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NEWS CLIPPINGS

02 August 2018

Thursday



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US WANTS TO TRY

NAPOLES AND FAMILY

US justice seeks extradition of Janet Lim-Napoles, her children, and brother-in-law with who were indicted in Los Angeles for conspiracy to plunder Philippine public funds, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said, to lend a helping hand.

FROM A1

Businesswoman Janet Lim-Napoles, the alleged mastermind in the Pao-billion pork barrel scam, and members of her family are wanted in the United States for money laundering.

The US Department of Justice said on Tuesday it would seek the extradition of Napoles, her three children, brother and sister-in-law whom a federal grand jury charged with funneling in and out of the United States some \$20 million in Philippine public funds, according to the US Attorney's Office.

Napoles' daughters Christine and Jeanne, son James Christopher, brother Reynald Uy Lim and her brother's wife Ana Marie, were indicted in Los Angeles on July 31 for conspiracy to commit money laundering, domestic money laundering and international money laundering, the Attorney's Office of Central District of California said in a statement.

"We will work with our Philippine counterparts to secure the extradition of the defendants in the United States," said Attorney Nick Hanna.

In Manila, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra on Wednesday said his office was ready to lend a hand to US counterparts in prosecuting Napoles and members of her family.

Napoles is the alleged brains behind the pork barrel racket, in which Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) allocations of Philippine senators and congressmen were funneled into ghost projects of her nongovernment organizations.

The lawmakers, other officials and Napoles pocketed kickbacks from the ghost projects, which were supposed to benefit the poor.

Napoles, who is behind bars, faces a string of plunder and graft charges in the Sandiganbayan in connection with the PDAF scam. A number of lawmakers and other officials have also been charged with plunder and graft.

Real estate, Porsches

The US justice department said about \$20 million of the PDAF funds was wired to Southern California bank accounts to purchase real estate, shares in two businesses and two Porsche Boxers, and to finance the living expenses of

Jeanne Napoles, and couple Reynald and Ana Marie Lim in the United States.

It said the charges filed against Napoles and members of her family pertained to events starting in September 2012 until August 2014.

After Napoles was arrested in 2013 and her family's banks accounts were frozen, she and her family "attempted to quietly liquidate the assets in the United States, secretly repatriate most of the resulting funds back to the Philippines and to other accounts in the US and United Kingdom," the justice department said.

Some of the funds, it said,

were used by Jeanne Napoles to finance her lifestyle and open a fashion business.

Consequences

"The efforts of the Philippine and American investigators demonstrate that there are consequences to abusing the public trust and we hope to deter such conduct in the future," Hanna said.

The US Attorney's Office has seized real estate in southern California worth about \$12.5 million, court documents showed. The real estate is subject to a civil forfeiture case before US District Judge James V. Selna.

US and Philippine officials will seek the return of the stolen funds to the Philippine government should the court order the assets forfeited, said the US justice department.

The case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Assistant US Attorney Dabille O'Brien, deputy chief of the Public Corruption and Civil Rights Section of the US justice department.

In Manila, justice Secretary Guevarra said his office had been "quietly working" with American authorities in its investigation into the alleged money-laundering activities of

Napoles and her relatives.

US case buildup

"The US Department of Justice, through its justice attaché in Manila, has kept us well-informed of its efforts to build up the case (against the Napoleses) in the US," Guevarra said in a text message to the inquirer.

"The Philippine Department of Justice (DOJ) will extend all assistance to its US counterpart in prosecuting the money-laundering cases and in ensuring that our people's money is returned in due time to our national treasury," he said.

In February, then Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II

temporarily provided state protection for Napoles after she applied as state witness.

But Guevarra ended her provisional admission into the Witness Protection Program on May 25 "as there has been no further claim of threats to her personal security" in her detention cell at Camp Bagong Diwa in Marikina, Taguig City.

He said Napoles and her lawyers did not seek a reconsideration of his decision.

"After the DOJ terminated Napoles' provisional coverage, neither she nor her counsel has ever approached the DOJ again," Guevarra said. —WITH A REPORT FROM MARLON RAMOS INQ

US indicts Napoles, kin for money laundering

By EDU PUNAY and PIA LEE-BRAGO

On trial for plunder in connection with the pork barrel fund scam, detained businesswoman Janet Lim-Napoles is facing another criminal case along with some family members – this time in the United States – for allegedly laundering some \$20 million in public funds.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra confirmed yesterday that Napoles, her children Jo Christine James, Christopher and Jeane Catherine, her brother Reynaldo and his wife Ana Marie have been indicted by a federal grand jury for conspiracy to commit money laundering, domestic money laundering and international money laundering.

"We have been collaborating with the US Department of Justice on these money laundering charges against Napoles. We welcome this development, as it paves the way for the return of the people's money to our national treasury," Guevarra told reporters.

With Napoles' indictment in the US, Guevarra said he expects the

federal justice department to move for her extradition to the US to stand trial.

"But until the case against Napoles in the Philippines has been resolved and terminated, we cannot extradite her to the US," he explained.

Napoles, currently detained at the Camp Bagong Diwa detention center in Taguig City, is on trial for five

counts of plunder, graft and other cases before the Sandiganbayan.

The DOJ chief explained that only her co-accused who are not facing any case in the Philippines could be extradited to the US.

"If we receive a request for extradition and they are here, we will commence the necessary proceedings."

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Guevarra said.

He stressed the Philippine government is ready to cooperate with the US government for the prosecution of the money laundering case against Napoles and some members of her family.

The money laundering case stemmed from activities of the defendants from September 2012 to August 2014.

"The DOJ will extend all assistance to its US counterpart, ensuring that our people's money is returned in due time to our national treasury," he added.

In a statement, the US Department of Justice said the indicted individuals, as well as around 20 lawmakers and other government officials, had "converted to their own benefit millions of dollars in Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) and transmitted approximately \$20 million from that scheme into the US to purchase assets, including real property and luxury vehicles."

PDAF is how congressional pork barrel is officially called.

The fraudulently converted money was reportedly paid to "dozens of non-governmental organizations" controlled by Napoles that were supposed to implement development projects.

"Instead, the money was diverted to kickbacks for the legislators and other government officials, and for the personal use of the Napoles family," it said.

Also in a statement, the US Attorney's Office for the Central District of California said the funds were diverted to money remitters in the Philippines and then wired to Southern California bank accounts, "where the money was used to purchase real estate, shares in two businesses, two Porsche Boxsters and finance the living expenses of three family members residing in the United States: Jeane Napoles, Reynald Lim and Ana Lim."

In August 2015, Philippine

authorities arrested Napoles and froze her family's local bank accounts.

Napoles and her family members attempted to quietly liquidate their assets in the US and secretly repatriate most of the resulting funds back to the Philippines and to other accounts in the US and United Kingdom, and disburse some of the funds to Jeane Napoles, who used the money to finance her lifestyle and open a fashion business.

"Even after Janet Napoles made a highly publicized statement admitting that she had bribed Philippine legislators in connection with these 'ghost projects,' the defendants attempted to convert the proceeds of this crime to their own use," said US Attorney Nick Hanna.

"The efforts of the Philippine and American investigators demonstrate that there are consequences to abusing the public trust and we hope to deter such conduct in the future. To do this, we will work with our Philippine counterparts to secure the extradition of the defendants to the United States," he added.

Court documents showed approximately \$12.5 million in Southern California real estate asset seized by the US Attorney's Office and is subject to a civil forfeiture case pending before US District Judge James Selna.

If the court orders the assets forfeited, the US will work with Philippine officials for the return of the stolen funds back to the Philippine government.

In their investigation of the case, US authorities said they received substantial assistance from the Philippines' DOJ, Office of the Ombudsman, Anti-Money Laundering Council and the Commission on Audit. The cooperation was in accordance with the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty between the Philippines and the US. Assistant US Attorney Daniel O'Brien, deputy chief of the Public Corruption and Civil Rights Section, is lead prosecutor of the case.

The STAR tried to get comments from Napoles' lawyer Stephen David but he did not answer calls or texts.

Earlier, he urged authorities

to give Napoles a chance "to divulge all that she knows" about the multibillion-peso pork barrel scam.

"She has always been willing to divulge all that she knows about the PDAF scam, but the previous administration did not want to listen to her because some of its allies will be implicated. But this new (Duterte) administration is fair and wants to know the whole truth about the PDAF scam," David said in an earlier interview with reporters.

When he was DOJ chief, Vitaliano Aguirre III placed Napoles under provisional coverage of the Witness Protection Program (WPP) but this

was withdrawn in May by his successor Guevarra, who said it had become "moot" after the Sandiganbayan rejected her plea to be transferred to DOJ custody.

The ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales had said special prosecutors would block any move to utilize Napoles as state witness in the existing pork scam cases.

"As far as the prosecution is concerned, she (Napoles) is one of the principal alleged malefactor [in the scam]. Certainly the OSP (Office of the Special Prosecutor) will block any attempt to make her a state witness," Morales said.

- With Elizabeth Marcelo

3 senators back 60-40 sharing in PH-China sea exploration

THREE senators allied with the administration on Wednesday expressed support to the 60-40 sharing scheme in the joint exploration of natural resources in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) with China.

When asked if the 60-40 sharing plan announced by Foreign Affairs Secretary Aian Peter Cayetano is acceptable, Senate President Vicente Sotto 3rd said, "Yes it is." "It means China is accepting the fact *na lamang tayo*

[that we have the edge]," Sotto said in a text message.

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto said, "Well, that sounds good to me. I hope it's true."

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said

► Exploration A2

■ EXPLORATION FROM A1

3 senators back 60-40

the deal is "more than acceptable as the 60-40 ratio complies with the requirements of the Philippine Constitution on foreign investment."

"It is practical and sensible to enter into a joint exploration with China," the senator added.

"First, we do not have the resources nor the technology to do it alone. Second, the West Philippine Sea is so rich in oil and natural gas and it is time to make use of these natural resources to uplift the lives of our people," he said.

Lacson added, "It could also provide us the wherewithal to pursue massive infrastructure development to further enhance investments."

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel 3rd said, "The specific area must first be divvied before I can comment."

Sen. Risa Hontiveros described the scheme as "preposterous and treacherous."

"It reverses our historic victory at The Hague and signs away Philippine sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea," she said.

Hontiveros added that the DFA's plan is absurd as it recognizes China's claim and ownership over the West Philippine Sea and nulli-

fies the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) upholding Manila's sovereign rights in the area.

"Is this the result of the DFA's so-called 50-100 diplomatic actions against China? Is this what President Duterte calls an independent foreign policy?" she asked.

The opposition senator said that in case the DFA failed to read the ruling, the UN decision "is very clear."

"We have sovereign rights to access offshore oil and gas fields, including the Reed Bank, within our 200-mile exclusive economic zone," she added.

"We don't share ownership of the West Philippine Sea with China," Hontiveros said.

She challenged the DFA to junk the planned joint exploration with China and focus on ways of enforcing the UN ruling on the West Philippine Sea.

"The people want a DFA that is courageous in asserting our historic victory at The Hague, not a Foreign Affairs office that the public can't distinguish anymore from the Chinese Embassy," Hontiveros said.

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

Senators okay PH-China joint West PH Sea exploration

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

AT LEAST three senators are amenable to China's willingness to conduct a 60-40 joint exploration of natural resources with the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea as bared by Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano, but some senators wanted further study on the offer.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III pondered China's recent statement on the possibility of joint exploration as a recognition of the country's jurisdiction over its exclusive economic zones in the West Philippine Sea.

Under existing laws, the Philippines will take a bigger chunk in revenues from the exploration.

"Yes, it is [acceptable]. It means China is accepting the fact *de iure*," Sotto.

Senator Pacific Lacson said the sharing is more than acceptable, as it complies with what is stated in the Constitution.

"More than acceptable as the 60-40 ratio complies with the requirements of the Philippine Constitution on foreign investment. It is practical and sensible to enter into a joint exploration with China," said Lacson.

Admitting that the Philippines does not have the resources nor the technology to do the exploration alone, the offer is a welcome development. He said the West Philippine Sea is so rich in oil, natural gas and other resources.

"It is time to make use of these natural resources to uplift the lives of our people. It could also provide us the wherewithal to pursue massive infrastructure development or further enhance investments," Lacson also said.

Duterte wants seized luxury cars for military, police use

President Duterte has made an exception on his policy to destroy smuggled vehicles as he allowed government forces to use Hummer vehicles illegally brought into the country.

Duterte, who earlier ordered the condemnation of all smuggled vehicles to prevent corrupt officials from making money out of them, admitted he has been aspiring to provide Hummer vehicles to soldiers and policemen.

"When (Cagayan Economic Zone Authority administrator Rau) Lambino said 'we have Hummer here... I'm sure I heard more than 10, I could not exactly remember what was the figure. But I said do not destroy it because I'll give it to the military and the police for their use,' the President said during the anniversary of the National Security Council and National Intelligence Coordinating Agency in Pasay City last Tuesday night.

"*Kami ilang taon na namin 'yan naglalarawan: kami* (We have been drooling over those vans for years)... even the vans, because they are within the vicinity of the local governments... They can divide it among themselves if possible," he added.

The Hummers, whose prices range from P1.8 million to more than P3 million

depending on the model, were among the smuggled vehicles that were supposed to be destroyed in Sta. Ana, Cagayan last Monday. A total of 68 contraband luxury vehicles and eight smuggled motorbikes were crushed by backhoe and bulldozer during the ceremony.

Duterte previously rejected calls for him to auction the smuggled vehicles, saying the scheme would allow smugglers in cahoots with corrupt officials to recover their contraband.

The President also questioned the importation of some bumpers or vehicle accessories, which he said had slipped into the country without importers paying the proper customs duties.

"(The importer) did not pay the whole amount. He was just asked to pay P5,000. No receipts," Duterte said, without naming names.

"You identify the employee sa Bureau of Customs and I will call the idiot – perhaps a call has been made – to come to Manila, to my office, we will talk," he said.

The President said the smuggling would not have happened without the go-signal of customs officials. – Alexis Romero, Edith Regalado, Emmanuel Tupas

COUNTERINSURGENCY FEARS

'LUMAD' ORDEAL NOT OVER DESPITE MILITARY PROMISE

By Chris Panganiban
@cpanganiban190

SAN AGUSTIN, SURIGAO DEL SUR—"Lumad" who fled their homes in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, for fear of increasing military presence were still afraid to return to their communities even after military officials promised to remove a detachment in the lumad area and Church groups vouched for the soldiers' sincerity.

Sarry Campos, secretary general of the lumad group Mapast, said lumad were still hesitant because the village council resolution that allowed the military to set up a detachment had not been revoked and could still be in effect.

Campos said that although his group had signed an agreement with the military for the removal of the detachment no military official had signed the document.

Trucks waiting

As of late afternoon on Tuesday, trucks sent by the Surigao del Sur provincial government to bring the evacuees home in Lianga and San Agustin villages were on standby in the village of Buhisan.

Fr. Richel Navarro, of Iglesia Filipina Independiente was helping the lumad, said he and other volunteers had to check



FEAR OF SOLDIERS Manobo evacuees walk to Tandag City in search of food and safety after fleeing their communities in Lianga town, Surigao del Sur province, for fear of increasing military presence.—CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

the communities first before lumad were allowed to return.

After the volunteers checked the area, evacuees, however, were still reluctant to go home.

Campos said that although there was no more soldier and the detachment had been dismantled, "we are still hesitant about going home."

He said lumad would not return home as long as the council resolution allowing soldiers to build a detachment re-

mained in effect.

Lt. Col. Jaime Datuin, head of the 75th Infantry Battalion, had agreed to dismantle the detachment at the village of Simuwao, which triggered the July 16 evacuation of lumad from nine communities.

Military assurance

Datuin gave assurance that the detachment would be removed during a dialogue on Monday in the village of Buhisan in San Agustin town.

Surigao del Sur, with lumad who were stopped by soldiers as they walked toward Tandag City.

Lumad were headed to Tandag City to seek refuge as food was running out in their evacuation site in Diatagon village in Lianga town, where they had been staying in the last 10 days.

The evacuees complained that food intended for them had to pass through a command post before reaching them.

But as lumad reached the

town, policemen and soldiers blocked their way, prompting local officials, Church leaders, military and police officials to initiate a dialogue.

Keep off

Navarro said evacuees demanded the removal of military detachments and for soldiers to stay away from their communities.

Datuin said there would be no more detachments or regular patrols but only mobile checkpoints.

Datuin added that soldiers were prohibited from entering the lumad's homes "and if one of my men violated my order, they can report directly to me."

But Datuin said his soldiers never harassed lumad and it was the troopers' duty to enter the lumad community if armed men were seen there.

A statement from the lumad group Mapasi said villagers feared the presence of soldiers from the 75th Infantry Battalion, led by a certain Captain Borroniec.

