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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

09 January 2018

Tuesday

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

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | JANUARY 9 2018 | TUESDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

NORTHEAST MONSOON AFFECTING EXTREME NORTHERN LUZON EARLIER AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF THE COUNTRY AS OF 5:00 PM - JANUARY 8, 2018

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:24 AM	5:43 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
11:48 PM	12:44 AM
LAST QUARTER	NEW MOON
JAN 6 6:28 AM	JAN 17 10:17 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
MANILA SOUTH HARBOR	
9:40 AM	1:35 AM
-0.08 Meter	0.80 Meter

- Partly cloudy in at times cloudy with rainshowers
- Partly cloudy in at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
- Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
- Light rains

	JAN 10	JAN 11	JAN 10	JAN 11	JAN 10	JAN 11		
METRO MANILA	23 - 31 °C	23 - 30 °C	TAGAYTAY	20 - 28 °C	20 - 27 °C	TACLOBAN	24 - 31 °C	23 - 31 °C
TUGUEGARAO	23 - 30 °C	23 - 29 °C	LEGAZPI	24 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	GAGAYAN DE ORO	24 - 32 °C	24 - 31 °C
LAOAG	22 - 30 °C	22 - 30 °C	PUERTO PRINCESA	25 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C	METRO DAVAO	24 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C
BAGUIO	15 - 26 °C	15 - 26 °C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	25 - 32 °C	25 - 32 °C	ZAMBOANGA	23 - 33 °C	24 - 33 °C
SBMA/CLARK	24 - 31 °C	23 - 31 °C	METRO CEBU	25 - 31 °C	25 - 32 °C			

DZRHNEWS TELEVISION

MONDAY - FRIDAY
11 AM & 5 PM

PILIPINAS HD

AIR 21

SARGT HQ. PADALA MDI

WEEKDAYS
6 AM, 6:30 PM & 9 PM

WEEKENDS
6 AM

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CONGRESS LEADERS AGREE ON CON-ASS

STORY BY CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO

Senate President Pimentel and Speaker Alvarez have reached agreement on how to amend the 1987 Constitution that would involve a shift to a federal system, but they differ on when to submit the new Charter to a plebis

By Christine O. Avendaño

@10avendanoINQ

The top leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives have agreed to convene the two chambers into a constituent assembly (Con-ass) to amend the 1987 Constitution and pave the way for a shift to a federal form of government.

But the leaders differ on the timetable for submitting a new Charter for voters' ratification in a nationwide plebiscite.

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III wants a plebiscite in 2019, while Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez favors holding it much sooner—in May this year.

Pimentel, who is leading the push for Charter change in the Senate, is set to file this week a resolution seeking to have the House and the Senate sit as a Con-ass.

"It's a resolution calling for the Senate to sit together with the House of Representatives as a constituent assembly for the purpose of revising the 1987 Constitution, specifically to study the adoption of a federal system of government," he said on Monday.

By the end of 2018, the Senate and the House will have come up with a draft Charter, Pimentel said.

'No-election'

He said the draft Constitution would be presented to the people in a plebiscite to be held simultaneously with the elec-

tions in May 2019

Speaking to reporters, Pimentel said this meant that elections would proceed as scheduled in 2019, a proposal contrary to the "no-election" (No-el) scenario involving half of the Senate being pushed by Speaker Alvarez.

Alvarez said last week that it might not be practical to elect new senators in 2019 because such elections would complicate

the country's transition to a federal system of government.

He said the 11 senators elected in 2013 could stay in a holdover capacity so they could end their six-year term in 2022 at the same time as the 12 elected in 2016.

Alvarez has a faster timetable in the drafting of a new Constitution that would provide for a shift to a federal form of government.

The Speaker wants a Constitution drafted by a Con-ass to be submitted to the people in a plebiscite this May.

P19-billion Con-con

Pimentel defended a Con-ass as the mode of amending the Constitution, saying a constitutional convention (Con-con) whose delegates are elected would cost the government P19 billion.

He said Con-con delegates would have to run, organize their offices and come up with an agenda and thus take two to three years before a concrete proposal on Charter amendments could be finalized.

"So it's not only a waste of money but also a waste of time," said Pimentel, president of Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), the party of President Duterte.

Under Pimentel's proposed timeline, a Con-ass would draft proposed amendments to the Constitution within this year.

"Congress is already organized, we already know our members and if we have committees, we will pattern it to our committees," he said.

