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## **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**18 August 2018**

**Saturday**



*Honor. Patriotism. Duty*

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# LAWYERS WATCHING DRUG SEARCH HELD; PEERS MAD

STORY BY TETCH TORRES-TUPAS AND DEXTER CABALZA

Several lawyers' groups have denounced the arrest of three young lawyers now facing drug charges for allegedly 'intimidating' the Makati police by insisting on a search warrant for their client.

## FROM A1

By Tetch Torres-Tupas and Dexter Cabalza @Team\_Inquirer

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) on Friday questioned the arrest of three lawyers detained by the police for allegedly interfering in the implementation of a search warrant at a bar they raided in Makati City.

The IBP announced earlier that it would be filing a petition for a writ of habeas corpus to secure the lawyers' release, but Senior Assistant City Prosecutor Romel Odronia issued a release order at 7:30 last night. Half an hour later, the lawyers left the police station.

But they were not yet off the hook, as the lawyers have to return to the prosecutor's office for a preliminary investigation

scheduled on Aug. 28.

In a statement, IBP national president Abdie Dan Elijah Fajardo described as "highly questionable the arrest and detention of lawyers Romulo Alarcon, 33, Ian Vincent Soliven, 32, and Lente Rocha, 25, in the course of defending a client."

The three lawyers of Time Bar in Makati were charged on Friday with constructive possession of illegal drugs under Section 11 of Republic Act No. 9165, as well as obstruction of justice, resistance and disobedience to persons of authority, and violating the city ordinance against civilians crossing a police line.

### Cops justify arrest

Under a constructive possession charge, the accused may not have physical possession of drugs, but "the charge exists when the drug is under the accused's dominion and control, or when the accused exercises do-

minion and control over the place where the drug was found."

The three lawyers were "intimidating the policemen and dominantly asking for the search warrant," said Insp. Jerson Vigilla of the Makati Police Station Drug Enforcement Unit in an interview.

The lawyers from the Desierto & Desierto law firm, who represent one of the bar owners, were arrested on Thursday morning after they allegedly "entered the premises of the bar, took several pictures and videos of the scene, and intimidated the members of the searching team without proper and prior coordination," the police said.

Vigilla said he called for their arrest when the lawyers allegedly followed the police operatives to the second and third floors, and started "touching objects which may tamper the crime scene."

The police said they had se-

cured a search warrant from Executive Judge Elmo Alameda of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 350, following a buy-bust-turned-raid on the bar on Saturday last week.

The bar was being used as a drug den, the police said, adding that operatives had recovered ecstasy tablets and 18 sachets of cocaine and kush with a total street value of P1.7 million.

Diane Desierto, senior partner at the law firm, denounced the warrantless arrest and noted that detainees charged with noncapital offense such as obstruction should have been released within 18 hours or at 9:30 a.m. on Friday.

#### Prolonged detention

But Vieilla said the police could prolong the detention "up to 36 hours because it's not just obstruction we had filed against them," but drug charges or violation of RA 9165, a capital offense, where suspects can be

detained up to 36 hours without being formally charged.

In a lengthy blog post, Desierto called out the arrest as an abuse of police authority in the country's war on drugs.

Other lawyers' groups also denounced the arrest, with Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) chair Jose Manuel Diokno calling it "unlawful."

In a statement, he added: "FLAG calls on the members of the bar and the bench, and all law-abiding citizens, to resist government's efforts to replace law with force, and democracy with fascism. Unless we act, and act now, the freedoms that we fought so long and hard for will crumble in to dust."

National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) president Edre Olalia condemned the arrest as "not only against the so-called rule of law, but against the role of lawyers, who are officers of the court and defenders of jus-

tice. They are there to ensure that rights are protected. We are not the enemies," he said.

Olalia said the Makati City incident was the latest of a string of alleged harassment against NUPL lawyers, who have been "maligned and demonized by drug-crazed authorities."

#### 'Brutal, high-handed'

Manananggol sa EJK (Manlaban) also decried the arrest and said that "arresting, detaining and charging the lawyers, ironically, with obstruction of justice shows how police have become brutal and high-handed in their operations, especially in those involving drugs," the group said in a statement.

The arrest of lawyers while performing their job is a "a clear disregard of the law and the independence of the legal profession," Manlaban added. —with

REPORTS FROM JEROME ANING AND MELVIN GASCON INQ

# Duterte: Resignation just an afterthought

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

After raising the specter of a military takeover and brushing aside the constitutional provision on succession, President Duterte yesterday said his announced plan to resign was just an "afterthought" — borne out of frustration over the continuing drug menace and corruption.

"I was frustrated. But remember that I was addressing myself to the military and the police and nobody else. What you heard was an afterthought, actually," Duterte said at the Hugpong ng Pagbabago Convention in Davao City last night. He cited in particular his getting wind of the anomalous activities of some officials at the V. Luna Medical Center.

After he finishes his term, Duterte said he would leave the government "in the hands of Filipinos who simply love their country."

At a Go Negosyo event earlier this week, Duterte said he was thinking of resigning out of exhaustion, but made

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## Duterte From Page 1

it clear he didn't want an "incompetent" Vice President Leni Robredo to take his place and that he would rather have a military junta succeed him. Under the Constitution, the vice president succeeds the president if the latter dies or gets incapacitated.

Yesterday, Duterte explained that he was just venting out his exasperation after learning that the funds intended for hospitalization and medicines of soldiers at the V. Luna Medical Center had been misused by some of its officials.

The President recently ordered the relief and start of court-martial proceedings against Brig. Gen. Edwin Leo Torrelavoga, head of the AFP-HSC Col. Antonio Panzalan, commander of the V. Luna Medical Center and 18 other individuals over alleged anomalies at the military hospital.

Duterte said he allotted some P50 million to V. Luna Medical Center but this supposedly ended up in the pockets of corrupt military officials.

"And I said to them, 'Ano kaya gusto ninyo mag-resign ako ngayon? (That's why you want me to resign?) I am challenging

you, everyone of you to — kung sinong interesado (whoever is interested), just stand up. What's the — stand up and sabihin mo (just say it),' "Duterte said.

"If the Air Force, Navy, Marines, Police, all the major commands tell me to 'step down', Fine. *Mas pagod ako sa inyo* (I'm more exhausted than you)," he said with expletives.

"And so I said, because I will — you will, after I shall have stepped down, *magulo yan. Magulo yan kasi sabihin nito*," he said.

Duterte said he made the declaration not because he was afraid of the military or the police, but because he wanted them to toe the line and follow his order.

He directed the officials of the uniformed services to "better shape up" because his commitment to fight corruption is on the line.

### Constitutional restrictions

His chief legal counsel Salvador Panelo, meanwhile, said President Duterte may have raised the scenario of a takeover by a military junta, as



he is aware of constitutional "restrictions" that keep the leadership from getting things done.

"Well, perhaps what he is saying is, if you follow the Constitution, there has been—there are many restrictions that will tie the President in doing things that should be done," Panelo said in an interview with ANC. A military takeover, he said, could just be one of the scenarios in the President's mind.

"And a military junta, if ever there is one, would not follow the Constitution and whoever is placed by the military junta could do things extra constitutionally," he said.

"I think the point is, right now, I'm shackled by many restrictions. But again, knowing this President as he repeatedly said, there are powers in the Constitution that he can use, even without declaring martial law or declaring a revolutionary government," he pointed out.

But he could just be testing the waters after all, Panelo said, adding the Chief Executive has been transparent about his thoughts and feelings—something many Filipinos find endearing.

He also said he doesn't think Duterte is resigning. "He has been saying that he is not a kind of man that will stick or clinch to an office. If he sees and feels that the situa-

tion is ripe for him to step down, he will. But not now, I don't think so," Panelo said.

He also doused speculations over the President's health. "I think the statement was more of an expression of exasperation, a cry of sheer disgust over what's happening vis-a-vis the drive versus corruption," he added.

The President's "intention is precisely to tell the people that he is disgusted, exasperated. He wants to resign, but he will not do it," he said.

"He's so pissed off, but knowing him, he is not a quitter," Panelo added.

He also said Duterte has no intention to influence the deliberations of the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) on the election protest filed by former senator Ferdinand Marcos Jr. against Robredo.

"I think that was more of a comparison between the vice president and Mr. Marcos given the qualifications that the two have," Panelo said. "He just wants to compare this particular person to another," he said.

Panelo said Duterte has no power over other constitutional bodies such as the PET.

"The President's statements on matters pending in any court will not affect that particular jurisdiction with respect to any decision it will make," he pointed out.

For the Philippine National Police

(PNP) backing a military junta is out of the question.

"As far as the Philippine National Police is concerned, I think that's also made clear by the Armed Forces of the Philippines—we will follow what's written in the Constitution," PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Berigno Durana said in a press briefing yesterday at Malacañang.

He stressed the PNP is squarely behind the President and rule of law and that the people should be just as supportive to the administration.

"We should learn from this migratory bird, the geese... they rally behind their leader when they fly long distances," he said. "The rest of the flock is cheering, encouraging the leader etc. I think that's also holds true to us. We can go long distances in our journey as a nation if we'll support and, you know, encourage our leader—in this case, our President," Durana said.

The PNP spokesman added the PNP and the rest of the Filipino people should "encourage our father" and "not contribute to his already monumental problems."

"That is why the PNP is working doubly hard to make sure that it implements the President's order to go after illegal drugs as much as possible, not to give him a lot of headaches," Durana said. It is only under Duterte's watch that the PNP is getting full support, he said.

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# EXPERTS URGE FIGHT VS COUNTRIES THAT THINK 'MIGHT MAKES RIGHT'

By Jerome Aning  
@jeromeAningNO

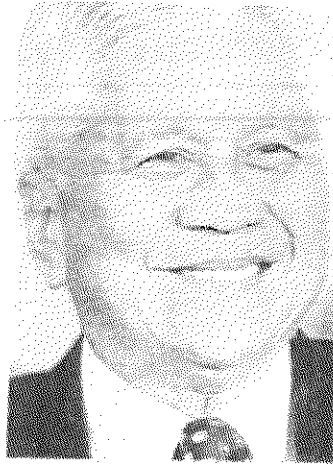
Populist leaders and powerful countries are undermining the international rule of law with their "might makes right" stance, but nations around the world should resist such a position to protect global order, diplomats and foreign relations experts said on Friday.

Visiting British Minister of State for Asia and Pacific Affairs Mark Field said the rules-based international system had "a hugely positive impact on global security and prosperity, protecting people and countries, and helping them to achieve their potential."

"This rules-based international system is a network of agreements and institutions that requires our support if it is to continue to protect us and make us more prosperous," he said. "If we stand back—perhaps in the hope of some possible short-term gain—we will all be worse off in the long run."

### Freedom of navigation

Speaking at a Stratbase-ADR



Albert del Rosario



Raul Pangalangan

national Studies (ADR) forum in Taguig City. Field said it was "unfortunate" that some leaders were intent on "flouting and undermining" the rules-based international system.

He referred to Russia, which he said was responsible for a chemical attack against a former Russian spy in the English town of Salisbury in March.

Field also cited the maritime dispute in the South China Sea, which was the subject of an ar-

bitration case won by the Philippines against China in 2016 but ignored by Beijing.

Field urged all territorial claimants to respect freedom of navigation and international law, including the 2016 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration to reject China's sweeping claims over virtually the entire waterway.

"It is critical for regional stability, and for the integrity of the rules-based international



system that disputes in the region are resolved, not through force, militarization or coercion, but through dialogue and in accordance with international law," he said.

Australia's ambassador to the Philippines, Amanda Gorely, said the adoption of a code of conduct in the South China Sea by China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) would allow claimant states to "cooperate and negotiate to resolve differences rather than resorting to the use of threat or force."

The Philippines, three other Asean countries—Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei—China and Taiwan have overlapping claims to islands and reefs in the South China Sea, one of the busiest in the world and believed to be rich in marine and underwater mineral resources.

#### Decrease tensions

"As a supporter of a rules-based order," Gorely said, "Australia believes that the negotiation of a code of conduct for the South China Sea has a potential to help manage the disputes and decrease the tensions."

ADRI board chair and former Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said the rise of a rules-based international system had been the "great equalizer" in global affairs and the "bedrock of peace, order and fairness in modern societies."

"International law has given equal voice to nations regardless of political, economic or military stature, banning the unlawful use of sheer force," he said.

China's actions in the region, he said, remained to be one of the "most important and contentious" external threats not only to the Philippines but to the Asia-Pacific region.

He said China had "unceasingly refused to accept the arbitral ruling that is now an integral part of international law" while depriving the Philippines of its "sovereign rights."

Raul Pangalangan, a judge on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and former law dean of the University of the Philippines, said "the best way to strengthen the rule of law internationally is to first strengthen it domestically."

He said some countries,

many of them in Asia, remained hesitant to submit to the ICC, despite its "fixed rules" in handling cases.

"I think it has less to do with the fact that we are international. It has more to do with the fact that we are a court," he said.

#### Mutual appeasement

Asian governments prefer a mediator whose goal is the "mutual appeasement of warring tribes" and who will come up with a ruling acceptable to the parties rather than a judgment on who is right and wrong, he said.

He made no direct reference to President Duterte, who has decided to withdraw the Philippines' ratification of the Rome Statute, due to "baseless" accusations against him by UN officials and alleged violations of due process by the ICC.

Mr. Duterte made the decision in May following an announcement by ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda that she would start a preliminary examination of a complaint accusing him of crimes against humanity in connection with his bloody war on drugs. *INC Ab*

# 'China training bombers to hit US'

WASHINGTON(Reuters) — China's military has expanded its bomber operations in recent years while "likely training for strikes" against the United States and its allies, a Pentagon report released on Thursday said.

