

Army Vision: By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride



TEAM ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

19 January 2018

Friday

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 19, 2018 | FRIDAY

EASTERLIES AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION OF THE COUNTRY at of 5:00 pm - January 18, 2018

CELEBES SEA

SUNRISE 6:25 AM	SUNSET 6:48 PM
MOONRISE 7:48 AM	MOONSET 7:38 PM
NEW MOON JAN 17 10:17 AM	FIRST QUARTER JAN 25 6:20 AM
LOW TIDE MANILA SOUTH HARBOR 7:07 AM -0.20 Meter	HIGH TIDE MANILA SOUTH HARBOR 11:22 PM 1.04 Meter

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

	JAN 20	JAN 21	JAN 20	JAN 21	JAN 20	JAN 21		
METRO MANILA	24-32°C	25-32°C	TAGAYTAY	19-28°C	19-28°C	TACLOBAN	23-29°C	23-29°C
TUGUEGARAO	24-30°C	25-31°C	LEGAZPI	25-33°C	24-32°C	CAGAYAN DE DRO	22-30°C	22-29°C
LADAG	24-32°C	25-33°C	PUERTO PRINCESA	24-30°C	24-30°C	METRO DAVAO	24-30°C	24-29°C
BAGUIO	17-23°C	17-23°C	ILOILO/BACOLOD	24-30°C	24-30°C	ZAMBOANGA	24-31°C	23-31°C
SBMA/CLARK	25-31°C	25-32°C	METRO CEBU	24-29°C	23-29°C			

DZRHNEWS TELEVISION

MONDAY - FRIDAY
11AM & 5PM

PILIPINAS HD

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

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Cha-cha hits snag; SC ruling needed

By Christine O. Avendaño and DJ Yap @Team_Inquirer

With the Senate and the House of Representatives not budging from their conflicting stands on how to vote in a constitutional assembly (Con-ass), Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon and Sen. Panfilo Lacson said on Thursday they believed the proposal to amend the 1987 Constitution for a shift to federalism was dead.

"Yes Cha-cha is dead," Drilon said in a text message, using the shorthand for "Charter change," which means amending the Constitution.

"Nothing will move forward," Lacson said, also by text. "Unless we all yield to the intent and spirit of the 1987 Constitution, Cha-cha will not happen."

But for Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, all is not lost. He said the disagreement between the two chambers of Congress should be taken to the Supreme Court for resolution.

Lacson filed a resolution on Monday calling on the Senate to sit as a Con-ass and introduce amendments to the Constitution, with the proposed changes to be approved by three-fourths vote of the chamber.

On Tuesday, the House adopted a resolution convening Congress into a Con-ass for the amendment of the Constitution, with all its members approving proposed changes by three-fourths vote.

Separate voting

The Senate has always rejected joint voting, as the senators are outnumbered by the representatives.

On Wednesday, the senators decided to ignore the House Con-ass, with Lacson suggesting expulsion for those who would break ranks.

Amendment by separate Con-asses is an original proposal by Drilon based on the reading of the constitutional provision on amendment that Congress is a two-chamber body.

It works like ordinary legislation, with senators and representatives separately proposing amendments and separately voting to approve the proposed changes.

Conflicting amendments are to be reconciled in conference then submitted to the people for approval in a national plebiscite.

The 1987 Constitution does not expressly say whether the Senate and the House should vote jointly or separately in proposing amendments to the Charter.

Former Chief Justices Hilario Davide Jr. and Reynato Puno, speaking as resource persons in a Senate committee hearing on proposals to amend the Constitution, both said the Constitution intended for separate voting, as Congress is a bicameral body.

arate voting, as Congress is a bicameral body.

"We will destroy institutional equality (of the Senate and the House) if we interpret Article 17 (of the 1987 Constitution) to mean that the Senate and the House shall vote together and not separately," Puno told the hearing.

House view

"That's their right, and that's their view," Alvarez said in a radio interview on Thursday, referring to the Senate's interpretation of the amendment provision.

"But we have a different view because the letter of our Constitution is clear. It is stated there that Congress by a vote of three-fourths of all its members may amend or revise the Constitution," Alvarez said.

"So for me, that provision is quite clear and there is no room for interpretation," he added.

Alvarez also suggested that the 292-member House could go it alone, if worse comes to worst. A three-fourths vote in the House, even without the senators, could still satisfy the three-fourths vote of Congress, considering the disparity in numbers.

"Yes, at the end of it, that [House vote] will satisfy the requirement in the Constitution, which says three-fourths of all its members. Let us count all the members, get the three-fourths, and vote... for us, the constitutional requirement is complied with," Alvarez said.

Told about Davide and Puno's statements to the Senate hearing on Wednesday, Alvarez said those were the two former Chief Justices' opinion.

"That's their opinion, but they are not the Supreme Court. Let us wait for what the Supreme Court will say on this issue," Alvarez said.

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the Constitution intended for separate voting, as Congress is a bicameral body.

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Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri called on the Senate and the House on Thursday to hold a legislative summit to talk things through and end the bickering, a proposal that Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III supported.

"Summit or talks, whatever you call it, we need to talk," Pimentel said in a text message.

Rendering Senate irrelevant

In his text message, Lacson said he heard what Alvarez had said in his interviews and that "it only confirms our suspicion that they interpret Article 17,

Section 1 (of the Constitution) to mean rendering the Senate vote irrelevant in a Con-ass contrary to the interpretation of all the senators as well as constitutional experts and legal luminaries, including our resource persons [in Wednesday's] committee hearing."

"It also justifies my suggestion to expel any member of the Senate who will go astray and betray the institution where he belongs," Lacson said.

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto frowned on the House bid to exercise the three-fourths vote on proposed amendments to the Constitution without the Senate.

"The three-fourths voting formula, to be exercised by one chamber alone, is the wrong calculus. The Constitution speaks of a bicameral legislature," Recto said in a statement on Thursday.

"[I]t takes two to Cha-cha. Going solo is shadow dancing," he said.

"If two bodies are needed to pass a bill changing the name of a barangay, then how can one House arrogate upon itself the far more important job of changing the basic law of the land?" he asked.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan, chair of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments and revision of codes and laws, said the House "should think twice about forcing the issue and proceeding with Cha-cha even without the concurrence of the Senate."

"I doubt if our people will simply stand and watch while the Constitution is being desecrated and torn to bits by self-serving politicians," Pangilinan said in a text message.

Hearings to proceed

Pangilinan said he would proceed with the committee hearings on proposals to amend the Constitution "so that these and other issues are ventilated and made known to the public in an open and transparent, participatory and deliberative process."

At a news forum in the Senate, Zubiri urged the House to "tone down the rhetoric," saying the representatives' talk of abolishing the Senate under a new form of government that would be created after the amendment of the Constitution would not help their cause for Charter revision. INQ

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MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Communist leaders hunted

By MARTIN A. SAGONONG

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) leaders Benito and Wilma Tiamzon are now the subject of a manhunt after

a Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) ordered their re-arrest following the collapse of the peace talks.

