peace agreement can be reached with the CPP-NPA-NDFP before Mr. Duterte steps down in 2022.

Go added that achieving lasting peace with the CPP-NPA is among the campaign promises of the President.

Meanwhile, Go cited the critical role played by entrepreneurs in boosting the country's economy during a speech in the Davao City leg of Go Negosyo's Mentor Me on Wheels (MMOW).



He joined Go Negosyo Founder and Presidential Adviser on Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion in the event held at the atrium of Lanang Premier. MMOW brings mentorship closer to starting

businessmen, especially to underserved entrepreneurs from distant areas. It also provides an avenue for capacity building in realizing President Duterte's goal of building an inclusive economy.

NAPC head told: Face charges, avoid going AWOL

By Nat Mariano

MALACANANG has National Anti-Poverty Commission Secretary Liza Maza to surrender to authorities following the arrest warrants issued by a local court against her and three other party-list lawmakers on murder charges.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said Tuesday that Maza, an incumbent member of President Rodrigo Duterte's

Cabinet, should respect the rule of law.

"I ask her to surrender, face the charges against her, and prove her innocence," said Roque.

"I'm sure that she has no reason to worry about [since] our courts can be relied upon for an impartial decision."

Duterte has not fired Maza since the issuance of arrest warrants by Nueva Ecija trial court against her. Former Agrarian Reform secretary Rafael Mariano, and

former party-list Representatives Satur Ocampo and Teddy Casiño.

He added that Maza might become a fugitive if she would not surrender physically to the Regional Trial Court.

"If she goes AWOL, absence without [official] leave, then the President will have to decide on her continuing appointment because she cannot be absent," said Roque, highlighting that the NAPC

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NAPC...

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played a crucial part in fighting against the country's poverty.

"We cannot have a secretary who is a fugitive from the law."

In a related development,

Duterte called communist leader Jose Maria Sison as having a "bankrupt mind" during a speech Monday at the destruction of contraband luxury vehicles and motorbikes at the Port Irene in Santa Ana, Cagayan.

Duterte also described the New People's Army guerrillas as "slaughterers" who have for decades killed "their own countrymen."

"There is only one person thinking [for the NPAs]. There is only one person using his gray matter between his ear. You are like robots," he said.

Duterte also described members of the NPA as "arrogant" who push war and stop the progress and development of communities.

"You cannot even occupy a barangay. When you're able to shoot somebody, kill civilians, kill soldiers, for nothing, for nothing. Not even an ideology. There is actually none at all. You're fighting for a bankrupt mind," the President said.

Instead of continuing the armed struggle, Duterte said communist guerrillas must "trust the government" and support economic centers and businesses.

Saying the communist rebels were strong in Cagayan, Duterte said it would mean nothing to them except for Sison whom "you [rebels] believe what is in his head."

He said he was once mesmerized by Sison but he admitted that he later reflected and reviewed his thoughts.

"You know there is always a time to reflect and review what we have in this life. It is not revolution...it has to be evolution," he said.

In Malacang, Roque said Maza must heed the warrant of arrest. With PMA.

Albayaalde tells men to remain on alert amid deadly NPA Palawan ambush

By ALFRED P. DALIXON

PHILIPPINE National Police chief, Director General Oscar D. Albayaalde has ordered all police forces nationwide to maintain their full alert against possible New People's Army attacks in the aftermath of a rebel ambush in Taytay, Palawan which killed two policemen on Sunday last week, the latest casualties of the ongoing NPA offensive in the countryside.

Gen. Albayaalde instructed his men to be wary of different NPA modus operandi to attack patrolling policemen or those who are returning to their stations after responding to emergencies or pursuing wanted persons or gain entry into lightly-guarded police out-

posts and other facilities.

NPA guerrillas are known for posing as policemen or soldiers by wearing PNP or Army uniforms each time they launch an offensive in the countryside. In many cases, they have posed as soldiers, policemen or even Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency agents out to turn over an arrested crime suspect to their target police station to gain easy entry.

This has prompted repeated warnings for policemen manning isolated stations to be wary of such modus operandi. As a result, a number of major NPA attacks have been foiled by alert policemen.

Around 10:50 a.m. last July 22, an undetermined number of NPA gunmen

killed two members of the Taytay Municipal Police Station in Palawan identified as Police Officer 3 Alexander Mimbala-wag and PO1 Julpetri Gustahan in Sitio Nagtakayan, Barangay Bato.

Police Regional Office 4-B director, Chief Superintendent Emmanuel Luis D. Licup said that prior to the ambush, the Taytay MPS received information regarding a vehicular accident involving a bystander and a motorcycle in Bgy. Bato around 8:30 in the morning.

Licup and duty investigators PO3 Mimbala-wag and PO1 Gustahan, along with a team from the 401st Regional Mobile Force Company went to the site to investigate the incident. Around 10:35 a.m., the two

policemen left the site on board a Mahindra patrol vehicle with PO3 Mimbala-wag as the driver.

The official said the two were later ambushed and killed by the rebels. Licup said members of the 401st RMFC, the Taytay MPS and the Marines rushed to the site to retrieve the bodies of the two and track down the leftist gunmen.

Last July 1, NPA guerrillas attacked a group of Army troops using landmines in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro triggering suspicions that the rebels have started their offensive against government troops in view of the stalled peace talks.

This prompted Gen. Albayaalde to remind his troops to be on alert at all

the intention of the President to offer the rebels the hand of peace within the ambit of six conditions set by the government.

The President's conditions are as follows: that the peace talks should be held in the country; that there will be no coalition government; that any agreed ceasefire between the two groups will hold that there will be no '3rd party' facilitators; that there will be no collection of revolutionary taxes and conduct of extortion and arson activities by the guerrillas; and that the NPA must limit the movement of their members within their camps and areas only.

Licup said that the presence of the barangay officials is crucial in the peace talks since they and their constituents are the ones directly affected by NPA atrocities and skirmishes between the rebels and security forces.

times particularly when it comes to responding to reports about crimes taking place in far-flung areas. This is due to a number of incidents wherein policemen responding to investigate alleged shooting or robbery incidents in the provinces were attacked by rebels.

The Palawan ambush occurred just days after the PRO4-B became the first regional unit to conduct 'localized peace talks' in the country amid the Duterte government's continuing program to finally seek an end to the decades-old communist insurgency.

Last week, Licup and local Army officials in Mimaropa region 'pioneered' the conduct of localized peace talks with 50 barangay chairpersons in two

municipalities in Oriental Mindoro known for a considerable presence of NPA guerrillas.

The pioneering talks in Mimaropa region is now being replicated by other police regional offices including those in Mindanao where NPA rebels are known for their rampant collection of so-called 'revolutionary taxes' from mining and logging firms and other businessmen, launching offensive and arson attacks on those who fail to pay their monetary demands.

Licup said they have started talking with local officials in Mimaropa region as early as before the start of the Sangguniang Kabataan and barangay elections last May to convey

2 sugatan sa pagsabog sa Antipolo

Matapos ang naganap na pagsabog sa Lamitan, Basilan na ikiramatay ng 11 katao ay isang pagsabog din ang naganap sa Antipolo City kahapon ng tanghali na nagresulta ng pagkasugat ng dalawang indibidwal, at hinihinsiang mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) ang may kagagawan nito.

Hindi na inihayag ng Antipolo City Police ang pangalan ng mga biktima, na bahagya lamang

namang nasugatan, matapos na higitan ng pampasabog ng di-kilalang suspek, dakong alas-11:00 ng tanghali.

Batay sa inisyat na ulat ng pulisya, ang suspek ay sakay ng hindi napalakhang kotse nang bigla na lang naghagis ng eksplosibo sa isang tricycle na sinasakyan ng mga biklima, sa Sitio Calumpang, ng Barangay San Jose.

Lumitaw naman sa imbestigasyon ng pulisya, na posibleng mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) ang may kagagawan nang

pagnapasabog at mga sundalo ng Philippine Army (PA) na dumaraan sa lugar ang target ng mga ito.

Nagkatabon umangong nag-overtake ang sasakyan ng mga sundalo sa tricycle kaya't ang mga biklima ang tinamaan ng pagsabog.

Inimbestigahan naman na ng mga tauhan ng Explosive and Ordnance Division (EOD) ng Antipolo City Police, kung anong uri ng improved explosive device (IED) ang ginamit ng mga salamin sa insidente. *(Mer Leyson) 9*

Palasyo kay Maza: Sumuko ka na

Nina GENALYN D. KABILING at JEFFREY G. DAMICOG

Nanawagan ang Malacbang kay National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) head convenor Liza Maza at sa lalo pang dating mambabatas na sumuko at harapin ang kasong kriminal na tohain laban sa kanila sa korte.

Smabon Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque na isang trial court sa Nueva Ecija ang naglahas ng arrest warrants.

"If they are innocent, they should surrender, recognize the jurisdiction of the court and prove their innocence in court. That's what we expect from everyone," ani Roque sa press briefing sa Palasyo.

Ayon kay Roque, hindi pa sinisilaban Maza ngunit maaari siyang maging pugnante "if she does not surrender." Idinagdag niya na hindi manatiling makialam si Pangulong Roxing Duterte sa kaso sa korte.

"She has to heed the warrant of arrest. Not even the President can interfere in the judicial process," ani Roque. "We cannot have a secretary who is a fugitive from the law."

Kaugnay nito, hinilimol, bahapon ang Department of Justice (DoJ) na itatara ang murder charges laban sa apat na dating mambabatas na naka-pending ngayon sa Palawan City regional trial court (RTC) sa Nueva Ecija.

Ang apat ay binaba ng grupong Coalition for the Defense and Freedom of Rafael Bayliss, na ang mga miyembro

ay sumagod sa Dal para iprotekt ang prosedura sa dating Catholic party-list representative na si Maza, kina dating Agrarian Reform Secretary at dating Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano, at dating Bayan Muna Reps. Satur Chango at Teddy Casilo.

"The filing of trumped up non-bailable charges against progressive leaders, organizers and activists is clearly political persecution against the government's perceived enemies," saad sa pahayag ng Coalition.

Nag-isip si Palawan City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 40 Judge Evelyn Astienza-Turilo ng arrest warrants nitong

Hulyo 11 kaugnay sa three criminal matters na isinagay laban sa mga akusado.

Inilabas ang kasong noong 2016 sa Palawan City RTC bansad ng mga alegasyon na sila ay manghiwalat sa pagpapay sa mga magsasaka na sina Danilo Felipe, Carlos Bayudary, at Jimmie Peralta noong 2001 at 2004.

Samatelang si Bayliss, kasabangang National Democratic front of the Philippines (NDFP), ay nahaharap sa kasong murder kaugnay sa 1985 Inoparan, Leyte masakal.

Pinagtigayansa siya noong Agosto 2016 kasama ang iba pang peace consultants ngunit ipinaghiwalat ang pagpapay ng gobyerno at ng mga kamunitaryong peacele

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Palace brands Lamitan bombing a 'war crime'

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

Malacañang yesterday condemned as a terrorist attack the bombing at a military checkpoint in Lamitan City in Basilan that killed 11 people, including a child and three

women.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said.

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"Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack (to justice)," he added.

Roque, a lawyer, noted that the attackers may have violated Republic Act 9851 or the Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity and the IHL of 2009

when they attacked civilians.

"We note that even in times of war, the attack constitutes a war crime because it constitutes an indiscriminate attack, which is prohibited by Article 4C-1 Attacks on Civilian, by RA 9851, IHL Act of 2009," he said.

Roque noted that Basilan is an area of non-international armed conflict so an attack against the civilian populace

is a violation of the law.

"It's an indiscriminate attack. It's a fact that Basilan is an area with a non-international armed conflict and there is already a domestic law on (IHL)," he said.

"Under IHL, you must limit your attacks pursuant to military objectives; you must limit it to military targets and you must avoid protected individuals including civilians," he said.

"Civilians are protected against attack, unless and

for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities. State practice establishes this rule as a norm of customary international law applicable in both international and non-international armed conflicts," Roque said.

He explained that President Duterte's statement last week asking the Abu Sayyaf group to return to the fold of the law is addressed to individual fighters.

Roque also refused to tag the bandits as the attackers,

saying the case is still under investigation.

"I clarified that the President is enjoining individual fighters of the Abu Sayyaf to surrender because they can still be accommodated as surrenderees in the same way that we are accepting surrenderees from the (New People's Army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front)," he said.

Roque also doused statements that the attack could be an affront to the government, especially since the gov-

ernment, including Duterte, joined the intelligence community in marking the 60th founding anniversary of the National Security Council and the 69th year of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency yesterday.

"I do not know if it's an insult; it shouldn't have happened. It's illegal use of force, even in times of armed conflicts. IHL as a legal system predates even the establishment of modern day republics," he said.