The military unit set up a detachment for counterinsurgency operations in lumad communities. *AJ*

The military tagged the evacuees' villages as part of Andaj Valley Complex, an area where communist rebels operated. INC.

Duterte to give 10 smuggled Hummers to PNP, AFP

President Duterte has spared at least 10 smuggled Hummers from being crushed and plans to give them to the

Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

▶6

Duterte to give 10...

◀1

He revealed the plan a day after witnessing the crushing of nearly ₱300 million worth of smuggled vehicles in Sta. Ana, Cagayan.

In a speech late Tuesday night, Duterte said revealed that he had ordered not to destroy at least 10 smuggled Hummer vehicles that were seized by the government because he plans to distribute them to government security forces.

"Was it 14 or... I'm sure I heard more than 10. I could not exactly remember what was the figure. But I said do not destroy it because I'll give it to the military and the police for their use," he said.

"Para naka-Hummer na kayo. Kami liang taon na namin 'yan nagialaway-laway kami hindi kami maka. (So that you will be using Hummers. We have been drooling over that for years but we can't get them)," he added.

Duterte also said that he will also give smuggled vans to the local government of Cagayan.

"Tapos yung mga vans (And then the vans), because they are within the vicinity of the local governments, Cagayan 'yan. Eh 'di paghati-haban na lang nila doon itung aabot (that's in Cagayan, just split it among yourselves)," he said.

It has been Duterte's policy to publicly destroy smuggled vehicles, and not to auction them off, to discourage smugglers. He believes that car smugglers still get profits from selling seized cars

Malacañang had earlier said that even if there were suggestions to put smuggled vehicles to good use, Duterte has already made up his mind to just destroy them.

"Nagdesisyon na po si Presidente na iparating sa mga smugglers ang mensahe na tapos na ang kanilang mga mailigayang araw, ibu-buldozer po 'yan. (The President has already decided to send a message to smugglers that their happy days are up, we will bulldoze those cars)," Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said last February.

On Monday, Duterte led the public destruction of 66 luxury vehicles and eight high-end motorcycles in Port Irene in Sta. Ana, Cagayan.

Duterte explained that he is destroying the smuggled vehicles because he wants to create an environment where businesses could thrive.

"You know, before a place can really be developed or a viable place to do business, you have to establish first law and order," he said.

The 66 luxury sedans worth ₱277,901,760 and eight big bikes valued at ₱19,567,350 are the second batch of expensive vehicles to be destroyed at Port Irene following public destruction of 14 luxury cars last March.

The expensive cars and motorbikes were part of 800 contraband vehicles imported in Cagayan through the port (Argel B. Gedeon)

Former Army chief hails 7ID

By ARIEL P. AVENDAÑO

FORT MAGSAYSAY Palawan City, Nueva Ecija — Retired Philippine Army chief Lt. General Romeo Tolentino lauded fallen and current officers and men of the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division (7ID) for their dedication to serve the people and placing their lives on the line to maintain peace and order.

Tolentino, accompanied by former commanding generals who served as chief of the 7th Infantry Division, was the keynote speaker in yesterday's 30th founding anniversary of the 7ID here.

Tolentino, who also served as 14th commander of the 7th Army Infantry Division, also extolled the leadership of Major General Elicmor Santos Jr. for initiating the putting up of the "Heroes Memorial" monument inside the vast army camp to honor and recognize the heroism of soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the performance of their duties.

He also urged the young soldiers to convince their relatives and children to join the military.

"Lalong magiging proud pa kayo kung mas mataas kesa sa inyo ang magiging ranggo ng inyong mga anak," Tolentino said.

He likewise encouraged the troops to plant more fruit-bearing trees inside the camp.

The official was instrumental in the planting more than 3,000 trees during his term as the division's commander.

Major Gen. Santos, who is the current chief of the army's 7th Infantry Division, reiterated the accomplishments under his command which included disaster rescue operations in many flood-stricken areas during the recent flooding in Central Luzon, aside from assisting the Philippine National Police in anti-drug campaigns. 7

• Army division marks 30th anniversary

CATBALOGAN CITY, Samar - The 8th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army marked its 30th anniversary Wednesday at Camp Vicente Lukban here. A wreath-laying ceremony in honor of the 10 8th ID soldiers who were killed in military operations this year and the awarding of merit medals to troops and civilians highlighted the event. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu, a retired Army general, was the guest of honor at the rites. Cimatu lauded the 8th ID for recognizing the heroes who sacrificed their lives for the country, as well as the "living heroes" for their accomplishments. The division's area of operation covers 135 municipalities, 10 of which are accessible only by boat or helicopter. It also has the most number of barangays among all Army divisions with 4,315. It has three tactical brigades (801st, 802nd and 803rd Infantry Brigades) and seven infantry battalions (14th, 20th, 43rd, 52nd, 63rd, 78th and 87th IB) deployed in Samar, and three infantry battalions (19th, 34th and 48th IB) fighting secessionist groups in Mindanao. Cimatu thanked the troops for helping DENR in its campaigns against illegal logging and in enforcing environmental laws. "We must continue the vigilance against any threats to ensure optimum use of our natural resources and common heritage," he said. The division commander, Major Gen. Raul Fernando, vowed continued support for all DENR programs that benefit the communities especially in farming the great. (Marie Tonette Grace Martiod)

Soldiers' ambushers pursued

BUTUAN CITY - Pursuit operations against suspected Communist New People's Army on Tuesday went

into high gear near Mt. Kalatungan Mountain in Butuanor province. The Army's 403rd Infantry Brigade

mobilized more combat troops after NPA fighters ambushed troops from the Army's First Special Forces Battalion Monday. Three soldiers were slightly wounded.

The soldiers were going after fleeing guerrillas who staged a predawn harassment attack on the battalion's patrol base on Monday but were waylaid by an undetermined number of NPAs on the same day in Sitio Mapat, Barangay New Eden of Pangantucan town.

The troops fought back forcing the ambushers to retreat, a field report said.

After the clash, government forces recovered an empty rifle grenade launcher case, ammunitions and other high-powered firearms.

Operating government troops reported evidence obtained from the clash site such as blood stains showed that the NPA suffered casualties.

The wounded soldiers, whose identities were temporarily withheld, were brought to the Bukidnon Provincial Hospital in nearby Maramag town. They were later declared out of danger it was learned.

Troops from the 403rd Brigade are being assisted by the Bukidnon Police Provincial Office and Pangantucan Municipal Police Station (MPS) in going after the NPA ambushers. Mike U. Crismundo

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AFP dismisses IS claim of suicide bombing

By Julie Alipala
@alipalajulieINC

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The Islamic State (IS) jihadi group has claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing that killed 11 people in Lamitan City, Basilan province, but the military on Wednesday quickly dismissed the claim as propaganda and instead blamed the local bandit group Abu Sayyaf.

Hours after the early Tuesday attack that killed a soldier, five government militiamen and four civilians including a mother and her child, and the suspected bomber himself, the IS Amaq news agency reported that IS was responsible for the attack, according to a US monitor.

In a statement, IS called the suicide attack a martyrdom operation, said Site Intelligence Group, a US company that tracks online activities of jihadist organizations.

Moroccan 'executor'

Site said the terror group identified a Moroccan as the 'executor' of the bombing who used a "suicide vehicle-borne IED (improvised explosive de-

vice)" which was detonated close to a military checkpoint in Lamitan after the van was pulled over by militiamen.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Danilo Galvez Jr. who was visiting Zamboanga City on Wednesday, dismissed the claim.

"We saw the Amaq reports. They claim everything and they are doing that to heighten up the support provided to them; but we can see that the support of (IS) in Basilan is waning," Galvez told reporters at the Western Mindanao Command headquarters.

"It's clear, very glaring that the one who perpetrated this is a local terrorist of Basilan. When we said that it's a suicide bomber, of 'foreign looking' suicide bomber, is not convincing," he added.

According to him, it was "very unlikely" for a foreigner to drive a van into an urban/militia place.

'Peace spoilers'

The military's stance suggests that beyond anyone else, the attack could have been the handwork of Abu Sayyaf or



BOMBING SITE Government forces inspect the site of a bomb explosion that killed 11 people in Lamitan City, Basilan province, on Tuesday. —AP

"peace spoilers."
"It's very hard for other groups to hop on the issue. The IS claiming responsibility could be just propaganda," he said.

The Western Command chief, Maj. Gen. Daniel dela Vega, said the identification of the driver as "Caucasian-looking" was just an "afterthought."