With the court order directing the recapture of the Tiamzon couple, Chief Superintendent Dionardo Car ▶12

los, Philippine National Police spokesman, said the PNP is ready to comply with the directive.

Manila Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 32 Judge Thelma Bunyi Medina issued the order after she granted the Department of Justice's motion for recommitment and cancellation of the ₱100,000 bail of the Tiamzon couple and their co-accused National Democratic Front (NDF) leader Adelberto Silva. The order, dated January 11, 2018, was released on Wednesday.

"Well, we follow the order of the court, we follow the order of the RTC in Manila for the re-arrest of the (Tiamzon) couple and whoever personalities are included (in the order)," Carlos said.

Earlier, Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the PNP should hunt

down the couple.

Carlos said it would be easy to locate the whereabouts of the Tiamzons and Silva since they have been monitored by the PNP-Intelligence Group (IG).

"Even if they were temporarily released for the purpose of the peace talks, they really have to answer for the violation of the law before the court kasi they were charged accordingly," Carlos said.

"Again babalik lang naman tayo doon sa... they should answer for the violation of the law before the court," he added.

The Tiamzons were arrested in Cebu in March, 2014 over murder charges.

Carlos said that the normal procedure include the giving of the copies of the warrants of arrest to the Criminal

Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), which would then implement it with all other PNP units.

Tiamzons to appeal

Meanwhile, the camp of Tiamzons said they would appeal the court's re-arrest order.

The Tiamzons were implicated in the murder of 15 persons believed to be tied to a purge among communist rebels in Leyte in 1980s and arrested in 2014.

In August, 2016, they were temporarily freed after they were allowed to post bail to serve as consultants for the peace negotiations between the government (GRP) and the CPP-NPA-NDF.

But the peace negotiation was terminated by President Duterte following an ambush in Bukidnon in November, 2017, resulting in the death of a policeman and a four-month-old baby.

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5 NPAs killed, scores wounded in Agusan del Sur, Davao Oriental skirmishes

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY — Five New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed while an undetermined number of other rebels were reportedly wounded during a gun battle between government security forces and communist terrorists in the hinterland areas in Agusan del Sur and Davao Oriental provinces, military and police report said.

Combat maneuvering troops of the Army's 28th Infantry battalion seized from the four slain rebels four firearms, improvised explosive devices and other bomb-making materials on Tuesday in Sitio Palo Palo, Barangay Marayag, Lupon, Davao Oriental, it said.

A separate military and police report received here said one NPA terrorist was

killed while an undetermined number of other rebels were believed wounded when a gun battle erupted between government troops and communist terrorists in the upper part of Quarry 69, Sitio Agpan, Barangay Imelda, Bunawan, Agusan del Sur.

A flash report received here also said the two platoons from the Army's 75th Infantry Battalion (75th IB) led by 2Lt. Bege de Jesus and 2Lt. John Arangoso were conducting Focused Military Operations (FMO) when they encountered a number of heavily armed NPA terrorists.

The communist terrorists in upper Quarry 69 were believed to be members of guerrilla-Front Committee 14 of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC).

The rebels, however, disengaged from the firefight after almost 15 minutes upon sensing that they were outnumbered,

dragging along with them their wounded and leaving behind the killed comrade-in-arm.

Operating troops recovered from the encounter site one unit AK47 rifle, two pieces magazine loaded with live ammunitions, one piece back pack containing personal belongings and anti-government documents, military and police report said.

The identity of the slain rebel has not been revealed as of press time.

PRO 13 Regional Director Chief Supt. Noli A. Romana ordered the commander of the provincial mobile force safety battalion and Agusan del Sur PPO to assist the 75th IB by conducting blocking positions along the possible escape route of the withdrawing NPA terrorists, said PRO 13 spokesman Chief Inspector Renel E. Serrano.

In a separate encounter, troops of the 28th IB also encountered an undetermined number of armed NPA terrorists at 1:25 p.m. on Tuesday at Sitio Palo Palo, Barangay Marayag, Lupon, Davao

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Oriental.

Capt. Andrew M. Linao, spokesman of the 701st Infantry Brigade, said patrolling troops of the 28th IB were responding to a call from residents in Barangay Marayag about the presence of the NPA terrorists in their village allegedly revolutionary taxes.

Meantime, Brig. Gen. Reuben S. Basiao, commanding general of the 701st Brigade lambasted the recruitment of minors and extortion activities of the NPAs.

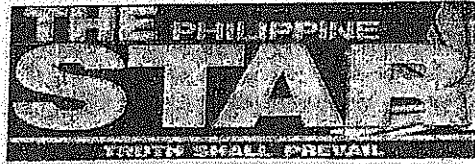
Surrender

The military yesterday said that five members of the New People's Army (NPA) laid down their arms and surrendered to government troops in Ampatuan, Maguindanao on Tuesday.

The rebel returnees who belonged to the platoon Samsung and My Phone of Guerrilla Front (GF) 73 were identified as Dany L. Daligdig, 32; Emiliano M. Tarusan, 47; Mike T. Kadingilan, 21; Marcelo M. Dampo, 49 all from a Teduray community in Brgy. Pamantingan, and; Wen M. Bilagen, 31, from a T'boli tribe in Brgy. Satumping, all of Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat.

According to the military, the five turned themselves in to Lt. Col. Lauro G. Oliveros, Commanding Officer of the 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion in Brgy. Karnasi, Ampatuan, Maguindanao. They also surrendered one homemade Springfield, one caliber 357, two homemade M79, and one Ingram. (With a report from Francis T. Wakefield)

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4 NPA rebels killed in clash with soldiers

Four New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed in an encounter with government troopers in Davao Oriental on Tuesday, the military reported yesterday.

There was no reported casualty on the government side.

Soldiers were verifying reports that NPA rebels were collecting so-called revolutionary taxes from residents of Barangay Marayag in Lupon town when the clash occurred, Capt. Andrew Linao, 701st Infantry Brigade (IB) commander, said.

Linao said an improvised explosive device and four guns were recovered from the fatalities.

Linao said pursuit operations for the rebels are ongoing.

2 battalions to fight Reds in Negros

With the all-out offensive against the communists following the scrapping of peace talks, the military will deploy two more battalions in Negros island.

A battalion will be deployed this month and another next month, Brig. Gen. Dinoh Dolina, newly designated commander of the 3rd

Infantry Division (ID), said during a courtesy call on Negros Occidental Gov. Alfredo Marañon on Tuesday.

The 3rd ID's three battalions were deployed in Marawi last year to fight Maute militants.

Dolina said the 3rd ID would also activate the 93rd IB to be deployed in Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental.

Two battalions are currently deployed on the island.