Basilan van blast kills 11

Palace condemns attack, vows to bring culprits to justice

By NONOY E. LACSON

ZAMBOANGA CITY - An army soldier, five militiamen, and four civilians were killed when a van loaded with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) exploded in front of a Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) detachment in Sitio Magwati, Barangay Maganda, Lamitan City in Basilan at about 5 a.m. Tuesday. ▶6

Basilan van blast kills 11

Lamitan City Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay said the explosion was so powerful it blasted into pieces the van carrying the IEDs and its driver, reportedly a foreigner - the 11th casualty in the explosion.

Furigay said a wife of a CAFGU standing about 60 meters away was killed by the blast.

The van reportedly came from Moh-Adjul town in Basilan province, a haven of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the province, Furigay said.

Initial investigation showed that the white van stopped in front of the CAFGU detachment reportedly after experiencing engine trouble and the driver reportedly asked help from the militiamen on duty.

However, in the process of pushing the van to help restart the engine, one of the militiamen reportedly noticed gallons and wire inside the van prompted him to ask help and report his discovery to the nearest Scout Ranger camp which was a kilometer away from the CAFGU

detachment.

A police spot report obtained by Manila Bulletin showed that while talking to the driver while waiting for help to arrive they noticed he had difficulty speaking in Filipino or any local dialect.

However, upon seeing the approaching army vehicle bearing the 9th Scout Ranger Company, led by Lt. Rodriguez, the driver reportedly detonated the IED due to panic resulting in the death of the victims. Among the wounded were five Scout Rangers, a militiaman, and civilians. They were immediately taken to Camp Navarro Gen. Hospital in this city for treatment of shrapnel wounds.

Furigay said soldiers in the city already received a tipped that a van carrying explosive will be passing through the village enroute to Lamitan City, placing members of the police and military authorities on full alert the past several days.

Palace assails attack
Malacañang strongly condemned the

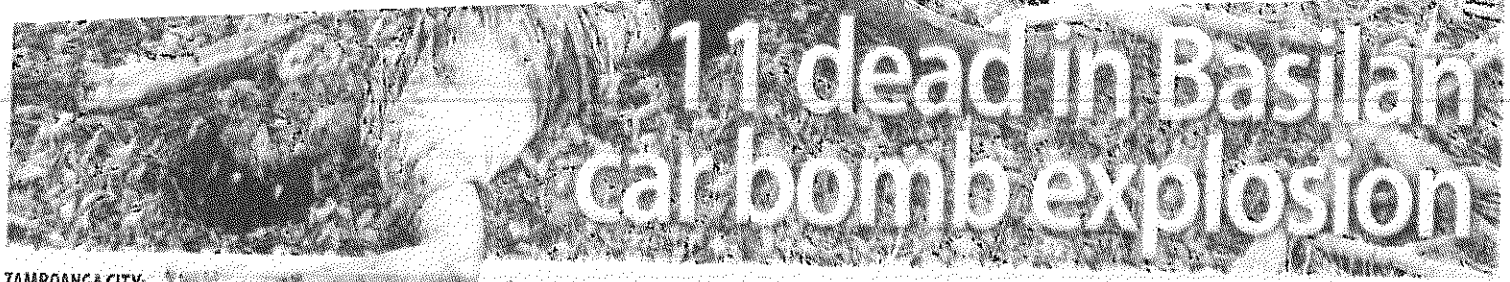
terrorist attack in Basilan and pledged to bring the culprits to justice.

Malacañang has strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Basilan and pledged to bring the culprits to justice.

For his part, AFP-WestMinCom Commander Lt. Gen. Arnel B. Dela Vega vowed to exhaust all available resources under his disposal to identify the perpetrators in the soonest possible time so that the people of Basilan will have the peace that they truly deserve.

Zamboanga City 1st District Rep. Celso Lobregat called on the police and military operatives here to stay alert and vigilant amidst the present volatile peace and order condition of the region.

"We cannot afford to become collateral damage of the acts of terror being perpetrated by lawless elements in the nearby provinces, all of us must be extra vigilant to include the civilian populace," Lobregat said. (With reports from Gen. D. Kabiling, Francis T. Wakefield, and Jinky Lou Tabor)



11 dead in Basilan car bomb explosion

ZAMBOANGA CITY:

Eleven people were killed when a car bomb exploded on Tuesday at a security checkpoint after government militias and soldiers stopped

the suspicious-looking vehicle in Lamitan City in the southern Philippine province of Basilan. The powerful blast obliterated the vehicle and left a huge

crater. Among those killed were a woman and a child.

Five soldiers were wounded in the explosion.

It was unknown how many

CHECKPOINT BLAST

A victim's body is seen at the site of an explosion at Barangay Maganda on the outskirts of Lamitan City in Basilan on Tuesday. Authorities warned the blast could be linked to a wider plot by Islamic militants. AFP PHOTO

> Explosion A8

■ EXPLOSION FROM A1

11 dead in Basilan car bomb explosion

people were inside the van, but media reports said among the passengers were believed to be foreign terrorists.

The suspected terrorists, according to the reports, came from a nearby town and heading to downtown Lamitan when they were stopped at the checkpoint after the passengers could not speak the local dialect or answer questions asked by militias. Minutes later the explosion was heard.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesman for the Armed Forces of the Philippines [AFP], identified the 11th casualty as the driver of the vehicle.

Arevalo said the driver was an Abu Sayyaf member under the command of Furuji Indama, a Basilan-based commander of the terrorist group.

But in a news conference in Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, he downplayed the incident, reminding the public not to call it as a lone wolf attack, terrorist attack or foreign terrorist attack.

"Because these are speculations and up to now, investigation is still ongoing and we should not preempt this by giving these terms that would definitely terrorize our

people and make them insecure," Arevalo told reporters.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman for the military's Western Mindanao Command, said five of the 11 victims were members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Caagu), four were civilians and one was a soldier.

The civilians killed were all family members of the Caagu militiamen, according to Besana.

He identified the victims as Corporal Samad Jumrah, the detachment commander; Caagu members Muhi Manda, Adzlan Abdula, Titing Omar (the child), Hermillito Gapo Jr. and Jerry Inso; and civilians Hadji Radia Manda, Garry Omar, Rosa Inso and Rosida Titing.

Wounded in the explosion were two other Caagu members and five Scout Rangers from the Philippine Army.

Basilan is a known stronghold of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) whose leaders have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS).

Several foreign fighters had been killed in clashes with soldiers in the province in recent years.

Three goats grazing in a nearby

field also died from the explosion, which can be heard from as far as five kilometers away.

Among those killed in the blast was the militia commander whose unit is under the supervision of the Philippine Army.

The government condemned the Basilan attack, calling it as a "war crime."

In a news conference, Malacñang spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said the attack was "a war crime because it constitutes an indiscriminate attack" in violation of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," Roque told reporters.

"It's an indiscriminate attack. Well, it's a fact that Basilan is an area with a non-international armed conflict. And there's already a domestic law on International Humanitarian Law. So under IHL, you must limit your attacks pursuant to military objective. You must limit it to military targets, and you must avoid protected individuals, including

civilians," he said.

Roque assured the public that authorities would ensure that perpetrators of the attack would be captured immediately.

"Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," he said.

The Palace official added that there was no proof yet that the ASC was behind the explosion.

"We do not know who's behind it yet. They're still investigating," Roque said, as he reiterated President Rodrigo Duterte's call for ASC members to surrender.

Meanwhile, Roque said the military should look into its intelligence capability given that the Basilan attack happened under martial law in Mindanao.

Martial law in Mindanao will end on December 31, 2018.

"I do not know how it happened. What I'm saying is illegal acts will happen whether or not we have intelligence communities. Perhaps, one thing that the military and security establishments must look into is their intelligence capability," Roque said.

The attack came just more than

a year since IS-affiliated Maute terrorists laid siege to Marawi City, Lanao del Sur province, which prompted Duterte to declare military rule in the whole of Mindanao.

It serves to remind the government to step up its intelligence and security capabilities to address this "new deadly threat," according to Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

"If it can be established that it was indeed a case of suicide bombing, considering that it was the first of its kind in the country, it is frightening to say the least as, and God forbid, it could start a trend of a series of such terroristic acts that could hit other highly populated urban centers," he said.

Sen. Juan Edgardo Angara echoed Lacson, raising the need to intensify intelligence gathering to prevent similar incidents.

Senators Nancy Binay and Risa Hontiveros asked authorities to dig deeper into the supposed suicide bombing.

Binay expressed hope that "what happened today won't sidetrack our efforts to achieve true peace in Mindanao."

Hontiveros agreed, saying, "It [government] must see to it that this incident will not derail our efforts to achieve peace and pros-

perity in the region, especially with the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law."

Police heightened the alert level in Northern Mindanao over the Basilan bombing, warning supporters of terror groups of the government's sustained drive against them.

Chief Supt. Timoteo Pacleb, police regional director in Northern Mindanao, said the regional police command and the AFP had been conducting a joint operation against terrorism and its possible perpetrators in the region.

"The police and the military have not slackened on their mandate to secure the people in Mindanao and we are always thankful to the civilian communities for their support in the fight against all forms of terror and criminalities in the region," Pacleb added.

The warning against the terror groups came after police unearthed a cache of foodstuff contained in 40 plastic gallons in the village of Dominorog in Talakag, Bukidnon, on Sunday.

Pacleb said the plastic gallons were filled with rice, sugar, salt and mungo seeds.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE
DEMPSEY REYES
BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO
AND CRIS DIAZ**

11 dead in Basilan blast

Abu Sayyaf eyed behind explosion

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

ELEVEN persons died in Lamitan City, Basilan yesterday after a van exploded in front of a para-military detachment.

Seven others were wounded.

The blast near the Magwakit detachment of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in Sitio Maganda, Barangay Colonia, in Lamitan is suspected to be the work of the Abu Sayyaf group which is notorious for kidnapping for ransom activities.

"We have intelligence reports that members of the Abu Sayyaf are planning to deploy IED and we are connecting that explosion to them for now," said military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo, pointing to the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Purup Indama.

The Abu Sayyaf, which the military said has 300 to 400 members, operates

mainly in Basilan and Sulu.

The blast happened days after President Duterte said he is open to talking with the bandit group which has pledged allegiance to the international terrorist group Islamic State. It also came after Duterte signed the Bangsamoro Organic Law which government expects to bring peace and development in Mindanao which is still under martial law.

The blast killed a soldier, five Cafgu members, four relatives of Cafgu members, and the van driver, Arevalo said.

Malacatang condemned the attack which presidential spokesman Harry Roque said is a "war crime."

"We condemn in the strongest possible term the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws. We note that even in times of war, the attack constitutes a war crime," he said.

A military incident report submitted by Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the Western Mindanao Command based in Zamboanga City, said the explosion occurred at 5:50 a.m.

He said troops from the 9th Scout Ranger Company were responding to a Cafgu call about the presence of a white van near their detachment.

He said the van exploded in front of the detachment around 20 minutes after the Cafgus were interrogating the driver.

The responding Scout Rangers were some 50 meters away from the van when it exploded.

Lamitan City Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay said based on information he gathered him, the Cafgu men flagged down a white van at a checkpoint some 50 meters from the detachment after they noticed it was slowly approaching the checkpoint.

With the van driver appearing uneasy, the Cafgu men also called for reinforcements from a nearby detachment where Army Scout Rangers were based while other the Cafgus surrounded the vehicle, he said.

The van exploded just as the Scout Rangers were approaching the van, Furigay said.

"That's why all of the killed were Cafgu members. The explosion also killed the relatives of the Cafgu who were at the detachment," he added.

Reports identified eight of the 11 fatalities as Pfc. Sammad Jumah, the detachment commander; Cafgu members Adlan Abdulla, Muid Manda, Teiong Omar, Herminio Gano; Hadja Radiya, wife of Omar; Gabi, son of Omar; and an unidentified woman said to be

See ABU SAYYAF ► Page B2

• FROM PAGE B1 •

ABU SAYYAF

Manda's wife.

Five of the seven wounded were known as Cpl. Romeo Tabun, 1st Lt. Rojean Rodriguez, Sgt. Renante Escanyan, Pfc. Romeo, and Pfc. Jeffrey Martiso.

INTEL REPORTS

Arevalo said military intelligence agents have been receiving reports that terrorist groups, including the Abu Sayyaf, will deploy an improvised explosive device in Basilan. That is the reason the military intensified checkpoint operations

in routes leading to the city proper, he said.

Chief Supt. Graciano Mijares, chief of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao police, said he ordered ground units to intensify security measures.

Arevalo said investigators are determining what triggered the explosion but he discounted the possibility it was a case of a "lone wolf attack" or "suicide bombing."

"It could be by any means. It could be the Cafgu's cellphone which triggered the IED (improvised explosive device). It could be him (the driver) accidentally, because he panicked because of

the checkpoint. So many possibilities but to say that it was a suicide bombing or lone wolf, I think that is too speculative for us to say," Arevalo said.

