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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

18 January 2018

Thursday

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

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www.panahon.tv /PanahonTV

YON ABUO

BALANCED NEWS - FEARLESS VIEWS

TODAY'S WEATHER FORECAST | JANUARY 18, 2018 | THURSDAY

PHILIPPINE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (PAR)

EASTER LIES AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF THE COUNTRY as of 5:00 pm - January 17, 2018

SUNRISE	SUNSET
6:25 AM	5:47 PM
MOONRISE	MOONSET
6:18 AM	5:59 PM
NEW MOON	FIRST QUARTER
JAN 17 10:17 AM	JAN 25 8:20 AM
LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
6:33 AM	10:47 PM
-0.21 Meter	1.05 Meter

Partly cloudy to at times cloudy with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms
Cloudy skies with rainshowers and/or thunderstorms

METRO MANILA	TAGAYTAY	TACLOBAN
23-31°C 23-31°C	19-27°C 19-28°C	24-29°C 24-29°C
TUGUEGARAO	LEGAZPI	CAGAYAN DE ORO
24-31°C 24-31°C	24-30°C 25-30°C	23-30°C 23-29°C
LAOAG	PUERTO PRINCESA	METRO DAVAO
20-31°C 21-30°C	25-32°C 25-32°C	24-31°C 24-30°C
BAGUIO	ILOILO/BACLOD	ZAMBOANGA
14-24°C 14-24°C	25-29°C 24-29°C	23-30°C 23-29°C
SBMA/CLARK	METRO CEBU	
25-31°C 25-31°C	24-28°C 23-29°C	

MONDAY - FRIDAY
11AM & 5PM

WEEKDAYS
6AM, 6:30 PM & 9PM
WEEKENDS
6AM

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2 EX-CHIEF JUSTICES SPLIT ON FEDERALISM

Hilario Davide Jr. warns the Senate that the proposed shift is a 'lethal experiment,' but Reynato Puno describes the Philippines as a 'failing democracy' under the current unitary system.

**By Christine O. Avendaño
and Jocelyn R. Uy**
@Team_Inquirer

Former Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. warned the Senate on Wednesday that shifting to federalism, as proposed by the Duterte administration and its allies, was a "lethal experiment" as it did not suit the Philippines and the "people of our generation and even those of the succeeding generations."

But another former Chief Justice, Reynato Puno, told the senators that the Philippines was a failing democracy under the unitary form of government, where some powers were merely decentralized to local governments.

Davide, the 20th Chief Justice of the Philippines, and Puno, the 22nd, spoke at the opening of the Senate's hearing on proposals to amend the 1987 Constitution for a shift to the federal form of government.

Davide, one of the framers of the 1987 Constitution, insisted that the present unitary system best fit the country's history, culture, character, and traditions, among other things, as it had "proven itself to be so."

"My position is: A shift to federalism is a lethal experiment, a fatal leap, a plunge to death, a leap to hell," he told senators on the committee on constitutional amendments and revision of codes headed by Sen. Francis Pangilinan.

Davide said that if the shift to federalism were to deal with the imbalance created by an "Imperial Manila," then this could be done by "effectively and efficiently implementing the relevant provisions" of the present Constitution "for strong local autonomy and decentralization."

He said Congress could also amend the 1991 Local Government Code.

In his comments, Puno joked that he had no intelligent

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OFFICE OF ANSWER TO DAVIDE'S STATEMENT THAT GOING FEDERAL WAS A LEAP TO HELL BECAUSE HE HAD NEVER BEEN TO HELL. S - Email add: oacpa.army2012@gmail.com - Tel no. (02) 845-9555 Local: 5285, 5295

that going federal was a leap to hell because he had never been to hell.

Philosophy of federalism

Puno said shifting to federalism would require the "overhauling" of the Constitution or a revision and "not a surgical amendment" because, among other things, there was a need to define the philosophy of the federal government to be adopted.

Former Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., who authored the Local Government Code, disagreed with Davide that going federal was a lethal experiment, saying that on the contrary, it was a "vital" one as this was in the interest of good government and in providing a good life for the Filipinos.

Pimentel said that if the Philippines would go federal, the Constitution should be revised.

"If we have to revise the Constitution to give meaning to the devolution intended by the Local Government Code, we might as well move forward to the scope and power by adopting the federal system," he said.

'Failing democracy'

Answering Sen. Loren Legarda's question whether the 1987 Constitution had served the needs of Filipinos, Puno described the Philippines as a failing democracy under a unitary form of government.

"Why are we classified year in and year out as a failing democracy? One of the principal reasons for that is our unitary form of government," Puno said.

He said the decentralization of some of the powers of the national government to local governments to deal with the needs of the people had not worked and this was the reason Pimentel was batting for federalism.

"In noncentralization of powers, you give real political, economic and social powers to the states and you give these powers from the Constitution itself. So it will not be a grant of powers from the national government but a grant of real powers from the Constitution itself, which means these states will have self-rule and self-determination," Puno said.

Constitutional convention

Davide, Puno and Pimentel were in agreement that the best mode to amend or revise the

Constitution was through a constitutional convention (Con-con), the delegates to which would be elected by the people.

Davide made it clear that there was "absolutely no need to amend or revise" the Constitution, as there was "nothing [there that needed] amendment or revision at this time."

Puno also made it clear that Congress should not be given the task to rewrite the Constitution as its "primary business" was to make laws.

But he agreed that there was a need to amend the Constitution, as times had changed since it was adopted 31 years ago.

Puno also called "cheap" the argument that a constituent assembly (Con-ass) should be the

mode since it was cheaper than a Con-con.