The military said it is eyeing the declaration of Negros, Iloilo and Capiz as insurgency-free by the end of the year. There are around 500 rebels operating in the areas.

In Northern Luzon, the newly appointed commander of the 5th ID, Brig. Gen. Perfecto Rimando Jr., said the campaign against the communists would be "bloody" if NPA rebels will not surrender.

"It is best for them to surrender... and help solve once and for all the problem of insurgency in the country," Rimando said. – Jaime Laude, Gilbert Bayoran, Victor Martin

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Concerts ni Ryan Ripperger, alay para sa mga sundalo

NI FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

NAKATAKDNG magtanghal sa series of concerts sa Pilipinas ang lead singer ng bandang nagpasikat sa *Passenger Seat* at *Out of My League* upang makalikom ng pondo para sa mga sundalong nasugatan sa sa giyera sa Marawi.

Sa press briefing na isinagawa sa Luna Hall ng Philippine Army Officers Club House, Fort Andres Bonifacio, Taguig City nitong Miyerkules, sinabi ng **Stephen Speaks** leader at American singer-songwriter na si **Rockwell Ryan Ripperger** na ang concerts na gaganapin sa Manila, Iloilo at Boracay, Aklan, ay magsisilbing pasasalamat niya sa mga mamamayang Pilipino na tumulong sa paglulunsad ng kanyang singing career noong 2000s.

Ang "Alive to Fight Tour" ng Stephen Speaks sa bansa ay magsisimula sa Enero 18 hanggang Pebrero 17.

"When I was a kid, the Philippines helped me launch my music career and was so supportive of me and we wanted to do a benefit. That's the least I could do to help out, give a little, a little back to a country that has given me so much," pahayag ni Ripperger sa mga reporter.

Nagkuwento si Ripperger na mabilis na kumalat ang balita sa United States tungkol sa limang buwang Marawi siege at agad siyang nagde-sisyon na tumulong sa mga sundalong nasugatan sa labanan sa pamamagitan ng pagsasagawa ng concert.

Sinabi niya na nabuo ang plano sa concert

habang nasa kasagsagan pa ang giyera sa Marawi City.

Sinabi naman ni Army spokesman Lt. Col. **Ray Tiongson**, na ang benefit concert ay magpapalakas ng morale ng mga nasugatang sundalo.

"Right now, we have, still have around 96 personnel who are still confined both in the Army General Hospital [in Fort Bonifacio] and in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Medical Center in V. Luna, so (this concert) will definitely boost their morale," sabi ni Tiongson sa mga reporter.

"This will also help them recover fast so that they could still serve our country," dagdag niya.

Ito ang ikatlong pagpunta sa Pilipinas ni Ripperger, ang lead singer ng three-man band na Stephen Speaks na sumikat nang husto sa bansa noong 2003.

Ang Stephen Speaks "Alive to Fight" Tour ay gaganapin sa mga sumusunod na petsa at venue:

- Jan 19 University of San Agustin Gymnasium in Iloilo
- Jan 21 meet local musicians 5pm (Iloilo)
- Jan 22 St. Paul University in Iloilo
- Feb 10 Playback Music Festival (Manila)
- Feb 11 back in Iloilo
- Feb 14 Boracay (venue to be announced)
- Feb 17 Fort Bonifacio.

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5 Reds killed in clashes

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUJUAN CITY – Five New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed following separate skirmishes with government forces in Agusan del Sur and Davao Oriental recently, a military and police report said.

One of the rebels fell in a gunbattle that occurred 4 p.m. Sunday in Quarry 69, Sitio Agpan, Barangay Imelda, Bunawan, Agusan del Sur.

The report said two platoons from the Army's 75th Infantry Battalion (75th IB) led by 2Lt. Begee de Jesus and 2Lt. John Arangoso were conducting Focused Military Operations (FMO) in the area when they encountered the rebels.

The firefight lasted some 15 minutes before the rebels disengaged, leaving their dead comrade behind.

No one on the government side was hurt in the incident.

Meanwhile, four rebels fell in the gunbattle that occurred in Sitio Palo Palo, Barangay Marayag, Lupon, Davao Oriental around 1 p.m. on Tuesday.

Capt. Andrew M. Linao, spokesperson of 701st Infantry Brigade, said the encounter occurred after patrolling troops of the 28th IB were alerted by residents of Barangay Marayag about rebels allegedly collecting revolutionary tax in the area.

"Our operating troops simply responded to the call and engaged the

rebels," Capt. Linao said.

Apart from the bodies of the four slain communist combatants, elements of the Army's 28th Infantry Battalion collected a number of low and high powered firearms as with several improvised explosive devices that were left by the rebels in the area following the skirmish.

In a statement, Brig. Gen. Reuben S. Basiao, commanding general of the 701st Brigade, lambasted the contin-

ued recruitment and extortion activities of the NPA.

"The NPA is desperate in implementing their recruitment efforts forcing the residents to attend their meetings and extorting the communities for their survival. However, the community is tired in believing their false promises realizing they will not benefit from the terrorists and would rather prefer to have the government on their side," he said.

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Pahina. 2

4 NPA terrorists todas sa engkwentro

Patay ang apat na miyembro ng mga teroristang New People's Army (NPA) nang makasagupa ang tropa ng militar sa isang liblib na lugar sa Brgy. Marayag, Lupon, Davao Oriental kamakalawa ng hapon.

Sa ulat, bago naganap ang bakbakan dakong ala-1:25 ng hapon sa nabanggit na barangay ay nagresponde ang tropa ng Army's 28th Infantry Battalion (IB) sa napaulat na pangha-harass

ng tinatayang nasa 20 mga teroristang NPA na nangongotong ng pera at pagkain sa mga residente sa lugar.

Pagdating ng tropa ng pamahalaan sa lugar ay agad silang pinaulanan ng bala ng mga teroristang NPA na nauwi sa palitan ng putok sa pagitan ng magkabilang panig.

Tumagal ng sampung minuto ang palitan ng putok ng magkabilang panig bago nagsitakas ang mga tero-

ristang komunista patungo sa direksyon ng kagubatan.

Sa isinagawang clearing operations ay narekober ang bangkay ng apat na NPA terrorists na inabandona ng mga nagsitakas nilang kasamahan. Habang wala namang nasugatan o nasawi sa tropa ng pamahalaan.

Nasamsam sa pinang-yarihan ng bakbakan ang apat na armas at isang improvised explosive device. -
Joy Cantos

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5 NPA tigok, 8 sumuko sa Mindanao

Nina MIKE CRISMUNDO, FRANCIS WAKEFIELD, at FER TABOY

BUTUAN CITY - Limang miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) ang napatay sa engkuwentro sa kabundukan ng Agusan del Sur at Davao Oriental, habang walong iba pa ang sumuko sa Maguindanao at Bukidnon sa nakalipas na mga araw.

