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NEWS CLIPPINGS

24 December 2018

Monday



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December 2013

INQUIRER

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P30-M REWARD UP FOR SOLON'S KILLERS

STORY BY MA. APRIL NIEP MICHAEL JACON REY ANTHONY GONZA AND JEFFS WHITTAKER

With at least 150 House members pledging at least P50,000 each, the bounty for the killers of Rep. Rodel Batoca could breach the P50-million mark. Officials and relatives believe the attack was politically motivated.

FROM A1

By Ma. April Mier,
Michael Jaucian,
Rey Anthony Ostria
and Mar S. Arguelles
@InquirerSLB

LEGAZPI CITY—The bounty for the killers of Ako Bicol Rep. Rodel Batocabe was raised to P30 million on Sunday and was likely to breach the P50-million mark in a few days as officials and relatives shared the belief that politics was behind the murder.

With the hefty cash reward, "there's a big chance we will solve it," said Chief Insp. Maria Luisa Calubaquib, Bicol police spokesperson.

Batocabe's colleague in Ako Bicol, Rep. Alfredo Garbin, said the party-list group had already pledged P15 million and members of the House of Representatives were expected to pitch in up to P50,000 each.

The reward money could exceed P50 million, Garbin said at a press conference in this city on Sunday.

Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said at least 150 congressmen had pledged to contribute to the bounty.

Hotlines

The regional police would provide hotline numbers for people to call and disclose information on the killers of Batocabe and his police escort, SPO1 Orlando Diaz.

The two had just wrapped up a gift-giving event for senior citizens and persons with disabilities in Daraga town when they were gunned down on Saturday afternoon.

Seven people were wounded in the attack, police said.

Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Albayalde ordered the relief of Supt. Benito Dipad, Daraga police chief, according to Calubaquib.

Garbin said his group was also seeking the removal of Supt. Charlotte Dodson Peñalosa, regional chief of a PNP unit in charge of providing security to VIPs.

Peñalosa pulled out Batocabe's police escorts days before the murder, the lawmaker said. "Her incompetence and negli-

gence resulted in loss of life."

Batocabe was running for mayor of Daraga in next year's local elections.

Death threats

His mother-in-law, Amy Molina Duran, said the legislator had been receiving death threats like "Isang bata ka lang

"continue whatever my father started because we cannot allow him to die twice."

Several officials have already pointed to politics as motive for the murder.

leaders flew to Albay province on Sunday to condole with Batocabe's family and assure them of help in bringing his killers to justice.

'Politically motivated'

An initial probe by National Bureau of Investigation agents "suggests [that] the attack was politically motivated," the Department of Justice said in a statement in Manila on Sunday.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra has ordered the NBI to coordinate with the PNP in solving the case.

Chief Supt. Arnel Escobal, Bicol police director, said investigators were looking into political rivalry as a possible motive in the killing.

The killing was likely linked to next year's elections, said Interior Secretary Eduardo Año.

Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Benitez said he, too, believed the killing was politically motivated.

Benitez said those who were behind Batocabe's murder were "afraid of change" and "did not want to lose."

Arroyo and other House

Life is cheap

"Life has become so cheap," she said after visiting the wake. "That should not be so."

Justin said the bounty offer would also be in remembrance of Diaz, the lawmaker's slain aide, who had become close to the family.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) office in Bicol has also started investigating the case "in aid of making the perpetrators accountable."

Jacqueline Ann de Guia, CHR spokesperson, on Sunday said Batocabe's killing should push the government to be more vigilant in the coming elections.

Batocabe's remains were brought to Dr. Ricardo A. Arcilla Hall on Bicol University's Daraga campus and would stay there until Dec. 31.

His family has yet to set a date for the funeral. —WITH REPORTS FROM DONA Z. PAZIBUGAN, JEANNETTE L. ANDRADE, MARLON RAMOS AND VINCE NOLIATO INQ

(just one bullet and you're dead)."

Duran said Batocabe was given a bulletproof vest but did not wear it.

But Batocabe's son Justin said the threats were "nothing outside of the ordinary during the election season."

He said the family wanted to

Albay town police chief axed

Over party-list lawmaker's slay

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

The police chief of Daraga town in Albay was sacked yesterday following the killing of Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Rodol Batocabe and his bodyguard.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Oscar Albayalde said the relief of Supt. Benito Dipad Jr. is part of the investigation to determine if there were lapses in security.

Supt. Dennis Balla replaced

were about to ride their vehicle after a gift-giving event for senior citizens in Barangay Burgos on Saturday.

Initial reports said there were at least two gunmen wearing ski masks who approached the vic-

Burglars hit another Ako Bicol party-list lawmaker's home. Story on Page 7.

Dipad as Daraga police chief. "It's standard operating procedure when there is an incident like this, and at the same time, there was a directive from the chief PNP," Bicol region police director Chief Supt. Arnel Escobar explained.

Batocabe and his bodyguard, Senior Police Officer 1 Orlando Diaz, were gunned down as they

fired and shot them repeatedly at close range.

Albayalde ordered the creation of a special investigation task group that will mobilize all available resources to ensure that the suspects are arrested.

"We appeal to the public to immediately report to the police any

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Albay

From Page 1

information that could lead us to the perpetrators and to help us quickly solve this case," he said. Albayalde condemned the shooting and vowed justice for the victims' families. Seven elderly people were also injured in the incident from stray bullets and the ensuing commotion. They were identified as Ellen Mansos, Marina Mediavillo, Florencita Mendiones, Haydie Llorca, Gregorio Mediavillo, Jesus Medes and Nelia Millena.

Escobal said their initial investigation showed at least six people participated in the attack, based on the testimonies of several witnesses. "We are investigating who among the suspects are the gunmen," he said, and that politics was being eyed as a possible mo-

tive in the killing of Batocabe. According to Escobal, he was able to talk to Batocabe about two weeks ago regarding security concerns as he was about to go around town in time for Christmas.

Batocabe was to run for Darraga mayor next May, against at least two other candidates - incumbent Carlwun Baldo and Vice Mayor Victor Perete.

Election hotspot

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra ordered the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to help the police in the investigation into the killing of Batocabe and Diaz.

Guevarra agreed with the initial observations by the police.

"Initial investigation by NBI

agents suggests that the attack was likely politically motivated. A thorough inspection of the crime scene will be conducted soon in coordination with the PNP," Guevarra said. For his part, Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año ordered the PNP to beef up security across the country in the wake of the killing of Batocabe.

Año directed the PNP to step up security measures in areas where election-related violent incidents usually occur.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) said it will look into the killing of Batocabe and decide if there is a need to declare Albay as an election hotspot.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said members of the seven-man poll body are expected to meet and discuss the killing of Batocabe and whether to declare Albay as election hotspot.

"I really can't say what the en banc will do at this point. I can assure you though that this matter (declaration of Albay as election hotspot) will be brought up before the en banc at the earliest possible opportunity," Jimenez said.

Jimenez said the Comelec will coordinate closely with police concerning the slaying of Batocabe.

Sen. Nancy Binay earlier called on the Comelec to declare Albay as a hotspot following the killing of Batocabe.

Malacañang condemned the "senseless" killing of Batocabe.

"We denounce the senseless killing of Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Rodel Batocabe," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

"Proper authorities are now investigating this brazen murder as we vow to leave no stone unturned in bringing the perpetrators of this felonious

act to justice," Panelo said.

Vice President Leni Robredo has called for swift justice in the death of Batocabe, adding that such a brazen crime "must not be the new normal." "But beyond my personal grief at his passing, is the growing rage at yet another brazen murder, committed in broad daylight, in the middle of a crowd. This cannot, and must not be the new normal; when Filipinos, young and old, rich and poor, are gunned down in cold blood as a matter of course, and where none of us can feel safe. This impunity must end," Robredo said.