"How will they troops man-

ning the checkpoint be able to identify that driver was a Caucasian? It was still dark," Dela Vega said, referring to the time of the blast, which was around 3:45 a.m. on Tuesday.

"We are just terrorizing ourselves. There is no definite and factual evidence that it's foreign looking," he said.

According to Dela Vega, the

driver "may have been just a courier."

He said the bomb components were placed in two 20-liter containers and one big kettle of suspected ammonium nitrate rigged to explode inside the van.

Powerful bomb

The bomb was so powerful that it obliterated the van, gouged a small crater on the ground and sent parts of the vehicle as far as 1.5 kilometers away from the blast site, which was just a few meters from the Magwakit Patrol Base at Barangay Bulanting, Vice Mayor Rodrick Furigay told the inquirer.

"It's heartbreaking to secure or pick up pieces of flesh, bones, strands of hair and other parts of the bodies," Furigay said of efforts to recover the remains of those killed in the explosion.

Sen Panfilo Lacson, a former Philippine National Police chief, on Tuesday said the attack could be the first suicide bombing in the country and this could start "a trend ... of terroristic acts that could hit other highly populated urban centers."

He urged a deeper probe into the attack.

US Ambassador Sam Kim condemned the bombing, calling it a "terrorist act" and expressed sympathies to the victims.

The US government remains committed to working with Filipinos "to further the causes of peace and prosperity," Kim said in a statement on Twitter on Wednesday.

Bangsamoro law

Tuesday's blast was a "horrifying attack" and a "cowardly act," said opposition Sen Risa Honson, who said the attack should not derail moves toward Muslim self-determination under the recently approved Bangsamoro Organic Law.

The bombing was a sign extremists were bent on sabotaging a peace effort that had a chance of success, according to security expert Rommel Bantaoil.

"These pro-Islamist State militants will pose a tremendous challenge for the implementation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law," Bantaoil said.

—WITH REPORTS FROM FRINSON LIM,
JEFFREY MAITEM AND DIVINA SU-
SON IN MINDANAO, DONA Z. PAZ-
IBUGAN IN MANILA AND
REUTERS IN A 2

AFP chief: ISIS not behind Basilan blast

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY - The military yesterday dismissed claims that the Islamic State (IS) was behind the car bomb attack that killed 11 people in Basilan. Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Carlito Galvez said the IS was claiming every terror attack as part of its

propaganda to gain more support.

"They are claiming everything. Even what happened in Manila, they were claiming to have had a hand in it. They are doing it to heighten the support and to show that they are still there," Galvez said.

He also discounted the possibility that the supposed suicide

Turn to Page 6

AFP chief From Page 1

bomber in last Tuesday's attack was a foreigner.

An anti-terror official, however, maintained the suicide bomber was a foreigner, bolstering claims and identifying the slain suspect as Abu Kafir Al-Maghrib, a Moroccan jihadist.

But some officials stressed it might be possible that the driver of the van was just a courier of the bomb.

"So it is not conclusive that it was a suicide bomber and it's not conclusive the suspect was a foreigner," Galvez said.

He stressed initial reports that the suicide bomber was foreign looking are not conclusive.

"And for a foreigner to drive alone was unlikely," he added.

A bomb-laden van driven by a suspected militant went off in a powerful blast Tuesday in Lamitan that killed 11 people, including a soldier, five militiamen and the driver.

Initial reports said the driver was unable to speak the local Yakan dialect or even Tagalog to the troops manning the checkpoint, prompting them to hold him for further questioning

The reports were based on claims by a couple that saw the van pass by but had not seen the driver.

The foreign looking (driver) was just an afterthought just to highlight but it's not conclusive," Galvez said.

He said the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) had intelligence reports and evidence indicating the Abu Sayyaf was behind the car bomb attack.

He said the assessment of the military was clear that the IS has nothing to do with the deadly bombing attack.

Galvez said the Abu Sayyaf was behind the bombing attack to frighten local officials in Basilan into financing its war chest.

He said the Abu Sayyaf lost support from the local officials who stopped paying the monthly P50,000 "protection fee"

"Based on the information and report, they were asking P50,000 each of the LGLs and that single action was used to threaten the mayors," he said.

Galvez revealed the Abu Sayyaf is targeting at least

three areas, including Lamitan and Isabela.

Special Assistant to the President Christopher Go said President Duterte has scheduled a command conference today to discuss the developments in the Lamitan car bombing. Go also gave assurance on the immediate release of financial assistance to the blast victims, including the militiamen and the wounded soldiers.

Locally made

Officials said several bomb fragments were recovered from the blast site that would help determine the signature of the bomb.

The slain driver was carrying an IED composed of 60 kilos of ammonium nitrate fuel oil stacked on three 20-liter containers and a large cassette, officials said.

Galvez said the bomb signature was traced to the Abu Sayyaf.

Westmincom chief Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega added the components of the IED could be bought locally and could be easily fabricated.

Regional military spokesman Lt. Col. Gerry Besana said the driver could have waited

for "a more opportune time to inflict harm on a bigger number of people."

Besana was referring to the still unidentified driver, who also died in the blast. "That's their death wish... the more, the merrier."

Officials are still clueless on the identity of the driver.

Galvez added investigators believe the driver of the van wanted a more target-rich environment to carry out the attack.

He pointed out that on the day of the attack, some 4,000 children with their parents and teachers were expected to attend a gathering at the Lamitan City plaza to celebrate nutrition month.

The Abu Sayyaf, founded in the late 1980s in Basilan, is notoriously known for bombings, ransom kidnappings and beheadings of foreigners.

The bandit group has been weakened by government offensives and surrenders but remains a national security threat - With Jaime Laude, John Unson, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Rudy Santos, Pia Lee-Brago, Helen Flores, Sheila Crisostomo, Michael Punongbayan

Lamitan to tighten security following bombing

By **NONOY F. LACSON**

LAMITAN CITY, Basilan — Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay on Wednesday called on the police and military to strengthen stricter security measures for the city following the deadly bombing attack at a checkpoint Tuesday.

Furigay also asked residents to be calm and vigilant and report to authorities the presence of suspicious-looking

persons in their neighborhood.

He said the move will help thwart any attack planned by the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf.

Furigay said the car bomb attack Tuesday was a wake-up call to the province's security forces and the city's residents as well to keep their guard up.

He condemned what he described as the dastardly act of terrorists to kill, maim, and injure innocent civilians in

the city.

On Tuesday morning, homemade explosives in a van were detonated while the vehicle was being inspected by soldiers and members of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (Cafgu) at a checkpoint about 2 kilometers from the city proper.

A soldier and five Cafgu members were killed.

Four civilian dependents of the Cafgu members were also killed in

the blast.

Another Cafgu member was wounded while six other members of 9th Scout Ranger Company sustained shrapnel wounds.

Chief of Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said those manning the checkpoint foiled an attempt to drive the van to downtown Lamitan—at the cost of their own lives.

The WestMindCom commander, Lt. Gen. Arnel de la Vega, said he has

committed all the resources under his command to thwart attempts by terrorists to disrupt the peace in Western Mindanao.

De la Vega called on "our people to be vigilant and continue their active participation with security forces in reporting their observations."

"We encourage them to notify the AFP and the PNP for any suspicious people or activities happening in their locality," he said. | 2

ARMM cops, airports on full alert in wake of Basilan blast

A FULL alert was raised at the Police Regional Office in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao after the bombing incident in Basilan on Tuesday morning that killed 11 people.

Authorities also enforced the security at the four terminals of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport following the bombing incident in Lamitan, Basilan.

"We advise the public to just go through the usual airport procedures without minding these enhancements. What we are doing is not intended to alarm them," said Manila International

Airport Authority general manager Eddie Monreal.

In a statement, PRO ARMM Regional Director Graciano Mijares said additional checkpoints will be established, existing check points will be strengthened and additional personnel will be deployed on foot and aboard mobile patrols in the highly populated areas.

In other developments:

- President Rodrigo Duterte on Wednesday ordered the military to intensify its search-and-destroy operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group following the bomb attack in Basilan. *Next page*

ARMM...

From A2

An international security analyst on Wednesday attributed to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria the bombing at a military checkpoint in Lamitan.

International security analyst Rommel Banlaon claimed the "suicide" bombing was done by a Moroccan national, according to a report by Allan Gatus on Dobo: B sa News TV.

The police force will coordinate with private security providers and security managers to establish joint security protocols while the intelligence monitoring and sharing of information will be intensified.

Mijares also said a special investigation task group will be activated to look into the bombing incident in which 11 were killed including the driver of the van.