Narekober ng mga tauhan ng 28th Infantry Battalion ng Philippine Army mula sa apat sa mga napatay na rebelde ang apat na armas, ilang improvised explosive device (IED), at mga gamit sa paggawa ng bomba kasunod ng bakbakan nitong Martes sa Sitio Palo Palo sa Barangay Marayag, Lupon, Davao Oriental.

Sa hiwalay na report ng militar at pulisya sa Butuan City, isa pang rebelde ang napatay habang hindi natukoy na bilang ng mga kasamahan nito ang nasugatan sa isa pang engkuwentro sa Quarry 69 sa

Sitio Agpan, Bgy. Imelda sa Bunawan, Agusan del Sur.

Ayon sa report, nagsasagawa ng operasyon ang dalawang platoon ng 75th Infantry Battalion sa lugar nang makasagupa ang mga armadong rebelde, na sinasabing mga miyembro ng guerilla-Front Committee 14 ng NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee.

Nagsimula ang bakbakan bandang 4:00 ng hapon nitong Linggo, at kaagad na napaurong ang NPA makalipas ang 15 minuto.

Samantala, iniulat kahapon ng militar ang pagsuko ng limang rebelde sa Ampatuan, Maguindanao nitong Martes.

Pawang miyembro ng Guerrilla Front 73 ang nagsisukong sina Dany L. Daligidig, 32; Emiliano M. Tarusan, 47; Mike T. Kadingilan, 21; Marcelo M. Dampo, 49, lahat ay mula sa tribung

Teduray sa Bgy. Pamantingan, at Wen M. Bilagen, 31, katutubong T'boli sa Bgy. Salumping, parehong sa Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat.

Isinuko rin ng lima ang isang homemade Springfield, isang 357 caliber, dalawang homemade M79, at isang Ingram.

Tatlo pang rebelde ang sumuko sa Army bitbit ang anim na matataas na kalibre ng baril at mga bomba sa Malaybalay City, Bukidnon.

Kinilala ni Army Capt. Norman Tagros, ng Civil Military Office (CMO), ang nagsisuko na sina alyas "Nante", ng Guerrilla Front 68, alyas "Pipoy", ng Guerrilla Front 53, at alyas "Janjan".

Isinuko rin nila ang isang caliber 223 na kargado ng mga bala, isang 45 caliber pistol, dalawang IED, at dalawang M-16 rifle na maraming bala.

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4 Reds killed in clash

By ZAIDA DELOS REYES-PALANCA

FOUR members of the New Peoples' Army (NPA) were killed in an encounter with government forces the other day in Davao Oriental.

This was confirmed by Capt. Andrew M. Binat, spokesman of the Army's 7th Infantry Division.

Identities of the slain rebels, who were left by their comrades, were not yet available as of press time.

Reports said the encounter occurred at around 1:25 p.m. in Sitio Palo Palo, Bgy. Marayag, Lupon town.

Troops from the Army's 28th Infantry Battalion (IB) received information regarding the alleged harassment of the rebels in the said community.

In response, troops immediately went to the area but were fired upon by some 20 NPA rebels.

A 10-minute firefight ensued after which the NPA rebels fled to a forested area, leaving four of their slain comrades.

Recovered at the encounter site were four low-powered firearms and an improvised explosive device.

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4 NPA PATAY SA BAKBAKAN SA DAVAO

APAT na miyembro ng New People's Army ang nasawi sa engkwentro sa pagitan ng militar at mga rebelde sa Mati City, Davao Oriental.

Ayon kay Cpt Andrew Linao, spokesman ng 701st Infantry Brigade, 125 ng hapon nang maka-engkwentro ng mga elemento ng 28th Infantry Battalion ang di batid na bilang ng mga rebelde sa Sitio Palo Palo, Brgy. Marayag Lupon.

Naglunsad ng operation ang militar matapos makatanggap ng report mula sa mga residente sa nasabing barangay hinggil sa pangangotong ng mga rebelde.

Ang bakbakan ay tumagal ng 10 minuto na nagresulta ng pagkasawi ng 4 sa mga rebelde, habang tumakas sa iba't ibang direksyon ang iba pang kasamahan ng mga ito.

Patuloy pang maalat ng mga otoridad ang pagkakakilanlan ng 4 na napatay na rebelde.

Narekober ng mga sundalo sa pinangyarihan ng engkwentro ang 4 baril at isang Improvised Explosive Device (IED) na naiwan ng mga tumatakas na rebelde.

Wala naman nasugatan o nasawi sa pang ng militar. (Mark Obledo)

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6 ex-NPA rebels get financial aid via CLIP

By MAMER BAÑEZ

BALER, Aurora – Six former members of the New People's Army (NPA) have received financial assistance through the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP).

Lt. Col. Edwin M. Paredes, Army's 56th Infantry "Patag" Battalion commander based in Bgy. Calabuanan, said the assistance, amounting to P65,000 each to six former rebels (FRs) as Clip beneficiaries, was held at Governor's Office, Provincial Capitol, in this town.

Paredes said that under the CLIP program, rebels will receive P50,000 for livelihood assistance and P15,000 for immediate financial assistance.

The beneficiaries are former medics/S4 Marites Esteban Ilaguno, alias Ka Jenjen/Nimfa/John Weil/Lea, political guide, regular member of Kilusang Larangang Guerilla (KLG) Sierra Madra (SM) of NPA; Joseph Ilaguno, alias Ka Erwin/Moymoy, squad leader Tersera KLG; Ardie Catipon, alias Soter, vice commanding officer, Larangang Guerilla sa Patag (LGP); Jose Gallegos, alias Ka Jeff, Sangay ng Partido sa Platan (SPP) Central Aurora; Edgar Baldonado, alias Ka Adim, vice commanding officer, and Carl Rissa Baldonado, alias Ka Kim, political guide, SPP Central Aurora.

Paredes said the reasons why these former NPA rebels abandoned the underground movement were due to hardship of running in the mountains, including hunger, stress and they were very tired of evading the Army patrols in the forests; they feared to engage in a firefight with the soldiers who are conducting legitimate operations in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Aurora; they found out the wrongdoings of the NPA; they missed their families and love ones; they realized that they are victims of futility of the armed struggle and misguided by the ill-propaganda of the NPA leaders; they decided to go down, surrender; they wanted to live peacefully and avail themselves of the government's livelihood, peace and development program.

"The CLIP program started in 2011 benefiting former rebels social welfare, livelihood, health, which also aims to facilitate the mainstreaming of former NPA rebels as productive citizens in their communities," he explained.

Based on joint circular issued by the DILG and Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OP-PAP), qualified beneficiaries of CLIP are those regular NPA members who surfaced in 2011 onwards and have expressed the desire to abandon armed violence and become productive members of the society, including their partners/spouses (whether legitimate or illegitimate), parents or siblings, if applicable.