A fellow Bicolano, Batocabe was also Robredo's batchmate in the University of the Philippines-Diliman, and a colleague in the 16th Congress.

She described the 52-year-old lawmaker as "smart and eloquent, witty and cheerful, a person who lived life to the fullest."

"He will be missed, both for

his service and his friendship," Robredo said.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said the killing of Batocabe highlighted the ongoing trend of violence and killing even during the holiday season.

"It is alarming that the trend of killings continues despite the holiday season. However, regardless of season or motivation, the government must not allow such transgressions against human rights to happen," CHR spokesperson Jacqueline de Guia said.

"We urge the government to apply increased vigilance, especially that there are allegations linking the killing to the upcoming (May 10) elections," De Guia said.

She said the CHR regional office is also investigating the killing of Batocabe. - With Helen Flores, Edith Regalado, Rainier Allan Ronda, Mayen Jaymalin, Edu Punay

Lorenzana reminds troops: Don't take sides during polls

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana reminded soldiers to remain apolitical during next year's elections. In a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Lorenzana warned

soldiers they will be punished if they meddle in politics.

Lorenzana said the mission of both the military and the police is to ensure "honest, orderly, and peaceful elections."

"If the military in an area ► 10

will attempt to side with one candidate, you are tilting actually the odds in favor of that candidate. Even by giving him security sometimes that could also be misinterpreted," he said.

Lorenzana said when he was the brigade commander in General Santos during the 1998 elections, when the life of one candidate was in danger, both he and his opponent were given security.

He said the Commission on Elections (Comelec) should approve first a candidate's request for security before it is granted to him.

Lorenzana also said candidates can visit military camps to campaign

there. Soldiers could also take photos with candidates as long as they do not campaign for them.

"The candidates can visit us because they are candidates. They can talk to the people, they can assemble the people, talk to them. We will allow any candidate to get into the camps to talk to the people," he said.

"We have a weekly troop education and information seminar every Saturday morning. They (candidates) can go there, they can pitch in their program," he added.

"We will not say to them that 'We will vote for you.' We'll just listen," he added.

CA junks P5.4-M damage suit vs GMA

By EDU PUNAY

The Court of Appeals (CA) has dismissed the P5.4-million damage suit filed by the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) against Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo over alleged extrajudicial killings during her presidency.

In a 13-page decision promulgated on Dec. 17, the appellate court's Special 14th Division denied the petition filed by the UCCP, through its general secretary Bishop Reuel

Norman Marigza, and the families of six victims of the so-called Oplan Bantay Laya during Arroyo's term as president.

The complainants sought compensation for the group's besmirched reputation and for the deaths of UCCP members and their relatives.

The CA affirmed the decision of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 226 in September 2016, which granted Arroyo's demurrer to evidence and dismissed the civil complaint for damages.

"This court finds that the evidence adduced is insufficient to support the

facts asserted in the complaint," read the decision penned by Associate Justice Zenaida Galapate-Laguilles.

Associate Justices Mario Lopez and Ronaldo Roberto Martin concurred with the ruling.

The CA magistrates agreed with the RTC's finding that the complainants lacked personal knowledge of the deaths and tortures, and failed to show the acts were committed by military personnel.

The appellate court held that evidence only included death certificates and the military's tagging of the UCCP as an alleged ally of

the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The CA pointed out that UCCP was not entitled to damages since it is a corporation and not a person.

It also cited the failure of the group to show evidence and establish the injury it supposedly sustained from its damaged reputation.

The UCCP filed the damage suit over the alleged killing of five of its members and the kidnapping of a priest from 2003 to 2006.

The group was joined in its complaint by Rosa Baclao, parent

of slain church leader Joel Baclao Jr.; Emma Lapuz, Evelyn Domingo and Dominga Pawican, widows of pastors Edison Lapuz, Raul Domingo and Andy Pawican; Teodora Montealto, widow of church leader Noel Capulong, and Berlin Guerrero, who survived illegal arrest and torture.

The group alleged that Arroyo was liable for damages as she failed "either by commission or omission, manifest negligence or by culpable acts" to fulfill her duties as then commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

Court junks UCCP suits vs Arroyo

By Rey E. Requejo

THE Court of Appeals has dismissed the P5.4-million damage suit filed by the United Church of Christ in the Philippines against former president and now House Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo over the alleged extrajudicial killings during her regime that victimized their pastors and members.

The court's Special 14th Division denied the petition filed by the UCCP, through general secretary Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza and the families of six victims of the so-called Oplan Bantay Laya during the Arroyo administration.

The petition had sought compensation for moral damages for the group's allegedly besmirched reputation and for the deaths of some of its members and their relatives.

The court instead upheld the deci-

sion of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, Branch 226, in Sept. 2016 that granted Arroyo's demurrer to evidence and dismissed the civil complaint for damages.

"All told, this Court finds that the evidence adduced is wholly insufficient to support the ultimate facts asserted in the complaint," the court said in its decision written⁴ by Associate Justice Zenaida Galapate-Laguilles.

Associate Justices Mario Lopez and Ronaldo Roberto Martin concurred with

the ruling

The appellate court sided with the RTC's finding that the complainants lacked personal knowledge of the deaths and tortures and failed to show that military personnel committed the acts.

The evidence only included death certificates and the military's tagging of the UCCP as an alleged ally of the Communist Party of the Philippines in the book *Trinity of War, Book III*.

"This Court concurs with the court that the witnesses lacked personal knowledge with respect to the alleged deaths and tortures suffered by their respective deceased family members. Worse, there is even no showing that the dastardly acts were perpetrated by military people," the appellate court said.

"As all of these individuals admitted that they did not witness the killings, their imputation to the military of participation in or authorship of the crimes are within the realm of speculation."

The appellate court also said that the UCCP itself was not entitled to damages since it was a corporation and not a natural person.

It likewise cited the failure of the group to show evidence and establish the injury it supposedly sustained from its damaged reputation.

The UCCP filed the damage suit over the alleged extra-judicial killings of five of its members and the kidnapping of another priest from 2003 to 2006.

The group alleged that Arroyo was liable for damages as she failed to fulfill her duties as President and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

Under the *Oplan Bantay Laya*—the anti-communist insurgency operation of the Armed Forces during Arroyo administration—UCCP was among the society and church organizations identified as front organizations of the Communist Party of the Philippines, and thus targets for neutralization by the military.

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Duterte thanks soldiers for sacrifices ahead of Christmas

By ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

President Duterte led in the distribution of Christmas gifts to military troops stationed in Camp General Manuel Yan Sr., Mawab, Compostela Valley, on Saturday and thanked them for their sacrifices in keeping the country safe.

The President also assured the

troops of the 10th Infantry Division (10th ID) who have kept Davao City safe that he would pursue the modernization program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to allow them to perform their duties more effectively and look after slain soldiers' families.

In his speech, he urged the military to "destroy" commu-

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nist rebels as he insisted on his refusal to subscribe to their five-day holiday ceasefire declaration.

"We do not subscribe to their ceasefire. We are ready for anything and I said change your paradigm. Do not fight them. Destroy them. Destroy them. Kill them," Duterte said.

The President extended his Holiday greetings to the soldiers and their families whom he also lauded for taking part in the sacrifices made by soldiers in the line of duty to secure the nation.

He likewise hailed the members of the 10th ID for their "gallant efforts" in combating communist insurgents in the country.