“You should not count the cost when writing a Constitution. A good Constitution is the best investment a people can make,” he said.

‘Hybrid’ Con-con

Puno said he preferred a “hybrid” constitutional convention, as it would be composed of elected and appointed delegates and would be non-partisan.

He agreed with Davide that if Congress eventually decided on a Con-ass, the Senate and the House should vote separately on proposed amendments to the Constitution.

“We will destroy institutional equality (of the Senate and the House) if we interpret

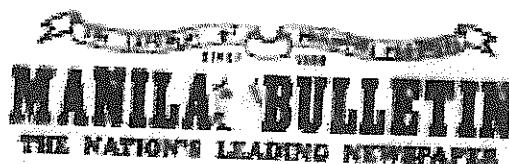
Article 17 (of the Constitution) to mean that the Senate and the House shall vote together and not separately,” Puno said.

Article 17 provides that “any amendment to, or revision of, this Constitution may be proposed by the Congress, upon a vote of three-fourths of all its members, or a constitutional convention.”

Puno cited several provisions in the Constitution showing the Senate voting separately as an institution like in declaring a state of war.

Davide said he agreed with the opinion of constitutionalist Joaquin Bernas that “what is essential is that both houses vote separately” as “the power to propose amendments is given not to a unicameral body but to a bicameral body.” INQ

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Soldiers take to the streets to gather intel on radicals

By ALI G. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY – Soldiers from the Sixth Infantry Division (6th ID) have taken to the streets, holding dialogues with the public at-large, particularly public utility drivers, to gather intelligence data on the reported attempt of radicals to enter the Cotabato region.

The civic-military operations (CMO) battalion of the 6th ID launched the street dialogs on Tuesday among habal-habal (passenger motorbike) drivers serving the thickly populated Pedro Colina Hill, former location of the headquarters of the combined police-military Central Mindanao Command (CEMCOM) forces.

In these informal dialogues, some of the drivers revealed experiencing

harassment from unidentified gunmen “roaming around the city.”

Some of these suspicious armed men even posed as habal-habal drivers, said Lt. Col. Gerry Besana of the 6th ID, citing information from the dialog.

The CMO team provided the drivers a mobile hotline number through which they could report similar instances or any signs of threat, according to Besana.

He said authorities would likewise provide the habal-habal drivers identification stickers and proper uniforms to isolate poseur-drivers.

“These (drivers’ tips) were small and yet real threats that can (escalate) into bigger security concerns,” Besana said.

He said the government and all

peace-loving citizens should not be complacent in the current drive against terror and other organized crimes.

“Vigilance is the most crucial task of each member of the society. A lot of petty crimes are happening around and yet they are not reported to authorities,” Besana said.

He recalled that the bloody Marawi City siege took place because state authorities thereat were caught off-guard by Daesh-inspired radicals due to complacency or imprudence.

He said Tuesday’s street dialogues will be replicated in other parts of this city and nearby areas in Central Mindanao, a geo-political region currently under close watch against entry by remnants of the Marawi siege perpetrators and other elements espousing Daesh radicalism.

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Pahina. B

4 NPA todas sa engkwentro

TODAS ang apat na miyembro ng teroristang New People's Army (NPA) sa nangyaring sagupaan sa pagitan ng militar sa Davao Oriental nitong Martes ng hapon.

Napag-alaman kay Lt. Ramon Zagala, commanding officer ng 28th Infantry Battalion, nakaharap ng tropa ang hindi matiyak na bilang ng NPA habang nagpapatrulya sa bulubunduking bahagi ng Sitio Palopalo, Barangay Marayag sa bayan ng Lupon.

Agad umanong nagkaroon ng palitan ng putok sa lugar na tumagal ng halos sampung minuto at nang humupa ang bakbakan ay tumambad sa encounter site ang apat na NPA kasabay rin ng pagrekober sa kaniang ginamit na armas kabilang ang isang M16 armalite rifle, apat na pistola at isang improvised explosive device.

"These NPA terrorists are responsible for the spate of attacks on civilians and extortion activities. Their neutralization is a demonstration of the AFP's resolve in stopping their atrocities and protect the people," ani Zagala. **JEFF GALLOS**

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NPA leader, wife surrender

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – A top New People's Army (NPA) leader and his wife

surrendered to military forces Tuesday in South Cotabato.

Colonel Roberto Ancan, 1002nd Infantry Brigade commander, said the surrender of Noel Legazpi, deputy secretary-general of

the NPA in South Mindanao, and his wife, Wendy Bendalian, is a big blow to the communist underground movement in the region.

He said Legazpi and Bendalian, who also served as NPA medical staff, surrendered to the 27th Infantry Battalion following negotiations facilitated by South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Fuentes.

Legazpi, who served the underground movement for 26 years, supposedly opted to return to mainstream society after realizing the revolutionary struggle has lost the support of the people resulting from improved governance under the Duterte administration.

"I and my wife came to realize that the revolutionary struggle waged by the CPP-NPA is now doomed to fail," Legazpi said, noting how, "The government has effectively delivered the social services needed by marginalized people in far-flung areas."

Following the surrender of Legazpi and wife, Ancan said they are expecting more NPA rebels to yield.

He assured the two surrenderers will receive livelihood assistance under the local government's Comprehensive Local Integration Program or CLIP.