He added: "I am even discouraging the use of lone wolf attack or suicide bomb attempt because that is not established. Let us not add fear by voicing out our own opinions because those are not validated or verified information."

The PNP has said Filipino extremists are not known to conduct suicide bombings because they are not that fanatic to give up their own lives.

Arevalo said the identity of the

van driver and other details have yet to be determined because all those who talked to the van driver also died.

He said they received information on the blast only from a Cafgu radio man.

A soldier interviewed on dzMM radio said the driver spoke in an unfamiliar dialect and may have been foreign.

Arevalo said security forces were investigating and there was no basis so far to conclude that the incident was a suicide bombing or was carried out by a foreigner. — With Jocelyn Montemayor and Reuters

Basilan blast kills 11 at checkpoint; Sayyaf blamed

By Francisco Tuyay and Macon Ramos-Araneta

ELEVEN people, including a one-year-old child, were killed when an explosion tore through a van at an army checkpoint in Lamitan City, Basilan, Tuesday, in what authorities warned could be linked to a wider plot by Islamic militants.

Six hours after the Lamitan explosion, a roadside bomb went off in Antipolo City along the Manila-Infanta Road, injuring two civilians.

In the mainly Christian city of Lamitan, the bomb went off after soldiers and pro-government militia troops stopped a vehicle and tried to search it just after dawn on the outskirts of the city.

One soldier, five militia troops and four civilians were killed.

The van driver, a suspected member of the Abu Sayyaf militant group also died, Armed Forces spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo told reporters in Manila.

He added that government forces had been on heightened alert after receiving reports that extremists planned to plant improvised explosives in areas around the island.

"We can just imagine the tragedy that this would bring to the people of Basilan had we not stopped them at the checkpoint," he said.

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Basilan...

From A1

Basilan is a stronghold of the notorious Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group.

It is one of several armed groups fighting government forces in Mindanao, where a decades-long rebellion has claimed more than 100,000 lives by government count.

Roderick Furigay, the Lamitan vice mayor, speculated that the explosives could have been intended for a parade on Tuesday morning by 4,000 children in the center of the town to mark the country's "nutrition month."

"That could have been [the target]," he said on ABS-CBN television. "It's a good thing they were stopped at the checkpoint."

President Rodrigo Duterte recently signed a law to create greater autonomy in the south which is hoped to help end the conflict.

Duterte put the southern Philippines including Basilan under martial rule until the end of this year after Abu Sayyaf members based on the island joined pro-Islamic State

group militants who seized the southern city of Marawi last year.

The five-month siege killed 1,200 people and destroyed much of the center of the city, which Duterte said the pro-Islamic State militants planned to turn into the capital of a southeast Asian caliphate.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque condemned the Basilan attack, describing it as a "war crime" apparently intended against civilians.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," Roque said in a statement.

Among the fatalities were PFC Sammad Junah, post commander of the Magwakit Detachment under the 19th Special Forces Company, militiamen Adlan Abdulla, Muid Manda, Teteng Omar, Herminio Gapo and the driver of the van.

Also killed in the bomb explosion were four dependents of militiamen, among them Hadja Radiya, wife of Omar and their son Gabi and Manda's wife.

An Army officer—Lt. Rojean Rodriguez

and three of his men, Sgt. Renante Escanayan, PFC Romeo Frias and PFC Feffrey Martisio and two militiamen—Gerry Inso, and Wilbert Garcia, were also injured in the bomb attack.

CAF members manning the Bulanting checkpoint intercepted and held the driver of a 10-seater van for questioning Tuesday morning. When questioned, the driver who looked like a foreigner, could not speak the local dialect or Tagalog, Yakan or English, prompting the militiamen to seek help from a senior official.

As Lt. Rodriguez approached the van, an explosive device went off, blowing the people nearby to pieces.

The AFP spokesman Arevalo attributed the bomb attack to ASG remnants under the group of Furuji Indama, but said it was unlikely to be a suicide attack.

"What we are saying is that we have no sufficient basis to conclude that this is a lone wolf attack and a suicide bomb attempt," Arevalo said.

"This group of Furuji Indama is swiftly losing ground. That's why they are now

resorting to these desperate moves to disrupt the mass surrenders from Basilan and Sulu," Arevalo said.

Armed Forces chief Gen. Carlito Galvez commended the vigilance and dedication of those manning the checkpoint.

"They have foiled an attempt to bring in a vehicle loaded with IEDs to downtown Lamitan City—at the cost of their own lives," Galvez said.

"While we commend our troops, we condemn in the highest possible terms this... dastardly attempt of terrorists to kill, maim, and injure innocent civilians," Galvez added.

He said the terrorists will not succeed given the strong collaboration between the military and the local government.

In Zamboanga City, authorities tightened checkpoints and boosted security in coastal and sea ports.

Senator Panfilo Lacson yesterday warned of a spate of terrorist attacks in the wake of the Lamitan blast, and expressed concern that it was the first of many suicide bombings.

With AFP, Nat Mariano

97th IB DISPATCHED

Bombing cues AFP to save BOL

By Mario J. Mallari, Kathleen Mae Bulquerin, Jason Faustino and Elmer Navarro Manuel

As government is verifying information the bomb blast that killed 10 people in Lamitan City, Basilan in Mindanao was a suicide attack—a first in the Philippines if it was, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday prepared to save the gains of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) by dispatching the Army's youngest and newly activated 97th Infantry Battalion to the troubled region.

AFP spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo yesterday reiterated no sufficient evidence has yet surfaced on the possibility that the blast that killed a soldier, five members of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) and four civilians, including a child and a woman relative of a killed Cafgu personnel, was the handiwork

of a suicide bomber.

Also wounded was one Cafgu personnel and six members of the 9th Scout Ranger Company.

First suicide attack?

Although there had been many cases of terror bombings in the Philippines for decades now, including recent series of bombings perpetrated by members or have been inspired by al Qaeda and then

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of late IS-influenced groups, no case of a suicide bombing has yet happened in the country.

Arevalo clarified that the car explosion that rocked Basilan Tuesday morning could not be ascertained if it was a suicide attack pending a thorough probe.

A white van containing IED (improvised explosive devices) exploded at around 5:30 a.m. in Barangay Bulanting, creating a big crater and affected nearby houses and farm animals, attesting to the impact of the blast.

Arevalo said the van was flagged down by soldiers manning a checkpoint. The van, however, tore into them and, as if on cue, exploded when one soldier led the CAFGU personnel to conduct an inspection on the vehicle. The incident led probers to consider a lone wolf suicide attack.

Arevalo, however, assured the public and advised the people not to panic, saying: "Let's not add to the anxiety of the public with this explosion in Basilan."

Basilan is a known stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf group which is notorious for kidnapping and banditry. It was home to the former "emir" of Islamic State in Southeast Asia who was killed by government forces last year.

The use of car bombs is also rare in Mindanao despite decades of separatist and Islamist violence which attracted foreign extremists to the region.

Driver panicked

But Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Mujiv Hataman claimed the van's driver "detonated the bomb sensing danger of capture."

Also in a radio report, 74th Infantry Battalion chief Lt. Col. Jonas Templo said the attack could be a case of suicide bombing as the driver of the van was among those killed.

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Western Mindanao Command chief, also committed to "exhaust every available resource under (his) disposal" to identify the perpetrators of the attack at "the soonest possible time."

Malacañang did not discount the possibility of the bombs' detonation as an aborted terrorist attack.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said in a statement.

"Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," he added.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) also vowed to go after the masterminds of the bombing.

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“ We join the Filipino nation in strongly condemning this hasty act of taking human lives for whatever motive its perpetrators may have.”

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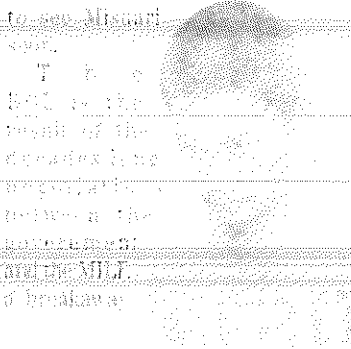
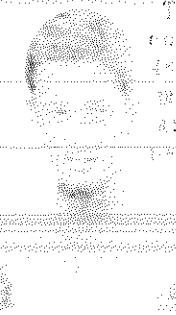
“Everybody knows that the Freedom is fair ...”

Immediately after signing the ...

The AMRM was the product of the ...

The President said he is willing to listen to what Misuari and his group ...

In 2003, supporters of Misuari launched what is now known as the Zamboanga City siege to pressure the peace agreement with the MILF. More than 200 ...



MEN carry the remains of a victim in an explosion in Lamitan, Basilan province, southern Philippines on Tuesday. A soldier, five militiamen and four villagers were killed by a powerful bomb that exploded in a van the troops were inspecting amid threats of bombings in a southern province, military officials said.

11 killed in Basilan 'suicide' bomb attack

A SUSPECTED Abu Sayyaf suicide bomber detonated a bomb-laden van inside a militia detachment in Lamitan, Basilan, at around 6 a.m. yesterday, killing at least 11 person's, many of them militiamen, a report from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Police Regional Office said. /Page 6

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Seven of the victims including soldiers, members of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit and civilians died on the spot during the bombing of the militia detachment in Sitio Madwakit in Berangay Maganda in Lamitan town, said ARMM police director, Chief Superintendent Graciano J. Mijares.

The scene of the bombing is around three kilometers away from Lamitan proper. The suspected suicide bomber was also killed instantly due to the powerful explosion.

In view of the Lamitan bombing, Mijares said they have initiated the following security measures: established and strengthened checkpoints in key cities and municipalities in the region; deployed maximum number of foot and mobile patrols particularly in highly-populated areas; and coordinated with private security providers and security managers to establish and enhance joint security protocols.

He also ordered his men to be wary of checkpoint personnel of vehicles with lone occupants or drivers only as well as foreign nationals and intensified intelligence monitoring and sharing of information with other units in the region.

Police and military intelligence troops aired

suspicions that the bombing suspect belonged to the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Faruji Indama.

"Based from a conversation with Wesmincom commander Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, this person whose name or identity is not known yet is part of the group of Faruji Indama," Armed Forces spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo told reporters at Camp Aguinaldo.

Indama is a Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf leader. The Philippine National Police mourned the loss of government security personnel and several civilians

who died in an apparent act of terrorism at a CAF-GU Detachment in Lamitan City, Basilan shortly before 6:00 a.m. today," said the PNI in a statement.

"We join the Philippine nation in strongly condemning this dastardly act of taking human lives for whatever motive its perpetrators may have. This incident is unfortunate as it comes in the heels of the historic ratification and enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, that is the Philippine government's "grand gesture" of sincerity

to establish lasting peace and sustainable progress in Muslim Mindanao," said PNP spokesman, Senior Superintendent Benigno B. Durana Jr. said in a press statement.

"We will mobilize all available resources at our disposal to bring the authors of this crime before the bar of justice. We urge the peace-loving people of Basilan not to be cowed by this single act of heinous terror but to keep calm but vigilant against any attempt to sow violence and disrupt our normal lives," he added.

BASILAN BOMB ATTACK KILLS 11

By Alfred Dalizon

A SUSPECTED Abu Sayyaf suicide bomber detonated a bomb-laden van on a militia detachment in Lamitan, Basilan around 6 a.m. yesterday killing at least 11 persons, including militiamen and a 10-year-old child, a report from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Police Regional Office said.

Seven of the victims including soldiers, members of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit and civilians died on the spot during the bombing of the militia detachment in Sitio Madwakit in Barangay Maganda in Lamitan town, said ARMM police director Chief Superintendent Graciano J. Mijares.

However, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom) spokesman Lt. Col. Gerry Besana it was not certain that the incident was the handiwork of a suicide bomber.

"Yup! We cannot conclude that incident is such," Besana said.

He said elements of 9th Scout Ranger were inspecting a white van reportedly carrying an improvised explosive device near the Magkawit detachment in Barangay Colo-

nia when the vehicle suddenly exploded.

The scene of the bombing is around three kilometers away from Lamitan proper. The suspected suicide bomber is believed to have been killed instantly in the powerful explosion.

In view of the Lamitan bombing, Mijares said they have initiated the following security measures: established and strengthened checkpoints in key cities and municipalities in the region; deployed maximum number of foot and mobile patrols particularly in highly-populated areas; and coordinated with private security providers and security managers to establish and enhance joint security protocols.

He also ordered his men to be wary of vehicles with lone occupants or drivers as well as foreign nationals and intensified intelligence monitoring and sharing of information with other units in the region.

Police and military intelligence troops aired suspicion that the suspects in the bombing belonged to the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Furuji Indama.

"Based from a conversation with Wesmincom commander Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, this person whose name or identity is

not known yet is part of the group of Furuji Indama," Armed Forces spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo told reporters at Camp Aguinaldo. Indama is a Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf leader.

Terror attack

Malacañang yesterday considered as a terrorist attack the explosion in Basilan that killed at least 10 people and injured several others.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in a statement.

"Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice."

The fact that the explosive was placed inside a van prompted investigators to suspect that the incident may be a case of suicide bombing.

The reports said the van was stopped at the checkpoint manned by the government militiamen. Military back-up was called after the militiamen noticed that the driver was acting suspiciously.

The van exploded even before the back-up arrived, killing all the mili-

tiamen manning the checkpoint and a child who is believed to be a relative of one of the Cagu members.

Though investigation was ongoing as of posting time, Templo said the incident may be the handiwork of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group, which operates in Basilan.

Intel gathering

Senator Panfilo "Ping" Lacson yesterday issued a challenge to the government to improve its intelligence gathering after the first case of suicide bombing in Basilan.

Lacson said that the incident should serve as a wake-up call to the government to enhance their capability in fighting terror activities in the country.

"First known suicide bombing case in PH should prod government to step up intelligence and security capabilities to address this new deadly threat. Proactive offense is still our best defense, prompted by good intelligence," Lacson said in a statement.

But Lacson insisted that the government must fix the bug in the system of gathering intelligence to ensure that the information that will be collected is credible. **With Zaida de los Reyes, El Montano, Marlon Purificacion**

10 dead as van explodes at Basilan checkpoint

Ten people, including troops and civilians, were killed when an explosion tore through a van at an army checkpoint in Lamitan City, Basilan, as authorities warned the blast could be linked to a wider plot by a still seemingly dreaded Abu Sayyaf bandits.

The powerful explosion happened after soldiers and pro-government militia troops stopped the vehicle and tried to search it just after dawn on the outskirts of the mainly Christian city of Lamitan, which is on the predominantly Muslim island of Basilan.

One soldier, five militia troops and four civilians were killed.

The van driver, a suspected member of the Abu Sayyaf militant group also died, Philippine military spokesman Colonel Edgard Arevalo told reporters.

He added that government forces had been on heightened alert after receiving reports that extremists planned to plant improvised explosives in areas

around the island.

"We can just imagine the tragedy that this would bring to the people of Basilan had we not stopped them at the checkpoint," he said.

Authorities earlier said at least five people died in the blast.

Basilan is a stronghold of the notorious Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group.

It is one of several armed groups fighting government forces in the southern Philippines, where a decades long rebellion has claimed more than 100,000 lives by government count.

Roderick Furigay, the Lamitan vice mayor, speculated that the explosives could have been intended for a parade on Tuesday morning by 4,000 children in the center of the town to mark the country's "nutrition month."

"That could have been (the target)," he said on ABS-CBN television. "It's a good thing they were stopped at the checkpoint."

President Rodrigo Duterte recently signed a law to create greater autonomy in the south which is hoped to help end the conflict.

Duterte put the southern Philippines including Basilan under martial rule until the end of this year after Abu Sayyaf members based on the island joined pro-Daesh terror group militants who seized the southern city of Marawi last year.

The five-month siege killed 2,200 people and destroyed much of the center of the city, which Duterte said the militants planned to turn into the capital of a southeast Asian caliphate.

Duterte spokesman Harry Roque condemned the Basilan attack, describing it a "war crime" apparently intended against civilians.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," Roque said in a statement. (AFP)

Suicide bombing: 11 patay!

NI JOY CANTOS

Ladang-isa katabo ang patay matapos sumabog ang bomba na itaga ng isang van sa isang checkpoint sa Brig. Colonia, Lamin City, Basilan kahapon ng umaga.

Kabilang sa kasawi ang isang sundalo, isang CAFGU at apat na sibilyan.

Patay rin ang hindi pa nakikilalang driver ng van.

Ayon kay Col. Gerry Brasna, spokesman ng AFP Western Mindanao, nagkasa ng checkpoint ang tropa ng 9th Scout Ranger Company sa Sino Bulianing, Brig. Colonia, matapos makatanggap ng report na may nagpapalibang magpasok ng mga pampasabog sa bayan.

Bandang alas-6:50 ng umaga nang dumaraan sa checkpoint ang van na may kahuw-hinalang de-

ver at sa gitna nang pag-inspeksyon sa sasakyan ay natagpuan umano ang driver at biglang sumailalita ang van.

"A driver of a 10-seater van who looked like a forger and cannot speak a local dialect, who could not even speak Tagalog, Yakan or English, was intercepted at Bulianing checkpoint. Outgus held the driver for further questioning. Other Outgus sought help from senior official to ask further questions from the driver. When the lieutenant approached the van, it suddenly went off," ayon pa sa itat ng militar.

Sinab ni AFP spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo na hindi umano lone wal attack" o "suicide bombing" ang pasabing terroristang ang impact ng pagsa-



Ang hangkay ng dalawa sa 11 namatay sa unang suicide bombing sa Lamin City, Basilan kahapon ng umaga. (Richard, Hene)

bog ay nasa 50 metro." "Napakalakas nitong bomba na ito, itong mga IED na ito. And we can not just imagine how the tragedy that this will bring to the people of Basilan. Kung ito ay hindi naninto," wika ni Arevalo.

Dagdag niya, sahan ni Abu Sayyaf leader Furqan Indama ang driver ng van. Layon niyang mabuhay ang masa sumunder ng mga rebelde.

Kabilang sa mga nasawi ay isang sundalo na si Pfc. Sarimand Jumah, Detachment commander ng 19th Special Forces Company (SFC), at apat na mga miyembro ng Carigu Active Auxiliary (CAA) na sina Adlan Abdulla, Teteng Omar, Heimirio Gano at dalawa pa mga sibilyan na sina Hadja Radiya, miss ni Omar Gabbi, anak ni Omar isang ginang na asawa rin ng isang Oligu.

Pito naman ang mga nasugatan kabilang ang isang batang trivente na si 1st Lt. Rojean Rodriguez, Corporal Romeo Tabun, Sgt. Reynaldo Espanyan, Pfc. Romac Inas, Pfc. Jeffrey Maras-

at dalawa pa. "Chief of Staff Gen. Danilo Galvez Jr. commends the vigilance and dedication to duty and the sacrifice of these heroes. They have foiled an attempt to bring in a vehicle loaded with IEDs to downtown Lamin City at the cost of their own lives," an Arevalo.

Inimbestigahan pa ng mga awtoridad kung matuturing na suicide bombing ang insidente.

Inaalam din kung kagawari ito ng bansang Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) na nagtatago sa isla ng Basilan.

Kinondena naman ng Maricanang ang umano'y "terrorist attack".

"We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," sab ni Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque sa isang panayag.

"Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this heinous attack to justice," wika niya. (Dagdag Mal na Pinar Angali)



Van na may kargang bomba pinasabog sa Basilan...

TERROR ATTACK: 11 PATAY

Itinuturing ng Malacañang na isang uri ng terrorist attack ang nangyari sa Basilan matapos pinasabog ang isang van na may lamang mga bomba sa isang Caggu checkpoint na ilanasawi ng 11 katao habang pito ang nasugatan naganap kahapon ng umaga sa Sitio Isulantiing, Barangay Colonia, Lamitan.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," ayon kay Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque.

Kinilala ang ilan sa mga nasawi na sina Pfc Sammad Jumrah, detachment commander ng Magwakit detachment

sa ilalim ng 19th Special Forces Company; apat miyembro ng Caggu Active Auxiliary (CAA) na sina Adlan Abdulla, Tereng Omar, Herminio Gupo, Murid Manda; at mga sibilyan na sina Hadja Radiya, misis ni Omar Gabbi, anak ni Omar; isang ginang na asawa ni Manda at bomber driver na inaalam pa ang pangalan.

Habang 7 ang nasugatan na kinilalang sina 1st Lt. Rojean Rodriguez; Corporal Romeo Tabun; Sgt. Reynante Escanyan; Pfc Romeo Frias; Pfc Jeffrey Martiso; CAA Gerry Inso; at CAA Wilbert Garcia.

Sinabi ni Col. Gerry Besana, Spokesman ng AFP Western Minda-

Nina JOY CANTOS, RHODERICK RENEZ, at RUDY ANDAL na nagkasa ng checkpoint ang tropa ng 9th Scout Ranger Company

sa Sitio Balanting, Brgy. Colonia, Lamitan City matapos na makatong-pap ng report na nagplaplanong magpasok ng mga pampasabog ang

grupo ng mga terorista sa Basilan upang mag-sagawa ng pambobomba sa laisawigun.

Bandang alas-5:50 ng umaga nang dumaan sa checkpoint ng Caggu ang van na kahirahirahan ang kinilos ng driver at sa gitnang pag-inspeksyon sa sasakyan ay natatama ang driver na tila banyaga dahil may karga itong eksplosibo nang biglang sumabulat na halos ikagutay ng mga CAA members.

Inaalam pa ng mga autoridad kung isa itong suicide bombing incident na kauna-unahin sa bansa at natoon pa sa antipersaryo ng National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) at maipasa ng Kongreso ang Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

Agad binukoy ng AFP na ang grupo ni Basilan based Commander Furuj Indama ang nasa likod ng pambobomba.



Ang dalawa sa 11 nasawi sa naganap na pasabog ng isang van na may kargang bomba sa Caggu checkpoint sa Lamitan Basilan. Rhoderick Beñez.

11 patay sa car bombing

Nina FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD, FER TABOY, at GENALYN KABILING

Labing-isang katao, kabilang ang isang sundalo at limang Civilian Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) members, ang namatay sa pagsabog ng Improvised Explosive Device (IED) sa Lamitan City, Basilan nitong Lunes.

Ayon kay Lt. Col. Gerry M. Besana, tagapagsalita ng Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMindCom), baso sa tinawag na ulat na kaniyang natanggap ay may apat pang sibilyan na nasawi sa pambombaha na naganap dakong 5:50 ng madaling araw.

Sa imbestigasyon, umaklat ang mga taunan ng 9th Scout Ranger Company, sa pamumuno ni Lieutenant Rodriguez,

se report hinggil sa presensiya ng isang puloy, van na binibinturan, may sakay na Improvised Explosive Device, malapit sa Magwakit Detachment sa Barangay Colonia, Lamitan City, Basilan Province.

(Sinabi ni Besana na habang nagsasagawa ng ocular inspection ang tropa, biglang sumabog ang van na naging swithi ng pagkamatay ng isang sundalo, limang CAFGU at apat na sibilyan.

"We are trying to get information if the driver is already included on the list. If not, the death toll could reach 11," sabi ni Besana sa Balita.

Samantala, kinordera ng Malacañang ang pag-atake at pinangakong mabibigyan

ng hustisya ang mga biktima.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws. We note that even in times of war, the attack constitutes a war crime because it constitutes an indiscriminate attack," pahayag ni Roque sa press briefing sa Palawan.

"Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," dagdag nina.

**Francis T. Wakefield,
Fer Taboy,
at Genalyn Kabiling**

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Bigger work lies ahead after BOL passage — Dureza

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

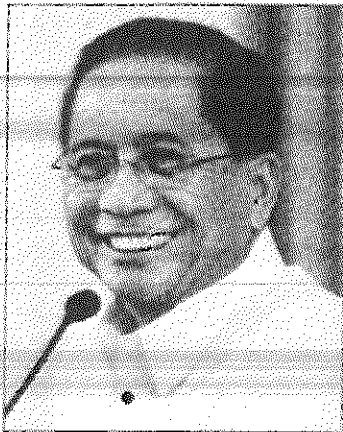
After the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), bigger work remains to be done to achieve peace, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza said on Monday.

In his message during the first Stakeholders' Conference of the United Nations Association of the Philippines at the University of Makati, Dureza said he remains optimistic that the landmark measure will

finally address the grievances of the Bangsamoro people.

He also expressed confidence in the leadership of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim over the Bangsamoro people and thanked the United Nations and its agencies for being "one of the strong allies in the work for peace."

"The UN agencies have been very helpful in our work to where we are today. There have been problems during the course of negotiations,



Dureza

but they did not falter. They continue to work for peace," Dureza said.

The BOL envisions the establishment of an expanded and more empowered form of the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and will be called the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

It abolishes the ARMM and paves the way for an autonomous Bangsamoro region, which includes the provinces

of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur. A plebiscite will be held within five months to determine if 39 barangays in North Cotabato province, six towns in Lanao del Norte and the cities of Cotabato in Maguindanao and Isabela in Basilan would be included.

Eduardo Año, OIC secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, said the signing of BOL into law is a historic breakthrough not just for the Moro people and Mindanaoans but for the whole nation as well.

"The BOL is a monumental document of unity for development among various levels of government — local, national, executive and legislature — as well as the people.

It is a proof of the administration's genuine resolve for peace and development and sincerity in empowering regional and local governments for the greater benefit of the Filipino people," Año said. He urged the communists to take inspiration from the fruitful result of the peace talks between Moro rebels

and the government, saying "we can also solve the communist insurgency if only the rebels would reciprocate the confidence-building and peace-building being done by the government towards nation-building." "We are not giving up on peace with the CPP-NPA-NDF. Following the example of the MILF and the MNLF, it's possible to have peace if there is mutual trust, commitment to a ceasefire and no attacks on government forces. I hope that the Left will be inspired by the signing of the BOL," he said, referring to the communist groups.