The assessment, which comes at a time of heightened US-China tensions over trade, was contained in an annual report that highlighted China's efforts to increase its global influence, with defense spending that the Pentagon estimates exceeded \$190 billion in 2017.

"Over the last three years, the PLA has rapidly expanded its overwater bomber operating areas, gaining experience in critical maritime regions and likely training for strikes against US and allied targets," the report said, using an acronym for China's People's Liberation Army.

The report comes as China and the United States plan to hold trade talks, offering hope they might resolve an escalating tariff conflict that threatens to degenerate into an all-out trade war.

The report said that while the PLA had continued to extend operations, it was not clear what message Beijing was seeking to send by carrying out the flights "beyond a demonstration of improved capabilities."

The Chinese embassy in Washington could not immediately be reached for comment.

This year, China's air force

landed bombers on islands and reefs in the South China Sea as part of a training exercise in the disputed region.

In January, the Pentagon put countering Beijing, along with Russia, at the center of a new national defense strategy.

While Washington and Beijing maintain a military-to-military relationship aimed at containing tensions, this has been tested in recent months, notably in May when the Pentagon withdrew an invitation to China to join a multinational naval exercise.

In June, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis became the first Pentagon chief to visit China since 2014.

The Pentagon report said that despite a projected slowdown in economic growth,

China's official defense budget would be more than \$240 billion by 2028.

The Pentagon report also said China's space program was progressing rapidly.

"The PLA continues to strengthen its military space capabilities despite its public stance against the militarization of space," it said.

This month, US President Donald Trump's administration announced an ambitious plan to usher in a new "Space Force" as the sixth branch of the military by 2020.

One of the arguments in favor of developing such a force is that American rivals like China appear increasingly ready to strike US space-based capabilities in the event of a conflict.

# US told: Who are you to warn us on subs?

President Duterte last night rebuked a top US official for saying the Philippines' plan to acquire big-ticket military systems and weapons from Russia is unhealthy for the alliance with the United States.

against my country buying Russian submarines... give me the reason why and make it public. You want us to remain backward?" Duterte remarked.

"We are the only ones who have none,

*Ex-DEA chief lands Duterte for calling out China. Story on Page 8.*

The Russian government also called out US Assistant Secretary of defense and Pacific security affairs Randall Schriver for his "outrageous" warning.

"You state your case why you are

yet you don't give us any (submarine)," Duterte, addressing the US, said at the gathering of the Hugpong ng Pagbabago regional party in Davao City.

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## US told From Page 1

The President mentioned the issue as he was explaining why there is so much noise about human rights in connection with his drug war, saying "the US do not like me."

Duterte remarked Schriver statement reflects the way the US treats a defense ally like the Philippines.

"Is that how you treat an ally and you want us to stay with for all time?" Duterte said. "What is the problem on acquiring submarines? Who are you to warn us?"

Duterte added the US has not warned other countries in Asia from modernizing their military assets. He even undermined the capability of US submarines.

He was quick to say that he is not an enemy but just thinking of the welfare of Filipino troops.

"I am not your enemy. I am protecting my soldiers and police," he said. "What's the problem is using submarines when we cannot use it against you. Neither we are using it against China or anybody else because we are under-armed."

Duterte claimed the US has not provided enough military assets to the Philippines—adding that the almost 50 years of alliance between the two countries bore no significant upgrade for the Philippine military.

While he maintains high regard for US President Donald Trump, Duterte expressed displeasure over the US' call for the DND to "think very carefully" about the procurement because it would not help the alliance.

In a statement issued through its embassy in Manila, the Russian government said Schriver – whom it said was not privy to the defense cooperation between the Philippines and Russia – should refrain from making such comments.

Speaking at a defense and security roundtable at the US embassy on Thursday, Schriver warned the Department of National Defense (DND) against its plan to purchase submarines and some military equipment from Russia, saying this would be unhealthy for the US-Philippines alliance.

“We can not recall when Mr. Randall Schriver was hired as advisor to the government of the Philippines. Nevertheless the defense cooperation between Russia and the Philippines is a matter of bilateral relations and does not involve any third country in any way,” the Russian government said.

The defense cooperation between the Philippines and Russia, it said, is in “full compliance with all existing international arms control regimes.”

“We believe it meets strategic interests of the Philippine nation and will definitely contribute to the regional peace and stability,” it said.

DND spokesman Arsenio Andolong said the Philippine government is acquiring military equipment from any country where it will be beneficial and advantageous to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

“While our acquisition of submarines (from Russia) for the Philippines is still under study and nothing is final at this point, we emphasize that the de-

fense department will procure equipment that is most advantageous for the AFP through the AFP Modernization Program,” Andolong said.

He also pointed out the purchase will be pushed through to any country as long as the procurement follows the proper and legal procedure, meeting the requirements of its end users.

In the case of submarine project for the Navy, Andolong said the DND is not limiting its choices and will consider any and all offers.

Aside from Russia, the DND is also eyeing France and South Korea as possible sources of its first ever submarine acquisition for the Navy.

Andolong, however, assured Schriver that the DND will honor all its alliances and international partnerships through the conduct of international defense and security engagements.

The Philippines is by far the largest recipient of US military assistance in the region through a variety of programs and initiatives, as compared to those provided by Russia and China, all in support of the AFP’s modernization goals.

US embassy spokesman Moli Koscina said that in the past few years, the US has delivered millions of dollars of planes, ships, armored vehicles and small arms to the Philippines, while also training Filipino troops.

“From Jan. 1, 2017 to the present, US grants funded the delivery of military equipment worth over P5 billion (\$95 million) to the AFP,” Koscina said.

– Christina Mendez, Helen Flores, Jaime Laude

# US defense exec to PH: We'll be your good ally in disputed sea

The United States will be "a good ally" to the Philippines in responding to territorial conflicts in the South China Sea, a US defense official said.

Randall Schriver, assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, gave the assurance as tensions rise over China's aggressive stance toward its claims to most of the strategic waterway.

Schriver, who spoke on Thursday to reporters at the US Embassy in Manila, was asked if the United States, which is bound to the Philippines by a mutual defense treaty, would help the country if China invaded the main Filipino-occupied island in the South China Sea.

"We'll be a good ally ... there should be no misunderstanding or lack of clarity on the spirit and the nature of our commitment," he said.

"We'll help the Philippines respond accordingly," Schriver added, declining to give further details.

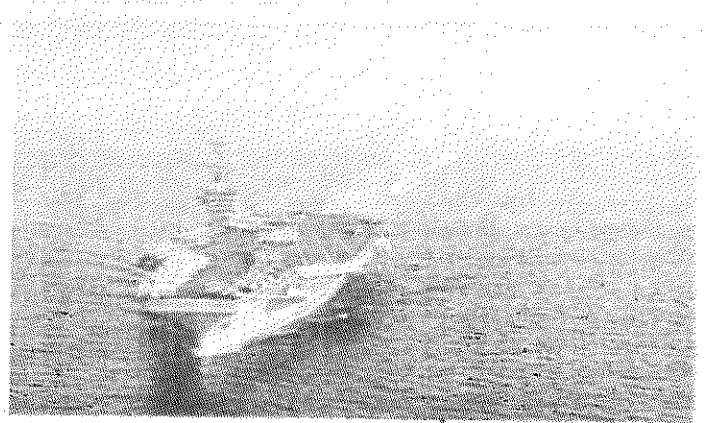
China and the Philippines, along with several other Asian nations, have conflicting claims to parts of the South China Sea, which is believed to contain vast mineral resources.

However, since he took office in 2016, President Duterte has moved the Philippines closer toward China and Russia and away from its traditional ally, the United States. He has accused Washington of hypocrisy and bullying for criticizing his brutal war on drugs.

China has built up heavily defended artificial islands in the South China Sea, and Philippine observers have expressed concern in recent weeks over aggressive Chinese radio warnings to foreign planes approaching them.

### 'Likely training for strikes'

As Schriver spoke with journalists in Manila, the Pentagon released a report in Washington saying China's military has expanded its bomber operations



**MARITIME SECURITY** The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, seen in this photo leading a formation of US and Singapore Navy ships during an exercise in the South China Sea in April, was deployed to the US 7th Fleet for maritime and security operations in the region. US Assistant Secretary of Defense Randall Schriver on Thursday said Washington would be "a good ally" to Manila in its territorial conflicts in the South China Sea. --AFP

in recent years while "likely training for strikes" against the United States and its allies.

The report said that while the People's Liberation Army

(PLA) had continued to extend operations, it was not clear what message Beijing was seeking to send by carrying out the flights "beyond a demonstra-

tion of improved capabilities."

"Over the last three years, the PLA has rapidly expanded its overwater bomber operating areas, gaining experience in critical maritime regions and likely training for strikes against US and allied targets," the report said.

#### Beijing at center of strategy

This year, China's Air Force landed bombers on islands and reefs in the South China Sea as part of a training exercise in the disputed region.

In January, the Pentagon put countering Beijing, along with Russia, at the center of a new national defense strategy.

The Pentagon report said that despite a projected slowdown in economic growth, China's official defense budget would be more than \$240 billion by 2028.

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#### High tensions over trade

One of the arguments in favor of developing such a force is that American rivals like China appear increasingly ready to strike US space-based capabilities in the event of a conflict.

The assessment, which comes at a time of heightened US-China tensions over trade, was contained in an annual report that highlighted China's efforts to increase its global influence.

China and the United States plan to hold trade talks, offering hope they might resolve an escalating tariff conflict that threatens to degenerate into an all-out trade war. —REPORTS FROM

AFP AND REUTERS *fl*



**Lorenzana: Bells not a 'trophy' for atrocities in US-PH war**  
Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana hailed the announced return of the Balangiga bells as a "strong indicator of the sincerity" of the United States in its self-avowed "ironclad alliance" with the Philippines. "We thank US Defense Secretary James Mattis for his effort in seeking the return of the bells to our country. We do hope that the US government will follow through with their commitment and that it will become a reality soon," Lorenzana said in a statement on Friday. Noting the opposition of some sectors in the United States to the plan, he reminded the American public that they should not hold on to the bells "as trophies for atrocities that were committed by both sides on Philippine soil a very long time ago ... in which both sides lost many precious lives." —JAYMEET GAMIL 57

## Balangiga bells not trophies — Lorenzana

By JAIME LAUDE

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana urged the Americans opposing the return of the Balangiga bells not to use the war booty as trophies.

"We call on the American people not to allow the bells to serve as trophies for atrocities that were committed by both sides on Philippine soil a very long time ago," Lorenzana said.

Lorenzana, who is currently in Moscow, released a press statement thanking US Defense Secretary James Mattis for his effort in seeking the return of the bells to the Philippines.

He added the Philippine government is hoping that the US will follow through with their commitment and the return of the bells will become a reality.

"The return of the Balangiga bells will be a strong indicator of the sincerity of the Americans in forging a lasting relationship with the Filipino people and truly symbolic of what their government has referred to in the past as an ironclad alliance between our two countries," he said.

Visiting US Defense Assistant Secretary for Asia and Pacific Security Affairs Randall Schriver said they are working for the return of the bells despite opposition from some

groups.

The bells were taken from the Balangiga Church in Samar by American troops as war booty following the "Balangiga massacre" in 1901.

One of the three bells has been displayed at the 9th Infantry Regiment in Camp Cloud in South Korea, while the other two have been at the former base of the 11th Infantry Regiment at the FE Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

And while understanding the resistance of some quarters in the US against the return of the Balangiga bells to the country, Lorenzana said all must remember that both sides lost many precious lives during the Fil-American War with the Filipinos suffering many more deaths than the Americans.

"It was a dark chapter in the shared history of our peoples, which should never be allowed to happen again. Let us not forget, however, that the time came when we set aside our differences and fought side-by-side against a common enemy in World War 2. Currently, we are again working together to fight terrorism," Lorenzana stressed.

"In this ever changing world, it is time to heal the wounds of the past, move on, and look to the future," he said.

# US vows to be a good PH ally

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

A high-ranking United States (US) official on Thursday assured the Philippines that the US will be a good ally should Pagasa Island in the disputed West Philippine Sea will be forcibly taken.

"I really don't want to address hypotheticals but I think there should be

no misunderstanding or lack of clarity on the spirit and the nature of our commitment," US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall Schriver said.

"We'll be a good ally and we'll help the Philippines respond accordingly and beyond that I wouldn't get into specifics," he added.

"We'll help the Philippines" ▶ 6

## US vows to be...

respond accordingly," Schriver added, declining to give further details.

Pagasa is the second largest naturally occurring island in the Spratly sand home to Kalayaan town in Palawan. It is inhabited by over 300 people.

Schriver met with Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana Thursday and both discussed full range of bilateral defense and military issues.

The US official, who is making his first visit to the Philippines as US assistant secretary of defense, said his visit to the country serves as a good opportunity for him to meet with the leaders of the country.

He said among the topics discussed with Secretary Lorenzana include counter terrorism, regional security in the South China or West Philippine Sea, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) modernization efforts.

"We discussed the full range of our bilateral defense and military relationship so we talked about our ongoing interest in counter terrorism cooperation, regional security such as the South China Sea, future plans of the AFP to modernize and how we can support them. So it was a very broad discussion," Schriver said as he spoke to reporters at the US embassy in Manila.

"I have been here in previous capacities but (the) first time since I assumed

this responsibility. So this is a good opportunity for me to come and meet with the leadership here, the Department of National Defense, Armed Forces of the Philippines, and government officials, to discuss regional security issues, bilateral relationship and alliance, how we can support the goals of the government here in Manila," he added.