"We are in deep sadness at this moment. This incident is an act to ruin the recent ratification and enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law that will pave way for achieving lasting peace in Muslim Mindanao," he said. **Joel E. Zurbano and Francisco Tuyay**

Basilan blast: Sayyaf wants extortion money

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

AFP military commander said the bombing in Zamboanga City in Basilan Province, which was being blamed on the Abu Sayyaf, was meant to force officials of cities and towns in the province to pay ransom to avert a demand of the militant group.

Government officials in Basilan, who have been mobilized and recruited, used to give about P500,000 a month to the Abu Sayyaf to protect their homes, but all of them recently stopped paying, and the Abu Sayyaf has been spreading fear in the Eastern Samarina Peninsula.

During the official's paragraph, the Abu Sayyaf demanded P10 million for the release of the hostages.

The Abu Sayyaf, which has a main group and sub-groups which must be protected, said they will have the authority to demand money from the Basilan officials.

"We are monitoring the activities of our group to subject our coordination with a local government," he said, without giving details on the location of the sub-group in the area and its members.

The group is a group of persons from the

region, he said.

The Abu Sayyaf group is a group of many Muslims in the area and belonging to a group of people from the Basilan Province, which is a province in Mindanao province and part of the Abu Sayyaf, which has a main group.

Local government officials AFP spokesman said the Abu Sayyaf want to make it appear that it is still a force to reckon with.

"We have consistent reports that point to the Abu Sayyaf as the group responsible for the Basilan province and the explosion," the AFP wanted to ensure the decline in their manpower and financial resources from recruiting, training, operations, and capable of further attacks, said a senior AFP official.

The military estimates the Abu Sayyaf has about 40 members, with at least 100 bases, during this time alone.

Defense Secretary Delfino Lorenzana appointed a task force to investigate the circumstances around the explosion as investigations are being carried out into the incident.

Reports on the explosion state carried the bombing was carried out by a "suicide attack."

Although we are not pausing during the investigation, all of them are not sure speculation is not true and are not the subject of an investigation, he said, conducted by a group of the AFP and PNP, he said.

"It is not our intent that the explosive did not reach the target because of our strategy to force the withdrawal of them from

Sp. BASILAN Page 51

BASILAN

the ultimate goal for protecting our people and their reach out to all the fixed ones they have left behind," he also said.

Arevalo said reports linking the bombing to the Islamic State was propaganda of the terrorists. He said even reports which state the driver of the van that exploded in front of a para-military detachment was a foreigner is baseless.

"We have no formal report or that it is very easy for any group to claim the explosion. Again, we are not discounting that possibility. We will not have to wait for the outcome of the investigation," he added.

The reported incident could

not be described as a "hone week attack" or a "suicide bombing" since there were many possible ways by which the explosive inside the van was triggered, including that the driver himself accidentally detonated the bomb, a cohort of the driver detonated the bomb from a distance, or the collusion of the para-military forces could have accidentally triggered it.

Arevalo also clarified there were 10 fatalities, not 11, after it was found out that one of the civilian-military volunteers, who was reported dead, merely passed out after the explosion.

The explosion occurred in front of the Maguindao detachment of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Sitio

Maganda, Barangay Colonia, in Lamitan.

CAFGU men manning a checkpoint stopped the van and were talking to the driver when the vehicle exploded.

POST-BLAST REPORT

Besana said based on post-blast investigation, the van was carrying three IEDs made from ammonium nitrate and gasoline, which were placed in three 20-liter plastic containers.

The triggering device has not been determined.

Before the explosion, Besana said, based on field reports, the van experienced engine trouble as it was approaching a large check-

point. At that point, the van driver got off the vehicle and requested assistance from the volunteer military forces to help him push the van nearer to the detachment.

When the CAFGUs approached the vehicle, they noticed winches which were connected to the 20-liter gasoline containers.

"When the CAFGUs saw the winches, some of them started to question the driver while one of them hurriedly rode a motorcycle and headed for the Scout Ranger detachment, which was some 500 away from the para-military detachment, to seek help," Besana said.

The IEDs went off when the Scout Rangers were still some 50 meters from the van.

Senators voice concern over Basilan car bombing

By MARIO CASAYURAN

Members of the Senate majority bloc said yesterday the car bombing in Basilan that killed at least 10 people and a suspected foreign suicide bomber at a checkpoint last July 1 underscores the need to strengthen the military's intelligence operations to prevent similar incidents in the future and to ensure peace and security in the country.

"It is difficult to stop further suicide bombings. From where I come from, it's intelligence, intelligence, intelligence, intelligence should prompt the government forces to do some pro-active offense. There's no other way because if you are not pro-active, you'll be caught five-footed," Sen. Panfilo M. Lacson, a former Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, said.

Lacson said the incident is

frightening and worrisome because it is the first time a suicide bombing case occurred in the Philippines.

"My fear is, what if there is a spillover to highly populated urban centers? Then we have a big problem," Lacson, chairman of the Senate public order and dangerous drugs committee, said.

After condemning the suicide bombing, Senator Richard J. Gordon advised the government in general, especially the security officers, to step up their intelligence and security capabilities, especially government installations.

"Because who knows, once it is confirmed to be a suicide bombing case, then we should really step up," he added.

Gordon, chairman of the Senate justice and human rights committee, said such act of terrorism, which is an indiscriminate attack, violates the International Human-

itarian Law and our domestic law — Republic Act 9851 or the Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes Against Humanity, which he authored.

"My heart-felt condolences to the bereaved families of the victims. I urge the government to give justice for their untimely deaths by bolstering our Armed Forces' capability so that the military would be more effective in defending the country against internal and external threats. The PNP and other security forces should also have improved capability to ensure peace and order," he added.

The incident came days after President Duterte signed into law the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) that was seen to reduce or stop secessionist ambitions of some Bangsamoro groups and bring peace to war-torn Muslim Mindanao.

Whole Mindanao is still covered by President Duterte's martial declaration. It was declared when a Muslim terrorist group laid siege to Marawi city last year.

On whether martial law in Mindanao helped the situation, Lacson said: "If at all, psychologically. Because martial law or no martial law, if you look at the provisions in the Constitution, there are no extra powers available to the President because the writ of habeas corpus has not been suspended."

"There are no warrantless arrests. More than what is really in the Bill of Rights or in the Constitution or in the existing rules and existing laws," he added.

Lacson stressed that martial law is helping the administration of President Duterte because as I said at least psychologically, people are showing some obedience to the military.

AFP wary of Lamitan bombing claimants

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Wednesday said that any terrorist group or organization can conveniently claim responsibility on the deadly blast in Lamitan, Basilan which left 10 people dead and rids on the incident for their own glorification.

AFP Spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo made the remark after

the Islamic State reportedly claim responsibility over the attack.

In a statement carried by its Amag news agency, Islamic State claimed responsibility for the Tuesday's bombing, which it called "a martyrdom operation".

"Jumping into it will be like aiding their narrative and lending themselves (the people) as instruments of

terrorists' propaganda," Arevalo said.

Nevertheless, we are not discounting the possibility that they (ISIS) are indeed responsible – just as there is also a possibility that other group besides the Abu Sayyaf Group could be responsible in that dastardly and cowardly terrorist act."

Arevalo said that they have received persistent reports that point to the Abu Sayyaf as the group responsible to the IED (Improvised Explosive Device) Explosion in Lamitan City, Basilan.

This after their demand for ₱50,000 in extortion money was refused by local government.

Arevalo said the blast happened moments after troops stopped the van that was allegedly loaded with improvised explosives. The driver, who was alone during the time of the incident, allegedly detonated the bomb.

Arevalo said a detachment commander, four Civilian Armed Auxilliary members and four of their relatives or dependents perished in the explosion.

A suspected Abu Sayyaf member who was the driver of the van that exploded also perished in the incident. (Francis T. Wakefield)

TARGET SA BASILAN BOMBING

Dumadalo sa 'Nutrition Month' —int'l security expert

NI BETH CAMIA

Ang mga batang dumalo sa feeding program bilang bahagi ng pagdiriwang ng Nutrition Month ang puntirya ng pambobomba sa Lamitan City sa Basilan, nitong Martes ng umaga.

Ito ang ipinahayag ni international security expert, Prof. Romme Barlaoi.

Ayon kay Barlaoi, ito ay base sa nakalap nilang impormasyon na mas marami pa sana ang nasawi kung hindi naharang ang sasakyang kinalululanan ng suicide bomber, na kabilang sa nasawi sa insidente.