"The surrender of almost 8,000 communist rebels and the recovery of some 700 firearms just this year alone speak well of the division's commitment to end the rebellion for good," Duterte said.

"I also call on our troops, especially the men and women of the 10th Infantry Division, to remain committed to your sworn duty to protect our people and defend our democratic rights. And I assure you of my

full support as we continue to ensure the security of Mindanao until the lifting of Martial Law," he added.

Duterte also expressed confidence that the AFP will continue to protect the country and its people from threats.

"As we celebrate Christmas and welcome the New Year, I am confident that the AFP will continue to ensure that peace will reign across our nation for the years to come," he said.

Members of the 10th ID received around 2,000 gift packs aside from their cash bonus.

Duterte expressed confidence that the AFP will continue to ensure peace across the nation in the years to come.

He said although he could not include another visit to see his troops in his schedule on Christmas Day, he reiterated his commitment to watch out for their welfare.

"Merry Christmas, especially to your family. We'll just pray that you're in good health and just be careful," Duterte said.

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MAGUINDANAO VILLAGE HEAD NABBED OVER ILLEGAL FIREARM

SHARIFF AGUIK, Maguindanao: Personnel of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines manning the checkpoints in Alamada, North Cotabato arrested a *barangay* (village) chairman from Maguindanao for illegal possession of firearm and for evading the checkpoint. Chief Insp. Joan Resurreccion, Alamada town police chief, said their law enforcers arrested Badrudin Kamid, chairman of Barangay Limamunan, Jalayan, Maguindanao; his brother Ali Kamid, 24; and security escort Malat Sapal. Resurreccion said the Alamada police and elements of 34th Infantry Battalion were conducting checkpoint operations at 4 p.m. on Friday in Barangay Kamaku when a black Toyota Hi-Lux pick-up truck (A9-1612) sped away when flagged down by law enforcers. Seized from Kamid were an unlicensed caliber .45 pistol, two magazines and 20 live bullets.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

A7



DU30 zest fuels AFP

By Kathleen Mae Dulquerin

defense capability of the government.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is now more capable of meeting external and internal aggressors as the current administration made huge headways in modernizing the

President Rodrigo Duterte said, thus far, the Philippine Air Force (PAF) achieved thousands of flight hours and performed thousands of sorties as well as ferried

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almost 160,000 passengers and airlifted more than 160,000 pounds of cargo "all in support of our territorial defense and security operations."

Improved military capability "resulted in the surrender (or) arrest of terrorists, the recovery of their firearms, the dismantling of drug laboratories, the arrest of many drug personalities and the recovery of millions worth of illegal drugs," he said.

Started in 1995, the Armed Forces Modernization Act or Republic Act 7898 was signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos and aims to modernize the branches of AFP which are the PAF, Philippine Navy (PN) and the Philippine Army (PA).

But after five years, it was stopped due to the funding shortage during the

1997 Asian Financial Crisis and was only continued in 2012.

In 2012, under Republic Act 10349 or the Revised AFP Modernization Act, which was signed under the leadership of former President Benigno Aquino III, the AFP was given an initial budget of P75 billion for five years.

Eagles have landed

Completed in May 2017, fighter jets from South Korea were acquired to boost the country's air capabilities. The acquisitions were the most expensive procurement by the PAF.

Twelve FA-50PH Fighting Eagle light combat jets were acquired from Korea Aerospace Industries for \$421,638,000 or almost P23 billion.

The newly acquired aircraft are now being used by the 5th Fighter Wing where the 7th Tactical Fighter were flying.

The PN awarded the contract to

a Filipino company Propmech Corp and Taiwanese boat-builder Lang Teh Shipbuilding Co. Ltd.

Worth almost P300 million, the vessels were tasked to create three Multi-Purpose Assault Crafts (MPAC) which was completed last 2017.

The three MPAC, namely BA-488, BA-489 and BA-491, are different from previous models as they are designed to be missile capable.

P300-billion plan

Under RAFFMP, the PA also recently completed one of its most ambitious projects. The procurement of night vision monocular goggles project was awarded to a Turkish defense company named Aselsan Elektronik Sanayi ve Ticaret A.S.

It was tasked to supply 4,464 units of A100 night vision monocular night vision goggles to the PA.

Mr. Duterte approved the proposed budget for the second horizon of the Revised AFP Modernization Program with a budget of P300 billion.

Unveiled during the Asian Defense, Security, Crisis Management Exhibition and Conference or ADAS 2018, the program seeks to acquire different aircraft, defense systems and helicopters.

Fighter jets from South Korea were acquired to boost the country's air capabilities. The acquisitions were the most expensive procurement by the PAF.

Air surveillance radar system, ground-based air defense system, heavy-lift helicopters, attack and combat choppers, light utility aircraft, medium-lift aircraft, multi-role fighter aircraft, special mission and long-range patrol aircraft, trainer aircraft (basic and

primary) and unmanned aerial vehicles are all in the order menu.

Range of defense assets

Amphibious assault vehicles, anti-submarine helicopters, attack crafts, corvettes, frigates, landing dock, medium-lift naval helicopter, multi-purpose medium lift helicopter, offshore patrol vessels and submarines are all on the PN wishlist.

Armored recovery vehicles, crew-served weapons, fire support vehicles, ground mobility equipment, individual weapons, light tanks, missile systems, multiple launch rocket system, night fighting system and tactical radios are the PA's goal.

The AFP said the third and last horizon of Revised AFP Modernization Program will start from 2023 to 2028 which will target first-world military equipment including submarines.

Duterte hails AFP for keeping PH safe

Rains from LPA

The low pressure area east of Visayas will continue to bring moderate to heavy rains over the eastern section of the country until Christmas Eve.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration, the LPA was estimated at 50 kilometers northeast of Guiuan, Eastern Samar around noon yesterday.

PAGASA said the LPA will continue to bring moderate to occasional heavy rains over Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Masbate, Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar, Samar, Southern Leyte, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Sungao del Norte, Sungao del Sur, Aurora and Quezon.

The LPA will likely traverse Visayas on its way towards the West Philippine Sea. (Ellaalyn V. Ruiz)

By ARGYLL GEDUCOS

President Duterte on Saturday hailed the Armed Forces of the Philippines for keeping the country safe during a Christmas gift-giving activity for the Army 10th Infantry Division in Mawab, Compostela Valley.

Malacañang said that the President was pleased that the 10th ID has kept Davao City, among others, secured.

"It is an honor and a privilege for me to join the brave men and women of the Philippine Army's 10th Infantry Division, which has always been close to my heart because my home city of Davao has always been under your care and protection," Duterte said in his speech.

The President extended his holiday greetings to the soldiers and their families whom he also lauded for taking part in the sacrifices made by the soldiers in the line of duty to secure the nation.

He hailed the members of the 10th ID for their "gallant efforts" in com-

bating the decades-old communist insurgency in the country. "The surrender of almost 8,000 communist rebels and the recovery of some 700 firearms just this year alone speak well of the division's commitment to end the rebellion for good," Duterte said.

"I also call on our troops, especially the men and women of the 10th Infantry Division, to remain committed to your sworn duty to protect our people and defend our democratic rights. And I assure you of my full support as we continue to ensure the security of Mindanao until the lifting of martial law," he added.

Duterte expressed confidence that the AFP will continue in protecting the country and its people from threats.