Schriver, who will be staying in the country for two days, said that the US wants to be a partner that's valued by contributing things that are important to the government here.

He added that they have a number of important engagements coming up before the end of the year and is looking forward to the rest of his visit.

### On disputed sea

Schriver, in the same interview, insisted that the US will fly/sail and operate where international law allows them.

He made the comment after a US plane was warned by China while flying over a highly disputed island in the South China Sea.

"We'll fly/sail and operate where international law allows, if queried by any particular party. Our guidance will, if we're operating legally, we'll continue to operate legally and lawfully," Schriver said.

"So we've seen an increase in this kind of challenge from China, not only directed at us but others and we, I think, we need to be consistent and the Chinese need to

understand that this kind of challenge will not result in a change of our behavior. We'll not allow them to rewrite the rules of the road or change international law," he added.

Schriver said the US has routine operations in the South China Sea and the plane that flew there is part of the routine flight.

He also stressed that the Freedom of Navigation Patrols (FONOPs) are part of an overall approach to the South China Sea.

The Chinese military ordered a US Navy plane flying over a highly disputed island in the South China Sea last week to "leave immediately and keep out to avoid any misunderstanding," according to CNN.

A reporter for the network was given a rare look at the Chinese government's militarization of the sea, where it built garisons with five-story buildings, radar facilities, power plants and even runways.

The P-8A Poseidon reconnaissance jet's crew received six warnings that it was inside Chinese territory as it flew 10,500 feet above the installation.

The aircraft flew past four artificial islands where China has built up fortifications: Subi Reef, Fiery Cross Reef, Johnson Reef and Mischief Reef, according to CNN.

On Subi Reef, the plane's sensors picked up 86 vessels, including Chinese coast guard ships, while on Fiery Cross Reef, rows of hangars stood alongside a long runway.

## Lorenzana to US: Don't keep bells as war booty

DEFENSE Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has called on the United States not to keep the looted Balangiga bells as their trophies from a massacre, saying that returning the bells to the Philippines would redound to a stronger relationship between Manila and Washington.

Lorenzana's appeal came after Wyoming lawmakers opposed returning the bells taken by American forces as war booty after Filipino revolutionaries attacked US soldiers in Balangiga, Samar, in 1901, killing 48 of them.

The US military retaliated and killed hundreds of Filipino men, women and children.

"The return of the Balangiga bells will be a strong indicator of the sincerity of the Americans in forging a lasting relationship with the Filipino people and truly symbolic of what their government has referred to in the past as an ironclad alliance between our two countries," Lorenzana said in a statement.

He added that he understood the resistance of officials from Wyoming, having lost American lives in the Balangiga incident.

Lorenzana, however, said the Filipinos suffered more than the Americans.

"It was a dark chapter in the shared history of our peoples, which should never be allowed to happen

again," he added.

"Let us not forget, however, that the time came when we set aside our differences and fought side by side against a common enemy in World War II," the defense chief said.

He then called again on the US to return the bells.

"We call on the American people not to allow the bells to serve as trophies for atrocities that were committed by both sides on Philippine soil a very long time ago," Lorenzana said.

He thanked US Defense Secretary James Mattis for his effort to write to the US Congress, saying it was "in the national security interest of the United States" to have the bells returned.

Last week, the US Embassy in Manila committed that the bells would be turned over to the Philippines.

US Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim said the US Department of Defense was coordinating with Lorenzana and his team for the expected return of the bells.

Two of the Balangiga bells are at Ft. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, while the third one is with the US Army in South Korea.

President Rodrigo Duterte, during his second State of the Nation Address last year, demanded the return of the bells.

**DEMPSEY REYES**

18  
PENTAGON:

# Chinese bombers after US targets

**W**ASHINGTON, D.C.: Chinese bombers are likely training for strikes against US and allied targets in the Pacific, according to a new Pentagon report that also details how Beijing is transforming its ground forces to "fight and win."

The annual report to Congress, released Thursday (Friday in Manila), highlights China's growing military, economic and diplomatic clout and how Beijing is leveraging this to rapidly build its international footprint and establish regional dominance.

In the case of China's air power, the report states that Chinese bombers are developing capabilities to hit targets as far from China as possible.

"Over the last three years, the PLA (People's Liberation Army) has rapidly expanded its overwater bomber operating areas, gaining experience in critical maritime regions and likely training for strikes against US and allied targets," the document states, noting how China is pushing its operations out into the Pacific.

In August 2017, six Chinese H-6K bombers flew through the

Miyako Strait in the southwest of the Japanese islands, and then for the first time turned north to fly east of Okinawa, where 47,000 US troops are based.

The PLA may demonstrate the "capability to strike US and allied forces and military bases in the western Pacific Ocean, including Guam," the report says.

China is engaged in a decades-long build-up and modernization of its once-backward armed forces, and military leaders have set a goal of fielding a world-class military by 2050.

President Xi Jinping last year ordered the PLA to step up efforts, saying China needed a military ready to "fight and win" wars.

According to the Pentagon, the PLA in April 2017 undertook a massive transformation of operational and tactical units as part of its structural reforms.

With nearly a million troops, the PLA is the largest standing ground force in the world.

China's military budget for 2017 was about \$190 billion, according to the report, far behind the Pentagon's annual budget of about \$700 billion.

This year's report reiterates that

China will seek to establish new bases in countries such as Pakistan.

Key to this expanding footprint is China's "belt and road" initiative that seeks to bolster ties with other nations through lending and infrastructure deals.

The document also shines light on China's ongoing military

preparations for a "contingency" in the Taiwan Strait.

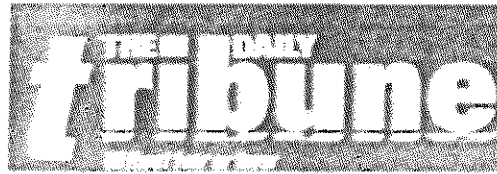
"The PLA also is likely preparing for a contingency to unify Taiwan with China by force, while simultaneously deterring, delaying, or denying any third-party intervention on Taiwan's behalf," it states.

To the ire of regional neighbors, China has built a series of islets and ocean features into military facilities in the South China Sea.

Beijing has now stopped substantial land reclamation.

"However, it continued to build infrastructure at three outposts," the report says. **AFP**





# US woos Rody, warns vs Russ subs deal

President Rodrigo Duterte announced a plan to start military purchases from Russia, including two submarines, the United States through Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and Pacific Security Affairs Ronald Schriver made an assurance that it will be "a good ally" to the Philippines. *Top to page 2*

There should be no misunderstanding or lack of clarity on the spirit and the nature of our commitment

From page 1

Schriver, nonetheless, cautioned the Philippines against buying large-scale weapons like submarines from Russia.

"I don't think that's a helpful thing in the (US-Philippine) Alliance and ultimately I think we can be a better partner than the Russians," he said.

The United States will respond to calls from its ally amid the territorial conflicts in the South China Sea, Schriver said.

He gave the assurance as tensions rise over China's aggressive stance towards its claims to most of the strategic

waterway.

Speaking to reporters at the US embassy in Manila, Schriver was asked if the United States, which is bound to the Philippines by a mutual defense treaty, would help the country if China invaded the Filipino-occupied island in the South China Sea.

"We'll be a good ally. There should be no misunderstanding or lack of clarity on the spirit and the nature of our commitment," he said.

### Promises

"We'll help the Philippines respond accordingly," Schriver added, declining to give further details.

China and the Philippines, along with several other Asian nations, have conflicting claims to parts of the West Philippine Sea which is believed to contain vast mineral resources.

China has built up heavily defended artificial islands in the sea and Philippine observers have expressed concern in recent weeks over aggressive Chinese radio warnings to foreign planes against approaching them.

However, Schriver said US forces would continue to fly and sail in those waters.

"We've seen an increase in this kind of challenge from China, not only directed at us but others," he said.

### No behavioral change

"This kind of challenge will not result in a change of our behavior. We'll not allow them to rewrite the rules of the road or change international law," he added.

Since he took office in mid-2016, Mr. Duterte has been moving the country's relations away from its traditional ally the United States and towards China and Russia. **AFF**



## US defense exec ends first Manila visit

UNITED States Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall G. Schriver concluded yesterday his three-day visit in the Philippines (August 15 to 17) aimed at reinforcing the United States' commitment to the Indo-Pacific region and to the Philippines, a close friend, partner, and ally.

"This was my first visit to the Philippines as Assistant Secretary of Defense, so this was a good opportunity for me to meet with the leadership here," said Schriver. "It's an honor for us to be considered a friend, partner, and ally of the Philippines."

While in the Philippines, Schriver met with Secretary of National Defense Delfin Lorenzana, Philippine Ambassador to Malaysia I. Eduardo Malaya, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Gen. Carlos Galvez Jr., Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, and Department of Foreign Affairs Undersec-

retary for Policy Enrique Manalo.

During his meetings, Schriver discussed the value of multilateral military exercises like Balikatan and KAMANDAG and their contributions to the strength and interoperability of the U.S. and Philippine militaries.

Schriver also emphasized the value of continuing frequent subject matter expert exchanges and joint training events between both countries' militaries, the continuing U.S. Special Operations Forces support of AFP counter terrorism efforts in Mindanao, cooperation to counter violent extremism, the United States' support of AFP modernization efforts, and the increasing importance of the U.S.-Philippine alliance to stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Schriver's trip also included a stop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, before traveling to Manila.

Cristina Lee-Pisco

## US: China may add 'nuclear element' to S. China Sea

The Pentagon sounded a warning over China's plans to introduce floating nuclear power plants on disputed islands and reefs in the South China Sea, part of an annual report assessing the nation's military strength.

"China's plans to power these islands may add a nuclear element to the territorial dispute," the Pentagon said in its 2018 report to Congress titled "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China." "China indicated development plans may be underway to power islands and

reefs in the typhoon-prone South China Sea with floating nuclear power stations; development reportedly is to begin prior to 2020."

The China Securities Journal – a Chinese state-run financial newspaper – said in 2016 that China could build as many as 20 floating nuclear plants to "speed up the commercial development" of the South China Sea, the South China Morning Post reported last year. Several Chinese state-run companies last year established a joint venture that aims to strengthen China's nuclear power capabilities in line with its ambitions

to "become a strong maritime power," the Post said, citing a statement released by the venture.

Beijing claims more than 80 percent of the South China Sea, which carries around \$3.4 trillion worth of global trade each year. Five other countries – including the Philippines and Vietnam – also have claims in the waters, which have led to clashes over fishing rights and energy exploration.

### INCREASING TENSIONS

US-China military ties have deteriorated of late, with the Trump administration in May revoking an

invitation for Beijing to join in Pacific naval exercises due to its activities in disputed parts of the sea. China has reclaimed 3,200 of acres of land in the Spratly island chain and added with ports, runways and other military infrastructure.

"The best-case scenario for the region would be China reconsidering the electricity supply source for its controlled islands, or at least a delay in the deployment of the fleet," given potential safety challenges and security risks from pirates or regional terror groups, Viet Phuong Nguyen, a nuclear researcher at the

Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, wrote in the Diplomat website that month.

The report also found:

China's military has expanded bomber operations and was "likely training for strikes" against the US and its allies.

China was willing to employ coercive measures and mitigate opposition of other countries, including the unsuccessful use of economic and diplomatic pressure to get South Korea to reconsider the deployment of a US anti-missile system.

China uses the Belt and Road Initiative to develop strong ties with other countries to better align their interests and deter criticism.

Computer systems around the world, including those owned by the US government, continued to be targeted by China-based intrusions last year. (Bloomberg)

# Ex-DFA chief lauds Duterte for calling out China

By HELEN FLORES

For his rare attack on China's militarization of the South China Sea, President Duterte has received praises from one of the most vocal critics of his administration's sidestepping Beijing's massive maritime claim — former foreign affairs chief Albert del Rosario.

"We want to respectfully commend President Duterte on his recent remarks about China's aggressive and unlawful behavior in the South China Sea," Del Rosario said yesterday at a forum on rules-based system organized by Stratbase ADR Institute in Taguig City.

Del Rosario, who led the Philippines in its successful arbitration case against Beijing in 2012, said the President's manifestation of "positive leadership" would "encourage and inspire" Filipinos.

"If we truly adhere and respect the rule of law, we should actively seek to end any unlawful and aggressive attack to the rules-based international system," he said.

Duterte and members of his

Cabinet had refused to criticize Beijing's continued incursion in Philippine territories in the West Philippine Sea, citing the need to strengthen relations between the two countries.

Del Rosario noted that Beijing's militarization of the South China Sea remains one of the "most important and contentious external threats" in the region.

In July 2016, the Philippines won the case against China before the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands.

The tribunal invalidated Beijing's nine-dash line claim over the South China Sea and affirmed the Philippines' maritime entitlements. Beijing, however, has refused to acknowledge the ruling.

Earlier this week, Duterte said China's claim to airspace above its newly built man-made islands in the South China Sea is "wrong" and that Beijing should "temper" its behavior.

"You cannot create an island, it's man-made, and you

say that the air above these artificial islands is yours," Duterte said.

"That is wrong because those waters are what we consider international sea," the President said.

Duterte said under international law, "the right of innocent passage is guaranteed" and that no permission is needed to sail through the open seas.

At the same forum United Kingdom Foreign Office Minister Mark Field pressed for a rules-based approach to settling territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Field is in the Philippines as part of his six-country Southeast Asia trip.

"In the South China Sea,

we urge all parties to respect freedom of navigation and international law, including the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague," he said.