Año said arriving at BOL spans a long, winding history that crossed five decades and several government administrations.

He added that BOL had to go through armed struggle costing loss of lives among Moro rebels, government forces and civilians as well as displacement of people before it found its way to be recognized as a legitimate cause for peace talks and its passage into law. The BOL sought a 75-25 wealth sharing scheme

between the national and the Bangsamoro governments in favor of the latter.

Meanwhile, the World Bank, encouraged by the prospect of sustained peace in the region through the signing of the BOL, yesterday committed to step up the provision of development assistance to Mindanao.

In a statement, the international finance institution said the signing of BOL is a "significant milestone" towards achieving stability in the region as it creates new opportunities for sustainable peace in Mindanao.

"The World Bank has been a long-time partner in supporting peace and inclusive growth in Mindanao.

We welcome the news and look forward to continue working closely with the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in support of sustainable peace and development in Bangsamoro and the entire Mindanao region," said Victoria Kwakwa, World Bank vice president for East Asia and Pacific. — With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Czeriza Valencia ju

'Bangsamoro autonomy not exclusive for MILF'

CAMP DARAPANAN, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Chairman Alhaj Murad Ibrahim stressed that the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) will not be exclusive to MILF members or to their supporters.

In a media conference held here after the formal turnover of the copy of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) by President Rodrigo Duterte to members of the MILF Central Committee, Murad told *The Manila Times* said they will welcome any of the Bangsamoro people – Muslims, Christians and indigenous people – to participate in the implementation of BARMM.

"We will not be exclusive and welcome everyone especially professionals who have the skills to actively participate in the running of the affairs of the BARMM," Murad said.

Jainal Hamad, former secretary of the Department of Health in the ARMM (DOH-ARMM) in his Facebook page said "the ratification of BOL and its signing into law by President Duterte, will be another milestone and possibility for change hopefully for better this time by including all segments of Bangsamoro tribes in all participating provinces.

Mohagher Iqbal, chairman of the MILF Information Committee said while the BOL is not a perfect law, still the Bangsamoro leaders view it as CAB-compliant. He was referring to the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro signed in 2014.

But many employees of the ARMM are apprehensive that when BARMM takes over, as expected next year after the mandatory plebiscite, they will be retrenched from their jobs, particularly those on provisional status like teachers.

Iqbal admitted that all political employees and those on provisional status will have to go, but the security of tenure of those who have civil service eligibility and enjoying plantilla item will be respected.

Amina Rasul, president of the Philippine Center for Islam and

Democracy (PCID), said as envisioned, the BOL will result in a stronger organic act that will grant genuine autonomy and self-government to the Bangsamoro people.

The BOL provides for fiscal autonomy, automatic appropriation of the block grant, funds for the rehabilitation and development of conflict-ridden areas, a judiciary based on Shari'ah laws and a new form of government.

"Once implemented, we expect all sec-

tors of the Bangsamoro civil society to support this law to enable our communities to live in peace and end the civil strife that plagued the island of Mindanao for more than 40 decades," Rasul said.

With peace in place, the PCID expects both foreign and local investors to flock to Mindanao, a land of promise and assist the Bangsamoro people in growing its economy, she added.

A7 JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

Ceremonial signing ng BOL sa Lunes

Sa Lunes, Agosto 6, nakatakdang ganapin ang ceremonial signing ng Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) sa Malacañang.

Matatandaang pormal nang nilagdaan ni Pangulong Duterte ang BOL nitong Hulyo 26 para maging isang ganap na batas.

Kung susundan ang mga nakagawian sa Malacañang kapag macroong malaking ceremonial signing ng batas, hiradi mawawala sa seremonya ang Speaker of the House, Senate president at iba pang mga mamabatas.

Manunang ganapin ang nasabing

ceremonial signing laging yamanta sa Mecca, Saudi Arabia si Bangsamoro Transition Commission Chairman at Moro Islamic Liberation Front Vice Chairman for Political Affairs Chadzah leafar, para naman sa kanyang pilgrimage.

Beth Camia

Where's mention of Mindanao martial law?

For something as consequential as martial law, there was not a single mention of it in President Duterte's State of the Nation Address (Sona). And for a vast island group, home to six unique administrative regions, Mindanao was only mentioned eight times. Finally, in his sentence closing that mention of Mindanao, Mr. Duterte spoke of only two directions his home region could take: war or peace.

This says a lot about the President's mindset on Mindanao. While a Mindanaoan himself, he thinks in terms of the binaries and stereotypes he is supposedly against, but which his status as an oligarch has afforded him. Ironically, he painted Mindanao through the prism of a Manila-centric narrative, in the same way, say, that President Barack Obama of African descent had to run the United States like a white president would.

Director Joyce Bernal took close-ups of the guests at the Sona who wore only bright, celebratory Islamic attires as the President spoke of "The Land of Promise." Pictures of Mindanao, an island region of "lumads," migrants, Muslims, Christians, etc. were flashed. Most of these showed the typical colors and stories of Mindanao: Islamic, festive, virginal, etc. And while these were on screen, Mr. Duterte spoke of Mindanao as if it were wronged only by those living outside it.

It was a convenient and idealistic portrayal that could only have come from a speechwriter's callow idea of the region. Case in point: "The Land of Promise" has been Mindanao's branding since after World War II. But so much has

COMMENTARY

DLS PINEDA

changed since then.

While the President's message of increased funding was welcome, we've heard it all before. We've seen new roads being built, and knowing how these corruption-ridden projects seem to benefit the same groups of people just turns us off. While he may have good intentions with the Bangsamoro Organic Law, its particulars—along with how they would jibe with his Charter change—are still very much up in the air as to their eventual value. Also, not once was there a mention of peace talks with the communists, a bigger concern for more areas in Mindanao than the Maute terrorist group.

Mr. Duterte's 2018 Sona, sticking to the script, had little to do with Mindanao. A few hours before he delivered his speech, a small group of rallyists passed outside my classroom's window. They were calling for an end to martial law. One of my students quipped, "Is there even martial law? There are so many crimes here in Butuan now."

Here lies one of the contradictions of Mindanao's martial law. While it is in full effect, the decades-long vacuum in governance has conditioned people to believe that martial law's sole purpose is to fight criminality, despite its being much more than that—a vast and fearsome apparatus of control by the government. And while it was imposed in Mindanao supposedly to counter

terrorist activity, the term "martial law" seems to have become nothing more than an ordinary, benign umbrella description for the intensification of government efforts against sundry targets.

Because of martial law, there is a huge concentration of power in Mindanao these days, but hardly anything seems to have changed, too. This contradiction of an extended yet seemingly unfelt clamp-down gives the impression that, whether it is under special rule or not, Mindanao is forever weak and unstable, and that its only hope for development lies with the same politicians and the same strongmen who have occasionally lifted this island region up. This martial law is precisely what dynasties need to stay in power.

One thing it has enabled, though, is the expulsion of lumad communities in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, by the Armed Forces. With hardly any media coverage, the lumad, hundreds of them, were herded 16 kilometers out of their ancestral lands to a cramped evacuation site. They are still there, surrounded by soldiers armed with machine guns. Educators in the lumad ranks allege that this was done to make way for coal mining companies that Mr. Duterte himself had approved. This, and what it represents, is the part of Mindanao that was tellingly absent in the President's Sona.

DLS Pineda teaches at Father Saturnino Urios University, Butuan City. After finishing his undergraduate and master's degree in UP Diliman, he decided to reside in his father's hometown in Agusan del Norte.

EDITORIAL

Historic moment

It is perhaps the most important legislation passed under President Duterte's leadership. But where was the sense of occasion, the honoring of the historic moment, when the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was finally signed into law?

The President announced that he had signed Republic Act No. 11054 last Thursday, July 26, referring to it by its original title, the one specified in the peace accords between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF): the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

"Napirmahan ko na ang BBL (I've signed the BBL)," he said on a visit to Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay. "The BBL has been signed, but I'm still going back because I have a ceremony with Jaafar and Murad," he added, mentioning the names of the MILF chair, Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim, and the vice chair, Ghazali Jaafar.

Other laws, much less consequential than the one that seeks to cement peace with the country's largest separatist movement, have been signed by the President in official rites held at the presidential Palace. It would have been appropriate for such an auspicious measure to have been signed into law in a similar ceremony, and in the presence of not only the senators and congressmen who worked on the law, but also the members of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and even officers of the MILF.

The administration thus wasted the opportunity to send an unmistakable sign of the law's importance and its demonstration of inclusiveness right from the signing.

But there are other opportunities. Malacañang should seize every remaining instance of what educators call teaching moments to drive the message home: The BOL, which seeks to create a

greater autonomous region for the Bangsamoro, was put together at great difficulty but both the government and the MILF deem it acceptable and viable. The public must support it, and the stakeholders in the plebiscite required to ratify the organic act must rally behind it and vote for it to ensure its success.

It is important to understand why the BOL was robbed of the usual ceremonial treatment upon signing, to remove possible misconceptions that may hinder the people's acceptance of it.

In the first place, it was a casualty of the power struggle in the House of Representatives; already much delayed, it was supposed to have been ratified by both chambers of Congress on July 23 and then signed into law by the President on the same day. But the abrupt adjournment of the morning session in the House on July 23, in the ultimately unsuccessful attempt to prevent the unseating of Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, further delayed the timetable. (The House ratified it, and new Speaker Gloria Arroyo signed it, on July 24.)

Secondly, it was a casualty of the many attempts by the administration coalition to either silence the President's critics (through interminable hearings) or change the constitutional order (through different options) with Alvarez out and Arroyo in. The federalism project may lose momentum, reinforcing the status of the BOL as the most consequential legislation passed during the Duterte administration.

The third factor has to do with the fact that the political class in Metro Manila and in Davao is distracted by the politics of the midterm elections. The leadership upheaval in the House is only one proof, albeit the most visible, of this shift in attention. While national popular opinion is moving in favor of greater autonomy in Muslim Mindanao, the politicians appear to be merely doing the electoral math.

This is a pity, because, despite its shortcomings, the BOL represents the best opportunity for both lasting peace and substantial autonomy for Mindanao since at least 1996. That will have an impact beyond the next several election cycles. Also, in the MILF, shortcomings and all, the government has found a reliable, responsible partner. Given its extensive participation in the crafting of the BOL, the MILF leadership can be expected to respond to this truly historic moment in markedly different fashion than the MNLF's Nur Misuari did.

Asserting ownership of the 'luli' isles

Nobody at the book launch of "Rock Solid: How the Philippines Won its Maritime Case Against China" explained the title of this groundbreaking work on the "West Philippine Sea" dispute. The supposition is that "rock solid" refers to the case submitted by the Philippine government to the Permanent Court of Arbitration to establish "ownership" over the islands, shoals, reefs and rocks of the Spratly Islands.

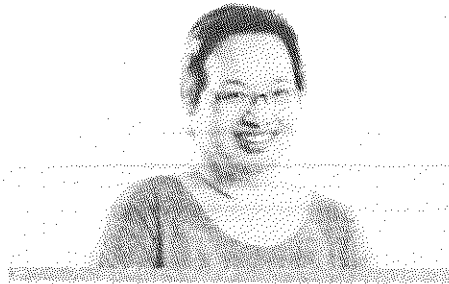
But as author Marites Dañguilan Vitug shows, the case documents may have provided irrefutable proof of the country's sovereignty over these specks of rock, sand, earth and coral in the middle of the South China Sea (or WPS in the view of the Philippine government), but in asserting its claim, the Philippine government's stance has been far from "rock solid."

Vitug relates that, in a conversation with a naval officer, he referred to these ocean features as the "luli" islands, for "lulubog, lilitaw" (sinking and rising), describing how some isles would disappear at high tide. In many ways, it also describes the waxing and waning of the Philippine position on the islands.

From the start, she recounts, Philippine assertion of its claim had always been subject to signals emanating from our giant neighbor. Discussions on strategy and policy would often be tempered by considerations of how China would react.

President Duterte may be the most egregious so far in his show of sycophancy toward Chinese officialdom. But every president in recent memory, including PNoy who made the decision to sue China, has had to look over his or her shoulder to gauge China's response.

Certainly, the most compelling, fasci-



AT LARGE

RINA JIMENEZ-DAVID

nating part of the book comes at the very start, where Vitug shines the spotlight first on the conference room of the Foley Hoag law firm in Washington, then on the Office of the Solicitor General in Makati, thence on former president Benigno Aquino III's residence in Quezon City, and finally on The Hague from where the Permanent Court of Arbitration emailed the final verdict on the case.