Pimentel said a Con-ass might be done with the proposed amendments after the President delivered his second State of the Nation Address in July.

Separate voting

Based on his reading of the 1987 Constitution, Pimentel said there should be separate voting by the Senate and by the House once they handled the proposed amendments in plenary.

He said a vote of three-fourths of the Senate and of the House was needed to amend or revise the 1987 Constitution.

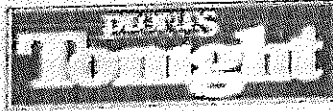
"[The draft proposal should be done] in less than a year so that by January 2019, what is being deliberated and being explained to the public is the final draft, which will be subject to a plebiscite [in May 2019]," he said.

He said holding the plebiscite at the same time as the 2019 elections was a "practical decision," considering that the government was spending between P7 billion and P10 billion to hold nationwide elections.

Pimentel said PDP-Laban was pushing for a federal form of government and was advocating a bicameral system in which the Senate would be the "venue for voices of the regions."

Under this system, a senator is elected in a region and a congressman in a district. INQ

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Page. 1

New SOCOM chief named

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines-Philippine Army Special Operation Command (SOCOM) has new commander in the person of Maj. Gen. Ronnie Evangelista.

Evangelista, who was former commander of the Civil Relations Service-AFP (CRS-AFP) formally assumed his post as new commander of SOCOM on Monday in simple change of command ceremony held in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija.

AFP-Public Affairs Office (PAO) chief Lt. Col. Emmanuel Garcia said Evangelista replaced Lt. Gen. Danilo Pamonag, who has been designated as commander, Southern Luzon Command, in December 2017.

The change of command ceremony was presided by Army commanding general Lt. Gen. Rolando Josecito Bautista with National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana as guest of honor.

It was learned that Evangelista assumed command of CRS in November 2016 when the post was vacated by M/Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, who now commands the Army's 2nd Infantry Division in Tanay, Rizal.

Prior to his stint as CRS Commander, MGen Evangelista was the deputy commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command based in Davao City. He also became commander of the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne).

Aside from the three distinguished service stars, Evangelista is a recipient of multiple awards and decorations, such as Gawad sa Kaunlaran medals, Bronze Cross medal and numerous Merit and Commendation medals.

He is a member of the Philippine Military Academy "Sinagtala" Class of 1986.

Zaida delos Reyes-Palanca

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ARMY CHANGES OF COMMAND

EVANGELISTA NEW SOCOM COMMANDER; PAMONAG TO SOLCOM

The former commander of Civil Relations Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines on Monday assumed leadership of the Army's Special Operations Command (Socom).

Major Gen. Ronnie Evange-

lista took over the Socom in a turnover rite at the command's headquarters at Fort Magsaysay. He replaced Lt. Gen. Danilo Pamongag, now chief of the Southern Luzon Command (Solcom).

Evangelista was the deputy

chief of the Eastern Mindanao Command based in Davao City.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Joselito Bautista led the ceremony with Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana as guest of honor and speaker. —NIKKO DIZON INQ

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Soldier, 4 BIFF men slain in clash

By JOHN UNSON

MAGUINDANAO – A soldier and four members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were killed in an encounter in this province on Saturday, the military reported yesterday.

The slain soldier was identified as Pfc Carl Anthony Dionaga. Pfc Harold John Dionisio was wounded.

The clash occurred after bandits fired at soldiers deployed to secure ethnic Teduray communities on Mt. Firis at the border of Datu Saudi and Datu Unsay towns.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, Task Force Central spokesman, said they have been receiving reports from local officials and village leaders that among the fatalities was a certain Salahudin, who was allegedly trained by

Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, in making bombs.

"The reports are very persistent, but we can't make a conclusion without validating the information," Besana said.

A police officer and two other persons were killed in roadside bombings allegedly perpetrated by BIFF men also in this province last week.

Maj. Gen. Arnel dela Vega of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID) said the BIFF is expected to launch more attacks in retaliation for its losses.

Clashes between soldiers of the 6th ID and BIFF gunmen started on Dec. 25 when the bandits attacked ethnic Teduray villagers, burned their houses and took their farm animals. The bandits also shot dead tribal chieftain Diego Dagadas two weeks ago.