He said the competing claims in the South China Sea must be resolved not through force, militarization or coercion but through dialogue and in accordance with international law.

He said UK is backing the rules-based international system in Asia through its security cooperation as well as humanitarian support and diplomacy.

Australian Ambassador Amanda Gorely, who was one of the speakers at the forum, said the situation in the South China Sea represents a serious challenge to a rules based

order in the region.

She said negotiating a strong and effective Code of Conduct for the South China Sea, without prejudicing the interests and rights of non-signatories, could immensely help preserve stability in the region. Gorely also stressed that concerns of third parties should be incorporated in the COC.

### Palace to blame

Meanwhile, Rep. Carlos Zarate of Bayan Muna said Malacañang has no one to blame but itself for the growing threat to the country from China.

"China is apparently treating the Duterte administration as a pushover by doing what

they want not only in Bajo de Masinoc or Scarborough Shoal but in the rest of the West Philippine Sea with nary a whimper from Malacañang," he said.

"Now they even rebuffed President Duterte himself when he called on China to rethink its conduct in the disputed sea. China insisted that they have the right to react to foreign ships or aircraft that get close to the contested islands," he said.

The President urged China to temper its conduct after Chinese forces warned a Philippine surveillance plane of grave consequences if it continued to fly over the islands Beijing has converted into military fortresses. ♪ - With Jess Diaz

## Rody hailed for calling out China on WPS

FORMER Foreign Affairs secretary Albert del Rosario on Friday hailed President Rodrigo R. Duterte's call for China to temper its behavior in the West Philippine Sea amid reports that Beijing warned a Philippine military aircraft that had flown over its man-made islands in the disputed region.

"We want to respectfully commend President Duterte on his recent remarks about China's aggressive and unlawful behavior in the South China Sea. Nine out of 10 Filipinos would be encouraged and inspired by this manifestation of our President's posi-

tive leadership," Del Rosario said.

The former DFA chief was speaking at the "Challenge to a Rules-Based International System: Moving Forward" forum organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute in Taguig City.

A recent news report said the Chinese military can be heard ordering a Philippine military aircraft to "leave immediately" or else they will "bear responsibility for all the consequences."

The Chinese military also reportedly issued a warning to a US military aircraft which conducted similar

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### Rody...

*From A1*

overflights over the South China Sea, with a media crew tagging along.

Duterte said that China should "rethink" its warning to other countries for flying over airspace above the artificial island that it built in the WPS.

On Monday, Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said the incident would be investigated.

A day after China rebuffed Duterte's call for it to temper its behavior, a top US defense official reiterated the continuing commitment of the US to the Philippines as its "close friend, partner and ally."

US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall G. Schriver visited the Philippines and met with the country's defense and security officials led by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Schriver also met with Armed Forces chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Enrique Manalo and Ambassador to Malaysia Eduardo Malaya III.

"This was my first visit to the Philippines as Assistant Secretary of Defense, so this was a good opportunity for me to meet with the leadership here," Schriver said, in a statement released by the US Embassy in Manila.

Schriver, who was on three-day visit to the Philippines since Aug. 15, reiterated Washington's commitment to further strengthen the security partnership between the US and the Philippines.

"It's an honor for us to be considered a friend, partner, and ally of the Philippines," he added.

During his meetings, Schriver discussed the value of multilateral military exercises like Balikatan and Kamandag and their con-

tributions to the strength and interoperability of the US and Philippine militaries.

China had earlier insisted that it had the right to warn foreign ships and aircraft near its artificial islands.

In a statement to the Reuters news agency, China's Foreign Ministry asserted that the disputed Spratly Islands remain Chinese territory.

While China respects the freedom of navigation and overflight of other countries, it said it had the right "to take necessary steps to respond to foreign aircraft and ships that deliberately get close to or make incursions into the air and waters near China's relevant islands, and provocative actions that threaten the security of Chinese personnel stationed there."

"China urges the relevant party to meet China halfway, and jointly protect the present good situation that has not come easily in the South China Sea," the Chinese foreign ministry added. Nat Mariano, with PNA



# DUTERTE HITS BACK AT US DEFENSE OFFICIAL ON ARMS PURCHASE

By Julie M. Aurelio  
@JMAurelioINQ

"You want us to remain backward?"

An irritated President Duterte on Friday said the United States should not question any decision by Manila to acquire modern weapons from countries other than the United States.

He was responding to a US defense official who warned that the Philippines would risk hurting its alliance with the

United States if it acquired weapons systems, including submarines, from Russia.

"Why? Did you stop other countries? Why are you stopping us? ... You're warning us, who are you to warn us?" he said in a speech in Davao City during the Hugpong ng Pagbabago convention.

Mr. Duterte was responding to statements on Thursday by US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Affairs Randall Schriver, whom he

challenged to say to him face to face why the Philippines should not acquire war materiel from Moscow.

"You meet me in a forum. You state your case why you are against my country acquiring [a] submarine. You give me the reason why and make it public," he said.

"Is that how you want to treat an ally? And you want us to stay with you all the time?" Mr. Duterte asked.

He said he would ask US

President Donald Trump himself the same questions "if I get to see him."

### More advanced neighbors

Pointing out that the Philippines' neighbors in Southeast Asia had more advanced military equipment, he added: "You want us to remain backward?"

"Vietnam has seven [submarines], Malaysia has two, Indonesia has about eight. We're the only ones without [submarines]," Mr. Duterte said.

The President was reportedly looking at purchasing submarines from Russia, although the military was already looking at South Korea, Germany and France as possible sources.

He said Washington should have no problem with the Philippines buying submarines from Russia.

"We are not using it against you. Neither can we use it against China or anybody else because we are underarmed," the President said.

The President also criticized the United States for selling refurbished helicopters, some of which, he claimed, had crashed already.

He noted that the Philippines' other allies like South Korea, Japan, China and Russia donated equipment.

"To this day, China or Russia never asked us even for a paper clip. They (China) never mentioned the West Philippine Sea, and I'm the one who's mad," he quipped. INQ

# PH largest recipient of US military aid

FRANCIS J. WAKEFIELD

The Philippines is by far the largest recipient of US military assistance in the region, reaching billions of pesos, in support of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP's) modernization goals through a variety of programs and initiatives, the United States embassy said.

In a statement following the visit of US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs

Randal G. Schriver to the country, the US embassy said the past few years the US has delivered millions of dollars of planes, ships, armored vehicles, and small arms to the Philippines, while also training side by side with its Filipino allies.

It said that from January 1, 2017 to the present, US grants funded the delivery of military equipment worth over P5 billion (\$95 million) to the AFP, including the following:

- January 2017: Raven tactical UAV system worth P60 million (\$1.2

million) which was first tested by the AFP during Balikatan and then used in Marawi City.

- May 18, 2017: 200 Glock pistols, 200 M4 carbines, 100 grenade launchers, individual operator gear, and four mini-guns to be mounted in helicopters, totaling P250 million (\$5 million);

- May 22, 2017: 25 combat rubber raiding craft and 30 outboard motors worth P250 million (\$5 million) to support the Philippine Marine Corps counter terror efforts.

- July 27, 2017: Two C-208 Cessna

aircraft ISR platforms for the Philippine Air Force worth P1.6 billion (\$33 million) including the cost of extra equipment and training.

- August 22, 2017: A tethered Aerostat and radar system for the Philippine Navy valued at nearly P923 million (\$18.5 million), including spare parts and training.

- August 22, 2017: Supplies to the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RADDL), the Animal Health and Welfare Division, and the national AI reference laboratory worth approximately P1 million (\$20,000);

- February 2018: 41 rubber boats with outboard engines valued at P41 million (\$794,000), given to the Philippine Navy;

- March 18, 2018: Scan Eagle UAS to be used for maritime domain awareness, HA/DR, and counterterrorism worth P687 million (\$13.2 million) including the cost of training;

- May 2018: 525 sets of ballistic vests, lightweight ballistic plates, tactical ballistic helmets, and accessories provided through the Counterterrorism Train and Equip Program, valued at P175 million (\$3.4 million);

- August 14, 2018: Special Airborne Mission Installation and Response (SABIR) system which provides the C-130 Hercules with advanced command and control, communications, computer, and surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, valued at P80 million (\$1.6 million).

# PH largest recipient of US military aid in Asia at ₱5 B

By FRANCIS WAKEFIELD

The Philippines is by far the largest recipient of US military assistance in Asia reaching billions of pesos, and Washington has been supporting the Armed Forces' modernization goals through a variety of programs and initiatives, the United States Embassy disclosed.

In a statement following the visit of US Assistant Secretary of Defense Randall G. Schriver to the country, the US Embassy said in the past few years, the United States has delivered millions of dollars worth of planes, ships, armored vehicles, and small arms to the Philippines and has been training side by side with its Filipino allies.

It said that from Jan. 1, 2017 to the present, US grants funded the delivery of military equipment worth

over P5 billion (\$95 million) to the Armed Forces.

These are:

- January 2017: Raven tactical unmanned aerial vehicle system worth P60 million (\$1.2 million) which was first tested by the Armed Forces during the Balikatan military exercises and used in Marawi City;

- May 18, 2017: 200 Glock pistols, 300 M4 carbines, 100 grenade launchers, individual operator gear, and four mini-guns to be mounted in helicopters, totaling P250 million (\$5 million);

- May 22, 2017: Twenty-five combat rubber-raiding craft and 30 outboard motors worth P250 million (\$5 million) to support the Philippine Marine Corps' counter-terror efforts;

- July 27, 2017: Two C-208 Cessna aircraft ISR platforms for the Philippine Air Force worth

P1.6 billion (\$33 million), including the cost of extra equipment and training;

- Aug. 22, 2017: A tethered Aerostat and radar system for the Philippine Navy valued at nearly P923 million (\$18.5 million), including spare parts and training;

- Aug. 22, 2017: Supplies to the Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, the Animal Health and Welfare Division, and the national AI reference laboratory worth approximately P1 million (\$20,000). The Defense Threat Reduction Agency granted the materials to these agencies, all of which are actively involved in the Department of Agriculture's response to the H5N6 Avian Influenza outbreak in the Philippines.

- February 2018: Forty-one rubber boats with outboard engines valued at P41 million (\$794,000), given to the Philippine Navy.

- March 15, 2018: Scan Eagle UAS to be used for maritime domain awareness, HA/DR, and counterterrorism worth P687 million (\$13.2 million), including the cost of training;

- May 2018: Five-hundred twenty-five sets of ballistic vests, lightweight ballistic plates, tactical ballistic helmets, and accessories provided through the Counterterrorism Train and Equip Program, valued at P176 million (\$3.4 million);

- Aug. 14, 2018: Special Airborne Mission Installation and Response system which provides the C-130 Hercules with advanced command and control, communications, computer, and surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, valued at P807 million (\$15.1 million), including the cost of training, installation, and sustainment support.

## ₱5B sa AFP modernization bigay ng US

NI FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Ang Pilipinas ang pinakamalaking recipient ng U.S. military assistance sa rehiyon na umaabot sa bilyun-bilyong piso, sumusuporta sa AFP modernization sa pamamagitan ng iba't ibang programa at inisyatiba. Inilathad ng United States Embassy.

Sa isang pahayag kasuod ng pagbisita sa bansa ni US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall G. Schriver, sinabi ng US Embassy na sa mga nakalipas na taon naghatid ang United States ng milyun-milyong dolar na halaga ng mga eroplano, barko, armored vehicles, at maliliit na armas sa Pilipinas at nagpasanay kasama ang mga tropong Parol.

Nakasama dito na muna Enero 1, 2017, hanggang sa kasalakuyan, pamondohan

ng U.S. grants ang delivery ng military equipment na nagkakahalaga ng mabigat P2 bilyon (\$55 milyon) para sa AFP.

Nitong Huwebes nakitanggap ng si Schriver kay Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana at tinatalakay nila ang full range biyatemang defense at military issues.

Layunin din ng pagbisita na pakalasterin po ang US commitment sa Indo-Pacific region at sa Pilipinas na malapit na kalibigan, kasangkapan, at kaalyado.

"This was my first visit to the Philippines as Assistant Secretary of Defense, so this was a good opportunity for me to meet with the leadership here," ani Schriver nang kausapin ang mga mamamahayag sa US Embassy sa Manila. "It's an honor for us to be considered a friend, partner, and ally of the Philippines."

Sinabi ni Schriver na kabilang sa mga paksang tinatalakay nila ni Lorenzana ang counter-terrorism, regional security sa South China o West Philippine Sea, at ang modernisasyon ng Armed Forces of the Philippines.

### GOOD ALLY

Tinayak ni Schriver na sakaling powersakang kumintang China ang PAGASA island sa Pilipinas, magiging mabuting kaalado ang US.

"We'll be a good ally, and we'll help the Philippines respond accordingly, and beyond that I wouldn't get into specifics," aniya.

Sa ibang West Philippine Sea, tinutubig ni Schriver na patukon ang kampanyang US para sa freedom of navigation. "The ability sail and operate where international law allows, if queried by any particular party," aniya.

# Duterte raises bounty for 'ninja cops' to P5M

By Frinston Lim  
and Julie M. Aurelio  
@Team\_Inquirer

President Duterte has raised the bounty for bringing in dead "ninja cops," policemen involved in the illegal drug trade, to a whopping P5 million as he expressed frustration over the slew of corruption allegations against the police and military.

In a speech during the Hugpong ng Pagbabago convention in Davao City on Friday, the

President lashed out at scalawag policemen, telling them to shape up or face terrible consequences.