"As we celebrate Christmas and welcome the New Year, I am confident that the Armed Forces of the Philippines will continue to ensure that peace will reign across our nation for the years to come," he said. 2

DUTERTE ORDERS MILITARY: DESTROY THE COMMUNISTS

DAVAO CITY—President Duterte on Saturday said he wanted to replicate the late Indonesian strongman Suharto's campaign against communist rebels, which led to the deaths of 3 million people, in the Philippines. "Do not fight them, destroy them. Destroy them, kill them," Mr. Duterte told troops at the Army's 10th Infantry Division's base in Mawab, Compostela Valley. —STORY BY FRINSTON LIM



By Frinston Lim
@flimINQ

DAVAO CITY—President Duterte on Saturday said he wanted to replicate in the Philippines the late Indonesian strongman Suharto's campaign against communist rebels, which led to the deaths of 3 million people.

Speaking to troops during his visit to the Army's 10th Infantry Division's base in Mawab, Compostela Valley, Mr. Duterte said there should be a change in the government's tactics in fighting local communists to something similar to the 1965-66 campaign waged by Suharto to crush communism in Indonesia.

Suharto's campaign for a "New Order" involved mass killings, targeting members of the Communist Party of Indonesia, leftists and ethnic Chinese.

30-year authoritarian rule

It led to the elimination of the Communist Party of Indonesia—the third largest in the world at the time—as a political force and the beginning of Suharto's 30-year authoritarian rule.

Indonesian officials justified the mass killings as a necessary defense against communists.

But an investigation by the National Commission on Hu-

man Rights in 2012 found gross violations of human rights during the events of 1965-66.

In his speech, Mr. Duterte said he had ordered the military to "destroy" the local communists.

"Do not fight them, destroy them. Destroy them, kill them," he said.

Mr. Duterte said he did not "subscribe" to the unilateral declaration of a ceasefire by the communist New People's Army (NPA) for the holiday season.

"We are ready for anything," he said.

"Destroy the Left," the President said, adding that the Abu Sanyal bandit group also "must be destroyed" and drug lords should be killed "without mercy."

Responsibility for killings

Mr. Duterte said he would take responsibility for the killings.

He repeated an order to soldiers to kill themselves to avoid getting captured.

"That's why you were given guns," he said.

"Do not give me the spectacle of coming home with a video showing you are being decapitated. We make a pact, we won't surrender. If we choose to be a warrior, we die like a warrior," Mr. Duterte said.

In a speech on Tuesday, Mr. Duterte said he planned to enforce an isolation policy in Mindanao to keep indigenous peoples out of the NPA's influence.

"I will hamlet them. Why? Because if they remain scattered, they are really in danger. I cannot get their loyalty if they are scattered because they are afraid to be far from each other," Mr. Duterte said.

Vietnam War program

The strategy echoes the Strategic Hamlet Program enforced by the governments of the United States and South Vietnam to pacify the countryside and reduce the influence of the communist Viet Cong on the population in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The US and South Vietnamese governments isolated the rural population in "protected communities" to keep the Viet Cong out.

The program failed and the United States canceled it after South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown in 1963, leading to Viet Cong gains that forced US military intervention.

Mr. Duterte did not say whether the hamlets he planned would be located within ancestral land or whether indigenous peoples would be removed from their land and isolated elsewhere.

Violation of rights

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) warned on Sunday that the strategy would violate the indigenous peoples' rights to liberty and property.

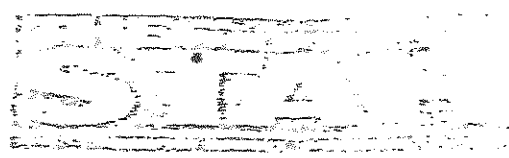
Jacqueline de Guia, CHR spokesperson, said in a statement that the strategy would "inevitably disrupt a community's cultural life."

De Guia said confining indigenous peoples in hamlets would violate international humanitarian law, as embodied in Republic Act No. 9851, the Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes Against Humanity.

The law, enacted during the Arroyo administration, prohibits "arbitrary deportation or forcible transfer of population or unlawful confinement," and considers these practices war crimes.

De Guia called on the government to "critically study" the idea and "establish a strong need" for isolating indigenous peoples before proceeding to enforce the President's plan.

—WITH REPORTS FROM CHRISTINE G. AVENDAÑO, VINCE F. NORATO AND INQUIRER RESEARCH IN MANILA INQ



Duterte tells AFP: Destroy Reds

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Days before the 50th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), President Duterte ordered the military to "destroy" the communist rebels, saying it was needed to maintain
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Duterte From Page 1

law and order in the country. Duterte said the Philippines would not become progressive if there is no law and order. "We love our country. We yearn for a progressive, productive and a good country that can provide the next generation a better life, better opportunities, and more or less a very comfortable life," the President said during a Christmas gift giving and talk to troops in Compostela Valley last Saturday. "Remember what I said. I will be long gone but the problem will still linger unless we can have law and order and we can stop corruption in govern-

ment. Law and order means you have to destroy, not really fight, but destroy the Communist Party of the Philippines, including its legal fronts and infrastructure," he added. Duterte said the rebels and their legal fronts are conspiring to "just fight and overthrow this government." "Unless we are able to destroy every one of them, our children, our grandchildren will face the same problems. And many of them will be soldiers and many of them will die without seeing the outcome of what would eventually be the Republic of the Philippines," Duterte said.

Duterte also declared that the government would not reciprocate the ceasefire declared by the CPP. The communists have declared a staggered holiday ceasefire that started today (Dec. 24) until Dec. 26 and from Dec. 31 to Jan. 1, 2019. Security officials are against the suspension of offensives during the holidays, saying the rebels took advantage of previous ceasefires to celebrate CPP's anniversary and to commit atrocities. The CPP will celebrate its 50th anniversary on Dec. 26. "We do not subscribe to their ceasefire. We are ready for anything and I said change your paradigm. Do not fight them. Destroy them. Destroy them. Kill them. Just destroy.

Who ordered you to do so? I did," Duterte said.

Negotiations between the government and the communists bogged down after Duterte had accused the rebels of seeking a coalition government, a power-sharing setup that he said is prohibited by the Constitution. The President was also angered by the rebels' attacks against government forces and civilians and expressed doubts on the communists' sincerity to talk peace.

Duterte also lambasted Jose Maria Sison, founder of the CPP who has been on self-exile in the Netherlands since 1987.

"Itong si Sison akala mo gwapo. Hindi na mahiya sa sarili niya (Sison thinks he's handsome, but really should be ashamed

*of himself). If I see him (Sison) in the airport, I will slap that son of a b****,"* the President said.

"We have to destroy them. Destroy them. Do not believe in human rights. I assume full responsibility," he added.

At the same event, Duterte promised to continue supporting the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) modernization program and to provide the needs of soldiers.

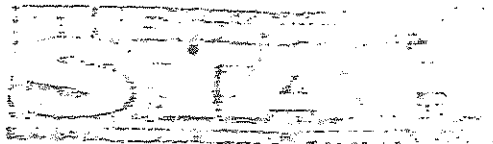
"I assure you that this administration will continue to pursue our AFP Modernization Program so you may perform your duties more effectively. We will improve your skills, invest in your professional development, and look (after) the welfare of your

families," Duterte said.

"I also call on our troops... to remain committed to your sworn duty to protect our people and defend our democratic rights. I have never doubted your capability to keep our nation safe from all threats, and I assure you of my full support as we continue to ensure the security of Mindanao until the lifting of martial law," he said.

Mindanao was placed under martial law on May 23, 2017 after Islamic State-linked terrorists occupied Marawi City.

"As we celebrate Christmas and welcome the New Year, I am confident that the Armed Forces of the Philippines will continue to ensure that peace will reign across our nation for years to come," Duterte said.



Trooper, rebel killed in Kalinga clash

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

An Army trooper and an alleged rebel were killed when a band of New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas attacked a military patrol base in Lubuagan, Kalinga yesterday morning.