Also qualified are those who did not receive full assistance under the Social Integration Program based on OPPAP's Special List of former rebels that surfaced in 2007 to 2009.

Paredes also vowed to assist the former rebels to live normal lives.

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2 NPA leaders, 5 others surrender in Mindanao

TWO high-ranking leaders of the New People's Army (NPA) and five others surrendered in South Cotabato and Maguindanao on Wednesday.

Philippine Army's 27th Infantry Battalion identified those who surrendered in South Cotabato as Noel Mirioto Legazpi, alias "Efren," deputy secretary of Far South Mindanao Region (FSMR) of the CPP-NPA; and his wife Jeanalyn Defensor-Bendalian, alias "Wendy," a medical staffer of FSMR.

South Cotabato Governor Daisy Avance-Fuertes facilitated the couple's surrender.

Efren joined the NPA in 1992 when he became a leader of League of Filipino Students (LFS). After six years, he became a full-time NPA member until he was named FSMR deputy secretary.

"We can't overthrow the government through our armed struggle, specially nowadays that the

DSSP 'Kapayapaan' of the Armed Forces is effective and the delivery of social services of the government is felt by the community in far-flung barangays," Efren said.

Meanwhile, those who surrendered in Barangay Kamasi, Ampatuan, Maguindanao were Dany L. Daligid, 32; Emiliano M. Tarusan, 47; Mike T. Kadingilan, 21; Marcelo M. Dampo, 49, all from Teduray Community in Barangay Pamantingan; and Wen M. Bilagen, 31, from a T'boli tribe in Bgy. Salumping, Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat.

Their surrender was confirmed yesterday by Lt. Colonel Lauro G. Oliveros, commanding officer of the 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion.

The rebels also turned over a homemade Springfield, one .357 firearm, two homemade M79, and an Ingram, according to Oliveros.

Oliveros said last January 9 and 10, some 28 guerillas also surren-

dered to the 1st Mech Battalion and 331B.

"The development on the series of surrenderees from among the rebels is a serious blow to the ranks of communist terrorist in Central Mindanao," 61D commander Major General Arnel dela Vega said.

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7 Reds surrender in Maguindanao, SoCot

SEVEN members of the New Peoples' Army (NPA), including two ranking leaders, surrendered to government troops in Maguindanao and South Cotabato.

Lt. Col. Lauro G. Oliveros, commanding officer of 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion, identified the surrenderers in Maguindanao as Dany L. Daligdig, 32, Emihano M. Tarusan, 47, Mike T. Kadingilan, 21, Marcelo M. Dampo, 49, all from Teduray Community in Bgy. Pamambangan, and Wen M. Bilagen, 31, from Tool tribe in Bgy. Salumping, Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat.

The rebel returnees laid down their arms and surrendered to Oliveros in Bgy. Kamasi, Ampatuan, Maguindanao the other day.

The surrenderers turned over one homemade Springfield, a cal .357, two homemade M79, and an Ingram.

On January 9 and 10, 2018, a total of 28 guerillas surrendered to 1st Mech Battalion, and 32IB with firearms, respectively.

In South Cotabato, two high-ranking NPA leaders also returned to the folds of the law to live a peaceful life in South Cotabato.

Those who surrendered were identified as Noel Minjoto Legazpi, alias Efren, deputy secretary of Far South Mindanao Region (FSMR) of CPP-NPA, and his wife Jeanalyn Defensor Bendalian, alias Wendy, medical staff of FSMR.

The couple surrendered to troops of the Philippine Army's 27th Infantry Battalion on Monday.

Accordingly, Efren and Wendy decided to return to the folds of the law after realizing that the armed struggle of NPA terrorists is not attainable and the CPP-NPA-NDF will not win against the government.

They were helped by South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Avance Fuentes.

Efren embraced the communist ideology since 1992 when he became a leader of League of Filipino Student (LFS). After six years, he became a full-time member of NPA and rose in the hierarchy of FSMR and became a deputy secretary.

For almost 26 years, he was deceived by the false ideology of the left and the movement (CPP-NPA-NDF) deprive him the freedom of democratic government.

Zaida delos Reyes-Palanca

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DUTERTE PICKS EMPEDRAD AS NAVY FLAG OFFICER IN COMMAND

By Philip C. Tubeza
@pctubezaINQ

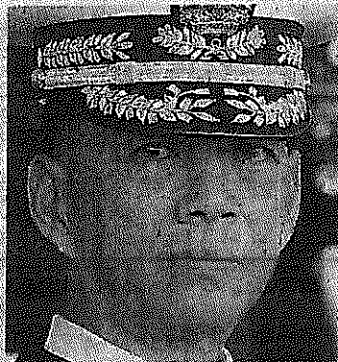
President Duterte has designated Rear Adm. Robert Empedrad as head of the Philippine Navy.

The President's order, dated Jan. 16 and addressed to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, was released by Malacañang on Thursday. It approved Empedrad's designation as Navy flag officer in command, effective Dec. 19, 2017.

"I wish to inform you that, per your letter-endorsement and in accordance with the recommendations of the chief of staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines and chairman, AFP Board of Generals ... the designation of (Empedrad) ... as commander, flag officer in command, Philippine Navy is hereby approved," the President said.

Weapons system

Empedrad replaced Vice Adm. Ronald Joseph Mercado as Navy chief because, according to Lorenzana, of Mercado's inordinate insistence on a particular weapons system for the country's first two missile frigates.



Robert Empedrad

Lorenzana said he had lost "trust and confidence in [Mercado's] integrity and leadership" because of his threats to derail a weapons contract that was signed last year.

The contract was awarded to Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) in early 2016 during the Aquino administration. Empedrad had chaired the Navy's Frigate Project Management Team.

The controversy over the project erupted again this week after Special Assistant to the President Christopher "Bong" Go was accused of interfering in the project.

Go has denied the allegation and President Duterte has de-

fended his top aide.

On Wednesday, the Department of National Defense cleared Go of any wrongdoing, and said he did not intervene in the project.

Paper trail

Based on what was claimed as a paper trail, Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano said on Thursday the President should have ordered an investigation into Go's alleged interference in the frigate acquisition project (FAP) instead of "lawyering" for him.

In a statement, Alejano said Malacañang's denial of Go's involvement in the FAP was a "glaring contradiction to the documents."

The bone of contention lies with Go's alleged preference for HHI's choice, Hanwha's Naval Shield, for the warships' combat management system (CMS), overruling the Navy's own choice.

Alejano cited the following documents as evidence of Go's interference in the FAP, especially in the selection of the CMS:

• A Jan. 12, 2017, white paper with Defense Secretary

Lorenzana's marginal note saying the document came from Go.

- A Jan. 18, 2017, letter from Go's office directing newly appointed Navy chief Empedrad to report to Malacañang.