"Ang target tulaga nila ay ang feeding program kung kaya pinaigting ang checkpoint," paliwanag ni Barlaoi, na ang tinutukoy ay ang mga batang dumadalo sa Nutrition Month celebration sa lugar.

Aniya, hindi rin malayong

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) ang nasa likod ng naturang pag-atake.

Sinabi ni Barlaoi na hindi basta-basta umaako ang ISIS ng pag-atakeng hindi nila suportado o hindi sila ang may gawa.

"Sa pag-aaral po sa ginagawa ng ISIS sa mga pag-claim nila, hindi nagki-claim ang ISIS ng mga insidente na wala silang sanction o hindi nila pinapahintulutan o hindi nila sinusupportahan. Maaaring mag-exaggerate sila sa mga detalye, i-overflow nila ang mga insidente, pero hindi sila magki-claim ng something na hindi kanila. Kaya ako sa aking pag-aaral ng mga previous attacks nila malakas ang aking paniniwala na may kaugnayan sila, hindi lamang dahil kini-claim nila ang pag-atake sa Lamitan, kundi may mga prior information

akong nakuha na meron talagang plano na magsagawa ng ganivan klaseng insidente sa area na iyan with assistance of foreign terrorist personality," dagdag pa ni Barlaoi.

Nanawagan naman kahapon si Lamitan City vice mayor Roderick Furigay sa pulisya at militar na paigtingin pa ang seguridad sa lugar, upang maprotektahan ang mamamayan sa posible pang-terroristic attack.

Umapela rin siya sa publiko na i-report agad ang mga kahinahinala sa kanilang komunidad.

"We encourage them to notify the AFP and the PNP for any suspicious people or activities happening in their locality to preempt any terroristic attack," sabi pa ni Furigay.

May ulat ni
Nonoy E. Lacson



Extortion motibo ng car bomb sa Basilan

Smisilip ng otomada na ang motibo ng car bomb sa Lamitan City, Basilan na ikinasaw ng 10 kata-kabilang ang bomber ay dahil umano sa kabiguan umano ng mga teroristang Abu Sayyaf Group na maka-

pangkil ng P50,000 mula sa mga opisyal ng lokal na pamahalaan.

Ito ang inihayag ka- hapon ni AFP Spokes- man Col. Edgard Arevalo matapos na personal na magtungo si AFP Chief of

Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez sa lunsod ng AFP West- ern Mindanao Command sa lungsod ng Zambo- anga upang alamin ang resulta ng imbestigasyon at magbigay ng karagda- gang direktiba sa military

operations.

Manasabing isa sa mga bomber ng grupo ni Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) Commander Furuji In- dama ang nasa likod ng madugong pagpapasabog ng bomba na lulan ng

isang van na dumaan sa checkpoint sa Brgy. Coto- nia, Lamitan City noong Martes.

Sa nasabing insidente ay patay ang isang sundalo at apat na CAFGU, apat na sibilyan na pamilya ng mga

CAFGU at ang hindi na nakilalang bomber.

Nilinaw naman ni Are- valo na 10 kamang ang patay taliwas sa napaulat na 11 ang kabuuang patay matapos na bumangon ang sugatang CAFGU na si Gerry Inso

na nawalan lamang pal- ng ulrat sa tindi ng pin- salang tinatago sa pagsabog. Siya naman ang naru- gatan na kinabibilangan ng dalaw ang CAFGU, limang sundalo at isang sibilyan. -Joy Camos-

ISIS umamin sa car bombing

Inak ng Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) ang madugong pagpapasabog ng isang van sa checkpoint sa Lantoran City, Basilan, Marang Maras.

Base sa statement ng Aman News Agency inak ng ISIS ang pamhabor na umahap sa car suicide bombing ahead ng isa pang terorbang may mga bang bahag ng kamang mayidon, corporation.

NI JOY CANTOS

"Thawag naman ng militar na propaganda ang ginawang pag-ako ng ISIS.

Any terrorist group or organization can conveniently claim responsibility and hide on the incident for their own glorification. Jumping into it will be misleading their narratives and lending themselves (the people) to their terrorist

propaganda," pahayag ni AFP spokesman Col. Edgar Arevalo.

Ca kabilang, ay hindi kinasama ng AFP ng ISIS ang responsable sa pamhabor.

"Nevertheless, we are not discounting the possibility that they (ISIS) are indeed responsible—just as there is also a possibility that other group

beyond the Abu Sayyaf Group could be responsible in that dastardly and cowardly terrorist act," ani Arevalo.

Ninaw naman si Arevalo ng 10 lathalaing ang kasawa at hindi ito tulad ng napathala.

Sa kasabing may mga pang sundalo, pagka CAFGU ang mga bang bahag ng ISIS CAFGU at ang bantog ang kasawa.

PNP on alert vs bomb attacks

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) has directed regional police offices to be on alert to prevent attacks, a day after a car bomb explosion killed 11 in Lamitan City, Basilan.

"I already gave a directive to our regions to intensify their police presence because it is very important. They should also intensify their Oplan Sita and their checkpoint operations," PNP Chief Oscar Albayalde told reporters on Wednesday.

He added that the police also intensified its intelligence gathering to prevent bombing incidents.

Albayalde said the police and military are confirming reports that the Abu Sayyaf Group deployed bombs nationwide.

"These are unconfirmed reports. We get reports but those are all raw information," he said.

Military spokesman Col. Edgar Arevalo said the driver of the white van that exploded was a member of the Abu Sayyaf.

"Nevertheless, we are not discounting the possibility that the ISIS is responsible, just as there is also a possibility that other groups could be responsible in that dastardly and cowardly terrorist act," he added.

However, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said the National Security Council does not need to convene because of the Basilan incident.

"In instances like that, there is no need for us to convene since the ground commanders can

handle the situation," he told reporters in a phone interview.

Esperon said President Rodrigo Duterte wants the military and the police to intensify their operations against the Abu Sayyaf in Mindanao.

"The President wants intensified operations and more data on the incident in Basilan," he said. "We may also visit Basilan on Friday and this might include President Duterte," he added.

Assistance

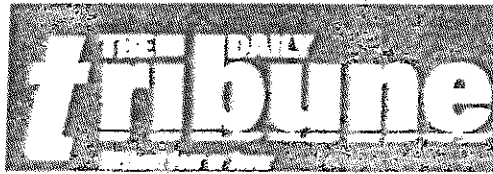
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Wednesday said it would provide assistance to the victims of the blast in Lamitan City.

The ICRC said it would provide materials such as dressing kits, intravenous fluids and infusion, and other medical supplies to the wounded civilians.

"We are saddened by this incident and condole with the families of those who were killed. Civilians must never be targeted. They are not part of the fighting and are protected under international humanitarian law (IHL)," Piotr Diegeci, head of the ICRC office in Zamboanga, said in a statement.

"The main purpose of IHL is to maintain some humanity in conflict. Without respect for IHL, civilians will continue to suffer," he added.

DEMPSEY REYES, ROY D.R.
NARRA AND NEIL ALCOBER



AFP not ready to buy IS claim

By Mario J. Mallari
and Kathleen Mae Buiquerin

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said it will not discount other groups, apart from the pro-Islamic State (IS) Abu Sayyaf (ASG), as being

behind the foiled attack in Lamitan City, Basilan that claimed the lives of 11 people, including the suspected terrorist.

The IS owned up to the attack in the terror group's *Amag* news agency describing it as a "martyrdom operation."

AFP spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said any terrorist group or organization can conveniently claim responsibility and ride on the incident for its own glorification.

"Jumping into it will be like aiding their narrative and lending themselves (the people) as instruments of terrorists' propaganda," Arevalo said.

"Nevertheless, we are not discounting the possibility that they (IS) are indeed

responsible — just as there is also a possibility that other groups besides the Abu Sayyaf Group could be responsible for that dastardly and cowardly terrorist act," he added.

Reports indicated troops near the Magwakit Detachment in Barangay Colonia, Lamitan City intercepted a white van containing improvised explosive device (IED) around 5:50 a.m. last Tuesday.

The vehicle exploded while undergoing inspection, killing one soldier, five CAFGU and four civilians, including the driver — who was believed to be the suspect. Also wounded were one CAFGU and six members

Turn to page 2

AFP not ready to buy IS claim

From page 1

of the 9th Scout Ranger Company.

The IED were intended for targets in downtown Lamitan City and masterminded by veteran ASG leader Furuji Indama. Arevalo earlier had said.

Terror group thins out

He added the attack was in response to the growing number of ASG terrorists voluntarily surrendering to government forces and causing the bandit group to lose ground in Basilan.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana condemned the bombing but he urged the public not to jump into conclusion on the incident, saying that investigators should be allowed to do their job.