At least 30 rebels reportedly stormed the Ag-agama CAPGU-Active Auxiliary patrol base located in Barangay Western Uma, according to Maj. Ericson Bulosan, chief information officer of the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom).

Bulosan said the attack indicated that the communist group was not sincere when it declared a unilateral ceasefire for the Yuletide season.

"The CPP-NPA broke its vow of a unilateral ceasefire for these coming Christmas season," Bulosan said, referring to the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The Army's 503rd Infantry Brigade launched a pursuit operation against the rebels, who fled after exchanging fire with the government forces.

The military withheld the name of the slain trooper until after his family is properly notified. It has yet to identify the slain rebel.

Nolcom chief Lt. Gen. Emmanuel

Salamat reminded his men to be more vigilant during the holidays, noting it is during this time of the year when people are vulnerable to attacks.

He gave assurance that the military would be more focus in their operations to prevent terrorists and other hostile groups from launching offensives.

3 NPAs surrender in Bukidnon

Three NPA insurgents surrendered to the military in Malaybalay, Bukidnon over the weekend.

The surrenderees - identified by their aliases as Macnac, 26; Momo, 23, and Talagos, 21 - brought their firearms with them when they turned themselves in to the Army's 8th Infantry Battalion.

The three cited the chance to be with their families during the holidays as among the reasons for their surrender.

2 killed, 4 hurt in Samar, Kalinga NPA encounters

BY ELADIO PERFECTO

FOUR days before the 50th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), separate encounters between government forces and New People's Army (NPA) rebels resulted in the killing of a Philippine Army soldier in Las Navas, Northern Samar and an active member of the auxiliary force in Kalinga province, while four others were wounded, including two rebels.

Capt. Francis Agno, chief of the civil military operations and spokesman for the 8th Infantry Division based in Camp Lukban, Maulong, Catbalogan City, told *The Manila Times* that a squad of soldiers led by Cpl. Cabanero of the 20th Infantry Battalion (201B) was patrolling along Barangay Capotoan in Las Navas town when they encountered about 30 rebels at about 8:30 a.m. on Saturday. Killed in action was Private First Class Alvin Avila while wounded

were Privates Ivan Anthony Ignao and Michael Ocasia. Agno said the rebels also attacked the reinforcement troops under Lt. Latuga that rescued the wounded soldiers. The wounded were brought to Catarman Hospital for treatment while the slain soldier was brought to the 803rd Brigade headquarters based in Camp Somoroy in Catarman. Lt. Col. Noli Lapizar, commanding officer of the 201B based in

San Jorge, Las Navas town ordered his men to intensify their combat operations even during Christmas and New Year's Eve. Earlier, an encounter also happened in Barangay Hinatad, Catarman town where four soldiers and two civilians were wounded.

Attack on Cagfu base

In Kalingan, an active member of the Army's auxiliary force was killed after about 30 NPA members attacked a Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit patrol base in Barangay Western Uma, Lubuagan town on Sunday. Maj. Ericson Bulosan, of the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) public information office, said also wounded were at least two NPA rebels who were seen being carried along bloodied by their comrades. He said the indiscriminate attack of the NPA is deplorable as it was perpetrated while the people in the community were preparing for their Christmas celebration.

"This only manifests the rebel groups' disregard of the welfare and well-being of the people," Bulosan said, adding that the CPP and the NPA broke their own vow of a unilateral ceasefire for the yuletide season. Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Salamat, Nolcom commander, had issued a reminder for all troops to be more vigilant this holiday season when people in remote areas are more vulnerable to attacks of the terrorist groups. Salamat said Nolcom would continue to pursue and persistently conduct focused military operations to target terrorist groups and prevent them from performing hostile activities that hinder the peace, development and security in Northern and Central Luzon. Meanwhile, the 503rd Infantry Brigade was placed on heightened alert and currently conducting combat and pursuit operations against the fleeing NPA. **WITH A REPORT FROM LEANDER C. DOMINGO**

A7

'Reds, allied fronts face destruction'

PRESIDENT Duterte's order to 'destroy' the communist movement could engulf the Reds' legal fronts, political parties and allied NGOs, an administration official said, prompting CPP founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison to denounce what he called state-sponsored terrorism.

Communications Secretary Martin Andanar was referring to the functions of the task force the President has created against the communist movement with the sole purpose of decimating the rebels' ranks.

Andanar said in an interview with Super Radyo dzBB that the insincerity of communist groups in the conduct of peace talks had prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to order security forces to "destroy" them.

Moreover, Andanar pointed out that nothing good has come out of the 50-year-old communist rebellion in the country but only killings.

On Saturday, President Duterte ordered government troops to destroy the CPP after the communist group declared a ceasefire in observance of the holiday season.

"We do not subscribe to their ceasefire. We are ready for anything and I said change your paradigm. Do not fight them. Destroy them. Destroy them. Kill them. *Basta destroy,*" Duterte said.

In rejecting the truce, President Duterte is "out of his mind," Sison said, labelling Duterte an abominable violator of human rights and mastermind of state terrorism.

"He exposes himself as an abominable violator of human rights. Relatedly, he has roused his armed minions to show no respect for human rights and human rights organizations," Sison said in a statement Sunday. Nat Mariano

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2 killed as rebels attack CAFGU camp in Kalinga

By MARI T. SUPNAD

CAMP AQUINO, Tarlac City - About 30 communist rebels attacked the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Lumbagan, Kalinga, Sunday morning. A CAFGU member and a rebel were killed in the raid.

The Army has not identified the CAFGU member.

Major Ericson Bulosan, Information office of the Northern Luzon Command, said troops from the Army's 503rd Infantry Brigade were going after New People's Army (NPA) that

launched the attack.

The raid came after Major Gen. Felimon Santos Jr., commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Division, pleaded with the rebels to lay down their arms and surrender.

The attack, Bulosan said, which was carried out "while the people are preparing for coming of the Christmas season, manifests the rebel groups' disregard to the welfare and well-being of the people."

The communist group also broke its own declaration of a unilateral ceasefire for Christmas, he said.

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Rody, Joma trade barbs over rights, insurgency

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Maria Sison Sunday criticized President Duterte for recently ordering the destruction of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF).

In a statement, Sison said Duterte is the "mastermind of state terrorism and abominable violator of human rights" by ordering soldiers during a speech at Camp Manuel Y. Tan in Compostela Valley on Saturday, to destroy the CPP including its so-called legal fronts and infrastructure.

"He had earlier ordered his armed minions to kill merely suspected actual or potential members of the CPP and New People's Army (NPA), including the istambay in public places. Thus, we understand clearly what Duterte means by destroying the CPP and the so-called legal fronts and infrastructure," Sison, who is currently the NDFP chief political consultant, said.

"He is giving license to his armed minions to kill suspected members of the CPP, legal organizations and just about anyone who criticizes and opposes his tyranny, treason, brutality, corruption and messing up of the economy," he added.

President Duterte told troops in Mawab, Compostela Valley to not just fight, but destroy the elements of the CPP-NPA-NDF.

Duterte made the statement during the Christmas gift-giving activity at Camp General Manuel T. Yan, Mawab, Compostela Valley Saturday afternoon.

In his speech, Duterte said the Philippines will never improve unless there is law and order in the country, and that means destroying the communist rebels.

"I will be long gone but the problem will still linger unless we can have law and order and we can stop corruption in government," he said.

"Law and order means you have to destroy, not really fight, but destroy the Communist Party of the Philippines, including its legal fronts and in-

frastructure," he added.