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POLICE FILES

Page. 1

5 BIFF at 1 militar patay sa sagupaan sa Maguindanao

COTABATO CITY

Patay ang limang miyembro ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) (Islamic Inspired Group) at isa sa militar sa engkwentro sa probinsya ng Maguindanao.

Ayon sa ulat ng 6th Infantry (Kampilan) Division Philippine Army, nagkasagupaan ng tropa ng 64th Reconnaissance Company ng Pbil Army at BIFF sa Sino Perez, Barangay Mantuana, Dabu Unsay, Maguindanao.

Tumagal ng mahigit dalawang oras ang palitan ng putok sa magkabilang panig.

Dahil sa dami ng mga rebelde, agad nagsponde ang dalawang Agusta 109 helicopter Grinchup ng Philippine Air Force at binomba ang mga terorista.

Nagpakawalan ng mga bala ng 105 mm Howitzer Cannon ang Artillery Battalion ng Philippine Army sa posisyon ng BIFF.

Humupa ang putokan nang umatras ang BIFF sa pamumuno ni Kumander Bungos.

Lima sa mga terorista ang nasawi at matamang ang nasugatan habang isang sundalo ang binawian ng buhay at isa ang nagtamo ng sugat.

9 January 2018

The Manila Times

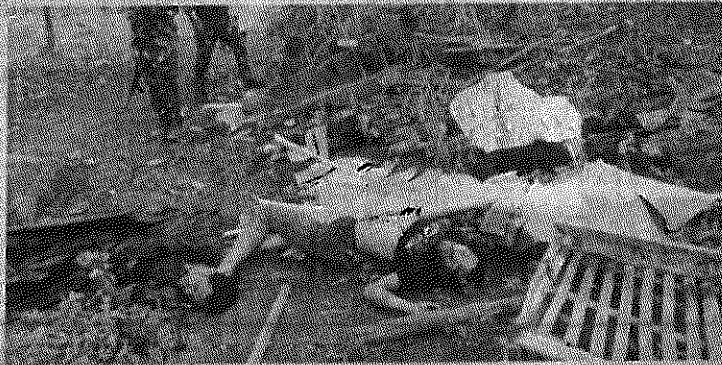
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Soldier, 5 rebels dead in Mindanao clash – army

FIVE Muslim rebels and a soldier were killed during a weekend ground and air assault by Philippines security forces on militants supportive of the Islamic State group in a restive southern region, the military said Monday.

The Philippine army pounded some 50 militants with artillery in a five-hour attack on the island of Mindanao Saturday, according to regional military spokesman Captain Arvin Encinas.

One soldier and at least five members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were killed in the clash, he said, adding that while small and fragmented the militant group was a threat in the region.



■ This undated handout from the Army's 6th Infantry Division shows troops standing next to the bodies of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) killed in the clash in Datu Unsay town, Maguindanao province. AFP PHOTO

"They have enough people to conduct atrocities, and they are actively recruiting," he said.

The Muslim minority of the

mainly Catholic Philippines considers Mindanao as its homeland. Decades of armed rebellion in the region had

claimed more than 100,000 lives by official estimates.

Last year another group pledging allegiance to IS occupied the Mindanao city of Marawi and fought a bloody conflict with US-backed Philippine government forces for five months, leaving more than 1,100 people dead.

In response to that violence, President Rodrigo Duterte put Mindanao under martial law until the end of 2018.

But sporadic fighting has continued as a network of rebel groups operating on the island splinters, even after the main militant organization the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) engaged in peace talks. **AFP**

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SolGen seeks dismissal of petition vs ML

By Benjamin B. Pulta and Ted Tuvera

The government, through the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), has asked the Supreme Court (SC) to dismiss a petition challenging the constitutionality of the full-year

extension of martial law in Mindanao.

In a 58-page comment, Solicitor General Jose Calida yesterday said the petition filed by the group of Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman should be dismissed due to lack of merit, stressing it is imputing grave abuse of discretion by Congress in extending the effectivity of martial

law in Mindanao.

"Petitioners committed a terrible blunder. They failed to attach the adverted Joint Resolution of Congress upon which they pin their allegation of arbitrariness," he added

"Moreover, they trace the arbitrariness

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to the absence of an actual rebellion. Petitioners are unmindful that the Supreme Court already declared in 'Lagman v. Medialdea' the existence of rebellion in Mindanao. Such fact is now beyond question," Calida said.