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LILIKAS LANG TAYO, BABY! Tinutulungan ng mga tauhan ng Philippine Army ang mga residente ng Egy. Padang sa Legazpi City, Albay sa paglikas habang patuloy na nakaamba ang panganib sa nagbabantang pagsabog ng Bulkan Mayon. **ALI VIGOR**

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Joma gives up on talking peace with Rody

by JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison is giving up on the possibility of talking peace with President Duterte.

Sison said Duterte should undergo psychiatric examination while his "parrot," presidential spokesman Harry Roque, should have his head and mouth examined.

"At this juncture, I must

say that it is too difficult or impossible to have any kind of serious conversation or negotiations anywhere with someone already crazed by power, Fentanyl and the drive for fascist dictatorship," Sison said in a statement posted at the website of the National Democratic Front (NDF) yesterday.

Sison said Duterte is making scapegoats out of the CPP and New People's Army (NPA) to justify martial law and military

campaigns in the countryside.

"Duterte is either ignorant or merely contemptuous of the peace process. His complaints or allegations against the CPP and NPA can be easily submitted by his negotiating panel to the Joint Monitoring Committee created under the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law," Sison said.

He said Duterte has a problem on his "mentality and behavior."

Sison said Roque should have his head and mouth examined "for presuming that out of his own bloated sense of self-importance dependent on a nutty sh**hole he can evaluate and downgrade others who are very much beyond his sphere of psychopancy. He should realize by this time that human rights associations and activists are contemptuous of him as the servant of a monstrous human rights violator," Sison said.

Sison said he is glad that Duterte, through Roque, has made himself clear that he never had the intention of meeting him.

"When I first read the report on Duterte's interview

with *MindaNews* I had some misgivings that he did not mean what he said because of his notoriety for saying one thing and then saying the opposite within a short period and also because of his arrogance and anger in setting some absurd preconditions," he said.

Sison said his friends and lawyers reminded him of Duterte's "treacherous character."

"(There are) his previous threats to kill me and warned me against my meeting him in any place under his full control and under conditions of his proclaimed all-out war policy, martial law, termination of the peace negotiations and designation of the CPP-NPA and their suspected supporters as terrorists," he said.

Tiamzons ordered re-arrested

Sison said he earlier suggested a neutral venue abroad for the one-on-one conversation with Duterte.

"I cannot submit myself to the disposition of anyone that boasts of himself as a murderer with impunity at the age of 16 and as an instigator of mass murders

that have already offended the Filipino people and other peoples of the world," he said.

Sison earlier welcomed the gesture of Duterte for a one-on-one talk regarding the possibility of resuming peace negotiations.

He proposed that the meeting be held in a neighboring country.

Sison made the statement after Roque had said Duterte is open to having a private conversation with him.

Roque, however, added the President is not committing to the possibility of reopening the peace talks with the CPP-NPA.

Duterte ordered the cancellation of peace talks with the communist rebels, citing the treacherous attacks on government forces while holding negotiations with the NDF.

The NDF is the umbrella organization representing the CPP-NPA in the peace talks with the government.

Duterte ordered the military to arrest all communist rebels who were granted provisional freedom to participate in the botched peace talks as consultants.

The government, through

a Supreme Court resolution, allowed the release of the rebel leaders to participate as consultants of the NDF in the peace talks in Norway.

One of the conditions was that once their participation ceases or the peace negotiations are terminated, the bail bonds shall be "deemed automatically canceled."

This developed as the Manila regional trial court (RTC) yesterday ordered the re-arrest of couple Benito and Wilma Tiamzon, the suspected top leaders of the NPA.

Manila RTC branch 32 Judge Thelma Bunyi-Medina granted the motion for reconsideration filed by the Department of Justice to cancel the P100,000 bail of the Tiamzons and another rebel leader, Adelberto Silva.

The court said the Tiamzons were allowed to post bail only so they could participate in the peace process.

The Tiamzons were among those charged with murder in connection with the discovery of a mass grave in Leyte where victims of a communist rebel purge were buried in the 1980s. – **With Marc Jayson Cayabyab, Christina Mendez**

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Lorenzana pessimistic on peace talks resumption with Reds

By Mario J. Mallari

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana is pessimistic on the prospect of resuming peace talks between the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) – citing the group's penchant of taking advantage of the negotiations to pursue their own selfish interest.

This, after CPP founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison lashed out at President Duterte for “double-talking” on the prospect of one-on-one talks between them as reported earlier.

Sison, in a statement, said that he is glad that Duterte, through Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque, made it clear that he (Duterte) never had any intention of meeting him in person for a one-

on-one discussion.

“Of course, when I first read the report on Duterte’s interview with *Mindanews* I had some misgivings that he did not mean what he said because of his notoriety for saying one thing and then saying the opposite within a short period and also because of his arrogance and anger in setting some absurd preconditions, like the CPP and NPA humbling themselves and capitulating to his tyrannical rule,” said Sison.

“Nevertheless, in the interest of the Filipino people and in my sincere wish to find a way for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, I preferred to give importance to Duterte’s public offer of a private conversation and I agreed to meet him in a country near the Philippines,” he added.

Lorenzana scored Sison’s

statement even as he expressed pessimism on the possible positive result of the meeting, if it pushes through, citing the CPP-NPA’s ill motives in talking peace.

“Of course, he welcomes it because that is the only way he can show to his poor NPA terrorists that he is still relevant,” said Lorenzana.

“But I don’t think the peace process will be resumed even after the President and he talks. Because let us always bear in mind that the communist go to peace talks not to pursue peace but to gain strategic and tactical advantage,” the defense chief added.

Lorenzana maintained that peace to the CPP-NPA is when they have totally won their so-called revolutionary war to institute a communist government.