- The appearance of Empedrad and the whole Project Management Team (PMT), which he headed then, in a Jan. 20, 2017, meeting with former Undersecretary Lloyd Christopher Lao under Go's alleged instructions.

- Empedrad's Jan. 23, 2017, letter to Mr. Duterte, which made references to a letter by Go's office requesting the PMT to justify the CMS chosen by HHI.

Alejano claimed Go's actions were prompted by an alleged visit of an official of South Korean CMS provider Hanwha. The supposed meeting with Go "possibly" took place between Jan. 5 and 11, 2017.

This came after former Navy chief Mercado wrote Lorenzana on Jan. 4, 2017, about the "grossly disadvantageous" provisions allegedly inserted by HHI to ensure it would have the right to

choose the CMS provider.

Navy preference

Instead of Hanwha's Naval Shield system, the Navy preferred the Taciticos system of the Dutch company Thales Nederland.

But the white paper, a copy of which was released by Alejano to reporters, stated the Hanwha system would provide the Navy the "most economic and effective logistics and upgrade, etc."

Mr. Duterte took the cudgels for Go on Tuesday, vehemently denying the veracity of the white paper and going so far as to single out Rappler as a "fake news outlet" for publishing an article on it.

But Alejano said: "The ones involved in this anomaly may disavow it, but it cannot be denied that in the end, business interest prevailed over national interest because of these events."

He called Empedrad "the least qualified" among the candidates for the position of Navy flag officer in command, having no Naval Forces Command stint. —WITH A REPORT FROM VINCE F. NONATO INQ

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DUTERTE WARNS OF 'MANY MARAWIS' IF BANGSAMORO LAW IS NOT PASSED

By **Christine O. Avendaño**
and **Philip C. Tubeza**
@Team_Inquirer

President Duterte has warned of numerous wars similar to the five-month-long Marawi siege erupting all over Mindanao if Congress fails to pass the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri said on Thursday.

The passage of the draft BBL, which would establish a new autonomous Muslim region in Mindanao, was part of the 2014 peace accord between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).
"The President said if there is conflict [in Mindanao] and we

do not pass BBL and war ensues, you are looking at Marawi 10 times or 50 times over," said Zubiri, who heads a Senate subcommittee handling the proposed measure.

Zubiri told reporters at the Kapihan sa Senado that he spoke on the phone with the President on Monday.

Extremist groups

He said the President was concerned that extremist groups in Mindanao would take advantage of the absence of the BBL, which was a commitment by both the government and the MILF to end decades of armed secessionist struggle in favor of Moro autonomy.

He also said Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza had told him that extremist groups continued to recruit people in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which is comprised of five predominantly Muslim provinces.

Zubiri said he informed the President that he had withdrawn his original proposal that adopted the previous Senate measure and this week filed a bill that adopted the BBL version of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC). He said the BTC version dropped many constitutionally questionable provisions.

The members of the BTC include representatives from the

government and the MILF.

"I would like to assure the public ... that we will give it utmost priority and my timeline is before March 22, our last day of session. We will try to pass the BBL in third and final reading," Zubiri said.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said the proposed BBL was "certified urgent" by the President last year.

Quoting House Muslim affairs committee chair Rep. Jun Papanayan, Roque said the bill was expected to be passed by March.

Dureza said Mr. Duterte met MILF chair Murad Ibrahim and other MILF leaders on Monday and assured them that the bill would be passed before any

shift to a federal form of government.

BTC version

He welcomed Zubiri's decision to adopt the BTC's version as the working draft to be discussed in the planned Senate hearings.

"We call on Filipinos to all help and contribute to the realization of this long-awaited aspiration of the Bangsamoro," Dureza said.

Zubiri said he would hold public consultations on the draft BBL starting next week in Cotabato City and Marawi City.

He said he would try to have Congress pass the measure so that the plebiscite on the proposal could be held simultaneously

with the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections in May.

Hundreds of extremists and followers of the Islamic State (IS) group attacked Marawi in May last year, battling thousands of government troops for five months. The fighting left more than 1,600 people dead and reduced the city center to rubble.

The siege prompted the President to declare martial law and suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao. The martial law period has been extended twice, the second lasting a year till December 2018.

Several petitions questioning the constitutionality of the latest extension have been filed in the Supreme Court. INQ

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Military checking if top Malaysian terrorist survived

The Armed Forces of the Philippines is trying to validate intelligence information that a top Malaysian extremist survived the defeat of an Islamic State-linked siege on Marawi City and is helping restart efforts to establish an extremist alliance, a military official said.

The commander of Joint Task Force Sulu, Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, said troops were trying to validate reports that Amin Baco is wounded during the siege but managed to escape to Sulu, where he was hiding with Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorists.

Yusop Jikiri, central committee chair of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which has a peace treaty with the government, said 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 of Sulu's Patikul town.

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

Validating information

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

Abu Amri Taddik, chief of MNLF intelligence, said Baco was involved in renewed efforts to establish an IS-linked alliance of several groups including the ASG.

A Sulu-based ASG commander, Yassir Igasan, is a key candidate to succeed Isnilon Hapilon, who led an emerging IS-affiliated



Amin Baco

alliance in Southeast Asia until he was killed when government troops crushed the five-month Marawi siege in October, Taddik said.

Body never found

Military officials had said that Baco was among the militants killed in Marawi although his body was never found.

A longtime rebel fighter who has served as Sulu governor and later as a congressman, Jikiri heads one of two major factions of the MNLF and had organized nearly 400 fighters to help the military combat kidnappings and terrorism.

"We'd like to clean the name of Sulu and the Tausugs," Jikiri said, referring to Sulu's dominant ethnic group. "I hope the Abu Sayyaf will stop kidnappings and all sort of criminalities to avoid any more bloodletting."

Sobejana welcomed the rebel move and said arrangements were being finalized to determine how the guerrillas could help troops.

"What is clear is they are already providing us with information," he said. —AP INQ

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AFP pursuing 50 foreign terrorists in Mindanao

By ROEL PARENO

ZAMBOANGA CITY - The military is tracking down some 50 foreign Islamic State (IS) militants in Mindanao.

"We will take this very seriously. In fact, we are conducting massive combat and intelligence operations on tracking these people," Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said yesterday.

"We are on the right track. We can zero in on the locations of this foreign terrorist group," he added.

Galvez said they are continuously validating the locations of the foreign jihadists reportedly conducting high level recruitment.

Galvez said the foreign jihadists are mostly Malaysians and Indonesians, with some coming from the Middle East.

He said the foreigners slipped into southern Philippines by pretending to be Tabligh (Islamic pilgrim) attending gatherings while others posed as businessmen, students or tourists.

"We have direct orders for our intelligence and combat units to immediately hit and eliminate the influence of the foreign terrorists group in the area," Galvez said.

He said they are continuously monitoring the movements of the foreign jihadists, some of whom

are reportedly conducting recruitment of locals.