According to him, without any evidence to support the petitioners' general allegation that there is no factual basis to extend martial law in Mindanao, their claim that Congress acted contrary to the Constitution has no leg to stand on.

"What the petitioners should have done is to show that the rebellion has been completely quelled. They have not done so," he stressed.

"There is rebellion in Mindanao. Until the rebellion is quelled, there is reason to extend martial law and suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus," the OSG added.

Calida also "said the danger and risks the Daesh-inspired *Da'awatul Islamiyah Waliyatul Masriq* (DIWM), local terrorist groups and the NPA (New People's Army) pose still remain high and the extension of martial law will necessarily address the rebellion being waged by these groups."

"For as long as Congress believes that the invasion or rebellion continues to exist, and public safety requires it, the proclamation of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus may be extended, subject only to the condition that any such extension be upon the initiative of the President and for a period to be determined by Congress," he stressed.

Congress approved President Rodrigo Duterte's request for the one-year extension on December 13, roughly three weeks before the December 31 expiration of the six-month extension of the May 23 proclamation that placed the whole of Mindanao under military rule following attacks by Islamic State-inspired Maute group in Marawi City.

When challenged before the SC, the High Court ruled on the constitutionality of the President's declaration of martial law in Mindanao.

Another petition vs ML filed

But Malacañang's decision to extend martial law in strife-torn Mindanao yesterday faced a legal challenge once more after leftist groups petitioned the SC to invalidate the one-year extension.

The National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) and party-list lawmakers such as Carlos Zarate (Bayan Muna), Emmie de Jesus (Gabriela), Arlene Brosas (Gabriela), Ariel Casilao (Anakpawis), Antonio Tinio (ACT Teachers) and Sarah Elago (Kabataan) along with Mindanao residents, in a 84-page petition, argued there was no legal basis for martial law, citing government pronouncements that the crisis in Marawi City ended last October.

They urged the High Court to conduct an "open, inclusive, thorough judicial determination of the sufficiency of the factual basis for such extension."

The petitioners insisted that "by the government's own admission, there actually exists no factual nor legal basis to support the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao - for a longer period than the original one at that - considering that the facts constituting the rebellion and threat to public safety in the assailed original proclamation, have already been resolved and no

longer persist.”

“Even in the letter forwarded by the President to both Houses of Congress citing the new alleged grounds that would warrant the extension, assuming without conceding that these are true, would still not logically and legally justify an extension because they do not rise to the level of rebellion that constitutes a threat to public safety as contemplated by the Constitution,” the petition stated.

The petitioners also said the extension would give way to “alarmingly intensified and increased human rights violations” allegedly aimed at “quelling legitimate redress of grievances against the government.”

“President Duterte has, without citing any basis, asserted that the opposition and the ‘left’ are conspiring to overthrow him. The Duterte administration has used, and will use, its martial law powers against dissenters by using the Marcosian martial law tactic of linking dissenters with the communists and the terrorists,” they noted.

The petitioners also accused the Senate and House of Representatives of committing grave abuse of discretion in allowing the martial law extension and suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in the entire Mindanao.

“(In fine, what is the cogent basis for extending Martial Law for a full year, way longer than the original declaration and first extension when fighting in Marawi was still ongoing? Is it not strange that the second extension is set for a period that is much longer than the period when fighting was still ongoing, there being no fighting in Marawi now?” the petition stated.

“What are the parameters for setting the time frame? What would be the parameters for the possible earlier lifting of martial law? How will the AFP gauge their success? Or is this arbitrary or subjective left entirely to absolute discretion beyond the pale of legislative query or judicial review? Is martial law intended to quell a rebellion or is martial law just intended to restore public order and make government function again? If there are no parameters, then martial law can exist until there are rebels in Mindanao, even if such rebels do not pose a threat to public safety. These are nagging questions begging for satisfactory constitutional and factual answers,” it added.

Named respondents were Mr. Duterte, Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III, Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Armed Forces chief General Rey Leonardo Guerrero and Philippine National Police chief Director General Ronald de la Rosa.

“We can defend ML”

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque, at a Palace briefing, yesterday downplayed the latest case, saying, “We can certainly defend martial law as it has been reviewed already by both Houses of Congress. And both Houses of Congress, voting jointly, concluded that there is both factual and legal basis.”

“Two branches of government have already ruled that martial law is constitutional and we’re confident that the Philippine government, the executive, can defend this position in the Supreme Court as well,” he added.