"Policemen have many abuses ... I told you to stop it already ... for ninja cops, I will raise the amount to P5 million if you bring him to me dead," he said.

"If you bring a ninja cop to me alive, I will give you P10,000. I am not joking. If I say it in public, that's true," he added.

Mr. Duterte said he was exasperated by the series of con-

troversies involving security forces and government officials.

"You better shape up. I will rise and fall on the issue of corruption [in government]. That's enough," he said.

## Troops' allowance, medicine

The President said he could not let pass cases in which police or military officials steal money intended for the troops' allowances or medicines.

He was referring to Lt. Col. Hector Marana, the dismissed

Philippine Military Academy comptroller who allegedly misused P15 million in PMA funds, as well as Armed Forces of the Philippines Health Service chief Brig. Gen. Leo Torrelavega, AFP Medical Center (AFPMC) commanding officer Col. Antonio Punzalan and 20 others who face court martial for a P1.4-million corruption scandal at the AFPMC.

Almost a year ago in September 2017, the President promised to raise the reward

money for the arrest and prosecution of ninja cops. The term refers to policemen involved in the illegal drug trade, or those who protect drug syndicates.

## Offer to policemen

On Friday, the President said he was making the offer to policemen who do not want to turn to illegal activities but want to earn money.

"You policemen, if you do not want to do bad things, this is a legal way I'm not telling you

to kill them. But if you bring them to me alive, I'll give you P10,000. I might even kick you," he said.

He said scalawag cops who were into the illegal drug trade would have an additional P1 million on their heads for each month that they refused to turn themselves in. **A3**

"Surrender within 48 hours, if you don't, I will add P1 million per month. I want it that way. There's money, so I should spend it," the President said. **INQ**

# Another military official on chopping block—AFP

By Francisco Tuyay

**T**HE Armed Forces of the Philippines has included another military official in the chopping block following his supposed involvement in fund irregularities.

The AFP said it would create three tribunals to try erring personnel who are involved in fraud and corruption.

AFP Chief of Staff Carpio Galvez also issued stern warning against military officials found to be involved in corrupt practices during their tour of duty.

Galvez declined to identify the military official involved in fund irregularities except that he was the alleged conspirator of Philippine Military Academy comptroller Lt.Col. Hector Marana, who was earlier accused of misusing P15 million worth of cadets allowances.

Marana has been convicted and is due to be transferred to the New Bilibid

Prison from the custody of the AFP Intelligence Service.

Last week, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the dismissal of Brig. Edwin Leo Torrelavega, commander of the AFP Health Service Command, along with Col. Antonio Punzalan, head of V. Luna Medical Center and 20 others on allegations of graft and corruption.

Reports said the officials allegedly misused funds intended for wounded soldiers who defended and liberated Marawi City against the terrorists in a fierce five-month battle last year.

The accused military officials will undergo court martial proceedings to determine the gravity of their involve-

ment to corruption amounting to millions worth of medical equipment and supplies.

*"Mayroon pa po tayong susunod. May isa na kaming naimbestigahan. Isa rin po siya sa kasama ni Marana at sinabihan ko po kahapon ang court martial na bilisan,"* Galvez said.

"Maybe in one month or two months time, another officer ang mako-convict natin," Galvez said.

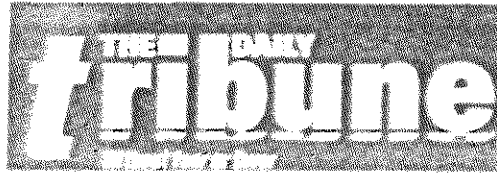
He said he had already formed three court martial tribunals so that justice will be meted to those implicated on corruption and irregularities.

"As I've said in my earlier speech that I will make the AFP clean," Galvez said.

Galvez said they are in a cleansing mode in the AFP to eradicate corruption to ensure that all resources and logistics will be given to their men in the field.

He also promised that all guilty parties who had embezzled government resources will be eventually punished as he repeated to all AFP personnel not to engage in corruption. **13**





# Go rallies government workers vs corruption

Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Eong" Go yesterday urged government personnel to cooperate and help President Duterte eradicate corruption.

"He (Mr. Duterte) needs the cooperation of all government personnel. I am appealing - our President is very serious in fighting corruption, he would ram anybody who comes his way," said Go.

Go noted that the President gets really frustrated and even exhausted, as his fight against corruption in government seems endless.

Recently, the President ordered the sacking of several military officials over the alleged "ghost deliveries" at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Medical Center.

He also castigated rogue policemen presented to him at Malacanang by the Philippine National Police (PNP) leadership.

With his frustration, the President even said he already wanted to resign.

"I really feel for the President.

He is getting old but he is doing all he can. He wants to instill discipline to everyone but it's difficult," said Go.

"I am saddened whenever I see him trying his best to stop corruption, illegal drugs and instill peace and order. Our President hardly gets to rest to fulfill all his promises," he added.

**The President is very strong. We are always together and he works until 2 a.m. Mentally and physically, the President is strong. He can definitely finish his term.**

At the same time, Go dismissed concerns about Mr. Duterte's health.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez earlier said the President can take a break and rest.

"The President is very strong. We are always together and he works until 2 a.m. Mentally and physically, the President is strong. He can definitely finish his term," Go said.

## Malacañang endorses ROTC reinstatement

Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana called on reservists and alumni of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) to harmonize all efforts to strengthen the reservist program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

**At the second Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council Meeting held on 13 August, President Duterte urged Cabinet members to include the ROTC Act in the priority bills.**

He issued the call at the first-ever ROTC Alumni Fellowship Night on 14 August 2018 at the Commissioned Officers Club at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

The event was attended by the alumni associations of the different schools and organized by the National ROTC Alumni Association, the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Reservist and Retiree Affairs, OJ9 of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resource and Department of National Defense.

In his speech, Lorenzana enjoined ROTC alumni leaders to use such

events not just to network and reminisce with fellow alumni but also to unite in support of the DND's legislative initiatives for national defense and security.

He particularly cited the proposed reinstatement of the ROTC as a mandatory program for senior high schools.

He also informed the ROTC community that at the second Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council Meeting held on 13 August, President Duterte urged Cabinet members to include the ROTC Act in the priority bills for submission before the end of the 17th Session at the House of Representatives.

Lorenzana also bared efforts to revive the program with the implementation of the Advanced Citizen Training Program in 100 pilot senior high schools all over the Philippines in the coming school year.

The program aims to introduce the concept of ROTC to senior high students of the current K-12 program as only six out of 10 senior high school graduates are able to pursue tertiary education. **Kathleen Bulquerin**

# AFP affirms humanitarian commitment

The Armed Forces of the Philippines on Thursday reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in a ceremony held at the AFP Commissioned Officers Club (AFPCO) at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

The DND and the Department of Foreign Affairs co-chair a government inter-agency ad hoc committee to formulate and implement activities to commemorate the IHL Day on 12 August and the whole month of August as IHL month.

Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., AFP chief of staff, led the Pledge of Commitment of Military Officers and Enlisted Personnel during the official opening of the celebration of IHL Month this August.

The Department of National Defense (DND) is hosting this year's national celebration of the IHL Month with the theme "Kaligtasan ng Mamamayan sa Panahon ng Digmaan. Sama-sama nating Pagtutulungan."

Among the guests at the ceremony

were Undersecretary Severo Catura, executive director of Presidential Human Rights Committee; Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Ernesto Abella; Undersecretary for Defense Policy Ricardo David Jr., and Boris Kelecevic, deputy head of delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross.

Activities lined up for the month include IHL photo exhibit on 16 August at Heroes Hall of General Headquarters Building at Camp Aguinaldo; IHL Fun Run, Human Formation and bloodletting on 17 August at the Philippine Army Grandstand at Fort Bonifacio, and series of IHL Training/Seminar on 5 to 6 September at AFPCOC.

Also part of the celebration is the "Toys and Books for Children of Marawi" — a donation campaign for the month of July to August.

The Philippines, as a Contracting Party to the Four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, subscribes to the basic principle of disinterested humanitarian aid to all victims of war and armed

conflict without discrimination and accepts direct responsibility for the application of IHL when involved in an armed conflict.

Annually since 1999, the DND and the Department of Foreign Affairs co-chair a government inter-agency ad hoc committee to formulate and implement activities to

commemorate the IHL Day on 12 August and the whole month of August as IHL month. PNA



# Soldier applicant drowns in Ecija military camp's dam

**FORT RAMON MACSAYSAY, Palayan City** - An Army recruit whose father is a police sergeant on Tuesday was found dead and floating at the Pabingahan Dam.

Police identified the victim as Eric Fores, 26, an Army soldier applicant, of Bgy. Liberty, Norala, South Cotabato.

Fores was last seen on Sunday at the Condor's Nest, Malave Special Forces School.

Army Private First Class Ronald Alorro, 35, of Bgy. Maura, Appari, Laganan, said the victim asked permission to take a bath at the Bachelor's Officer Quarters inside the camp at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday. At 5:30 p.m. of the same day, he looked for Fores but failed to find him.

Alorro told police that he noticed a kayak boat was missing. He immediately reported the incident to the 1st Sergeant of the Special Forces School.

The next day, Alorro said they kept looking for Fores until they recovered the missing kayak boat at the dam's shoreline.

On Tuesday, they found the victim floating in the middle of the dam.

Steve Gosaico

## *Duterte's invitation to come home a sham — Joma*

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

The National Democratic Front has described President Duterte's invitation for NDF chief political consultant Jose Ma. Sison to come home as a sham.

In a statement posted on the NDF website, Sison said Duterte was in fact demanding the leaders of its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA) and Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to surrender.

"Duterte never gets tired of repeatedly terminating the peace negotiations. He terminated the peace talks with the NDF on Nov. 23, 2017 with Proclamation 360, and again in December 2017 with Proclamation 374, designating the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations," Sison said.

He said Duterte will be known in history as a "murderer and terminator of the peace negotiations."

"It was a sham that Duterte was inviting me to return to the Philippines after he issued those two proclamations. He was demanding all along the surrender of the revolutionary movement before any comprehensive agreement on social, economic and political reforms," Sison said.

He said the President is hell-bent on establishing a fascist dictatorship.

"He had to terminate the peace negotiations to be able to scapegoat the CPP-NPA for the purpose of declaring martial law nationwide," Sison said.

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### Soldier killed, cop kidnapped in Isabela NPA raids

TUGUECARAO, Cagayan - An Army soldier was killed in an encounter with suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels who raided a checkpoint of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Ilagan City, Isabela on Thursday.

The identity of the slain soldier was withheld pending notification of his family members.

Capt. Norel Jayaban, 5th Infantry Division spokesman, said around 40 communist guerrillas attacked the checkpoint at around 5:20 a.m.

Police Officer 2 Danilo Maur of the Ilagan police and two civilians identified as Jomel Sanchez and Richard Samusam were also reportedly taken by NPA rebels in nearby Silo Kapallatan.

Sanchez and Samusam were later released.

The rebels attacked the same DENR checkpoint on Tuesday and ransacked the office of Task Force Kalkasan.

- Raymund Catindig

# NPA claims raid on police station

BY NESTOR L. ABREMAEA

TACLOBAN CITY - The New People's Army (NPA) claimed responsibility for the raid on the Lapinig, Northern Samar police station last week.

Amado Pesante, spokesperson of the NPA's Northern Samar Rodante Uriai Command, said in a press statement sent to Manila Bulletin, said the group stormed the station last August 10 and carried off 10 M-16 rifles, two 9-mm pistols, a thousand rounds of M-16 ammunition, 48 M-16 magazines, and three laptop computers.

Pesante said a five-minute shootout with the officers in the station left two of them wounded.

He said the NPA targeted the Lapinig station because it was notorious for its involvement in the illegal drug trade in a number of areas in the province.

"This is a big blow against coddlers of the illegal drug trade right under the nose of the reactionary government while a number of PNP units have become instruments to Duterte's hypocritical drug menace Oplan Tokhang that launches a killing spree specifically against the poor," Pesante said.

The raid was the NPA's response to human rights violations and the militarization of the province, he said.

"In Northern Samar, at least eight communities have been occupied by state security forces since the second

half of the year," Pesante said.

The NPA notes the escalating number of counter-insurgency operations in the province actively involving PNP personnel under Oplan Kapayapaan.

Pesante warns against operating PNP units converted into "private killing machine and elements for counter-insurgency operations out to wreak havoc against the civilian populace."

The raid on the Lapinig police station resulted in the relief of Chief Supt. Mariel Magaway as regional police director, Sr. Supt. Romeo Campomanes as the provincial police chief, the station chief and all its 21 officers.

Chief Supt. Dionardo B. Carlos replaced Magaway.

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### Newsbits

#### NPA twisting the truth - Army

ILOILO CITY - The Army's 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) condemned the spokesman of the Coronacion Chiva "Waling-waling" Command of the New People's Army (NPA) for "fabricating lies. The government and the NPA are trading accusations after seven NPA rebels were killed by joint forces of the Army and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in San Jose, Antique, last Wednesday. "We all know who is telling the truth. Ka Julo and his comrades are known for fabricating lies especially in situations like this. His mouth is a fountain of lies," said Major General Dinoh Dolina, 3ID commander. The police team was serving warrants of arrest against rebels Joven Coraivo and Jason Talbe, who were charged for frustrated murder and rebellion. The rebels allegedly opened fire and prompted the police team to seek back-up from the 61st Infantry Battalion (R1 ID). The NPA and left-leaning group Panay Alliance Karapatan said those killed were unarmed. They also said the seven victims were not NPA guerrillas, but activists. "We have numerous recoveries that strongly prove them being armed and legitimate members of the NPA. They are involved in conducting extortion and other criminal activities, which also attest that these are not planted evidences," Dolina said. "If we wish to insist that this was a massacre and those were planted evidences, just prove your allegations in court," he said. (Tara Yap)



## Antique encounter 'massacre' - militants

**BACOLOD CITY:** Militant groups in Panay island led by Panay Alliance Karapatan believe that the incident on August 15 that killed seven alleged members of the New People's Army (NPA) in Antique was 'a massacre and not an encounter' as described by the military and police.