Duterte also said that there will be a time that it will be obvious that the rebels' legal fronts is just a conspiracy to fight and overthrow the government.

"Unless we are able to destroy ev-

eryone of them, ang ating mga anak o apo ninyo gamin pa rin ang habarapin (your descendants will experience the same thing). And many of them will be soldiers and many of them will die without seeing the outcome of what

would eventually be the Republic of the Philippines," he said.

The President also stated that the government will not adhere to cease-fire earlier declared by the communist rebels.

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A7

300 NPAS, SUPPORTERS SURRENDER IN NORTH COTABATO

COTABATO CITY: Some 300 communist rebels and supporters have pledged allegiance to the Philippine flag in symbolic events in Magpet town, North Cotabato. Lt. Col. Ehrlich Noel Paraso, commander of the Army's 19th Infantry Battalion (19IB), on Sunday said some 300 men, composed of farmers and members of the New People's Army (NPA) and its self-styled Milisyang Bayan, renounced their membership to both rebel organizations during separate rites in Magpet. Two separate surrender ceremonies were conducted and witnessed by local officials, Paraso said. The military said there is a strong NPA presence in Magpet where the rebels subject the farming communities to forced taxation or payment of revolutionary tax and persecute people who refuse to cooperate. Paraso said 1LT. Proten Bonacma, commanding officer of the Alpha Company of 19IB, helped facilitate the surrender of the rebels and their supporters under the government's Balik Looch Program. The 19IB, securing North Cotabato's adjoining municipalities of Magpet, Arakan and President Roxas, also facilitated the surrender of more than 50 NPAs between January and October this year.

A7

JULMUNIR JANNARAL

24

Return to the fold of the law, Duterte urges NPAs anew

AS the nation prepares to celebrate Christmas, President Rodrigo Duterte again called on communist rebels to abandon "extremist activities and return to the fold of the law."

In his speech before soldiers at Camp General Manuel Tan in Compostela Valley on Saturday night, Duterte expressed hopes that the government's efforts to achieve lasting peace would be reciprocated, saying that he does not want to see the country disunited.

"I am, therefore, taking this opportunity to call on communist terrorists to abandon their extremist activities and return to the fold of the law," Duterte said. "Discard the outmoded ideology that has led you astray and reintegrate into society so you can lead more dignified lives," he added.

Duterte made the appeal even after he renewed his call on the military to "destroy" the communist movement.

"Law and order means you have to destroy, not really fight but destroy the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), including its legal fronts and infrastructure," he said.

CPP founder slammed the President for ordering military forces to destroy communist members.

"Not satisfied with the daily violence of exploitation, he (Duterte) has given his armed missions license to kill people with immunity on mere suspicion," Sison said in a statement.

The communists group earlier declared a Christmas truce that will take effect at 12:01 a.m. on December 24 to 11:59 p.m. on December 26.

Despite the communists' declaration of a holiday ceasefire, Duterte advised government troops to be on their toes to repel possible strikes of "Sparrow" units, the hit squads of the New People's Army.

"We live in abnormal times. *Kaya galit ako diyan sa mga Sparrow. Hanap kayong magpakumpiyansa diyan* (I'm infuriated by the Sparrow. Don't be too confident that they will not attack)," Duterte said.

Duterte earlier issued Executive Order 70, ordering the creation of a national task force to end local communist armed conflict, as part of his civilian approach against the rebels. **CATHERINE S. VALENTE**

The killing of a good cop

It's Christmas but for the wife and seven children of Police Senior Inspector Porferio Gabuya Jr. this is the worst time ever. The 53-year-old Deputy Chief of the Guihulngan City Police was gunned down on December 19 by riding-in-tandem attackers while he was about to enjoy a cup of "Milo" in a store near the Guihulngan City police station. A fellow police officer who was in civilian attire escaped the rain of bullets from an M4 "baby armalite" assault rifle by diving to the floor.

A native of Biliran, Gabuya served in Cebu, particularly in Cebu City. He was station commander of Cebu City Police Station 8 (Talamban) and in March this year he was briefly officer-in-charge of Police Station 1 in Parian after the entire police force of the station was relieved.

Immediately after the murder of Gabuya, Police Regional Office 7 Director Debold Sinas announced that the New People's Army (NPA) through its Special Partisan Unit (Sparu) was responsible for the killing, citing intercepted text messages as evidence. Police Senior Superintendent Raul Tacaca, the chief of Negros Oriental Provincial Police Office, said that Gabuya was a target because he had arrested NPA members tagged as drug suspects (*The Manila Times*, December 19).

The NPA should naturally be considered a "usual suspect." From September 23 to November 4, the

Leonardo Panaligan Command (LPC)-NPA Central Negros murdered two active CAFGU members and one army corporal in Guihulngan City, one retired soldier in Canlaon City, and a civil defense officer in Moises Padilla. On October 30, the LPC opened fire on two police detachments in Guihulngan City. On July 21, 2017, the LPC killed six Guihulngan City police officers, including the chief of police.

However, the NPA, through Juanito Magbanua, spokesperson of the Apolinario Gatmagan Command-Negros, in local interviews has denied the NPA's involvement in the murder. They don't have a record on him as he was assigned to Guihulngan City for barely two months, it said. Of course, in the eyes of the NPA, a police officer is always considered a legitimate military target. Anyhow, they denied this one. My local sources also told me that people didn't know about Sr. Inspector Gabuya having arrested NPA members as claimed by the provincial police. He reportedly was more focused on engaging the community and had his personnel do the same.

Some residents of Guihulngan City identified the slain police officer with a group of policemen from Talisay City, Cebu, that had been reassigned to Negros Oriental, and whom President Rodrigo Duterte had linked to drugs. Gabuya arrived

at the same time as the 20 policemen who were among the 65 who had been relieved from the Talisay City police station. On August 21, President Duterte in a speech before the municipal mayors gathered in Cebu City lashed out at the police in Cebu in general, Talisay City in particular. "*Caya ng Talisay, p***** yang Talisay na 'yan. Mahurot mo diha hinay-hinay. Pulis niyo din Cebu! Puro adik. Halos tawag!*" (official transcript by the Presidential Communications Operations Office).

As a result, PRO-7 Director Sinas on September 1 told the Talisay City police force that they were all — with the exception of their chief — relieved effective the following day. The officers were required to attend a 15-day moral recovery program followed by a four-month Enhanced Basic Internal Security Operations Course, *Sun Star Cebu* reported on September 2.

All the relieved policemen reportedly ended up in Negros Oriental, with 20 of them being assigned to the Guihulngan City police office. Gabuya was not one of them. He was not assigned to Talisay City and he was not relieved. In fact, Gabuya appears to have been a responsible and diligent police officer with no derogatory record. His only connection to Talisay City was that it was his place of residence.

Gabuya used to live in Barangay Tejero, Cebu City. His former neighbors have fond memories of him. Among the friends that the slain officer made during his many years in Tejero was the late SPO1 Adonis Dumpit. They were colleagues and neighbors there years ago. Gabuya testified in Dumpit's defense in the latter's murder trial in 2010. Tejero Barangay Councilor Jessielou Cadungog was also a friend of many years. Dumpit was killed by operatives of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, last June 27. The NBI claimed that he had become a drug dealer. Cadungog, a three-term barangay captain of Tejero, is in hiding. On July 30, his driver/bodyguard shot to death PO3 Eugene Calumba who was about to fire his gun at Cadungog's car. The prosecutor threw out the police's murder charges against Cadungog but fearing for his life, Cadungog has gone underground. An attempt to burn his house last November 14 did not bait him to resurface.