"We noticed as of now their attempt to recruit is very massive because of their heavy losses, so they want to massively recruit especially those vulnerable people like students, orphans and youth," Galvez said.

He said the foreign terrorists were increasing the level of their organization by recruiting from families orphaned during the siege in Marawi City.

Galvez said the foreigners were also recruiting from other Muslim insurgent groups.

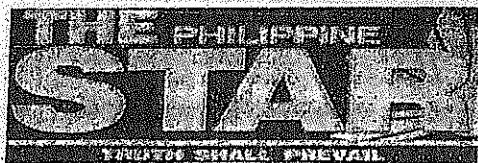
He said the IS has not been able to conduct massive recruitment so far.

"We noticed we were able to thwart the recruitment as the Grand Mufti and the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) are helping us in really countering violent extremism by going through the grassroots level of information campaign to prevent people from being deceived by the recruitment of the Daesh and foreign terrorist group," Galvez said.

Galvez said they have also created the Regional Anti-Terrorism council in the ARMM to closely monitor the recruitment of the IS group.

The military and the local government units have been conducting massive information drives in schools in Cotabato City.

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2 drug suspects slain

TUGUEGARAO CITY, Cagayan – A former town councilor and another drug suspect were gunned down by motorcycle-riding men in Ilocos Norte on Wednesday.

Former Dingras councilor Nathaniel Ruben Taylan II, 32, was talking with Joefrey Blanes, 45, in front of his house in Barangay 11, Laoag City at around 4 p.m. when they were shot.

The victims were pronounced dead on arrival at the Governor Roque Ablan Sr. Memorial Hospital.

Nine bullet shells for a 9mm pistol were recovered at the scene.

Chief Inspector Dexter Corpuz, Ilocos Norte police spokesman, said the fatalities were on the drug watchlist.

MILF leader, 17 others nabbed

Meanwhile, 17 other drug suspects, including a leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), were arrested in drug stings in the Zamboanga peninsula, Quezon and Bulacan in the past two days.

Askim Andam, 23, platoon leader of the MILF's 105th Central Mindanao

Front, was collared after selling shabu to undercover agents in Barangay Banale, Pagadian, Zamboanga del Sur on Wednesday. Four sachets of shabu and P300 in marked money were allegedly recovered from the suspect.

Four other alleged drug dealers were arrested in Dipolog, Zamboanga del Norte, Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay and Zamboanga City.

Businessman Mark Rainer Opeña, 29, and farmer Elpidio Malarasta, 50, were nabbed in Barangay Pinagbakuran, Sariaya, Quezon at around 4:30 a.m. yesterday.

Opeña yielded 16 sachets of shabu, unlicensed guns and cannibalized motorcycles, Senior Superintendent Rhoderick Armamento, Quezon police director, said.

In Bulacan, 11 persons were arrested in stings in San Jose del Monte, Meycauyan, Malolos, Pulilan, San Rafael, Bustos and San Idefonso.

Police said 37 sachets of shabu, drug paraphernalia and marked money were recovered from the suspects.

– Raymund Catindig, Ed Amoroso, Ramon Efren Lazaro, Roel Pareño

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Empedrad named Navy chief

BY VICTOR REYES

PRESIDENT Duterte has named Rear Adm. Robert Empedrad as Navy chief.

Empedrad, a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1986, has been acting Navy chief, in concurrent capacity as the AFP's deputy chief of staff for reservist and retiree affairs, since December 19 after Vice Adm. Ronald Joseph Mercado was unceremoniously relieved from the top Navy post in connection with the Navy's frigate acquisition project.

Duterte signed Empedrad's papers on Tuesday, based on the recommendation of the Armed Forces' Board of Generals chaired by AFP chief Gen. Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has said he recom-

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See EMPEDRAD > Page B6

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EMPEDRAD

mended Mercado's relief for favoring a combat management system, produced by the French firm Thales Group, that would be installed on two frigates being built by the Hyundai Heavy Industries for the Navy. Lorenzana said Mercado ignored his several directives to stop pushing for the Thales Group, and it was tantamount to insubordination.

Mercado is on "floating status" at Guerrero's office.

Empedrad, before becoming AFP deputy chief of staff for reservist and retiree affairs in February last year; was commander of the Philippine Fleet's Off-shore Combat Force, in concurrent capacity as project manager of the frigate acquisition program.

A senior military officer who spoke on condition of anonymity said the list of officers recommended for the top Navy chief and submitted to the office of Presi-

dent Duterte was "maneuvered."

The source said the Board of Generals initially recommended, through the DND, three officers for the post -- Empedrad and Rear Admirals Rommel Ong and Giovanni Carlo Bacordo, both of the PMA Class 1987.

The recommendation was revised, and contained the names of Empedrad and other members of PMA Class 1986 -- Rear Admirals Gaudencio Collado, Danilo Rodellas, Rene Medina, and Allan Ferdinand Cusi.

"They (Bacordo and Ong) were not included. They were replaced with members of the (PMA) Class 86," the source said noting

Meanwhile, spokesman Arsenio Andolong said the Department of National Defense is not going to terminate the P18-billion frigate acquisition project which Magdalo party list Rep. Gary Alejano, a former Marines captain, earlier said was anomalous.

He said Alejano's "allegations" are not enough to cause the abro-

gation of the deal.

The P18-billion contract for the construction of the two frigates, including the weapons system and munition, was awarded by the defense department to Hyundai Heavy Industries of South Korea in October 2016.

Lorenzana has said it should be Hyundai that should decide on the type of combat management system that should be installed on the frigates. Hyundai is reportedly eyeing to install a cheaper and less capable CMS produced by Hanwha of South Korea.

In a privilege speech on Tuesday, Alejano alleged that Mercado was relieved because he was blocking the "business interest" of Hyundai.

Alejano also alleged that Christopher "Bong" Go, special assistant to President Duterte, intervened in the project, in favor of Hanwha. Lorenzana and Mercado on Wednesday said Go did not intervene in the frigate acquisition program.

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Standard

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New Navy

chief named

By Vito Barcelo and Francisco Tuyay

REAR Admiral Robert Empedrad, whose name was dragged into the controversial acquisition of a frigate, was appointed as the new flag officer in command of the Philippine Navy, Malacañang announced Thursday.

The former Armed Forces of the Philippines deputy chief of staff for Retirees

and Reservists Affairs' appointment was released on Jan. 16 but was made public only on Jan. 18 and signed by President Rodrigo Duterte.

Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Wednesday dismissed a proposition by a lawmaker to abrogate the consummated P18-billion contract to acquire a modern frigate for the Philippine Navy.

Lorenzana was reacting to Rep. Gary Alejano's suggestion that the frigate procurement project be terminated because it was allegedly anomalous.

He said the frigate project for the

Navy could not just be scrapped in the absence of questionable conditions in the transaction.