Reylan Vergara, secretary general of Karapatan, said that based on their initial fact-finding mission, the "residents claimed that the seven victims were most probably in their deep sleep when peppered with bullets and brutally killed."

In their interview with a crew of the local funeral parlor where the bodies were brought for initial embalming, it showed the victims were "shot frontally and at close range as the bullets did not exit the victims' bodies."

He said, "all victims have bullet wounds in their heads and chests, a sign that these are finishing gun shots to ensure their deaths."

Vergara added the victims did not have any signs of struggle and the grenades and rusted guns were planted because these did not match the bullets recovered from the scene.

The encounter at about 12:10 on Wednesday in an abandoned church of Purok 7, Barangay Atabay in San Jose, Antique killed Jason Talibo, Jason Sanchez, Karen Ceralvo, Liezel Bandiola, Felix Salditos, Rey Panes and an unidentified male.

The police was about to serve warrants of arrest to Talibo and Joven Ceralvo but were allegedly met by gunfire from the suspects triggering a firefight. Ceralvo reportedly escaped.

Senior Supt. John Bulalacao, police regional director for Western Visayas said the suspects planned to attack the San Jose Police Station.

Meanwhile, the Army in the Visayas slammed the National Democratic Front (NDF) in Panay for "twisting" the facts on the encounter.

Cpt. Eduardo Precioso, spokesman for the 3rd Infantry Division, said NDF Panay spokesman Ka Julio and his comrades are known for fabricating lies especially in encounters.

"His mouth is a fountain of lies, no wonder nothing goes out from it but deceptions," Precioso said in a statement.

In a statement also on Wednesday, Ka Julio said there was no encounter in Antique but was a massacre planned and executed by the "criminal and fascist" military and police forces.

He also bared that the killed rebels were "legitimate personnel" of the Communist Party of the Philippines and NDF in Panay and unarmed.

Precioso countered Ka Julio, insisting recovered pieces of evidence prove that the killed persons were "armed and legitimate" members of the NPA.

"If you insist that this was a massacre and those were planted [pieces of] evidence only, just prove your allegations in court," he said.

EUGENE Y. ADIONG AND DEMPSEY REYES

# Gov't forces arrest ranking CPP official

By Francisco Tuyay

A RANKING official of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Mindanao was captured by security forces in Zamboanga City on Thursday.

Initial reports said authorities have arrested Roberto Rossette Jr., secretary of the Southern Mindanao Regional Command and Central Committee member in Barangay La Paz in Zamboanga City at about 4 p.m.

Reports said that Rossette Jr. was apprehended a few hours after he evaded arrest from authorities who tried to serve an arrest warrant at his house in Sitio Dragon, Barangay Upper La Paz.

Prior to Rossette's arrest, reports said intelligence operatives conducted a monitoring of the suspect's whereabouts at the said house.

While on a stakeout operation, authorities spotted Rossette together with his wife and two unidentified male personalities who had just left their home aboard two single motorcycles.

Upon seeing him, authorities initiated to serve the arrest warrant against Rossette Jr., but the suspect quickly alighted from the motorcycle and ran towards a bushy area.

The police chased the suspect and was later cornered Rossete Jr.

The suspect is presently undergoing interrogation, although sources said that there were no reports as to Rossette's criminal offenses that warranted his arrest.

Meanwhile, military authorities in the Island province of Panay on Friday accused the CPP-NPA for twisting the truth on the neutralization of an extortion group the other day in Antique. 13

Major Gen. Dino Dolina, commander of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, slammed Ka Julio Montana, spokesman of the Coronation Chiva "Waling-Waling" Command for spreading lies about the nature of the CPP-NPA extortion activities in Panay.

## NPA attack: Sundalo utas, pulis at 2 pa kinidnap

**TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan** - Patay ang isang sundalo ng Philippine Army habang talibong katao kabilang ang isang pulis ang dinukot ng mga pinaniniwalaang rebeldeng New

People's Army (NPA) na lumusob sa ikalawang bases sa isang anti-logging checkpoint ng pamahalaan sa Brigy Sindon Bayaba, Iligan City, Isabela noong Himebes.

Kinumpirma ni Capt Nonel Toyaban, tagapagsalita ng 5th Army Division na isang sundalo ang napatay sa bakbakan na pumutok dakong alas-6:20 ng umaga.

Samantala, sa hindi kilawran na nagaganap na sagupaan sa dako ng Barangay Kapaltatan, dinukot ng mga armado sa PO2 Danilo Maur na miyembro ng Iligan City Police at dalawang sibilyan

na sina Jermal Sanchez at Richard Samusari.

Hindi pa nilinaw ng pulisya kung bakit nasa lugar ng bakbakan ang nawawalang pulis.

Una nang nilusob ng mga armadong kalelakihan na pinaniniwalaang kasapi ng NPA ang nasabing checkpoint noong Martes.

Ayon sa report, pinakawalan ng mga armadosina Sanchez at Samusari nang bandang hapon na at dinala ng mga awtonidad kay Isabela Police Director Sr. Supt Mariano Rodriguez para sa kaululang pagtatanong. *(Reymund Catindig)*

### **10-anyos dinukot ng Sayyaf**

**NORTH COTABATO** - Dinukot ng arim na kala-lakihan na hinihinalang mga miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf Group ang isang Grade 5 pupil sa Barangay San Raymundo, Jolo, Sulu nitong Huwebes ng umaga.

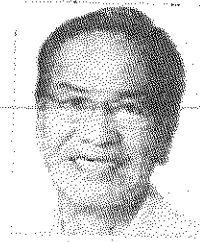
Ayon kay Senior Supt. Fabio Labra, provincial police director ng Sulu na dinukot ng mga suspek na sakay ng tatlong motorsiklo si Zaire Khan Fasil, 10-anyos at mag-aaral ng Notre Dame of Jolo dakong alas-7:00 ng umaga.

Dahil dito, nananawagan ngayon si ARMM Gov. Mujiv Hataman sa Sulu provincial police at mga lokal na otoridad ng kooperasyon para sa agarang pagpapalaya sa kidnap victim.

Nabatid na ang tatay ng bata ay isang municipal local government operation officer ng Jolo (**Rhoderick Benez**)

# AT GROUND LEVEL

SATUR C. OCAMPO



## Duterte, a confused and confusing president

*"These terminated the talks with the Reds - the Communist Party of the Philippines with [Jose Maria] Sison. Because in the series of agreements before, even [in] the time of Aquino, they entered into so many things that they scattered [sic] the privileges and power which they wanted. And we summed it all [up] and it would really appear that it was a coalition government. And so I say, 'I cannot give you an inch of that even. I cannot give you what is not mine.'"*

These statements are among those let loose by President Duterte in a free-wheeling and rambling speech in Malacanang on Aug. 14, before an audience composed of the country's top businessmen, foreign diplomats, and government officials (including former president now Speaker Gloria M. Arroyo).

Once again setting aside a prepared speech, he opted to talk about "my personal heartaches and all," centering on his thoughts about stepping down from office. He was tired and exasperated, he said, that he could not fulfill his promises to the people to end the problems of illegal drugs, criminality, and corruption "even beyond his term."

Taking note of Arroyo's presence (toward whom he showed deference), he added, "I do not want to cheapen the presidency, *kasi nakakabitin eh.*" I suppose he meant that it would be too embarrassing to do so.

But what interests me is his reference to the GRP-NDFP peace talks, which he terminated by issuing Presidential Proclamation 360 in November last year.

(Changing his mind in April 2018, he ordered his peace negotiating panel to engage its NDFP counterpart in backchannel talks toward resuming the formal talks. But then, just as the back-

channel discussions had produced three agreements that would have enabled the formal negotiations to proceed apace smoothly, and the fifth round of formal negotiations was set to be held by the end of June, Duterte changed his mind again. He suspended the formal negotiations for three months - a period that would be ending soon - purportedly to enable the GRP panel to engage in wider public consultations and to enable him to review all previously signed agreements.)

I picked out the quotation above because it exposes the President's apparently confused reading of the previously signed agreements - if indeed he has read all of the pertinent documents. What did he mean by saying the NDFP, representing the CPP-NPA and about 20 other revolutionary organizations, "scattered the privileges and power which they wanted"?

One glaring indication that he hadn't really read the previous agreements is the phrase "even [in] the time of Aquino." There was only one signed agreement during the Cory government (in the initial GRP-NDFP peace talks in 1986-87), and it was for a 60-day bilateral ceasefire; nowhere in that document was a reference to a coalition government. In P-Noy's time (2010-2016), no signed agreement was reached because the talks bogged down soon after the first round of formal talks ended in February 2011.

Such confusion in Duterte's mind, in turn, must have spurred his confusing decisions that have proved to be inimical to the very objectives of the formal peace negotiations: to address the root causes of the protracted armed conflict; forge the necessary comprehensive bilateral agreements on social, economic and political reforms; and to implement these in

order to attain a just and lasting peace.

After the above-quoted statement, Duterte seemed to criticize his chief peace negotiator, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, and peace adviser, Jesus Dureza. He said: "So sorry, Atya Bello was there. He was the one with Dureza. But I didn't know they [were] backchanneling."

Was Duterte disowning the order he had given to his peace team to engage in backchannel talks with the NDFP in April-June 2018? One of the agreements produced by the backchannel talks was on a "coordinated unilateral ceasefire," which the GRP side had been pressing for. It will be interesting to find out how Bello and Dureza are reacting to their principal's statement. Nothing so far has been heard from them although both had been saying the door remains open for the resumption of the talks.

Duterte capped his remarks about the peace talks by flatly declaring that "I cannot deal with the Communist Party." So many soldiers and civilians, he added, have been killed; thus "we will have to continue fighting.."

The context in which Duterte spoke about killings is the war of almost 50 years between the government and the Left revolutionary forces that he has repeatedly bemoaned. And each side in the war has claimed high casualties inflicted on the adversary, with the AFP boasting a higher tally of "enemies" killed, not counting the civilians slain as "collateral damage." And Duterte has been silent on the ever-increasing human rights violations attributed to state security forces under all administrations.

It's this war that the GRP-NDFP peace talks aim to end by the two sides assiduously addressing its root causes. Yet, Duterte chose to terminate the talks

and pursue the war instead.

And he seems to belittle, disparage and disregard all the signed agreements painstakingly negotiated and forged since 1992. The most important among these agreements is the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAR-HRIHL), which the European Parliament, among other institutions, has praised as a landmark agreement that even provides material compensation to the civilians whose rights have been violated by either side in the conduct of the war. The CAR-HRIHL should have been implemented since 1998, but the GRP has withheld cooperation in this regard.

In reiterating his decision to terminate the talks, Duterte failed to point out that pursuing the long suspended peace negotiations was one of his promises as presidential candidate. He ignored the positive results of the four rounds of formal negotiations supposedly under his watch, from August 2017 to April 2018. In signed joint statements, the two negotiating panels hailed the "unprecedented" meeting of minds on social and economic reforms in such a short period of negotiations held in a mutually agreed-on neutral venue in Europe (Oslo, Norway and in The Netherlands). One such consensus is the free distribution of agricultural land to peasants and farm workers as the "basic principle of genuine agrarian reform."

Clearly, Duterte has lost his bearings vis-à-vis the GRP-NDFP peace talks. He has fully adopted the militarist solution, which one administration after another since Marcos has proved to be unattainable.

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# China the superpower

WHEN China must be considered a superpower has been the subject of accelerating projections. Goldman Sachs in 2007 predicted the Chinese economy would be almost the size of the US economy by 2025 and would be the largest economy in the world by 2050 when it would be twice the size of the US economy. In 2010, the date when China would overtake the US was moved forward by BNP Paribas to 2020. In 2011, the *Economist* estimated that China would overtake the US six years from then. That is 2018, our current year!

Bloomberg tells us that actually China already surpassed the US two years ago, in 2016, based on purchasing power parity and surpassed it ever further based on the Big Mac scale, a Big Mac costing 1.8 times more in China.

Martin Jacques in his best-selling opus *When China Rules the World* deals with what China will be like as a superpower. It is interesting to see how his prognosis of the future has turned or proved to be, now that we are in the nascent years of China having the No. 1 economy in the world.

### Effects of China's rise

One of the more fundamental effects of China's rise, says Jacques, is the transformation



AMBASSADORS' CORNER

JAIME J. YAMBAO

and reshaping of the international financial system. The financial crisis of September 2008 made manifest the decline of the dollar and the increasing strength of the renminbi. It showed the US no longer strong enough to underwrite the present international economic system and to sustain the dollar as the world's premier reserve currency. Nations would hence prefer to hold more of their reserves in currencies other than the dollar. Given that China is the main trading partner of most, if not all East Asian countries, it will be natural for trade between them to be conducted in the renminbi. The full convertibility of the renminbi is ineluctable. Among the consequences of this shift in the financial system is that the US will find that economic sanctions against countries like Iran or North Korea will no longer carry the same threat because access to the US dollar financing will be less significant to them.