PNP Central Visayas and Negros Oriental have formed a special investigative task group to probe the murder of St. Insp. Gabuya. The perpetrators, including the mastermind, must be brought to justice.

At

'End Red terror'

By Kristina Maralit

Reiterating the mandate of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to "preserve the Republic of the Philippines" and protect its people, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the military late Saturday to once and for all put an end to the

communist insurgency.

Don't just fight but destroy communist rebels, Mr. Duterte told the military as he reiterated his refusal to subscribe to a five-day unilateral holiday ceasefire from the insurgents.

Speaking before soldiers of the 10th Infantry Division in Compostela Valley last Saturday

night, the Commander-in-Chief rejected calls for a ceasefire and ordered the military to "destroy" the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

The CPP is celebrating its 50th anniversary on Wednesday, 26 December.

"We love our country. We yearn for a progressive, productive and

a good country that can provide the next generation a better life, better opportunities and more or less a very comfortable life. But the real problem is — and remember my words — I will be long gone but the problem will still linger unless we can have law and order and we can stop corruption in government," Mr.

Duterte said.

"(Having) law and order means you have to destroy, not really fight, but destroy the Communist Party of the Philippines, including its legal fronts and infrastructure," he added.

The President said he will "assume full responsibility" should cases of human rights

violation be filed against him for issuing the order.

The legal fronts, political parties and allied non-government organizations (NGO) of the CPP could be covered by Mr. Duterte's order, Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanan said Sunday.

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'End Red terror'

From page 1

In a radio interview, Andanar said even the "legal front of the partylist, NGO and those who visit workplaces to recruit members. All of them. There will be no excuses."

Abandon extremism

Mr. Duterte also appealed to New People's Army (NPA) members to surrender and return to the fold of the law.

"I am, therefore, taking this opportunity to call on communist terrorists to abandon their extremist activities," he said.

"Discard the outmoded ideology that has led you astray and reintegrate into society so you can lead more dignified lives," he added.

The Commander-in-Chief then stressed he hopes the government's efforts to achieve lasting peace which were made "in good faith" be reciprocated, saying he does not want to see the country disunited.

I am, therefore, taking this opportunity to call on communist terrorists to abandon their extremist activities.

Andanar noted the insincerity of communist groups in the conduct of peace talks, as he added nothing good has come out of the 50-year-old communist rebellion.

The President had tried to reach out to the Reds when he assumed power in 2016 but the

CPP's insincerity has rendered the talks a futile exercise, Andanar said.

"The other side seems to be taking all Filipinos for a ride," he explained.

He will "assume full responsibility" should cases of human rights violation be filed against him for issuing the order.

For the next generation

The President's resolve is clear against the communists whose socialist ideology he earlier claimed to share.

"Unless we are able to destroy every one of them, our children and grandchildren will face the same. Many of them will be soldiers and many of them will die without seeing the outcome of what would eventually be the Republic of the Philippines," Mr. Duterte said.

Peace negotiations between the government and the CPP, its armed unit the NPA and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines have stalled in November 2017 after the Chief Executive blasted the continued offensive of communist rebels against military and police forces and civilians.

Early this month, Malacañang mapped out a new strategy to contain the decades-old

problem on insurgency by issuing Executive Order (EO) 70 creating a national inter-agency task force aimed in finally ending the armed conflict with communist rebels.

In implementing the EO, the administration took a whole-of-nation approach to get to the root causes of the communist insurgency, disturbances and tensions such as poverty, historical injustice, social inequality and lack of inclusivity.

No mercy

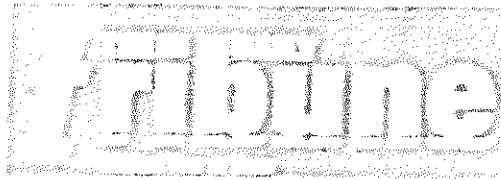
In an earlier speech, Duterte said NPA rebels do not deserve mercy because they are "cruel and brutal people" and would rather have the military finish them off.

The other side seems to be taking all Filipinos for a ride.

"Don't surrender anymore because, if I see you again, I will shoot you. *Wala nang surrender-surrender (No more surrender) because you are a cruel and brutal people.*" Duterte said.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said communist rebels should show sincerity when they declare a Christmas truce, insisting that the Palace is firm on its decision not to reciprocate the holiday truce.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the CPP could use the holiday truce to strengthen its force in time for its 50th anniversary on 26 December.



Davao under 'double full alert'

He particularly instructed his men to enhance intelligence gathering and coordination with other law enforcement units, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Alarmed by the rising number of attacks being launched by communist New People's Army (NPA) against government troops in various provinces, the city and regional police in Davao on Sunday raised their security level to double full alert.

Chief Supt. Marcelo Morales, Police Regional Office (PRO)-11 director, ordered all police units and

stations to conduct checkpoints and apply simulation exercises.

"I am reminding all police units to be extra-vigilant and not to give the enemies the opportunity to attack," Morales said.

He cited as an example the pre-dawn attack by the communist rebels in Sibagat, Agusan del Sur recently.

In the said incident, some

terrorists abducted two soldiers and 12 militiamen and high-powered firearms before fleeing.

He particularly instructed his men to enhance intelligence gathering and coordination with other law enforcement units, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

For his part, Senior Supt. Alexander Tagam, Davao City Police Office head, assured the public "while the people are enjoying Christmas, policemen will secure and protect them."

The city, he said, is also getting augmentation from the regional maneuver force battalion.

|| ■■

LEADING

Gov't program lures NPA surrenderers

By Kathleen Mac Sulguera

Encouraged by the government's local integration program, some 30 communist rebels who earlier had turned themselves in to the 54th Infantry Battalion in Asipulo, Ifugao, have called on their former comrades to follow their lead and return to the fold of the law.

He particularly instructed his men to enhance intelligence gathering and coordination with other law enforcement units, including the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The government's centerpiece Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) has been mainly responsible for convincing thousands of New People's Army (NPA) members to yield and return to normal civilian life.

Under the program, the government is providing each surrenderer financial assistance ranging from P15,000 to P85,000, a modified conditional cash transfer from the Department of Social Welfare and Development amounting to P5,000, an additional P50,000 for livelihood, P450,000 housing assistance and remuneration for every firearm

surrendered.

The E-CLIP's goal is to achieve permanent peace by facilitating the surrender of rebels and have them turn over their firearms with the help of local government units.

One of the surrenderers revealed they hesitated to give up earlier because they were made to believe by their superiors that the military will kill or treat them harshly once they surrender.

"We are appealing to our former comrades to stop supporting the communist movement and instead give their support to the government if they truly want to attain a long-lasting peace" one of the rebels said.

"I am overwhelmed by the numerous red fighters and communist supporters returning to the fold of the law. I would like to think that these are the fruits of the community support program of the APP and the local government units" Lt. Col. Narciso Nabulneg Jr., commanding officer of 54th IB said.

"We don't need to fire a single bullet to attain long and lasting peace instead let's convince our long-lost brothers and sisters who are still in hiding to embrace peace and live normal lives in the mainstream society," Nabulneg added. //

2 dead as NPA raids CAA base

A Civilian Armed Auxillary and a New People's Army rebel were killed in an NPA attack on a CAA patrol base in Lubuagan, Kalinga yesterday.

Major Ericson C. Bulosan, acting chief of the Public Affairs Office of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Northern Luzon Command, said an estimated 30 NPA attacked the Ag-agama Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit Active Auxillary Patrol Base in Barangay Western Uma.

A CAA member and an NPA rebel were killed in the attack. Their identities were not disclosed.

Bulosan said the Army 503rd Infantry Brigade are on heightened alert and are currently conducting combat and pursuit operations against the NPA.