"Although we are not discounting them entirely, all of these are just pure speculations at this time and are now the subject of an investigation being conducted by a joint team of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police," Lorenzana said.

IS threatened

“
*The
 challenge
 for Rodry is
 to manage
 expectations
 and the
 possible
 frustrations.*

The suicide bombing that killed 11 persons in Lamitan, Basilan and which the Islamic State (IS) claims as a “martyrdom operation” shows the terror group is threatened by the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

It was the first such terror attack from a lone bomber and there were indications that he was a foreign militant, a sign that the IS plans to import terror techniques that are hitherto unknown to the country.

The suspected bomber, a soldier, five paramilitary troopers and four civilians, including a mother and her child, were killed. Seven others were wounded in the blast.

The IS in a statement carried by its *Amaq* news agency claimed responsibility for the bombing attack.

A soldier who witnessed the attack said the driver spoke in an unfamiliar dialect raising suspicion that he was a foreign terrorist.

During the five-month siege of Marawi City last year, several IS foreign fighters were reported to have relocated from the Middle East terror operations that have been defeated by a US-led coalition.

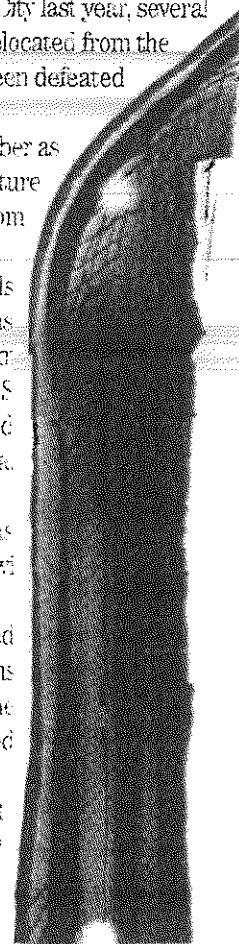
The IS news channel identified the bomber as Abu Kathir al-Maghrebi and posted a picture of him. It also said the “martyr” was from Morocco.

Armed Forces of the Philippines officials blamed the Abu Sayyaf Group which has pledged allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Abu Sayyaf provided the IS access to its local network and thus helped the terror group grow in Southeast Asia, according to experts.

Abu Sayyaf head Isnilon Hapilon was killed during an encounter in the Marawi City battle.

International groups, including the United Nations, warned that the Philippines remains a destination for foreign fighters after the Marawi City attack which was orchestrated by the pro-IS Maute group.

The van was stopped at a checkpoint that prevented the bomber from inflicting more casualties since the military believes its intended target was downtown Lamitan.



The IS is banking on the discontent in the Muslim regions to recruit fighters and spread its extremist ideology in Mindanao.

The IS threat was contained with the decisive move of President Rodrigo Duterte to impose martial law in Mindanao despite the usual potshots from his yellow critics.

The allegations against Rody were effectively silenced by the acknowledgement from the international community that his swift action nipped in the bud what could have been a regional terror threat had the IS established a base in Mindanao.

The BOL seeks to provide autonomy to the Muslim regions and, according to Rody, render to the Moro people a historical justice.

The attack being claimed by the IS is an admission from the terror group of the BOL's high chance of success and that it is bent on sabotaging the effort to set up the autonomous region.

The government should then take the attack as a cue to work harder and faster to set up the Bangsamoro to keep the terrorists at bay.

“
International groups, including the United Nations, warned that the Philippines remains a destination for foreign fighters.

The succeeding steps towards the implementation of the BOL is crucial, including the campaign to have the Bangsamoro autonomous region accepted by those who will vote for it.

The challenge for Rody is to manage expectations and the possible frustrations that may arise from the region that will have greater autonomy than the Autonomous

Region in Muslim Mindanao that it will replace.

The IS is expected to lurk like a wolf to take advantage of any mistake that may arise from the forming of the Bangsamoro region.

That the IS needed a foreign "martyr" to undertake the dastardly act raises the hope that the terror operations would be limited due to the lack of local support.

The IS ideology may have been embraced by some leaders of local extremist groups but not their fighters.

Still, the IS remains a threat since it is in the process of indoctrinating Filipino Muslims to accept its violent ways.

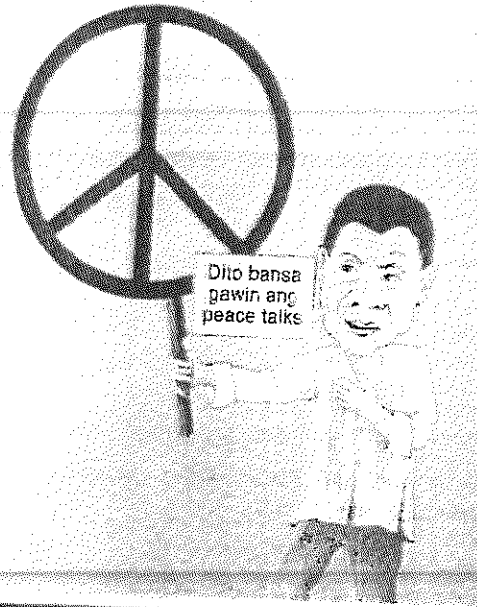
The Bangsamoro plan is the only potent antidote to the ambitions of the IS in the country.

Editorial

Localized talks sa NPA, isulong

KUNG magtatagumpay ang pakikipag-usap ng Duterte administration sa mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA), maaring dito na magsimula ang pangmatagalang kapayapaan sa bansa. Balak ng pamahalaan na ang mga NPA rebels na lamang ang kausapin para sa kapayapaan at hindi na ang founding chairman ng Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) na si Jose Maria Sison. Hang beses nang naunsiyami ang peace talks dahil maraming hindi pinagkakasunduan ang dalawang panig. Bawat isa sa kanila ay mayroong pinaninindigan.

Gusto ni President Duterte na sa bansa gawin ang peace talks dahil narito ang problema pero ayaw pumayag ni Sison. Nagpatigasan na sila. Hanggang sa ang naka-schedule na peace talks noong Hunyo ay



suspendehin ni Duterte. Hanggang sa tuluyan nang mapurnada ang pag-usap.

Naisip ng pamahalaan, sa halip na makipag-usap kay Sison, sa mga pinuno na lang ng NPA rebels makipag-usap. Bakasakaling ang pakikipag-usap sa mga rebelde ang maging daan sa pangmatagalang kapayapaan. Matagal nang namumundok ang mga rebelde at patakbu-takbo. Kulang sila sa pagkain at iba pang pangangailangan. Dahil sa kakulangan ng pondo, itan sa kanila ang nangungolekta ng revolutionary tax. Habang sila ay patakbu-takbo at kinukulang sa pangangailangan, nasa masarap namang kalagayan ang kanilang chairman. Tila ba hindi naaalala ang dinaranas ng kanyang armed wing sa mga liblib na lugar.

Posible naman ang pamahalaan na makipag-usap ang mga rebelde. Ayon sa military, marami na umano ang nagnanais sumuko at bumalik sa tahimik na buhay. Patuloy umano ang military sa paghikayat sa mga rebelde na magkaroon sila ng pag-usap sa kapayapaan. Hindi umano sila magsasawa sa pagkumbinsi sa mga ito sa kabila na sinabi ng NPA na hindi sila makikipag-usap sa Duterte administration. Ayaw nila sa local peace talks.

Hindi dapat ibasura ang balak na localized peace talks at sa halip, isulong ito. Maaring magbago ang isip ng mga rebelde at sumunod sa aloi ng gobierno. Kailangan pa ang tiyaga para makamit ang kapayapaan.

Editorial**Maging alerto
at mapagmatyag**

ABU Sayyaf ang itinuturong may kagagawan ng pambobomba sa Lamitan City, Basilan noong Martes ng umaga na ikinamatay ng 10 tao. Isa sa mga namatay ay sundalo, limang militiamen at apat na sibilyan. Sumabog ang bomba na nasa loob ng van malapit sa patrol base ng mga sundalo. Ayon sa military, pinara ng militiamen sa checkpoint ang isang van na may kargang dalawang drum at malaking kettles. Hindi umano makapagsalita nang maayos ang driver ng van nang tanungin ng militiamen kaya tinawag ang kanilang superiors para ito maintindihan. Napansin din na hindi rin daw mapakali ang driver habang tinatanong nila.