Roque also said the CPP-NPA’s terrorist label has “nothing to do” with martial law extension. **PNA**

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Another petition vs ML extension filed before SC

By EDU PUNAY

Another petition challenging the one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao was filed before the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday.

Petitioners led by Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Carlos Zarate asked the high court to issue a temporary restraining order (TRO) stopping the implementation of martial law in the south.

Just like the petition filed recently by the group of Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, Zarate and company also sought the nullification of the order by President Duterte for the extension of declaration.

They also argued that there is no factual basis as required by the 1987 Constitution to justify the extension of martial law, claiming that the administration has even admitted that there is no actual rebellion in

Mindanao.

The group cited Duterte's admission that the government has achieved victory over the Islamic State-linked Maute terror group in October last year after a five-month campaign to oust them from Marawi city.

"Hence, by the government's own admission, there actually exists no factual nor legal basis to support the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao – for a longer period than the original one at that – considering that the facts constituting rebellion and threat to public safety in the assailed original proclamation have already been resolved and no longer persist," read the latest petition.

Petitioners explained that the grounds raised by the executive branch in extending mar-

tial law, which was approved by Congress last month, "do not rise to the level of rebellion that constitutes a threat to public safety as contemplated by the Constitution."

They alleged that the real target of the extension of martial law are those who dissent or oppose Duterte's policy, including the NPA and its supporters and financiers.

Lastly, petitioners said the Senate and the House of Representatives committed grave abuse of discretion in allowing the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus without enough legal or factual basis.

Zarate was joined by Reps. Arlene Brosas and Emmie de Jesus of Gabriela party-list, Ariel Casilao of Anakpawis, Antonio Tinio of ACT Teachers and Sarah Elago of Kabataan party-list in filing

the petition

They named as respondents President Duterte, Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III, Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, AFP chief General Rey Leonardo Guerrero and Philippine National Police chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa.

A similar petition was filed last month by Lagman, which cited similar arguments.

Malacañang is confident that it can defend the legality of the martial law extension before the SC.

"We can certainly defend martial law as it has been reviewed already by both houses of Congress. Both houses of Congress voting jointly concluded there is both factual and legal basis (to declare martial law)," presidential spokesman Har-

ry Roque said.

"Two branches of government have already ruled martial law is constitutional and we're confident that the Philippine government, the executive, can defend this position in the Supreme Court as well," he added.

Roque also disputed the petitioners' claim that martial law could be used to persecute groups critical of the government.

Roque claimed that branding the NPA as terrorist is "separate and distinct" from the declaration of martial law in Mindanao.

"They were branded as terrorists because they are terrorists," the spokesman said.

Dismiss Lagman petition — OSG

Yesterday, the Office of the Solicitor General asked the SC to dismiss Lagman's petition

for lack of merit.

In its comment, Solicitor General Jose Calida stressed that petitioners failed to fulfill their burden of proving by evidence that there is no factual basis to extend martial law in Mindanao and that Congress acted contrary to the Constitution in approving the extension.

Calida argued that the extension of martial law was simply necessary.

"Public safety inevitably requires the extension of the proclamation of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao. The danger and risks the Daesh-inspired DIWM, local terrorist groups, and the NPAs pose still remain high and the extension of martial law will necessarily address the rebellion being waged by these groups," he said. – **With Alexis Romero**

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ANOTHER GROUP PETITIONS SUPREME COURT TO STOP MARTIAL LAW EXTENSION IN MINDANAO

**By Marlon Ramos,
Philip C. Tubeza,
Mart Sambalud
and Allan Nawal
@Team_Inquirer**

A group of party-list lawmakers and representatives of people's organizations, including three townmates of President Duterte, questioned in the Supreme Court on Monday the extension of martial law in Mindanao by a year.

They said Malacañang and Congress peddled fears of enemies the government had claimed to have vanquished by shifting to terrorism the discussion on an insurgency rooted in social inequality.

"None serves as basis for the extension of martial law, its previous declaration a tragedy, its perpetuation a farce," the petition read.

Represented by the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUP-L), the Makabayan bloc of lawmakers and other petitioners asked the high court to stop the government from extending Mr. Duterte's Proclamation No. 216, which also suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, until Dec. 31.

Palace defense

They sought the issuance of a temporary restraining order (TRO) or writ of preliminary injunction as the tribunal determines the legality of the extension through a thorough and public factual determination of the sufficiency of the factual bases.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said the Duterte administration was confident that it could defend the constitutionality of martial law.