The political consequence of the decline of the dollar will be wide and deep. US military

bases overseas will become markedly more expensive to finance and the American public will be less prepared to accept the costs of expensive military commitments abroad. On the other hand, China has of course long started converting its growing economic power into a mighty modern military force on land, sea, air, and, lately, even outer space. China has built up its military presence abroad first by converting South China Sea features into military bases and giving priority in its One Belt One Road initiative to ports that can serve as docking and refueling stations for their Navy and Air Force. China may in no time match the military strength of the United States as well.

Jacques' last edition of his work was completed before Donald Trump became president. Can Trump arrest the decline of the United States? Can he make the US great again? It is doubtful if he can because he has taken directions opposite to those considered responsible for the rise of China. China has taken advantage of trade globalization while Trump has taken a negative view of free trade agreements and waged a tariff war on principal trading partners. China has assiduously cultivated its soft power on developing countries, es-

pecially those gifted with natural resources or those producing commodities that China needs. Trump has called developing countries shithole countries, treated them as coddlers of terrorists, and erected unprecedented racist immigration barriers against their citizens. The Communist Party of China has kept its country united despite the handover of territories of different political systems. Trump has made the United States of America a divided and polarized society.

(It is perhaps a sign of America's dire financial straits or of Trump's state of mind that Trump has insisted on building a wall on its border with Mexico and making Mexico pay for it. The Chinese emperors built the Great Wall of China without asking Mongolia or any of the barbarian neighbors to pay for it, in whole or in part. As the wiser than ever 90-year-old Mahathir reasoned out in a CNN interview, "It is his project, he should pay for it.")

### **A civilization-state?**

Perhaps because we Filipinos are familiar with the Chinese and their culture, I am somewhat quizzical about Jacques' description of China as a civilization-state to be distinguished from a nation-state. It is strange to categorize

something when it is the only thing that falls into the category. China is the only ancient civilization that continues to this day. Admittedly, the ancient emperors of China were at the center of a sophisticated system of governance when the rest of mankind was in the proverbial state of nature. They introduced examinations as the way to enter the civil service. Unlike latter-day emperors, they were deposable; their mandates could be withdrawn from them by their discontented subjects. Although the compass did not make of China a maritime power and their mastery of gunpowder did not drive the white devils away, these and other inventions remain landmarks in the history of human knowledge. But continuity I do not see from Confucius to Mao other than that they represent ethical systems not driven by religious beliefs.

Maybe because of this civilization-state mindset Jacques conceives of superpower China, ever becoming more powerful and prosperous than its neighbors, ruling over East Asia under a revival of the ancient tributary system of the Middle Kingdom. All's well provided a country acknowledges the superiority of China. To make this acknowledgement to the Yongle Emperor of the Ming dynasty, a Sultan of Sulu in 1417 made a trip to China fol-

lowed by an entourage of 300 and laden with gifts of pearls, tortoise shell, precious stones and a memorial inscribed on gold. The Sultan was accorded a royal welcome and return gifts of chinaware, gold, silver, silk and hundreds of thousands of copper coins, and when he died suddenly on his way home, was given a funeral "as formal as a Chinese king's." The grieving emperor ordered a mausoleum built to contain his remains and in memory of his friend. The emperor named the Sultan's son as his successor. Sulu continued to send tributary missions in 1420, 1421, 1423, and 1424.

Is a fate worse than this possible to befall the Philippines? Is China keen on attaching the Philippines as a province? A visitor from a think-tank in Beijing pointed out to his audience at the Philippine Council on Foreign Relations that it was Spain, the United States, and Japan that invaded the Philippines, never China. Its expansionism has been confined to territories that shared the same land mass with China.

Could there be a first time of this expansionism leaping across the ocean? *Az*

We hope that China will find out that the best way to exercise their influence over their wide sphere is through the institution of the rule of law.



# The importance of international law to the Philippines

By Albert del Rosario

LET me start by stating that our country is facing challenges which threaten its very foundation that is built on the rule of law.

The Philippines has been a staunch advocate of a rules-based international system. Its experience as a nation that has been liberated from dictatorial rule, proves its commitment to human security, dignity and more importantly, its core values of democracy. As such, we as a people have always sought to identify with those nations which share the same belief that international order should be based on rules that are fair to the shared interest of all.

This is quite evident in our Constitution which is replete with principles in the conduct of its foreign policy. In embracing an independent foreign policy, the Philippines has adopted the generally accepted principles of international law.

I have shared time and again that the rule of law is the bedrock of peace, order and fairness in modern societies. The rise of a rules-based international system has been the great equalizer in global affairs.

Respect and adherence to international law have preserved peace and resolved conflicts. International law has given equal voice to nations regardless of political, economic or military stature, banishing the unlawful use of sheer force.

Yet, there are those who think that the rule of law does not apply to great powers. We continue to reject that view. There are actors, however, who believe that they have unbridled power to dominate their fellow nations because they have the superior firepower.

The militarization of the South China Sea remains to be one of the most important and contentious external threat not only in our country but to the region.

China has continuously rejected the rule of law by obstructing the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. More so, it has not only uncessingly refused to accept the arbitral ruling that is now an integral part of international law, but it has also unwaveringly flexed its muscle to deprive us of our sovereign rights. Since our northern neighbor is a signatory to UNCLOS, it cannot pick and choose arbitrarily what benefits China. Our northern neighbor must

abide by the totality of UNCLOS.

## What to do

What are our options to advance our national interest vis-a-vis South China Sea?

How do we communicate effectively and efficiently our aspirations for a global order that increasingly needs stability?

While our country appeared to be lax in enforcing what is right, it is not yet too late.

We can still change the path we ought to take and lead it towards achieving a global order wherein "right" is might.

We need to regain the respect of responsible nations by clearly standing up for the rule of law. We can begin by rallying for the support of other countries. We can seek the UN General Assembly to issue a Resolution that would effectively order China to abide by the arbitral ruling. Nonetheless, whether through multilateralism at the UN or with Asean or bilateral engagements, these provide us with glimmers of hope that we can triumph over an aggressor.

We must furthermore be able to police our own conduct and declarations to ensure that we do not project any opposing views that tend to undermine our lawful rights and interests.

## What not to do

At the risk of sounding repetitive, the arbitral ruling is not an empty victory. Any person who views it as such carries the voice of China.

Let us not be willing victims by supporting and fueling China's non-adherence to the rule of law. Concomitantly, we cannot remain silent.

According to my esteemed friend, Acting Supreme Court Chief Justice Antonio Carpio, the inaction of a State which is faced with a situation constituting threat or infringement of its rights refers to acquiescence; thus, it takes the form of silence or absence of protest in circumstances which generally call for a particular reaction signifying an objection. )

By being silent, we have weaponized an aggressor to do more harm. By being silent, we have encouraged further aggression into our territories and marine resources.

As any responsible nation would do, we must act with peaceful resistance against threats to our sovereign rights and most importantly, the decline of the rule of law.

## Previous rulings

Aside from the South China Sea, a

number of cases regarding territorial integrity and sovereignty has been resolved wherein the rule of law has been used as basis in delineating the rights of claimant states.

The cases of the Kingdom of Netherlands versus Russia, Mauritius versus UK, and Nicaragua versus United States deserve significant attention. The losing parties in these cases ultimately and substantively complied with the award of the arbitral tribunal.

The question is why. Simply because these States opted to respect the rules-based international system. These states must therefore be considered exemplars of democratic countries that ought to be copied.

## Moving forward

As we continue to ponder our role in the future global order, let us ask ourselves what kind of international system we want to live in. Let us ask as well whether or not our actions are aligned with our aspirations.

Our country is therefore confronted with two choices—do we stand strongly for the rule of law? Or do we, by default, allow ourselves to be ruled by China?

Should we end up with a misguided choice, for examples, do we want to suffer the political consequences of Cambodia or the debt trap challenges of Sri Lanka and Djibouti?

In closing, we want to respectfully commend President Duterte on his recent remarks about China's aggressive and unlawful behavior in the South China Sea.

Nine out of 10 Filipinos would be encouraged and inspired by this manifestation of our President's positive leadership.

If we truly adhere and respect the rule of law, we should actively seek to end any unlawful and aggressive attack to the rules-based international system.

The Filipinos have the moral high ground.

The Filipinos have the law on their side. We are in the right.

Let us therefore speak with one voice—that adherence to the rule of law is the only way forward.

*Albert del Rosario is a former Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Philippine Ambassador to the United States. This speech was delivered Friday, Aug. 17, at the Strathbase ADR Institute Forum at Ascott Bonifacio Global City.*

# Is the federalist project doomed?

Who would quarrel with a promised path to economic prosperity and lasting peace after decades of persistent poverty and incessant rebellion?

Well, it now appears that not everyone agrees with it and they're not just a small minority.

*“And lately, it appears that even within the Duterte administration, there’s no unanimity in the pursuit of Federalism.”*

From where we sit, the Federalism proposal and the Charter change that it necessarily entails both seem to be facing rough seas.

Recent surveys show that 8 in 4 Filipinos do not approve of Charter change that would bring about the shift to a federal system of government as they are more concerned with coping with high prices and getting/keeping a job so they can feed their families three square meals a day.

Filipinos also tend to look with suspicion at any attempt to revise the fundamental law as they fear that behind this are ulterior motives, including extending the term of office of elective officials. Initiatives by the Ramos and Arroyo administrations to change the 1987 Constitution, for instance, failed to take off as these were perceived to be nothing more than ill-disguised moves to extend their terms beyond their mandated six years without reelection.

There’s also the very real fear that the shift to Federalism, unless accompanied by a clear prohibition on political dynasties, would only strengthen their hold on political and economic power. As we know, new and old political families already dominate Congress. Once it transforms into a constituent assembly, would these political families willingly give up their positions of power?

And lately, it appears that even within the Duterte administration, there’s no unanimity in the pursuit of Federalism, with three key economic managers expressing misgivings about adopting it at this point as they believe it would have adverse rather than salutary effects on the economy.

Last week, at least three senior Cabinet members cited the need to go slow in pursuing the federal shift unless substantive issues, especially regarding its fiscal impact on the economy, are resolved.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III, facing senators at a committee hearing, clarified he was not

totally opposing Federalism as it is, but could not endorse the federal road map in its present form, based on the draft shown to him, citing its "adverse impact on fiscal space."

Dominguez told senators the country's positive credit rating may be put at risk if its proponents fail to address the fiscal issues related to the proposed shift to Federalism. Rushing the transition to a federal system without addressing fiscal issues, he pointed out, may result in a large deficit and imperil country's credit rating.

The Department of Finance which Dominguez heads had earlier warned that the shift to a federal system could bloat the budget deficit to P1.2 trillion, equivalent to 6.7 percent of gross domestic product. Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia has also warned that at this point, the regions in the country are not ready for Federalism, that the momentum of infrastructure improvement in the regions is going to be disrupted and that the shift to Federalism would entail immense expenditures which may increase the fiscal deficit to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio. That's quite a mouthful from the country's chief economist.

“  
*It's not mandatory to register for the PhilID, but those who do will have their personal details collected.*

can't just adopt a system of government without knowing the implications.”

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has also cautioned against rushing Chacha and the shift to Federalism, saying the government needs to conduct a comprehensive public information drive to let the people know how Federalism works.

Senators are also wary about the proposed shift to the federal system. The Senate Committee on Economic Affairs is now conducting public



## AROUND TOWN

Ernesto M. Hilario

hearings to take an in-depth look at the potential impact of the proposed shift to Federalism would have on the Philippine economy.

The hearings seek to scrutinize the economic risks and opportunities, impact on regional economic growth, additional fiscal costs of the shift to Federalism, effects on investments due to emerging issues on the imposition of additional taxes, administration of incentives and repercussions on ease of doing business in the country.

Senior economists in the academe, such as Bernardo Villegas and Victor Abola of the University of Asia and the Pacific, are apprehensive that the country might experience hyperinflation as it shifts to Federalism.

Business groups, including the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Makati Business Club, Management Association of the Philippines, Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, Semiconductor and Electronics Industries of the Philippines Foundation Inc. and Cebu Business Club, had earlier also expressed fears that the proposed federal shift may spawn uncertainty among investors.

Last week, they were joined by more groups expressing concern over the consequences of shifting to Federalism. These include Alyansa Agrikultura, Asia-Pacific Real Estate Association, Bankers Association of the Philippines, Foundation for Economic Freedom, Judicial Reform Initiative, People Management Association of the Philippines, Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Philippine Women's Economic Network, Tax Management Association of the Philippines, UP School of Economics Alumni Association and Women's Business Council Philippines. They likewise called on legislators "to weigh carefully the costs and risks associated with the proposed monumental shift to a federal system of government."

With so many voices now opposed to what appears to be feverish efforts to fast-track Charter change and Federalism, the administration should heed the handwriting on the wall. At the very least, it should allow broader popular participation in the debate. Otherwise, it risks alienating the very people whose support is crucial for Charter change to succeed. 4

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# It takes two to cha-cha

**“The truth is that this is a useless exercise because the Senate is hardly cooperative in the matter of the Federalism shift.”**

Speaker Gloria Arroyo has admitted her doubts on charter change and the shift to Federalism done during her term, something she must have known was not likely to happen during her short term as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Almost everybody could see this, knowing that the politicians seeking elective seats will have to troop to the Commission on Elections to file their certificates of candidacy, then unofficially campaign, apart from Congress having long vacation time, given the many holidays, following the congressional calendar.

However, the Speaker, during a lengthy TV interview, said she would facilitate discussions on cha-cha.

“If (cha-cha) might not be completed in my remaining time in office, especially as there will still be a plebiscite,” Arroyo said, adding she

hopes to be able to move cha-cha forward as far as she can during her Speakership.