Nang lumabas ang sundalong superior, biglang sumambulat ang van. Sa lakas ng pagsabog, nagkaroon ng uka sa lupa. Nakabulagta ang mga biktima pagketapos. Patay din ang driver ng van na ayon sa military ay mukhang foreigner. Ayon pa sa military, cell phone ang ginamit na device para pasabugin ang van. Naganap ang pagsabog dakong 5:45 ng umaga. Sa lakas ng pagsabog, may mga namatay ding hayop sa paligid.

Ayon kay Sen. Panfilo Lacson, ang nangyari ay unang kaso ng suicide bombing at kung hindi maagapan ang ganitong paraan, maaaring ulitin pa sa ibang matataong lugar. Kailangan daw maging mahusay ang gobyerno sa pag-detect ng ganitong gawain. Paghusayin ang intelligence para mapangalagaan ang seguridad.

Tama si Lacson. Bilang dating PNP chief alam niya kung paano ang gagawin sa ganitong sitwasyon. Nararapat paghusayan ng military ang paghanap ng impormasyon para mahuli ang nasa likod ng pambobomba. Tiyak na mga Abu Sayyaf ang may kagagawan ng karumal-dumal na pagpapasabog.

Maging alerto at mapagmatyag naman ang mamamayan. Marami nang pangyayaring sumabog ang bomba sa karanohan ng tao. Nangyari ang LFT bombing noong Dec. 30, 2000 na ikinamatay ng mga pasahero. May nangyari na ring Valentine bombing kung saan iniwan sa bus ang bomba. Mayroon nang aral ang ganitong pambombomba kaya kabeag may nakitang kahine-hinatang bagay sa bus, building o plaza isagbigay-alam sa mga awtoridad.

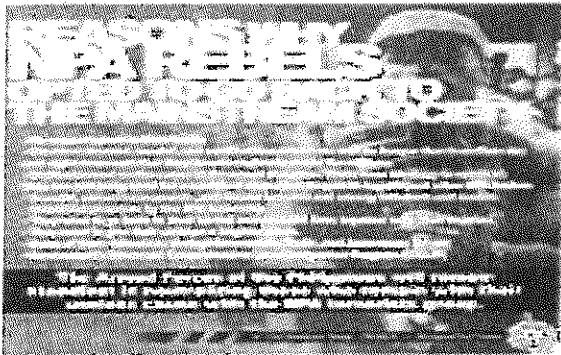
ONLINE NEWS

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REASONS WHY NPA REBELS OPTED TO GO BACK TO THE MAINSTREAM SOCIETY

Alvin Santos



- No support given to their family
- Constant physical, mental, and emotional weariness as well as hunger due to endless day and night movement that they have to endure to evade the military.
- Disillusionment on the cause of the armed struggles. There is no ideology to speak of: they are just being used for a senseless cause that targets to benefit just a few NPA leaders
- Scandal, sexual harassments, and abuses between and among members and leaders
- Unfulfilled promises by the NPA leadership
- They want to go back to their normal and peaceful lives together with their families.
- They want to give their children a brighter future.
- Some of them influences through Newsmedia, Radio, and Awareness Drives
- Government's Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP)

The Armed Forces of the Philippines will remain steadfast in neutralizing those who remain with their useless cause with the NPA terrorists group. CRSAFP / MCAG

TAGS: NPA

MEETING | Maguindanao Provincial Peace and Order Council

Alvin Serrano

BULUAN, Maguindanao (DWDD) – The Office of the Maguindanao Provincial Governor conducts joint Provincial Development Council (PDC), Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC) and Provincial Anti-Drug Abuse Council (PADAC) Meeting presided by Governor Esmael G. Mangudadatu.



The meeting was attended by Brigadier General Cirilito E. Sobejana, Commander of 6th Infantry "Kampilan" Division and party held at BBJM Hotel Function Hall, Buluan, Maguindanao on July 31, 2018. **6DPAO / MCAG**

TAGS:

<https://www.philstar.com/>

Philippines orders heightened security in air, sea terminals after Basilan blast

philstar.com • August 1, 2018 • 6:02pm

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines on Wednesday ordered all its agencies concerned to heighten security in airports, seaports and road transport terminals following a bombing incident in its restive south which left 11 people dead.

An improvised bomb inside a white van exploded near a military checkpoint in Lamitan City, Basilan on Tuesday, killing 11 people and hurting five others including a woman and a child.

Related Stories

[Palace condemns fatal Basilan blast](#)

[Basilan car bomb kills 11](#)

In a statement on Wednesday, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade offered his condolences to the families of those killed and vowed to ensure that the incident would not happen again.

"We should not compromise nor take for granted the safety and security in our surroundings, people and facilities," he said.

Undersecretary Art Evangelista, administrator of the Office for Transportation Security, said he directed all transport security personnel to "enhance their current security measures."

The Philippine Coast Guard, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, Philippine Ports Authority and the Philippine National Railways said they had beefed up their security measures and protocols in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

Maritime Industry Authority Administrator Rey Leonardo Guerrero, meanwhile, urged the public to cooperate with the implementation of security measures, checkpoints and inspections in all transportation terminals.

The country's armed forces said it believed the Abu Sayyaf group was behind the attack.

Speaking on ANC television, Lt. Col. Mon Almodovar, commander of AFP's 3rd Scout Ranger Battalion, said they were still verifying reports if there was a foreigner involved and if it was done by a suicide bomber.

Basilan, a province in Mindanao, is a stronghold of Abu Sayyaf group notorious for its banditry and kidnap-for-ransom operations. — **Philstar.com** Christian de Lano Deiparine

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/08/01/1838722/philippines-orders-heightened-security-air-sea-terminals-after-basilan-blast#1w3LalZCeEEVQfBa.99>

AFP chief: Foreigner involvement in Lamitan blast unlikely

By Teofilo Garcia, Jr. August 1, 2015 9:54 pm

ZAMBOANGA CITY -- Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said Wednesday there is no conclusive evidence that a foreigner was involved in Tuesday's bomb explosion in Lamitan City, Basilan.

Galvez said it was likely that the driver of the van loaded with explosives happened to be a foreign-looking individual.

"It is very unlikely a foreigner will perpetrate it alone considering he is not familiar with the terrain," Galvez said in a press conference in Camp Navarro in this city.

From all indications, the AFP chief said the blast was the handiwork of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and that the motive was extortion.

Tuesday's bomb explosion resulted in the death of 10 people, including the driver of the van carrying the bombs while seven others were wounded. The fatalities included a soldier, four militiamen and four civilians, who were militia dependents.

Echoing Galvez's statement, Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief, said: "There is no definite and factual evidence that could point its (driver) foreign looking. It was darks inside the van."

Dela Vega appealed to the public not to make speculations concerning the incident "otherwise they will serve as the spokesman of the terrorists."

Dela Vega said it is also unlikely that the driver of the van was a suicide bomber since improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were being transported to the target area.

"There is that strong possibility the driver is just a courier and he doesn't know anything about explosive. that it (van) was rigged," he said.

The van suddenly exploded while the troops were about to inspect the vehicle at a checkpoint in the boundaries of Barangays Bulanting, Colonia and Maganda in Lamitan City, Basilan. (PNA)

TF Davao tells Dabawenyos to be vigilant vs. terrorists

By Armando Fenequito, Jr. August 1, 2016, 9:47 pm

DAVAO CITY -- The Task Force (TF) Davao on Wednesday called on Dabawenyos to remain vigilant following Tuesday's bombing incident in Lamitan, Basilan that left 10 persons dead and wounded five others.

Col. Nolasco Mempin, TF Davao commander, also asked the public to immediately report suspicious persons, who might be out to sow terror in the city.

"As I always mention, we need the full support and cooperation of all the stakeholders by being vigilant and by reporting immediately any suspicious looking person or unattended baggage," he said.

Mempin said residents may also report to the security guard or to police auxiliary members in their area so that the latter can contact the police.

Although there is no report on the presence of ISIS-linked groups in the city, Mempin said the TF Davao will continue to intensify intelligence gathering.

He said security forces in the city are always on heightened alert, as it is the hometown of President Rodrigo Duterte.

With the holding of Kadayawan Festival later this month, Mempin said people can expect stricter security measures to ensure the safety of residents and tourists.

As in past major events, Mempin said people are discouraged from bringing backpacks and canisters in all activity areas to avoid any inconvenience.

"Sa ating mga Dabawenyo, ang inyo pong Task Force Davao at other security forces here in Davao are doing its best para maging safe and secure and Davao (To the Dabawenyos, your Task Force Davao and other security forces here in Davao City are doing its best to make you safe and secure in the city)," he said. *(Armando Fenequito Jr/PNA)*