"Well, we can certainly defend martial law as it has been reviewed already by both houses of Congress and both chambers, voting jointly, concluded that there is both factual and legal basis," Roque said in a media briefing.

The President placed the entire Mindanao under martial law on May 23, 2017, after Islamic State-inspired Maute and Abu Sayyaf terrorists overran Marawi City.

As set by the Constitution, martial law was supposed to last only for 60 days, but the Senate and the House jointly voted to extend it until the end of 2017.

Last October, government troops recovered Marawi after five months of heavy fighting that killed more than 1,600 people, including about 900 terrorists and 164 soldiers and police.

Another year

Majority lawmakers again voted on Dec. 13, 2017, to extend martial law in Mindanao by a year, after security officials recommended it to the President.

"This is a violation of the Constitution, which allows the imposition of martial law only when there is actual rebellion and when the operations of civilian government are substantially impaired that public safety should be preserved," said former Rep. Neri Col-

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and no longer persist,” the petitioners argued.

They said Mr. Duterte’s real targets were dissenters, noting that the martial law extension added the New People’s Army (NPA) and their “supporters, financiers and coddlers” as broad targets of martial law.

NUPL secretary general Ephraim Cortez said the real targets were “ordinary activists and dissenters who are critical of President Duterte’s human rights record and antipeople policies such as people’s organizations, the Church, media and independent government bodies.”

Roque countered that there had been no documented cases of abuse committed by government security forces since martial law was declared in Mindanao.

“I think the branding of [the] NPA as terrorist is separate and distinct from martial law. They were branded as terrorists because they are terrorists,” he said.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon welcomed the petition, which he said would give the Supreme Court “an opportunity to pass upon the validity of the extension.”

It was the second legal action brought against the extension of martial law.

Two weeks ago, a group of opposition lawmakers led by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman challenged its constitutionality by filing a similar petition. —WITH A REPORT FROM CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO INQ

Colmenares, NUPL chair.

“The government is functioning in Davao City and the entire country, so why replace it with martial rule?” he said.

Colmenares said justifying martial law on grounds that it would help in the rehabilitation of Marawi or to “completely” eradicate the rebels “are not grounds under the Constitution.”

The petitioners included three Davaoeños—Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate,

Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao and Save Our Schools coordinator Rius Valle—ACT Teachers Rep. Antonio Tinio and Francisca Castro, Gabriela Women’s Party Rep. Emmi de Jesus and Arlene Brosas, Colmenares, Dr. Maria Carolina Araullo, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan’s Renato Reyes Jr. and Karapatan’s Cristina Palabay.

The petitioners pointed out that the President’s request for an extension of martial law came two months after he de-

clared on Oct. 17 that the Maute group had been defeated and driven out of Marawi.

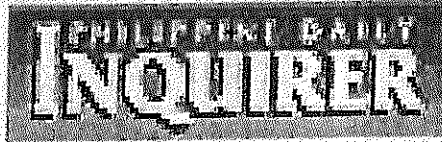
Marawi siege

They said the Constitution stated that martial law may be extended only “if the invasion or rebellion shall persist and public safety requires it.”

“The Marawi siege and other grounds ... that were used as the alleged bases to justify the assailed declaration of martial law ... have already been resolved

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LORENZANA EXPLAINS MERCADO'S DISMISSAL TO EX-NAVY CHIEFS

By Nikko Dizon
@NikkoDizonINQ

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Monday said that he had met with former chiefs of the Philippine Navy who had expressed disappointment over how Vice Admiral Ronald Mercado was relieved from his post last December, triggered by a disagreement over the Navy's P15.5-billion frigate project.

In an interview with reporters at Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, Lorenzana said he had requested the meeting with

the former Navy Flag Officers in Command to explain "the root cause why Admiral Mercado was relieved."

Violated tradition

"They expressed their disappointment at the process. They said I violated the long-honored tradition of retiring, [which included a] parade and everything. I said it was because the situation was also so fluid we [could] no longer have a formal turnover. I explained to them why and they understood," Lorenzana said.

How the "situation" became "fluid" was not clear, but the unceremonious firing of Mercado created a sense of restlessness in the military, especially the Navy.