The defense chief cited the gains

of the communist group during the resumption of peace talks in the early part of the Duterte administration.

“For instance in the recent peace talks they were successful in freeing 21 of their top leaders from detention and their NPA cadres recovered many barangays in the countryside. We got nothing,” said Lorenzana.

“And yet when the President canceled the talks, we were branded as anti-peace,” he added.

The President canceled the peace negotiations with the CPP-NPA after communist rebels continued with their atrocities against government troops even while there were ongoing talks. The last straw was the ambush against the Presidential Security Group (PSG) in Arakan, North Cotabato last July.

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Duterte warns of fresh terrorist threat

By **CHRISTINA MENDEZ**

The country faces a terrorist threat, and it's "coming in very fast," with the warning issued by President Duterte himself.

Duterte gave the warning shortly

after he inaugurated the satellite-based new air traffic management system in Pasay City last Tuesday.

The President said he would call an emergency meeting with security officials soon to discuss the threat.

"I'm reminded of the serious threat

now, but I hope that you have to raise awareness not only of the senses – and just maybe it's good to anticipate that there's going to be one (terror act)," he said, adding that the attacks would target public places where crowds gather. "They'd like to blow up where our

people converge such as airports, *pan-talan* (pier), park ... because of what happened in Mindanao provinces today. As I have said, the threat remains," he said.

Following intelligence reports,
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Duterte directed anew the military and police to be vigilant and show no mercy against groups out to destabilize the country.

"My guidance to the security forces, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, is that in this matter of security against terrorism, it will be no quarters asked, no quarters given," he said.

Amid fears that he might expand the declaration of martial law all over the country, Duterte bragged about how martial law in Mindanao has helped the peace and order situation in the region.

Meanwhile, the military is trying to validate intelligence information that a Malaysian militant leader survived the defeat of an Islamic State-linked siege and is helping restart efforts to establish an extremist alliance, a military official said yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana said troops were trying to validate reports that Amin Baco was wounded during the siege of southern Marawi City but managed to escape to Sulu, where he is hiding with Abu Sayyaf militants.

Rebel leader Yusop Jikiri of the Moro National Liberation Front, which has a peace treaty with the government, told *The Associated Press* that his group received information that Baco is being protected by Abu Sayyaf commander Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, the Malaysian militant's Filipino father-in-law, in the mountains off Sulu's Patikul town.

Sawadjaan is a notorious kidnapper linked to several abductions of foreign tourists.

"We also got that information and we're validating it," Sobejana said. "Our efforts against this group have been relentless."
– With AP

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Manila
Standard

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Terrorists flock to PH—AFP

THE military said Wednesday it had monitored 48 foreign terrorists allegedly involved in training local recruits in Mindanao, which is under martial law.

Major General Fernando Trinidad, Armed Forces deputy chief of staff for intelligence, justified the year-long extension of martial law in the south by saying the situation there had become complicated with the “influx of foreign terrorist fighters capitalizing on the porous maritime boundaries in the southern Philippines in the guise of tourists and businessmen.”

He said the military had monitored the

entry of terrorists from Indonesia, Malaysia and Egypt.

While the Marawi siege had ended, Trinidad said, the rebels were still able to regroup by recruiting some 400 men who had received training on marksmanship, urban warfare and use of improvised explosive devices from foreign terrorists.

“Regional leadership may remain in the southern Philippines for the establishment of a wilayat [ISIS caliphate] in Southeast Asia since DAESH still views the Philippines as a prospective area of operation in the region. Thus, senior leaders from Syria, Malaysia and Indonesia may return to assume the leadership of Daulah Islamiyah,” Trinidad said.

“Daulah Islamiyah members will at-

tempt to replicate the siege of Marawi in other areas in Mindanao to achieve their goal of establishing a wilayat. They could also look for opportunities to conduct bombings particularly in the urban areas not only in Mindanao but even in Metro Manila to project their relevance and to avenge the death of their colleagues.”

Trinidad said the remnants of terrorist groups still had the capability to recruit members and sow terror again.

“Further, other DAESH-inspired and like-minded rebel groups remain capable of staging similar atrocities against vulnerable targets in Mindanao including the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, Davao, General Santos, Iligan and Zamboanga,” Trinidad said.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman opposed the military’s presentation, saying it should have been done before the joint session of Congress before the extension was approved.

The other petitioners did not object while Solicitor General Jose Calida said Lagman was absent when the presentation was made in Congress.

Lagman denied Calida’s claim.

“I was present the whole time during the joint session of the Congress and there was no power-point presentation made by the military,” he said.

Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno then allowed Trinidad to deliver his presentation and ordered Calida to file a manifestation indicating when the military made the presentation in Congress.

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Gov't defends ML extension before SC

By EDU PUNAY

The government yesterday justified the one-year extension of martial law in Mindanao before the Supreme Court (SC), with the military saying terrorist activities in the region still exist.

In the continuation of oral arguments on petitions questioning the martial law extension, the executive branch presented what it said were factual bases for the continued imposition of martial law in Mindanao.

Maj. Gen. Fernando Trinidad, deputy chief of staff for intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), told the justices that terrorist activities in southern Philippines did not end when the government won the war against the Islamic State (IS)-linked Maute group in Marawi City in October last year.

"The scourge being brought by the communist rebels, the Abu Sayyaf group and the presence of remnants, protectors, supporters and sympathizers of the Daesh (Islamic State) pose a clear and present danger to national security and hinder the facilitation of rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction efforts in Marawi City and the attainment of peace, stability, economic development and prosperity in Mindanao," Trinidad told the high court.