She also said she hopes “those who follow after her will pick up from where we left off in this Congress.”

But just what is the House pushing? The draft of the Duterte-commissioned body that came up with the presidential federal shift?

Doesn't she, as well as her new team, realize that as a constituent body, any member of the House



**FRONTLINE**  
Ninez Cache-Olivares

fact that the country and its people are not ready for it because the many local government officials and officers are just not ready to perform under a sub state. And neither, for that matter, is the present government ready to finance these sub states without bloating the national budget which spells more budget deficits, higher interest rates and more loans than the country can afford to repay while keeping Filipinos in eternal hock.

While the parliamentary form of government has apparently been shelved by the Constitutional Commission created by President Duterte, and that the American federal system instead has been adopted, which means a bicameral Congress, the presidential system hardly guarantees that local officials, who will be running in such an election under a federal system, are fit for the job since most of them are just not ready for such a big job. Nor, for that matter, are such sub states formed ready to have their own legislature and executive branches.

At this time, even as the House speaks of pushing the federal system as far as it can, its members and officers should look at the “sample” sub state envisioned to form the Bangsamoro under the Bangsamoro Organic Act.

Just who will be composing

can propose amendments and revisions? Or will this new team of Gloria just silence whoever proposes amendments, block the vote and simply have a *visa voce* vote on the passage of the draft charter as is?

Of all the reasons brought forward, pro and con, in the never-ending issue of the Federalism shift is the

the officers of the Bangsamoro government especially, during the so-called transition period, if not the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fighters who hardly knew a thing about governance?

Yet the MILF insists on a government that is virtually independent, with the nation under a prime minister and a parliament that would elect its members.

In a transition government, the leaders normally segue into a permanent position and, for certain, there will again be fighting among the various Moro tribes, which is why there can never be peace in Mindanao. Worse, this same sub state, in time, will be demanding full independence and secede from the Republic of the Philippines.

But Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said once the shift is approved, local government units (LGU) will be in a better position to attract more investments and decide the kind of incentives they can offer, such as lower property taxes or corporate taxes.

Is Lopez so certain that these LGU officials, many of whom are not ready for such jobs, are capable of running their sub states under a presidential federal system?

What then happens if the shift comes, and later the nation finds that the shift is a big mistake and, worse, the government is bankrupt and can hardly afford to subsidize the 13 to 16 sub states?

But in the matter of cha-cha still being pushed by Gloria up till the time the 17th Congress comes to an end, the truth is that this is a useless exercise because the Senate is hardly cooperative in the matter of the Federalism shift.

What good will all the push for the Federalism shift by the House do, if the Senate will not bother about pushing Federalism when what is in their minds is getting reelected and elected in 2019? 4

It always takes two houses to cha-cha.

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**18 AUGUST 2018**

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**Sundalo patay sa engkuwentro sa Isabela**

Harris Julio, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Aug 17 2018 12:11 PM



Patuloy ang pagtugis ng militar sa mga nakatakas na rebeldeng New People's Army na nakasagupa nila sa Barangay Sindon Bayabo sa Ilagan City, Isabela. Larawan mula kay Matts Mar Mateo

ILAGAN CITY, Isabela - Patay ang isang sundalo sa panibagong engkuwentro ng militar at mga miyembro ng New People's Army sa Barangay Sindon Bayabo ng lungsod na ito, Miyerkoles.

Sa inisyal na imbestigasyon, nagsasagawa umano ng combat patrol ang mga sundalo ng 95th Infantry Battalion nang makasagupa ang hindi pa matukoy na bilang ng mga rebelde sa bahagi ng Sitio Kapaltatan.

Matapos ang palitan ng putok, napag-alaman na isang sundalo ang nawawala. Natagpuan nilang nakahandusay at wala nang buhay ang kasamahan malapit sa lugar na pinangyarihan ng engkuwentro.

Hindi muna pinangalanan ang nasawing sundalo habang ipinagbibigay-alam pa sa pamilya ang kaniyang pagkamatay.

Sa pahayag ng Reynaldo Piñon Command ng NPA Central Isabela Front, inamin nila ang paglungsad ng "hakbang pamamarusang pagdi-disarma" sa Task Force Kalikasan.

Giit ng NPA, sangkot umano ang Task Force Kalikasan sa pangongotong at korupsiyon.

Ang Task Force Kalikasan ay binuo ng lokal na pamahalaan at Department of Environment and Natural Resources kasabay ng konstruksyon ng Ilagan-Divilacan Road tatlong taon na ang nakaraan.

Patuloy naman ang pagtugis ng militar sa mga tumakas na rebelde.

Pelino in an interview with media denied being part of the ASG but was unable to answer queries on why he had firearms and explosives.

'Fertile ground'

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is actively monitoring reports of renewed recruitment in Mindanao following the defeat of the Maute group in the Marawi siege last year.

In a GMA News report, Professor Rommel Banlaoi said the ISIS considers Mindanao as "fertile ground" and "safe haven" because of the Moro rebellion that continues to exist "even though the law on the creation of a Bangsamoro political entity, the Bangsamoro Organic Law or BOL, was passed this year."

The same report added that "the surviving leaders of the Maute group found an opportunity to recruit new followers from mostly poor communities in Mindanao as well as generate funds."

The report says "the terror group has officially declared Mindanao as Wilayah East Asia or ISIS East Asian province," based on IS publications such as the Amaq News Agency, which is a news outlet linked to the ISIS group.

Studies by the Philippine Institute for Peace Violence and Terrorism Research also identify three personalities as the "leaders" of the Wilayah East Asia: "Abu Toraype," the former vice chairman of military affairs of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters who later left the BIFF and pledged his allegiance to ISIS; "Abu Dar," who is considered as the leader of the remnants of the Maute group; and "Puruji Indama," the ASG leader from Basilan who is allegedly behind the Lamitan bombing a few weeks ago.

On alert

Government is on alert against the resurgence of terror.

Recently, the Office for Transportation Security (OTS) Security Screening Officers (SSOs) assigned at the Mactan Cebu International Airport intercepted pieces of suspected live ammunition from passengers' baggage.

On 12 August, a passenger of Cebu Pacific flight 5J 608 was found to have one piece of suspected live ammo of an unknown caliber. The passenger bound for Clark was later identified as Apostol Krizzle.

Later that day, another passenger, identified as Solaha Heil, was intercepted with two pieces of suspected live ammunition. Heil was bound for Manila via Air Asia flight Z2 774.

On 13 August, a passenger bound for Zamboanga via Cebu Pacific flight 5J 433, identified as Mark Ivan Ventura, was intercepted with two pieces of suspected live ammunition of caliber 5.56mm.

As part of the standard operating procedures, incidents were properly recorded and ammunition intercepted were turned over to the law enforcement officers for proper disposition.

Meanwhile, all passengers were allowed to continue with their respective flights without undue delay. With reports from Rico Mirasol Osmena and GMA News.

## Army troops, police massacred 7 alleged NPA members in Antique, families say

By: Nestor P. Burgos Jr. - @inquirerdotnet  
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 01:50 PM August 17, 2018



The family of seven suspected NPA rebels killed in San Jose, Antique on Wednesday accused soldiers and policemen of summarily killing their loved ones claiming that those killed were unarmed (Photo by Nestor P. Burgos Jr./INQUIRER VISAYAS)

ILOILO CITY – Liezl Bandiola’s face was half blown off. Five others had fatal wounds in the head or face.

“There was no firefight. They were mercilessly killed, massacred,” said Ruth Salditos, wife of Felix Salditos, one of the seven alleged New People’s Army (NPA) rebels killed in a purported shootout with policemen and soldiers in the capital town of San Jose in Antique province on Wednesday.

In a press conference at the Gegato Abecia Funeral Homes and Crematory in Jaro District here on Thursday afternoon, the families of the slain alleged rebels accused the Philippine National Police and the Army’s 301st Brigade of shooting and killing their loved ones who were “unarmed and probably sleeping.”

### ADVERTISEMENT

“Why were they so cruel? They could have arrested them,” said Lina Mecinas, wife of Peter Mecinas, 60, who was earlier identified as Rene Agustin.

Police and military officials earlier said the seven died after they threw a grenade and fired at a team of policemen and soldiers who were out to serve warrants of arrest against two alleged rebels about 12:10 a.m. on Wednesday.



They said a 30-minute firefight erupted before the alleged rebels were found dead inside a house in Barangay Atabay in San Jose. No one from the raiding team were hurt.

Chief Supt. John Bulalacao, Western Visayas police director, denied allegations that the alleged rebels were summarily killed.

“We are ready to be investigated. There was no massacre,” stressing that a “legitimate encounter” happened.

The raiding team had presented various firearms, grenades and ammunition allegedly recovered from the house along with rebel documents and belongings.

Bulalacao said none of the raiding team were wounded because they were “well-positioned and were in superior numbers” compared to the alleged rebels.

But Reylan Vergara, secretary general of the human rights group Karapatan in Panay, said the recovered firearms were “rusty” and the ammunition was incompatible with the firearms.

## COA questions Bohol town's expenses in 2017 ops vs Abu Sayyaf

Adrian Ayalin, ABS-CBN News

Posted at Aug 17 2018 02:15 PM



Government troops patrol the town of Inabanga in Bohol province in pursuit of Abu Sayyaf rebels that had entered the province, April 2017. *Jay Rommel Labra, EPA/File*

MANILA - The Commission on Audit (COA) has questioned nearly P1 million in disbursements that the local government of Inabanga, Bohol made at the height of police and military operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group in 2017.

- [TIMELINE: Abu Sayyaf in Bohol](#)

State auditors cited the town's total expenses of P935,316.59 from April 17 to 28, 2017, which supposedly covered "financial assistance to the Philippine Army for the ongoing military operations against the ASG, reimbursement [for] drone camera with accessories, payment of food supply for the military and PNP (Philippine National Police) personnel during the encounter with ASG."

The COA noted that payments made by the municipality, led by Mayor Josephine Socorro Jumamoy, lacked supporting documents and required signatures of the municipal accountant, "casting doubt on the legality and propriety of the transactions."

The three disbursement vouchers itemized as "reimbursement [for] drone camera with accessories" had a total amount of P128,625, with the mayor identified as "payee."

"The only document attached to the financial assistance to the Philippine Army was a certification from the mayor that there is on-going military operations against the ASG in the municipality. This has to be supported with acknowledgment receipt from the recipient military officials and a request from their military unit," the COA said.

There was also a disbursement made on June 29, 2017, two months after the operations, to cover funeral expenses, including payment for two caskets, embalming of 6 bodies and transportation costs.

"It was not indicated how much [was] the price per casket or per item of work, hence it was difficult to determine the price reasonableness of the funeral expenses," the COA said.

Police and military operations in Inabanga started on April 6, 2017 when soldiers monitored ASG members leaving for Central Visayas.

This prompted various foreign governments such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada to advise their citizens against traveling to the region, including Bohol, a popular tourist destination.

The operations led to the death of ASG leader Muamar Askali, also known as Abu Rami.

- Several killed as Abu Sayyaf, military clash in Bohol

The Inabanga local government, led by Jumamoy, said the disbursements were necessary as residents were in danger at the time.

It also noted that the municipal accountant was on official travel at the time but that her role was delegated to a staff member given the magnitude of the situation.

"Time in procuring the equipment is of the essence due to the hot pursuit operation of the military in pursuing the Abu Sayyaf Group and the use of drone is very important to enhance security and safety," the municipality said as quoted by the COA.

"Financial assistance to the military and food supply to the military and PNP personnel is of same importance for a more effective operation and a boost to their morale in sacrificing their very lives [for] Inabangnons. The payment [for] caskets, embalming and transportation [was] higher due to the higher state of decomposition of those casualties in the encounter," the COA said quoting the municipality.

Government auditors recommended that municipal officials and employees submit the required supporting documents to avoid a possible disallowance.

They also sought an explanation from the municipal accountant on her failure to certify the disbursement vouchers released.

Under PD 1994, all government disbursements must be approved by proper officials, and supported with complete documentation.

Post audit process indicated that the signature of the municipal accountant did not appear in the various disbursement documents that authorized the payments.

The disbursement vouchers showed that the recipients of various amounts ranging from P50,000 to P100,000 included Brig. Gen. Arnulfo Matagulhan, PSupt Felipe Natividad, Col. Jose Dodjie Belloga Jr., LTC Adolfo Espuelas; and LTC Arthur Romanillos.

However, there was no indication that the alleged recipients actually received the money.

ON the other hand, a certain Josephine Socorro Jumamoy received over P100,000 for the drone camera and accessories.

State auditors said the Bohol Quality Corp. was paid over P335,000 on April 28, 2017, for food supply.

A disbursement voucher dated June 29, 2017, indicated that P171,000 was paid to the Inabanga Funeral Homes for "payment of 2 caskets, embalming, transportation others".

"The only document attached to the financial assistance to the Philippine Army was a certification from the mayor that there are on-going military operations against the ASG in the municipality," the COA report read.

Auditors said there was also no list of military or Philippine National Police personnel who may have partaken of the food supplied by BQC.

"The absence of this information made the verification of disbursement difficult as to validity, regularity, and correctness," auditors reported.

Reacting to the audit findings, local officials explained that there was much urgency in disbursing the funds owing to the fact that the military and police operatives were engaged in a hot pursuit operation against ASG men.

The Inabanga officials also explained that the cost of caskets, embalming and transportation expenses was higher because the bodies of the casualties were already in a "higher state of decomposition."

However, auditors insisted for the submission of the required supporting documents to avoid suspension or possible disallowance of the disbursements.