Gen. Leonardo Guerrero, the Armed Forces chief of staff, informed Mercado of his relief through a text message on the night of Dec. 18. Hours before that, Mercado got wind of his relief and asked Guerrero about it. He was told it was not true.

On 'floating status'

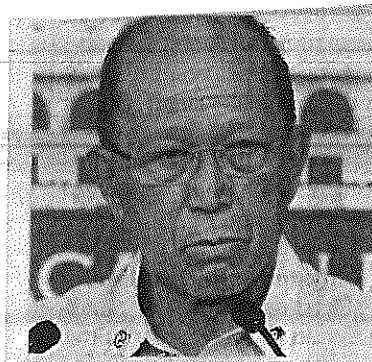
Lorenzana designated Rear Adm. Robert Empedrad, who

was part of the frigate technical working group, as acting Navy chief. Mercado is now on "floating status," assigned in Guerrero's office, Lorenzana said.

Hyundai steel cutting

Lorenzana expressed hope that the procurement of the steel for the Navy's frigate, to be constructed by Hyundai Heavy Industries, would "happen soon" and that the steel cutting would take place by April.

The controversy in the Navy persisted as China again flexed its muscle in the South China Sea by



Delfin Lorenzana

reportedly deploying some 200 soldiers on Fiery Cross Reef.

Lorenzana said the government should "register our protest" through the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). INQ

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Former Navy chiefs frown on sacking of Mercado

BY VICTOR REYES

FORMER Navy chiefs have expressed disappointment over the unceremonious relief of Vice Adm. Ronald Joseph Mercado as Navy chief last month for acts tantamount to insubordination, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday.

Lorenzana said he recently met with the former officials to clear the air regarding the relief of Mercado, who is now assigned to the office of AFP chief Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

Lorenzana did not say when and where the meeting was held.

"I have talked to former flag officers in command (of the Navy). I requested from them a meeting and I explained to them the root cause why Admiral Mercado was relieved," Lorenzana said.

"They expressed their disappointment over the process (of

Mercado's relief). They said I violated the long-honored tradition of retirement, parade and everything," said Lorenzana.

Mercado was relieved on December 19 and replaced by AFP deputy chief of staff for retirees and reservists affairs Rear Adm. Robert Empedrad in an acting capacity. He relinquished the post in rites held at the office of AFP chief Gen. Leonardo Ray Guerrero, without the traditional testimonial parade and review in honor of the outgoing Navy chief.

"I said because the situation was fluid, we can no longer have formal turnover. I explained to them and they understood," he also said.

Lorenzana last month said he recommended to President Duterte Mercado's relief because he has "lost trust and confidence in his integrity and leadership." He said Mercado has been pushing for

the installation of a combat management system (CMS) manufactured by a French firm on two frigates which are still under construction. He said he has told Mercado to stop insisting on the CMS produced by the French firm and instead let the Hyundai Heavy Industries of Korea, which is constructing the frigates, to make the decision.

Mercado reportedly did not heed Lorenzana's directives.

There are reports Mercado is considering going on early retirement. Mercado is due to reach the mandatory retirement age of 56 in March this year.

Lorenzana said, "I think he is already requesting, according to some of the former FOICs (flag officers in command) that talked to him, that he will just be allowed to retire in March. I said he can retire (in March). No one is forcing him to retire earlier," he said.

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CHANGE OF COMMAND | New Leadership at SOCOM and FSRR

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#)

FORT RAMON MAGSAYSAY, Nueva Ecija (DWDD) – A Joint Change of Command Ceremony was held for the Special Operations Command and First Scout Ranger Regiment at the Parade Grounds of the Special Operations Command, Fort Ramon Magsaysay, Palayan City, Nueva Ecija.

Lt Gen Rolando Joselito D Bautista, Commanding General, Philippine Army, was the Presiding Officer for the ceremony while Defense Secretary Delfin N Lorenzana, served as the Guest of Honor and Speaker.

Honors were feted outgoing Special Operations Command (SOCOM) Commander Major General Danilo G Pamonag, AFP and First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR) Regiment Commander Brigadier General Rene Glen Paje, AFP.

The programme involved the Presentation of Award and Command Plaque to the outgoing commanders, followed by the Reading of Relief and Relinquishment of Command and the Lowering of their Personal Flag.

This was followed by the Assumption of Command and Receiving of the Command Symbol by the incoming SOCOM Commander MGen Rey Evangelista and Incoming FSRR Commander Col William N Gonzales.