"Considering the magnitude of scope as well as the presence of rebel groups in

Mindanao, public safety remains in danger and the security of Mindanao is at stake. As it is, the AFP is appealing for the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus for one year," he said.

Trinidad bared foreign terrorists have arrived in Mindanao and are now actively participating in training recruits.

He said 15 terrorists from Indonesia and Malaysia entered Mindanao last November to join the IS-inspired group in Sarangani, while 16 other Indonesian terrorists entered Mindanao to provide assistance and training to the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan and Lanao del Sur.

Earlier this month, an Egyptian profiled as a terrorist was also monitored to have entered southern Philippines, Trinidad said, adding there are about 48 foreign terrorists in Mindanao.

While the protracted battle against the Maute group had reduced the numbers of terrorist groups in Mindanao, Trinidad said the remnants intensified recruitment and their forces again ballooned to almost 400.

He said the new recruits are undergoing training on marksmanship, urban attacks and production and use of improvised explosive devices.

This figure, Trinidad stressed, is "almost the same strength" as the groups that attacked Marawi City in May last year.

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Ex Navy flag officer breaks silence, waits for probe

By Mario J. Mallari

Erstwhile Navy Flag Officer in Command Vice Admiral Ronald Joseph Mercado yesterday broke his silence about his “unceremonious” relief, admitting he was hurt but stressed that as a soldier he only follows orders.

Mercado was ordered relieved by President Duterte, upon the recommendation of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, last Dec. 22 for allegedly delaying the P15 billion frigate acquisition project of the Philippine Navy.

He is subsequently placed on a floating status and reporting to the office of Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

According to Mercado, he is preparing for any possible investigation of his “unceremonious” relief.

“I am still a full-blooded Navy officer because I am floating...I report to the office (of the chief of staff)...I am fine right now, I am preparing what I need to...if there are any investigation,” said Mercado.

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano, a former Marine captain, is calling for a congressional inquiry into Mercado’s relief.

Asked of his relief, Mercado

replied “I am a military officer, I obey orders. I know the secretary of national defense, he has some justification for doing it so I respect it.”

“Of course, I was hurt because I was the flag officer in command then I was relieved but that’s it. As I’ve said I’ve been a soldier in my life,” he added.

A member of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) “Matikas” Class of 1988, Mercado was scheduled to reach the mandatory retirement age of 56 this coming March.

But he admitted that retiring earlier that his mandatory retirement remains an option.

“Those are options available to me but I am not yet have been thinking about it because I am more concerned with preparing for possible investigation, if there is one,” said Mercado.

Military insiders claimed that Mercado only fought for what is beneficial to the Philippine Navy in the installation of a more sophisticated combat management system (CMS) for the two frigates contracted with Hyundai heavy Industries of South Korea.

Lorenzana even met with former Navy chiefs to explain the relief of Mercado, whom he (Lorenzana) accused of insubordination.

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Sacked Navy chief clears Bong Go

By JAIME LAUDE

Sacked Philippine Navy chief Vice Admiral Ronald Joseph Mercado broke his silence yesterday since his

ouster, but only to clear Christopher "Bong" Go, special assistant to President Duterte and chief of the Presidential Management Staff, of any accountability in a multibillion-

peso defense frigate acquisition project of the Navy.

Mercado, in a telephone interview with defense reporters, said since he heard reports

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Sacked From Page 4

Lorenzana ordered the sacking of Mercado for reportedly delaying the frigate acquisition, an action that reportedly caused widespread demoralization in the Navy.

Mercado's unexpected coming out yesterday defending Go, however, was seen as highly suspect, as past efforts to reach him proved futile.

For his part, Go offered to resign from his post once there is evidence to prove allegations that he intervened in the P15.7-billion procurement of the Navy's weapons system for its warships.

Go also cried foul over reports that he endorsed a South Korean company to be the supplier of the CMS of the Navy's frigate program.

"My name has been unfairly

dragged in this issue. I am not privy to the frigate transaction of the DND," he said.

"I have never seen the controversial document... that is alleged to have come from me, much less handed the same to SND Lorenzana," he said.

Defense spokesman Arsenio Andolong said the document was later traced to have originated from Hanwha, not from Go.

A day after the President challenged news media outfits to show proof of Go's alleged intervention, Go said he will not stay a minute longer in the Duterte administration and resign once proven that he exerted pressure on any government agency or official to favor one supplier at the Navy

- With Christina Mendez

18 January 2018



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Let's find them

It began 38 years ago—a great idea then and now: George Ty's foundation that searches for and recognizes outstanding Filipinos. The search is concentrated on teachers, police men and women, and soldiers—three groups that get far too little recognition of the great work they do.

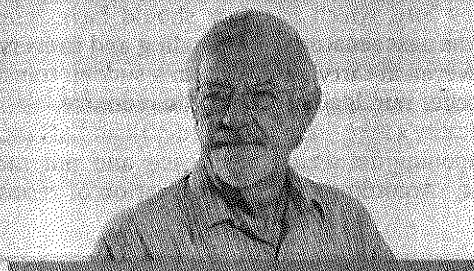
I've long been bothered about how poorly treated and paid they are. I've read stories of teachers buying needed school supplies themselves from a salary that is an insult. Their dedication to our kids is admirable.

As for soldiers, I've known many over the years, and worked with them on some civic works. Together with the Management Association of the Philippines, I organized a foundation, "A Life for Others," to help look after the families of soldiers who die rescuing civilians during typhoons, etc. And look at the many who've lost their lives fighting terrorists to keep us safe.