Most poignant is the scene painted by Vitug on how PNoy received the news: alone in his home, reading the summary of the award and feeling "happy and pleased," then calling up the officials closest to the dispute to convey his congratulations and praise. "Soon after," writes Vitug, "his mobile phone lit up with congratulatory text messages."

We all know what followed and what is taking place to this day. Vitug recounts the first press conference called by then foreign secretary Perfecto Yasay in reaction to the legal victory. Yasay read a brief statement, glum-faced and refusing to take questions, delivering, said a

foreign TV journalist, something more akin to a eulogy.

Vitug relates the legal and technical (and environmental) issues included in the Philippine brief, including testimonies from fishermen who had plied their trade in the waters of and around Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) for many years until 2012, when the Chinese Navy imposed sanctions.

From establishing the environmental impact of construction work done on the islands China had encroached on, to testimonies of the human cost of Chinese interference, the country's case was clearly and succinctly made. It is a shame we have not been able to build upon it to establish further action, or simply to assert our rights.

By Vitug's accounting, the Philippine response to Chinese aggression on the Spratlys has been spotty, haphazard and of little impact on China's expansionist dreams. And, under Duterte, writes Vitug, the government "took a defeatist, self-flagellating stance despite the immensity of what the Philippines had gained from the ruling: a maritime area larger than the total land area of the Philippines, rich in resources."

It is an embarrassing spectacle. And as the latest opinion polls show, the Filipino public does not look kindly on officials who do not stand up for the country, especially since, in its "David vs Goliath" legal battle with China, the Philippines scored an impressive, historically important victory not just for our own little collection of islands, but for all "little countries" as well.

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Car bombing

EDITORIAL

Malacañang officials called it a terrorist attack. As of last night, probes appeared to be zeroing in on the Abu Sayyaf as the group responsible for a bomb blast at daybreak yesterday in Lamitan City, Basilan that killed 11 people, among them a child.

The most worrisome aspect of the attack is that, according to initial reports, it could be the first suicide car bombing to be staged in this country. Soldiers reportedly pulled over a 10-seater van at a military checkpoint manned by militias. The driver looked like a foreigner and could not speak the local dialect, according to initial reports. Moments later, the van exploded, instantly killing the driver together with five militiamen and four civilians.

Basilan has long been a hotbed of armed conflict, with its jungles used by the Abu Sayyaf as a base. The bandits pillage villages, attack churches, seize captives as human shields or for ransom, and commit rape, mutilation and murder with impunity. The Abu Sayyaf has launched attacks even in Metro Manila, in tandem with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Je-

maah Islamiyah. 11 men have trained Filipino terrorists in bomb-making. But no suicide attack or car bombing has ever been staged - until yesterday.

Equally troubling is if the attack was perpetrated with the involvement of the Mautes. Last year the Islamic State-inspired terrorist group managed to engage the Armed Forces of the Philippines for five months in Marawi. The devastated Islamic city is a long way from recovery.

Suspicious have also been raised that the attack in Lamitan was the handiwork of groups out to sabotage the peace process with the MILF following the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law or BOI last week.

The MILF and the faction of the Moro National Liberation Front that participated in crafting the BOI can mobilize their networks to help ferret out the truth. While the van driver is dead, he could not have carried out the bombing without various forms of assistance from certain individuals. Every effort must be made to track down his cohorts and prevent more attacks.

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BY RIGOBERTO TIGLAO
Columnist

I WAS astonished at the gall, and hypocrisy, of former President Benigno Aquino 3rd, when he recently admonished President Duterte to be transparent in his dealings with China.

Aquino will go down in history as the first, and hopefully the last, president to preside over the loss of

► TiglaosA6

territory: Bajo de Masinloc, also known as Panatag or Scarborough, Shoal, in June 2012.

Yet Aquino and his official directly responsible for the loss, his foreign affairs secretary Alberto del Rosario, have not explained exactly how they lost Panatag to China. It is not just an academic exercise for the truth on this matter to be ferreted out. The details of Aquino and del Rosario's colossal boo-boo, will enable our nation to see clearly what our foreign-policy stance should be over the South China Sea territorial dispute.

I have written a number of articles on what led to Aquino and del Rosario's loss of Panatag, all of which have been confirmed by unbiased reports abroad, a summary of which is as follows:

In April 2012 vessels of the Philippine Coast Guard and the Bureau of Fisheries Aquatic Resources arrested Chinese fishermen in the shoal's lagoon, alleging they were catching endangered fish. When a China Maritime Surveillance (CMS) vessel — a civilian ship — arrived to prevent the arrest, Aquino deployed the BRP Gregorio del Pilar, the Philippine Navy's biggest warship, which had been donated to us by the US a year earlier.

However, the very next day, Aquino ordered the warship out, informed that oops! he had just militarized the squabble. Three CMS ships with about 50 small fishermen's dinghies enter the shoal and block the Coast Guard and BFAR vessels, which had of course released

Aquino, Del Rosario must disclose to the nation exactly how they lost Panatag

Congress has the duty to investigate this colossal boo-boo



RIGOBERTO
TIGLAO

the Chinese they had arrested.

Month-long stand-off

For more than a month, Chinese and Filipino ships were in a stand-off, with their governments knowing that the party that withdraws from the shoal will in effect be losing it — forever as it were. The unwritten rule in territorial disputes all over the world, is that occupation — especially one undertaken not through violence — is ownership.

On June 3, after a month of so-called back-channel talks by his personal envoy Sen. Antonio Trillanes 4th, and purportedly after negotiations through official channels by del Rosario and our ambassador to the US, Jose Cuisia, all the Philippine vessels were ordered out of the shoal. Since then, no Philippine vessel has been allowed to enter the lagoon: We lost Panatag Shoal.

Trillanes informed me back in 2016 and in a written aide memoire of this "Back Channel Talks," that when he was still arranging the details of the simultaneous withdrawal of both Philippine and Chinese ships, Aquino called him and told him that the Filipino ships had already sailed out of the lagoon. Aquino told the stupefied Trillanes that del

Rosario had informed him that an agreement had already been reached with the Chinese in Washington, and that it was his foreign secretary who ordered the Filipino ships to leave.

Trillanes wrote in his aide memoire, quoting Aquino: "*Kaya nga sinabihan ko si Albert kung bakit niya pinalabas yung BFAR na hindi ko nalalaman.*" ("That's why I asked Albert [del Rosario] why he ordered the BFAR vessels to leave without my permission.")

This account has not been disputed by Aquino, del Rosario, and Trillanes ever since I first wrote it in May 2016 and repeated in several articles.

Del Rosario in fact last month confirmed the gist of the account when he wrote an article posted in the website of his Alberto del Rosario Institute for Strategic and International Studies, which had the following paragraph:

"During the impasse at Scarborough Shoal with China, we were approached by the US, an honest broker, for both China and the Philippines to agree to a simultaneous withdrawal of ships from the shoal. We therefore agreed. At the appointed time, we withdrew, whereas China did not — in violation of our agreement." (Emphasis mine.)

Self-serving, misleading

It is obviously a self-serving, misleading claim, intended to hide his big blunder. Consider the following points, and one could easily see through del Rosario's lies.

Aquino, Del Rosario must disclose to the nation *exactly* how they lost Panatag

If China reneged on the agreement, wouldn't the US have protested loudly to the world — especially as it was the mediator — that the Asian superpower didn't keep its word, therefore confirming the American narrative that that nation can't be trusted and intends to occupy the entire South China Sea if not by force, by subterfuge? If the US State Department could not officially claim that there was an agreement, wouldn't it do what it often does, which is to leak it to its media especially its usual venue *The New York Times*?

Based on accounts of very credible sources, Fu Ying, China's vice minister of foreign affairs in charge of Asia (who had been ambassador here from 1998 to 2000) met June 1 in Washington with Kurt Campbell, US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, to discuss Aquino and Del Rosario's request for the Americans to intervene — even militarily, my sources claimed — in the Scarborough Shoal stand-off. Campbell proposed the idea of a simultaneous withdrawal. Fu told Campbell that she would relay the suggestion to her superiors in Beijing. She never got the green-light from Beijing.

Isn't this account more credible, given China's system of governing, in which such crucial foreign policy decisions are decided in the highest echelons not just of government but of the Communist Party of China?

Del Rosario isn't bound by any confidentiality agreement, nor is he a foreign secretary any

more. He (and Aquino as well) should disclose to the nation the following:

1. Who exactly in the US State Department brokered, as del Rosario claims, the agreement between the Philippines and China? Was there a document on this very important agreement? If none, why wasn't there one?

2. Who in the US State Department informed him about the alleged agreement? Or was it just his close friend our ambassador the US then, Jose Cuisia? Or did del Rosario — 73 years old at that time — possibly mishear what was relayed to him, that he heard only "agreement" when it was actually "proposed agreement"?

3. Was Aquino informed about the alleged agreement before the order to the Philippine vessels given to withdraw from Panatag Shoal? Or was Trillanes being truthful when he reported that it was del Rosario who ordered the vessels out without even getting clearance from the President. If this is the case, del Rosario is liable for usurpation of authority, similar to what could put former national police head Alan Purisima in jail, because he supervised elite troops when he was no longer in the required post of authority.

4. Who exactly did del Rosario issue order for the Philippine vessels — those of the Coast Guard and the BFAR — to withdraw from the shoal? Was it the commandant of the Philippine Coast Guard, then Rear Admiral Edmund Tan, or his boss Mar Roxas, secretary of the transport and communications

department, under which the Coast Guard is?

The answers to these questions are crucial for the nation to assign accountability for our first loss of Philippine territory. Del Rosario, with his enormous wealth and longtime associate, the Indonesian magnate Salim (who controls the *Philippine Star-TV 5* media empire) of course has been creating a different narrative, which paints China as the villain in this episode and practically demands an antagonistic stance against the economic superpower. He apparently has even recruited academics with "expertise" in the South China Sea dispute into his "institute" with fat consultancy fees. Would they not toe del Rosario's line?

It is only Congress that has the resources more than what del Rosario commands, which can ferret out the truth. An objective narrative of how we lost Panatag is crucial for the country to adopt a correct foreign policy.

On Friday, I will explain how the possible answers—or absence of answers—on exactly how we lost Panatag could lead to an intriguing, but likely explanation: The US played Aquino and del Rosario to lose Panatag, so a flash point could be created in the South China Sea territorial dispute to paint China as an expansionist power.

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Shape up or ship out

“If the big mining companies do not commit themselves to responsible mining, they must be told in no uncertain terms that they must shape up or ship out.”

Make no mistake about it. President Rodrigo Duterte is determined to institute “radical reforms” in the country’s mining sector.

Here’s what Duterte said in his third State of the Nation Address last 23 July: “I say this once again and maybe for the last time, do not destroy the environment or compromise our resources. You can no longer fish in the rivers. It’s all contaminated and the color is not even brown or purple or white. It’s black.”

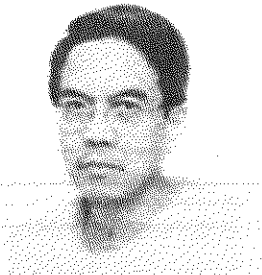
But has he been barking up the wrong tree and targeting the wrong people?

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines and Philippine Mining and Exploration Association insist that while they support the President’s stand, they’re not the ones at fault but the small-scale miners who have been violating government regulations.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) even supports the big mining companies in this regard. A DENR official conceded that “small-scale mining is the problem” as large-scale miners are “easier to manage since they have the capacity to rehabilitate sites.”

The DENR, therefore, is now fast-tracking the delineation of specific areas for “*Minahang Bayan*,” a program to legalize small-scale mining operations throughout the country.

The *Alyansa Tigil Mina*, meanwhile, has been urging Duterte to cut incentives given to the mining industry to ensure that the administration is “really doing its part in protecting the



AROUND TOWN
Ernesto M. Hilario

environment. We need concrete policies.”

At any rate, we fully support initiatives that would uphold environmental protection even as government should be able to collect the proper taxes from the mining industry.

Responsible mining really means the extraction of minerals such as gold, silver, copper and nickel should be undertaken with due consideration to preserving the environment so that future generations of Filipinos should still be able to benefit from the country’s natural resources. If the big mining companies do not commit themselves to responsible mining, they must be

told in no uncertain terms that they must shape up or ship out.

“Small-scale mining is the problem, as large-scale miners are easier to manage.”

Expanded bilateral relations
How are Philippines-China relations two years into the Duterte administration?
In his remarks at the reception marking the 91st Founding Anniversary of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of the People’s Republic of China last 27 July, Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua pointed out that as a result of what he described as the “comprehensive turnaround and betterment of China-Philippines relations” since 2016, military-to-military cooperation and exchanges between the two countries have significantly increased.

The Chinese envoy explained that China and the Philippines have resumed their annual defense and security talks. China’s Defense Minister also paid a friendly visit to the Philippines last year. The past two years also witnessed increasing exchanges of visits at various levels and training programs between the two armed forces and military academies.