CGPA Lt Gen Bautista then delivered his message.

The **Special Operations Command (SOCOM)** of the Philippine Army is the command that is responsible for planning, conducting, and supporting

special operations for the Philippine Army. Currently, units under SOCOM are the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne), Scout Ranger Regiment and the Light Reaction Regiment.

Meanwhile, the **First Scout Ranger Regiment's (FSRR)** mission is to organize, train, equip and provide rapidly deployable forces and conduct special operations in support of SOCOM's mission.

The regiment's core capabilities are: direct action, jungle warfare, special reconnaissance, and sniping operations. **AES / Photos and Report by LQG**

www.dwdd.com.ph

AFP RESERVE FORCE | Senate Bill No. 1607

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#)

NAVAL STATION JOSE ANDRADA, Manila (DWDD) – In the past years since the passage into law of the RA 7077, it is undeniable that there are still certain gaps and loopholes that govern our State. Our reservists who untiringly and willingly protect and serve the Filipino people, more often than not, are unable to experience certain rights and privileges unlike our regular force. For an instance, numerous reservists continuously volunteer to offer their services in the hopes of maintaining the national security and they act on it without a glimpse of hesitation. Unfortunately, as they temporarily depart their civilian careers to serve our beloved country, they come back having been relieved or responsibility of their careers and they are experiencing discrimination in terms of job hiring, reinstatement, promotion, or any employment's benefit. Even so, they unceasingly provide overwhelming sacrifices every time they respond to the State's called to active duty.

The then Deputy Chief of Staff for Reservist and Retiree Affairs, J9, RADM ROBERTO A EMPEDRAD AFP, who is now the Acting Flag Officer In Command of the Philippine Navy, addressed these particular issues in the form of the Senate Bill No. 1607 also known as "An Act Strengthening the Employment Rights for Members of the Citizen Armed Forces or the Reserve Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and for other purposes" which was sponsored by Senator Paolo Benigno "Bam" A. Aquino. It captured the very rights of our reservists that were often left unacknowledged. The following are the highlights of the aforementioned bill: it aims to protect the reservists from any form of discrimination in terms of employment and reinstatement processes after having been deployed or mobilized; it assures the reservists of their civilian careers after their duty with recognition of the special needs and assistance of those who are temporarily or permanently injured; and it intends to professionalize the Reserve Force and assure them of their employment rights.

So now, we, the Philippine Navy, invite you to take part with us as we advocate for the rights of our brave reservists. Join us and together let us support the Senate Bill No. 1607, "Reservist Employment Rights." **NPAO/MCAG**

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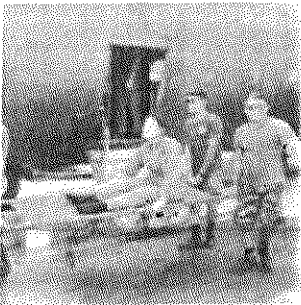
WOMEN POWER | Cpt Ventura is the Third Female C-130 Pilot in Command

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#)

MACTAN AIRBASE, Cebu City (DWDD) – The entire Airlifters community welcomed its third Female C-130 Pilot-in-Command, CPT REYNA VENTURA PAF last December 17, 2017 after weeks of rigorous and demanding pilot training.

As part of tradition, she was dunked in the pool and reported to all her senior pilots most especially her Instructor Pilots while still in her water-dripping flight suit. Her milestone is another reason for the 220th Airlift Wing to celebrate as it meant to increase the pool of qualified aircrew and continue to maintain the Wing's long term readiness sustainability in the future.

CPT VENTURA said: "It was indeed a great experience not many females can say they have had... the Wing through the thrust of the present leadership is putting the best crew that we can put together... nothing other than qualification, experience, and ability were considered.



After completing all the needed requirements, she was immediately deployed to fly for the holiday sorties. She said that *"Seeing the excitement and relief on the faces of our comrades as we take them out on their way home to their loved ones is truly fulfilling and rewarding... what really matters is knowing we're making a difference and seeing it with every mission we fly"*.

She also shared her personal thoughts on this achievement, *"I would tell any person regardless of sex that flying is an attainable goal for anyone who wants to work for it. As they say, you are only limited in what you can do by what you can dream"*. She ended her interview by expressing how grateful she was for all the knowledge and experience she gained from her instructor pilots, other aircrew and maintenance personnel. **Courtesy of 220th AW / MCAG**