Cops have gone through all kinds of criticism, as a result of such cases as the "mistaken identity" shooting in Mandaluyong City. Those are what capture the headlines; the good deeds they do don't even land on page 16. And they do good deeds far more often than bad ones.

Metrobank Foundation Inc. (MBFI) needs you to nominate worthy teachers, soldiers, or police personnel. From the nominations, four teachers, three soldiers, and three police personnel will be chosen for recognition at the annual MBFI gala event. Apart from trophies and medals, they will each receive P1 million. That's a long way toward a house for the family.

MBFI president Chito Sobrepeña explains the search: "Responsible citizen, exemplary public servant, agent of positive change—all these define the Outstanding Filipino. Once again, we are looking for



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these ordinary individuals with extraordinary accomplishments. By giving them due recognition, we hope to inspire the Filipino nation further in our collective task of building a strong and progressive society."

The nominees should have a minimum of 10 years of service with at least a "very satisfactory" rating in their profession. Those who are set to retire must have at least three remaining years of service. Elementary and secondary teachers must have completed academic requirements for a master's degree; higher education teachers must have a doctorate. Military commissioned officers (from captain to colonel) must hold a bachelor's degree; enlisted personnel (from corporal to chief master sergeant) must have completed high school. Police commissioned officers (from inspector to senior superintendent) and noncommissioned officers (from police officer 2 to senior police officer 4) must hold a bachelor's degree.

To give you an idea of what the MBFI is looking for, and to give last year's winners further recognition, here is the list:

The teachers were: Jennifer Rojo, who makes science learning enjoyable through

her beyond-the-textbooks-initiatives and methodologies; Edgar T. Elago, who constantly looks for ways to extend his art and culture advocacy into the larger community; Dr. Esperanza C. Cabrera, who expanded the boundaries of scientific knowledge in the country, enriched competencies of budding and professional microbiologists, and uplifted overall human conditions in places needing crucial aid; and Dr. Alonzo A. Gabriel, who led the establishment of the country's first and only laboratory of food microbiology and hygiene, and makes sure that concerns for food safety and security are cascaded to the grassroots level.

The soldiers were: SSG Narding N. Pascual, who defends communities from militant forces and uplifts the living conditions of his fellow tribespeople; Lt. Col. Elmer B. Suderio, who employs out-of-the-box methods to deal with insurgents, eventually transforming war-torn communities into peaceful ones; and Lt. Col. Ricky P. Bunayog, who executes combat missions but also recognizes the need to pursue socioeconomic activities to win the peace.

Then there were the cops: PO3 Shiela May S. Pansoy, who dedicated her life to champion women and children's rights and protection; Chief Insp. Rosalino P. Ibay Jr., who led numerous operations against notorious crime syndicates and is also an active community leader doing humanitarian projects; and SSupt. Joel B. Doria, who is known for his anticrime crusade "Project Pokemon," which captured lawless individuals and drug offenders in Cebu City.

An impressive list of wonderful people.

E-mail: wallace_ikeitis@wbf.ph. Read my previous columns: www.wallacebusinessforum.com.

ONLINE NEWS

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SolGen: ML extension in Mindanao has valid basis

By Christopher Lloyd Caliwan

MANILA -- Solicitor General Jose Calida on Wednesday said that the one-year extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao has factual basis, adding that there is nothing to fear as it does not suspend the operation of the Constitution.

Calida also told Supreme Court (SC) magistrates during the continuation of the oral arguments on the petitions against the extension of martial law in Mindanao that President Rodrigo Duterte has not violated any of the safeguards in the Constitution in his bid to quell terrorism in the Muslim region.

"All the petitioners are haunted by the ghost of martial law past. There is no reason for them to feel that way," Calida told the Court.

Calida said the petitioners failed to present facts to overturn the presumption of constitutionality of Resolution of Both Houses No. 4.

He likewise said that the petitioners failed to prove that Congress acted in grave abuse of discretion when it granted the request of President Duterte to extend martial law in Mindanao as well as demonstrated that there was a clear breach of the Constitution in such a move.

Rebellion persists

"Even as the leadership of the Mautes was decimated in Marawi, the rebellion in Mindanao persists as the surviving members of the militant group have not laid down their arms. The violence committed by the other groups such as the BIFF, AKP, ASG, DI Maguid, DI Torayfie is part of the equation," Calida told the high court.

He said these armed groups should not be taken lightly as they are also capable of conducting well-coordinated mass casualty attacks to overthrow the present government and establish an Islamic state or wilayah in Mindanao.

Calida said the New People's Army had also been launching offensive operations and that it had forged a common front with these armed groups to remove the allegiance of Mindanao to the duly-constituted government.

"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 local terrorist groups and the NPAs pose cannot be discounted. The

extension of martial law will necessarily address the rebellion being waged by these groups, which launched attacks from areas they control inside Mindanao," he explained.

Calida further argued that none of the petitioners had been able to show proof to dispute the security assessment made by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police showing that rebellion still existed in Mindanao.

He said that this year, rebel groups conducted 43 attacks using improvised explosive devices and kidnappings which resulted in the killing of eight civilians, three of whom were mercilessly beheaded.

"Even as the petitioners have joined cause to dispute the actions of President (Rodrigo) Duterte and Congress, their reasons for disputing the sufficiency of factual basis of the extension appear to be a function of their demographic," Calida said.

"The petitioners bear the burden of proof that the rebellion has been quelled," he added.