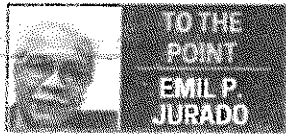
Last year, China also provided two batches of weapons and ammunition to the Philippines to support the government’s campaign against terrorism in Marawi. The third batch of military assistance was recently turned over to the Philippine side to assist in our efforts to neutralize terrorism and violent extremism.

The security cooperation between the Philippines and China is part and parcel of expanded relations. Since 2016, China and the Philippines have conducted high-level exchanges and enhanced cooperation in trade and investments, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, poverty alleviation and law enforcement. **4**

Since the two countries are neighbors, Zhao emphasized, “we are determined to level up our friendship and partnership and bring more tangible benefits to our two nations and peoples. We do have our differences, but both countries have agreed to manage them through dialogue and consultation, so as not to jeopardize the growth of overall relations. I am convinced that so long as we remain committed to the spirit of good-neighborliness, (seek) win-win solutions and peacefully settle differences, we can make concerted efforts to advance the common interests of our two countries.”

Email: ernhil@yahoo.com

Standard Gut issues first



IN THE wake of all these distractions—the transition of power in Congress, for instance, with Rep. Gloria Arroyo being named Speaker of the House—Filipinos would still want to know: What about gut issues?

These are the high prices of goods and services, the scarcity of jobs, and low wages.

And then you have an environment of lawlessness and violence that is bound to get worse with the elections in May 2019.

Plus, let us not forget what President Rodrigo Duterte said in his Sona last week—that he would pursue his war on drugs with its “chilling effect.” Even now, the Philippine National Police is gearing up for a “recalibrated” campaign against drugs, whatever that means.

in the pursuit of Charter change to pave the way for federalism, can most Filipinos expect the gut issues to be addressed?

I have serious doubts. I’ve been

a journalist for almost 70 years, and I have seen enough, both the best and the worst.

I would go as far to say that Charter change at this point seems to be the road to perdition. It will only derail projects that cry out for immediate attention.

I even doubt that Congress has time for this, given that in a few months its members will be focused on their respective campaigns.

Along this line, I am happy that former Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez and his idea of a no-election scenario are out.

At the end of the day, it is up to President Duterte to set his priorities straight. It’s his third year in office and he still has a great opportunity to change the lives of millions of Filipinos for the better.

With the emergence of Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte as kingmaker—queenmaker would be more accurate—I think sooner or later splintered groups

of the ruling PDP-Laban and even other parties will gravitate to her Hugpong ng Pagbabago regional party. In turn, this will make her regional party become national in character.

When this happens, will Sara insist on running for a local position? I am sure she can easily make it to the Senate, along with Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos.

Other strong names for the Senate race are those of Senators Grace Poe, Cynthia Villar, Nancy Binay and former senator Pia Cayetano.

The terror attack in Basilan which killed at least 13 is a reminder to the President and to the Armed Forces that IS-inspired groups are very much around despite martial law in Mindanao.

They are just biding their time to strike back after their failure to make Marawi City a caliphate.

Because of this I strongly object to President Duterte’s plan to reach out to and talk peace with the Abu Sayyaf.

My *gulay*, you do not talk to people whose only agenda is to sow terror!

As sure as night follows day, ter-

rorists will strike.

The objection of Muslim leaders like the Moro National Liberation Front’s Nur Misuari, and other groups, to the Bangsamoro Organic Law springs from the fact that the BOL was conceived by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

We know only too well that Moroland is controlled by tribes. Muslims from Lanao and Maguindanao cannot coexist with Tausugs from Sulu, and those from central Mindanao regard Tausugs as pirates.

Corabato City Mayor Cynthia Guini has also expressed concerns about the BOL, the same sentiment as that of Zamboanga City residents who do not want to be part of the Bangsamoro.

President Duterte needs to talk to all stakeholders.

I am saddened by the death of Chintang Guerrero Nakpil, a true literary and press icon. She was a good friend.

Gut...

From A4

Chitang used to join us at the 365 Club at Hotel Intercontinental and discuss the issues of the day with the regulars. She was a literary giant in many ways. She authored 10 books and was chairwoman of the Philippine Historical Commission.

She was a cut above us all.

I saw Chitang at a party sometime ago at the Manila Polo Club. She was with her daughter, Gemma Cruz Araneta. I asked if we could talk and she just smiled. I knew then she was not herself.

We will sorely miss her.

The so-called parking fees for pending cases, resorted to by prosecutors, is well known in the industry.

This is the reason so many corruption cases are inordinately delayed. I am told that sometimes the bribes go by the millions, depending on how important the case is.

The practice also clogs court dockets.

In law, both the lawyer who pays the "parking fee" and the prosecutor are both guilty of bribery. This must stop.

www.emiljurado.weebly.com



Suicide bomber sa Basilan

NAKAKABAHALA Sa unang pagkakataon, mayroon nang naitalang suicide bombing incident sa Pilipinas. Kahapon ng umaga, may 11-katao, kabilang ang isang sundalo at limang CAFGU ang nasawi at pito pa sa security forces ang nasugatan matapos na sumabog ang bomba na karga ng isang van sa terror attack na tinihinasang kagegawan ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf. Siyempre patay pati nagmamaneho ng van nang ito'y sumabog sa isang checkpoint sa Brgy. Colonia, Lamitan City, Basilan.

Noong araw, nasasabi nabng mas mapalad tayo sa Pilipinas dahil wala ang mga tinatawag na human bombs

na handang isakripisyo ang sariling buhay para maisagawa ang kanilang walang saysay na misyon. Hindi pa maiimang kung ang suicide bomber ay Pilipino o dayuhan. Lalong nakababahas ito kung Paipino ito dahil ibig sabihin, nagtatagumpay ang mga terorista na isusunang ang kaisipan ng ating mga kababayan.

Ayon kay Col. Gerry Besana, tagapagsalita ng AFP Western Mindanao, nagkasa ng checkpoint ang tropa ng 9th Scout Ranger Company sa Sitio Buanling, Brgy. Colonia, Lamitan City matapos na makatanggap ng report na nagpaplanong magpasok ng mga pampasabog ang grupo ng mga terorista sa Basilan na may planong mag-sagawa ng pambobomba sa lalawigan.

Ang tanong ay, sino ang may pakana dito? Yun bang sector na umaayaw sa bagong kopagtibay na Bangsa Moro Organic Law o yung mga talagang ibig lang mag-hasik ng kaguluhan? Sa aking sariling pananaw, patagay ko'y ito ay kasama sa agenda ng international terror group na ISIS na ang layunin ay makapaghati sa buong daig-dig sa pamamagitan ng paghahasik ng terorismo. Ito'y hindi kayang lutasin ng ilang leader lamang kundi nang pinagsamang aksyon ng lahat ng bansa. 4

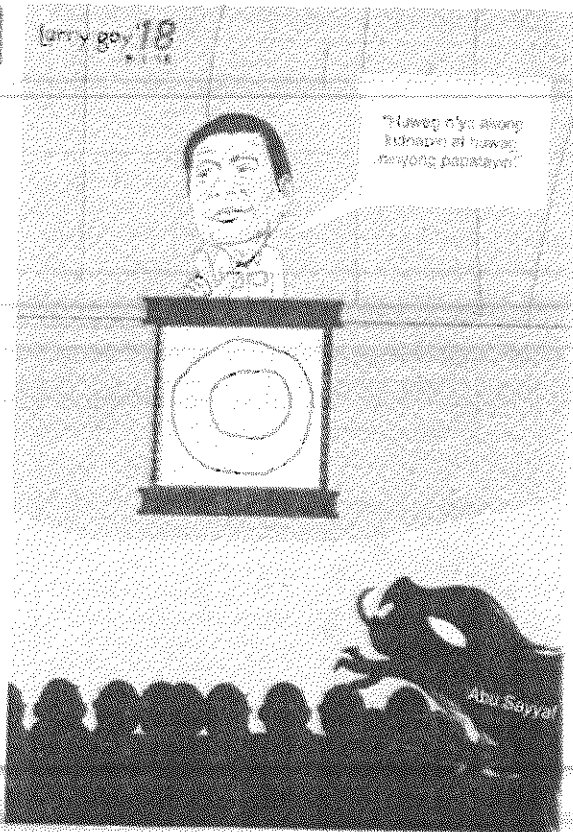
Editorial

July 18, 2018

Pulbusin ang Sayyaf!

NOONG nakaraang Biyernes, nakiusap si President Duterte sa mga teroristang Abu Sayyaf na huwag siyang kidnapin o patayin. Ginawa niva ang pakiusap nang dumalaw sa mga biktima ng sunog sa Bgy. Busbos, Jolo, Sulu. Sabi niya, "Huwag n'yo akong kidnapin at huwag ninyong papatayin!" Wala raw mapapala ang Abu Sayyaf kapag siya ay pinatay. Iba na lang daw ang kidnapin ng mga ito pero huwag ang Presidente. Kabit sino raw ang kidnapin basta huwag lang siya. Sabi niya sa mga residente na ipaabot daw ang kanyang mensahe sa Abu Sayyaf.

Seryoso ang Presidente sa pakiusap at maaring naaamoy niva na nasa paligid lamang ang mga terorista at maaring gumawa ang mga ito ng hakbang laban sa kanya. Kaya marahil siya nakikiusap sa mga



ito na huwag siyang kidnapin o patayin.

Pero pakikinggan kaya siya ng mga mamamatay-ino? Wala nang kinikilala ang Abu Sayyaf. Pera ang sinasamba ng mga ito kaya naman sunud-sunod ang ginagawang pangkidnap. Hanggang ngayon, sila pa rin ang nasa likod ng mga pangkidnap kapalit ng ransom. Walang awa ang grupo sa mga kinikidnap na hindi makapagbigay ng ransom. Pinupugutan nila ng ulo ang mga dayuhang kinidnap at hini-video pa. Noong 2016, dalawang dayuhan ang kanilang pinugutan kasabay pa sa pagkaluklok ni Duterte sa puwesto. May isang pagkakataon na pinugutan nila ang isang dayuhan sa araw pa ng pagdiriwang ng kalayaan.

Marami nang nakubang ransom ang mga terorista. Kumita sila nang malaki nang kidnapin ang mga dayuhan sa Dos Palmas resort sa Palawan. Sila rin ang nasa likod ng pagkidnap sa mag-asawang Burnham sa Patawan din.

Kamakailan, sinabi ni Duterte na pagkakalooban ng bahay at lupa ang mga susukong Sayyaf. Marami ang napailing sa balak na ito. Mga terorista, bibigyan ng bahay at lupa. Hindi tama ito. Kung sino ang maraming pinatay sila pa ang pagkakalooban ng bahay.

Sa halip na makiusap sa mga terorista, mas maganda kung pulbusin ang mga ito. Pagbayarin sa mga ginawang kasalanan. Hindi sila dapat kaawaan. Kahapon, 11 ang namatay sa Lamitan, Basilan dahil sa pagsabog ng bomba na inilagay sa isang van. Mga Abu Sayyaf ang hinihinalang may kagagawan ng terorismo. 3

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ONLINE NEWS

01 AUGUST 2018

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net>

Abu Sayyaf behind Basilan explosion – AFP

By: **Frances Mangosing** - Reporter / [@FMangosingINQ](#)

INQUIRER.net / 01:09 PM July 31, 2018



Photo credit to Wesmincom

The military claimed Tuesday that the suspect behind the explosion in Basilan that left at least 11 people killed belonged to the group of Abu Sayyaf leader Furuji Indama.

“Based from a conversation with Wesmincom commander Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, this person whose name or identity is not known yet is part of the group of Furuji Indama,” Armed Forces spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo told reporters at Camp Aguinaldo.

Indama is a Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf leader. One of its previous leaders in the island, Isnilon Hapilon, was one of the terrorists who led the five-month Marawi siege, which left almost a thousand people killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.

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

A lone van driver detonated a bomb at a military checkpoint in Lamitan City early Tuesday, leaving one soldier, five militiamen and four civilians killed. The van driver also died instantly.

The driver flagged at the checkpoint reportedly appeared to be a foreigner based on a military report but Arevalo said it could not be proven yet, as of this posting.

“We can’t say that this is a foreign terrorist or a foreigner driver because he himself was killed in the blast. The personnel who had contact with the driver also died in this incident,” Arevalo said.

“This group of Furuji Indama is swiftly losing ground so they are now resorting to desperate moves in order to disrupt the mass surrender of Abu Sayyaf members in Basilan,” Arevalo said.

The spokesperson also called on the public to refrain from calling the incident as a “lone wolf attack.”

“These are speculations. Up to now, the investigation is still ongoing,” he said.

The car bomb attack in Basilan happened days after President Rodrigo Duterte said he was open to a dialogue with the Abu Sayyaf to end extremism in the Philippines.