AFP Nolcom chief Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Salamat said the indiscriminate attack, which happened while the people were preparing for Christmas, manifests the NPA's disregard for the welfare and well-being of the people. "Additionally, the CPP-NPA broke their own vow of unilateral ceasefire for these coming Christmas season," he said. (Francis T. Wakefield) 4

CPP-NPA durugin, patayin! - Digong

Inihutos ni Pangulong Duterte sa mga sundalo na wasakin at patayin ang lahat ng rebeldeng Communist Party of the Philippines kabilang na ang legal fronts nito.

Inihayag ito ng Pangulo sa kanyang pagbista sa 10th Infantry Division (10ID) at Camp General Manuel T. Yari Sr. sa Barangay Tuboran, Mawab, Compostela Valley Pro-

vince

Sinabi ng Pangulo na sinisira ng kilusang komunista ang bansa at kapag hindi naagapan ay ang mga anak at apo ng mga sundalo na magiging sundalo rin ang papatayin ng mga ito.

Sinabi rin ng Pangulo sa mga sundalo na buong malakot sa lahat ng larangan dahil kung destiny mo

nang mamatay ay wala na umano layong magagawa.

Kailangan umahonong masira ang mga komunista at mga Abu Sayaff dahil kanila ring sinisira ang mga Pilipino.

Wala aniyang ibang pakay ang mga komunista kundi pabalos sa ating panyerno subalit hindi sila papayag na mangyari ito sa kanyang gapanon.

At kung may nagtatanong umano kung sino ang nag-utos, ay ituro lamang umano ang Pangulo.

Hindi rin umano malalakot si Pangulong Duterte kung siya ay ipakukulung para sa mga mamamayan.

Samantala, muling ipinangako ng Pangulo na dadagidagan ang sahod ng mga sundalo. (Rudy Andal) 2

30 sa NPA, sumugod sa CAFGU base: 2 tigok

Nasa 30 miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) ang sumalakay sa Ag-agama CAFGU Active Auxillary Patrol Base sa Barangay Western Uma sa Lubuagan, Kalinga, kahapon ng umaga.

Isa ang napatay mula sa Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) Patrol Base, habang isa rin ang nasawi sa parig ng NPA.

Kaagad namang isinailalim sa heightened alert ang 503rd Infantry

Brigade, at tuluy-tuloy ang combat at pursuit operations laban sa NPA.

Kinondena naman ng Northern Luzon Command (NoLCom) ang hayagang paglabag ng NPA sa idineklara nitong unilatera ceasefire laban sa militar ngayong Pasko.

Maingat na hindi tinugunan ng militar ng kaparehong tigil-putukan ang idineklarang unilatera ceasefire ng NPA ilang linggo na ang nakalipas.

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Lizle Basa Inigo

Bangsamoro plebiscite info drive set

Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) chief Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. signed on Friday a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Commission on Elections (Comelec) and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) on the conduct of an information, education, and communication campaign for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) plebiscite next year.

"With this new partnership in conducting IECs or voters education that we are about to formalize with the Comelec, I'm very confident that we will be able to ensure that the public and the voters will have correct and timely information on the conduct of the plebiscite," Galvez said.

Galvez also said the partnership will ensure the smooth conduct of the plebiscite.

"We promise that this will be a fair and honest election. We will be giving all the Bangsamoro people their freewill to choose where they want to belong," he said.

The MOA, which was signed by Galvez, Comelec Commissioner Al A. Parreno, and BTC Chairman Ghazali Jaafar, will identify the responsibilities of each party in the preparation and implementation of the voters awareness campaign in the plebiscite areas.

The ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, a legal document that honors all signed peace agreements with the

Moro fronts, will be conducted through a plebiscite in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Cotabato City, and Isabela City on January 6, 2019.

The plebiscite in Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato, and areas whose petition for inclusion will be granted by the Comelec, is scheduled on February 6, 2019.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said there have been reports of disinformation being circulated in the plebiscite areas.

"The biggest disinformation we have is the news going around that people should show an ID to vote," he said.

Jimenez said the partnership will help combat the spread of wrong information. (By Francis T Wakefield)

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EDITORIAL

Peace, please

From today, Dec. 24, to Dec. 26, and from Dec. 31 to Jan. 1, the guns of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) will fall silent in observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays. That's according to the unilateral ceasefire declaration the rebel group announced for this year.

No equivalent ceasefire declaration from the Armed Forces of the Philippines is forthcoming, however, marking the first time in 30 years that Filipinos will celebrate the holidays without the by-now traditional temporary cessation of hostilities between the government and the insurgents.

That absence would have happened in 2017, too, but for a last-minute change of heart by President Duterte, who declared a ceasefire from Dec. 23 to 26 and from Dec. 30 to Jan. 2—a much shorter truce than previous ones. Peace this year, on the other hand, is turning out to be even more elusive, as the relations between the Duterte administration and the communist leadership are practically at nadir point.

A rapprochement with, and eventual resolution of, the communist insurgency was one of the central promises of Mr. Duterte's presidency. His long-time rapport with communist rebels in the South had made him the only candidate in the 2016 presidential election with the cachet and credibility to sway weary voters with the promise of a just and lasting solution to the rebellion. And his administration did hit the ground running, approving an accelerated timeline for peace talks on its second month in office and, a month later, holding the first round of peace talks with the National Democratic Front in Oslo, Norway—the first time the two parties began talking again after nearly five years. In that meeting, both parties agreed, among others, to declare unilateral ceasefires as a confidence-building measure, to help the burgeoning détente along.

That period seems of an entirely different era now, as Mr. Duterte and the communist leadership went soon after from being tentative peacemakers to all-out adversaries, their exchanges marked by broadsides and insults, while the AFP and the NPA have repeatedly clashed in bloody encounters. Mr. Duterte's rhetoric against the rebels has upped considerably: "If I see you, I will kill you, even if the human rights [groups] are here," he said recently. "You are cruel and brutal people, you don't deserve mercy." He has also floated the idea of forming "death squads" that would mirror the NPA's infamous Sparrow Units—urban hit teams during the '80s—but with the Reds in the crosshairs this time.

For his part, CPP founder Jose Ma. Sison, once cozy with Mr. Duterte—his former student in political science at Lyceum University whom he once lauded as offering "more hope for the advance and success of the peace negotiations than previous presidents and regimes"—is more engaged these days in returning fire and trying to better Mr. Duterte in brickbats. The President is using the CPP as a scapegoat to "give him the pretext to establish a fascist dictatorship through martial law," he said, while also calling his former student a "bloodthirsty tyrant."

Despite the holiday ceasefire declared this year by the rebels, Mr. Duterte isn't biting. "They were the ones who declared a unilateral ceasefire. I did not ask for it," he said. "But they were also the ones who launched the attack in Sorsogon, and... they killed the wife of a Cofgu." Last Wednesday, the NPA captured two soldiers and 12 militiamen at a military detachment in a remote village in Agusan del Sur province, further dimming hopes of any cooling-off period between the two sides. Such incidents, said Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, only prove the insincerity of the rebels, thus the AFP's recommendation, greenlighted by Mr. Duterte, that no equivalent ceasefire be declared from the government's side.

The holiday suspension of hostilities between the armed parties has almost become its own Christmas tradition ever since the late 1980s, when the Corazon Aquino administration first began exploring peace talks with the CPP. But even that temporary gesture of peace and goodwill—a sliver of concord among warring Filipinos held out of respect for the profound and central place Christmas occupies in the consciousness of their fellow countrymen and women—appears to be on its way out, too, another casualty of the preening, bellicose times.

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