Also present during the oral argument on Wednesday was Maj. Gen. Fernando Trinidad, deputy chief of staff for intelligence of the Armed Forces presented data to back the government's position that martial law was still necessary in Mindanao.

Trinidad told the justices that terroristic activities in southern Philippines did not end when the government won the war on the Islamic State-linked Maute Group in Marawi City in October last year.

"The scourge being brought by the communist rebels, the Abu Sayyaf group, and the presence of remnants, protectors, supporters and sympathizers of the DAESH pose a clear and present danger to the national security and hinder the facilitation of rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction efforts in Marawi City and the attainment of peace, stability, economic development and prosperity in Mindanao," he told the High Court.

"Considering the magnitude of scope as well as the presence of rebel groups in Mindanao, public safety remains in danger and the security of Mindanao is at stake. As it is, the AFP is appealing for the extension of martial law and the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus for one year," the AFP official explained.

48 foreign terrorists in Mindanao

Trinidad bared that foreign terrorists have in fact arrived in Mindanao and are now actively participating in training recruits.

The AFP official said 15 terrorists from Indonesia and Malaysia entered Mindanao last November to join the Daesh-inspired group in Saranggani while 16 other Indonesian terrorists entered Mindanao to provide assistance and training to Abu Sayyaf Group in Basilan and Lanao del Sur.

Just earlier this month, he said an Egyptian national profiled as a terrorist was also monitored to have entered southern Philippines.

Trinidad said there were presently about 48 foreign terrorists in Mindanao.

Trinidad said that while the numbers of terrorists had been whittled down, recruitment had boosted their numbers to almost 400, "almost the same number that initially attacked Marawi.

The AFP official said the new recruits are undergoing training on marksmanship, urban attacks and production and use of improvised explosive devices.

This figure, he stressed, is "almost the same strength" as the groups that attacked Marawi City in May last year.

Trinidad said Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers may have died in battle, but there were new leaders who emerged from the ranks of the terrorist groups - including the founder of Khalifa Islamiya, a Filipino terrorist based in Indonesia and another Filipino terrorist who came from Syria.

"The magnitude as well as the presence of rebel groups endangers the public safety," he told the justices.

Calida said the information from the AFP only proved that the extension of martial law in Mindanao had sufficient factual basis as required in the Constitution.

The top government counsel urged the SC to uphold the martial law extension, saying petitioners have failed to present facts to overturn its presumption of constitutionality.

The Court is hearing the oral arguments on the four consolidated petitions against the martial law extension, filed by the congressmen led by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman et al; another group led by Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate and Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao, et al; former Commission on Human Rights chair Etta Rosales; and a group led by Christian Monsod, one of the framers of the Constitution.

The oral arguments ended on Wednesday afternoon with all parties ordered to submit their respective memorandum on Jan. 24, Wednesday at 4 p.m. before the case would be submitted for resolution in a 30-day deadline. (PNA)

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Military claims there are 48 foreign terrorists in Mindanao

The government has monitored 48 foreign terrorists operating and recruiting in Mindanao, the military told the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. Fernando Trinidad, Armed Forces of the Philippines deputy chief of staff for Intelligence, said that there has been an "influx" of foreign terrorists, "in the guise of tourists and businessmen," in the southern Philippines.

At the resumption of oral arguments on the extension of martial law, Trinidad made a presentation to justify the AFP's request for a year-long extension of martial law in Mindanao.

Four petitions have been lodged before the SC claiming President Rodrigo Duterte's request for a year-long lacks factual basis.

The petitioners raised that, following military statements that they are fighting only "remnants" of the terrorist groups, military rule is not needed in Mindanao for another year.

He said that, last November, 15 terrorists from Indonesia and Malaysia entered Mindanao to augment the Maute terrorist group in Sarangani. In December 2017, another 16 Indonesians entered the country to train the members of the Abu Sayyaf groups in Basilan, and Maute Group in Lanao del Sur.

In January 2018, Trinidad said that it was reported that an Egyptian national also entered the country.

The new recruits, said Trinidad, are being trained in tactics and marksmanship, while those who displayed advanced skills are undergoing training in making IEDs and in urban operations.

He added that there are about 400 terrorists in Mindanao. Around the same numbers that mounted the Marawi siege in May 2017 although the government had initially estimated the number of terrorists in Marawi at 50-100 during the early days of the siege.

"Abu Sayyaf groups, in the presence of remnants, supporters, protectors and sympathizers of DAESH (another term for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS), pose a clear and present danger to national facilitation of rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction in Marawi, and hinder peace in Mindanao," Trinidad said.

He appealed to the SC to uphold the granting of the year-long extension in Mindanao so that the AFP "can hasten accomplishment" of the agency's mandate to secure Mindanao

The SC continues its oral arguments on four consolidated petitions challenging the constitutionality of Duterte's martial law extension in Mindanao on Wednesday.

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4 NPAs killed

FOUR members of the New People's Army (NPA) were reportedly killed yesterday in an encounter with the soldiers of the 28th Infantry Battalion in Sitio Palo 2, Barangay Maravag, Lupon, Davao Oriental.

Capt. Andrew Linao, the civil-military operations (CMO) officer of 701st Infantry Brigade, told TIMES that around 1:30 p.m., government troopers conducting combat operation in the area encountered at least 20 members of the Pulang Bagani Command (PBC) 6 of the NPA's Southern Mindanao Regional Committee (SRMC).

Linao said the firefight lasted for about 10 minutes.

Four bodies were recovered by the government soldiers. No casualty was reported on the government side.

Troopers also recovered one M16 rifle, four short firearms and one improvised explosive device (IED), subversive documents, nine rice containers, four backpacks and other NPA personal belongings.