Malacañang condemns Basilan attack

By Azer Parrocha July 31, 2016, 4:01 pm

MANILA -- Malacañang condemned the car bomb explosion, which left at least 10 people dead in Lamitan City, Basilan on Tuesday morning.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws," Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque said in a statement.

Roque assured that the government will take legal action against the perpetrators.

"Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," he added.

In a Palace briefing, Roque said the attack may be considered a "war crime" because it constitutes an indiscriminate attack which is prohibited by a provision under RA 9851 or the "Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes Against Humanity."

"It's an indiscriminate attack. It's a fact that Basilan, of course, is an area with a non-international armed conflict and there's already a domestic law on international humanitarian law (IHL)," Roque said.

"Under IHL, you must limit your attacks pursuant to military objective, you must limit it to military targets and you must avoid protected individuals, including civilians," he added.

Roque said authorities are still investigating which groups are possibly behind the attack.

According to reports, 11 people, including a foreign-looking individual suspected to be the suicide bomber, were killed while five others were wounded in the explosion. **(PNA)**

ASG leader Indama behind Basilan blast: AFP

By Priam Nepomuceno July 31, 2016, 2:52 pm

MANILA -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has confirmed that veteran Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leader, Furuji Indama, was behind the blast that killed 11 people, including the suspected bomber, and wounded seven others in Lamitan, Basilan early Tuesday.

In a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo, AFP spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo said the attack was in response to the growing number of ASG terrorists voluntarily surrendering to government forces, causing the bandit group to lose ground in Basilan.

"This group of Furuji Indama is swiftly losing ground. That is why they are resorting to these desperate moves in order to disrupt the mass surrender of Abu Sayyaf members in Basilan and in Sulu," Arevalo added.

He said military units in the area were on alert after receiving reports that improvised explosive devices (IEDs) would be deployed to various areas in Basilan.

"Now, as we told you, this vehicle loaded with IEDs is being driven by a lone person. *Na-checkpoint natin ito* (It went through checkpoint) because we have received earlier reports that say there could be IEDs that could be deployed (to) various areas, specifically in this area of Basilan. That is why our checkpoints in Mindanao have been alerted," Arevalo added.

The explosion took place at 5:50 a.m. near the Magwakit Detachment in Barangay Colonia, Lamitan City.

Reports indicated that troops in the area intercepted a white van containing IEDs.

The vehicle was being inspected when an explosion tore into it, killing one soldier, five members of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), and four civilians, including the driver who was believed to be the suspect.

Also wounded were one CAFGU and six members of the 9th Scout Ranger Company.

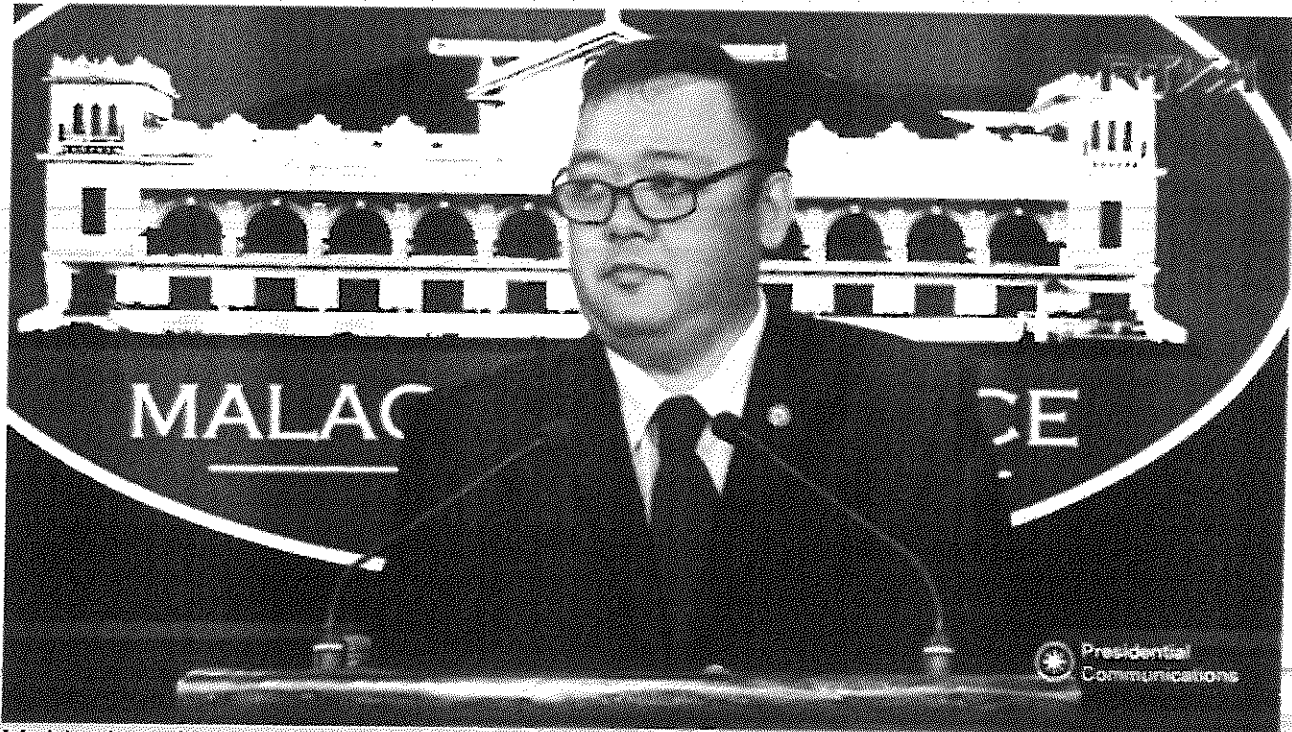
Despite the losses suffered by military personnel, the AFP spokesperson said they have successfully performed their mandate as they had prevented the IEDs from reaching the intended target, which he believed to be downtown Lamitan.

"(AFP) Chief-of-Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. commends the vigilance and dedication to duty and the sacrifice of these heroes," Arevalo said.

"And while we commend our troops, we condemn in the highest possible terms this yet another dastardly attempt of terrorists to kill, maim, and injure innocent civilians," he added. **(PNA)**

Basilan terror attack: Intel capability ng PNP at AFP, nais masuri ng Palasyo

Posted by Zambal, Zambal Lineage, 11/11/2017



Mahigpit na kinondena ng Malacañang ang pinakabagong pag-atake ng mga terorista sa Basilan na ikinamatay ng ilang katao.

Sinabi ni Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque, isa itong lantarang paglabag sa batas ng Pilipinas at karahasan sa mga inosenteng sibilyan.

Ayon kay Sec. Roque, iniimbestigahan na ng mga otoridad ang insidente at tinitiyak nilang maihaharap sa hustisya ang mga responsableng terorista.

Ang insidente ay naganap sakto sa paggunita ngayong araw ng ika-68 anibersaryo ng National Security Council at National Intelligence Coordinating Agency na pangungunahan mamayang hapon ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa Philippine International Convention Center.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the latest terrorist attack in Basilan perpetrated in violation of our laws. Authorities are now investigating the incident even as we vow to bring the perpetrators of this brazen attack to justice," ani Sec. Roque.

Kaugnay nito, pinapasuri ng Malacañang sa mga militar at pulis ang kanilang intelligence capability.

Sa harap ito ng nakalusot na pagpapasabog sa Basilan kaninang umaga kahit pa umiiral sa buong Mindanao ang Martial Law.

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

Maituturing aniya na war crime ang naganap na pagsabog dahil isa itong "indiscriminate attack" kung saan may mga biktimang sibilyan na mahigpit na ipinagbabawal sa International Humanitarian Law.

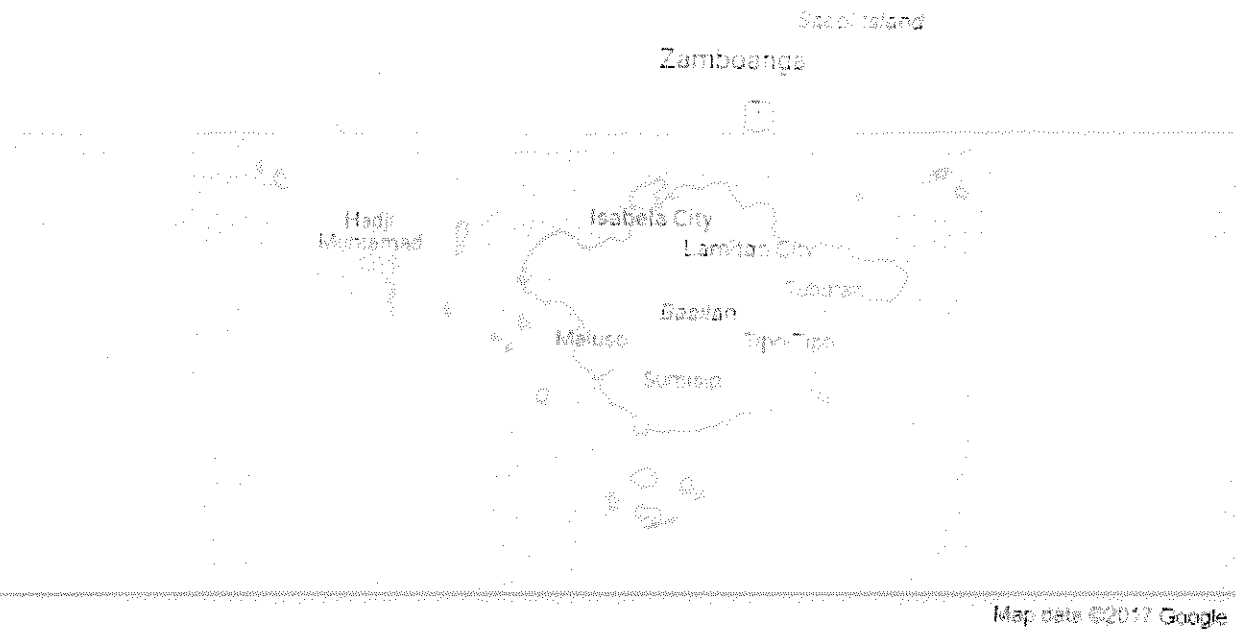
Ayon pa kay Sec. Roque, sa ilalim ng nasabing batas, dapat ay limitado lamang ang mga pag-atake sa military targets at walang dapat madamay na sibilyan lalo na mga menor de edad.

Sa ngayon, inihayag ni Sec. Roque na hindi pa alam ng Malacañang kung sino o anong grupo ang nasa likod ng pag-atake.

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10 na patay sa hinihinalang 'suicide bombing' sa Basilan checkpoint

Posted By: Bombo Marilyn Delos Santos: July 31, 2018



Basilan map

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Umaabot na sa 10 katao ang nasawi habang marami pa ang sugatan sa nangyaring pagsabog ng car bomb malapit lamang sa military detachment sa Barangay Colonia, Lamitan City SA lalawigan ng Basilan.

Kabilang sa kinumpirmi ng mga otoridad na nasawi ay ang apat na Cafgu members, ang detachment commander na isang sergeant at ilang sibilyan, habang nadamay din ang 10-anyos na bata.

Kasama rin sa mga namatay ang mismong sinasabing foreign suicide bomber na siyang nagmamaneho ng van kung saan inilagay ang bomba.

Inilipat na papunta sa military hospital ng Camp Navarro General Hospital sa Zamboanga City ang maraming sugatan kabilang ang limang kasapi ng Army Scout Ranger, isang lieutenant at sibilyan.

Nabatid na nasa 200 metro lamang ang layo mula sa highway ng lugar kung saan nangayri ang pagsabog.

Ayon sa mga residente na mag-alas-6:00 ng umaga kanina nang marinig nila ang napakalakas na pagsabog.

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

Sinabi ni Lamitan City Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay, posibleng target ng bomber na pumasok sa mismong sentro ng siyudad na nasa mahigit din na isang kilometro ang layo at doon isasagawa ang pagpasabog.

Pinara umano ng mga Cagfu ang van ng bomber habang dumadaan ito sa naturang detachment at napansin nila na isa itong "foreign looking" at hindi umano nakakapagsalita ng local dialect kaya kaagad inalerto ang tropa.

Isasailalim na sana umano sa interogasyon ng militar ang naturang driver at ocular inspection sa van nang biglang sumabog ang dala niyang bomba.

Mahigpit pa rin ngayon ang seguridad na ipinatutupad ng mga otoridad sa lugar ng pagsabog habang binibirepika na rin ang impormasyon na isang international terrorist ang suicide bomber

Ayaw namang kumpirmahin pa ni Col. Fernando Reyes, commander ng joint Task Force Basilan na isang dayuhan ang driver at isang uri ng suicide bombing ang pangyayari dahil nagsasagawa pa ng imbestigasyon ang SOCO team.

Sa inisyal umanong imbestigasyon, nagkaroon ng premature explosion ang improvised explosive device sa loob ng sasakyan.