Meanwhile, a soldier was wounded in the encounter in Sitio Banban, Barangay Lumiad, Paquibato District on Monday morning.

Wounded was PFC Ryan Millet, a member of the 16th Infantry Battalion. He was hit in his left thigh.

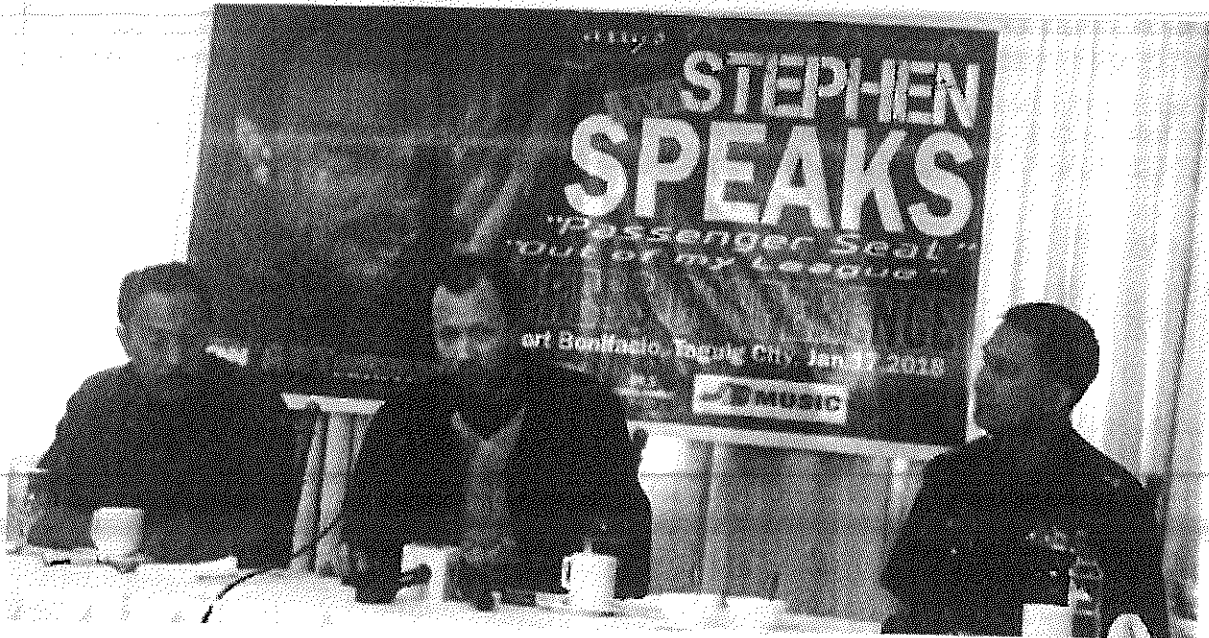
Lt. Ian Calopez, head of combat patrol cleaning operation, said they encountered undetermined communist terrorists, under Ka Jinggoy of PBC 1 at 11:40 a.m.

The encounter lasted for 40 minutes.

Hot pursuit operation is still conducted by government troopers.

Stephen Speaks to hold benefit gigs for wounded Marawi troops

By: Frances Mangosing-Reporter



Rockwell Ryan Ripperger of Stephen Speaks (center) holds a press conference on Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2018, at the headquarters of the Philippine Army in Taguig. With him is Lt. Col. Ray Tiongson, Army spokesperson. (Photo by FRANCES MANGOSING / INQUIRER.net)

American singer-songwriter Rockwell Ryan Ripperger of Stephen Speaks is in the Philippines to lend his talent to do a benefit shows to help wounded soldiers from the five-month battle in Marawi.

Ripperger said he wanted to do something for a country that helped his music career. A portion of the proceeds from his shows will go to the wounded soldiers.

"It's all over the news," he said in a press conference held Wednesday at the Philippine Army headquarters in Taguig. "When I was a kid, the Philippines helped me launch my music career and was so supportive of me, and we wanted to do something, a benefit. It's the least I could do to help out – give a little back to a country that has given me so much. I'm honored to be a part of it, to help out."

'Alive to Fight'

If there's any song that he would dedicate to the wounded troops, Ripperger said it would be one from his upcoming album, titled "Alive to Fight."

"It's about struggle and getting through," he said. "The album's not out yet. I also wanna make a video with footage of Marawi efforts."

Lt. Col. Ray Tiongson, Army spokesperson, said there were still 96 wounded soldiers confined at the Army General Hospital in Taguig City and the V. Luna Medical Center in Quezon City.

"Definitely, it will boost their morale and it will relaly help them recover fast so they could go back to their unit and serve our country," Tiongson said.

Ripperger also congratulated the Filipino soldiers for liberating Marawi City after five months of gunbattle.

"Thank you guys for fighting. Thank you for sacrifices," he said. "When 'Alive to Fight' comes out I hope that inspires you. I hope it resonates with what you're doing tp keep the country free. I've seen the footage and the news. It's been a struggle. You emerged victorious... I hope my music can bring you some comfort, courage and some joy."

Catch Stephen Speaks' shows at the following dates:

- Jan. 18: SM City Iloilo 4 p.m.
- Jan. 19: University of San Agustin Gymnasium in Iloilo
- Jan. 21: Meet with the local musicians 5 p.m. (Iloilo)
- Jan. 22: St. Paul University in Iloilo
- Feb. 10: Playback Music Festival (Manila)
- Feb. 14: Boracay
- Feb. 17: Fort Bonifacio