"There is a proper process prescribed in Republic Act 9184 and there are specific conditions that must be present in order to invoke it, none of which are existing at the moment," Lorenzana said.

Lorenzana endorsed Empedrad as Philippine Navy Chief effective Dec. 17, 2017.

Empedrad's appointment came amid a controversy involving the Philippine Navy's P15.7-billion Combat Management System procurement plan for its two missile frigates.

But Malacañang said Empedrad had nothing to do with the procurement that was made during the Aquino administration.

In December 2017, former Philippine Navy flag officer in command Vice Admiral Ronald Joseph Mercado was sacked because of "insubordination."

Earlier, Lorenzana said Mercado was relieved from his post for "jeopardizing" the frigate acquisition project. Both Mercado and Empedrad worked with the technical working group handling the procurement deal since the Aquino administration.

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Duterte warns of war

If BBL is not passed

BY CATHERINE VALENTE

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte warned that a war will erupt in Mindanao if Congress will fail to pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

In his speech during the launch of Overseas Filipino Bank in Manila on Thursday, Duterte said failure to address the concerns of Bangsamoros could lead to more clashes in the country.

"Because at this time, if nothing will happen to the BBL or we change the Constitution or do not change the Constitution at all, there will be war in Mindanao, I can assure you. *mamili kayo* (You choose). *Hindi ko na ma-control iyan* (I cannot control that)," Duterte said.

"And at this time, it could be a double whammy because my enemy would be their friends and what would that be? It's the ISIS," he added, using another name for Islamic State terrorists.

The BBL is the enabling measure of the peace compact signed by the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014. It aims to create a Bangsamoro political entity with enhanced autonomy.

Duterte has banked on the bill's passage to heal the "historical

injustices" suffered by the Moros, who have waged a separatist rebellion since the late 1960s.

The measure failed to pass in the previous administration because of the bloody Mamasapano clash, where 44 elite cops were killed by several assailants, among them members of Moro groups. The bill also faced questions on its constitutionality. Duterte met with MILF leaders led by Ibrahim Murad on Monday in Davao City. He gave assurances that BBL would be enacted first before he will pursue proposals to shift to a federal form of government.

Test

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri on Thursday said the creation of a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) through the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) would be a "good test" to see if federalism will work on smaller scale.

Zubiri, chairman of the Senate subcommittee on BBL, is set to conduct next week a series of public hearings on the BBL that aims to abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"I am willing to give it a chance especially now that extremism is going on again, recruitment is ongoing. I will focus on BBL first before Charter change. This is the long term solution that will provide long lasting peace in Mindanao," he said.

"This will dictate whether we will have peace in Mindanao. This is the remaining promise that government has to fulfill to be able to complete the 1972 Tripoli agreement."

Zubiri said the current BBL version of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) no longer contain provisions that would violate the Constitution.

"Our version relied heavily on the past version. During our brief-

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ing on December 20 (2017), I saw the BTC version. It's good. They took out several unconstitutional provisions," he told reporters.

Only two provinces were added to the current BBL version – Cotabato and certain towns of Lanao del Norte. The earlier version included Palawan and Zamboanga City.

"They took out the provision that they will set up their own institutions such as their own Commission on Audit, Civil Service Commission and Bangsamoro police," Zubiri said. "This is a nice step to get 100 percent support from fellow lawmakers."

The senator hopes to pass the BBL before Congress adjourns in March.

If the House of Representatives passes the same version, the two chambers will have a bicameral conference meeting to fine-tune the BBL so they can ratify it when Congress resumes session in May.

**WITH BERNADETTE
E. TAMAYO**

19 January 2018

The Manila Times

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DND hits Alejano for 'innuendos' on frigate deal

THE Department of National Defense (DND) on Thursday hit back at Magdalo party-list Rep. Gary Alejano for alleging irregularities on the purchase of Navy frigates, saying the lawmaker only had "in-

nuendos" and no proof.

DND spokesman Arsenio Andolong said there were no grounds to terminate the frigate acquisition project of the Philippine Navy.

"We must point out that the anomalies being cited by [Alejano] are mere allegations and innuendos which are not legal grounds for termination of the [frigate]

► Deal A7

project," Andolong said in a statement.

"There is a proper process prescribed in Republic Act No. 9184 (Government Procurement Reform Act) concerning the termination of a procurement project and there are specific conditions that must be present in order to invoke it, none of which are existing at the moment in this project," he said.

In a privilege speech earlier this week, Alejano called for the cancellation of the P18-billion frigate project, claiming the Korean contractor violated the contract, endangering the modernization program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Alejano claimed the government would not lose money because Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI), contractor of the Navy's frigate deal, had paid 20 percent of the contract, which could be confiscated.

The dispute centers on who should be the supplier of the weapons system – Dutch company Thales Taciticos or South Korean-based Naval Shield of Hanwha Thales.

Vice Admiral Ronald Joseph Mercado was sacked on December 18 as flag officer in command of the Navy, for allegedly sitting down on the frigate deal for four months.

He was replaced by Rear Admiral Robert Empedrad, former AFP deputy chief of staff for reservists and retiree affairs (J9).

Timeline

Mercado was said to have favored Thales Taciticos and even met with former Navy chiefs to help his cause, which earned the ire of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Palace Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said the memorandum of the acquisition decision was released as early as 2015, during the time of Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin.

It was Gazmin who approved the final technical specifications for the frigate procurement last January 2016.

At the time, Mercado was commander of the military's Western Command but was among members of the technical working group (TWG) of the Philippine Navy.

He was also part of the post-qualification team that declared HHI as the "qualified and capable" in delivering two frigates for the Navy's project worth P18 billion.

On August 18, 2016, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, successor of Gazmin, signed the frigate project's Notice of Award and consulted the TWG.

A well-placed military source of *The Manila Times* said Lorenzana repeatedly asked the TWG, which included Mercado, if there were any questions or concerns regarding the frigate project before he signed the contract.

In October 2016, Lorenzana and the vice president of HHI signed the contract in accordance with the procurement process. Vice admiral Jesus Millan was the Navy chief.

But in January 2017, Mercado supposedly questioned the terms of the contract despite Lorenzana's earlier consultations with the Philippine Navy TWG.

The HHI contract also states that it is responsible for the delivery of the entire frigate including its components such as the combat management system (CMS).

In February last year, Mercado sacked Empedrad as chairman of the TWG for the frigate deal and designated Capt. Sean Villa.

The Times source said Mercado wrote to the Defense Acquisition Office (DAO) of the DND, saying that the Navy was not endorsing HHI as the CMS supplier, allegedly lobbying for Thales Taciticos to supply the weapons system.

Another source, however, said Mercado and Empedrad had a rift.

Among reasons why Empedrad and Mercado fought was because of the latter's favoring France for the CMS, after a trip to Europe.

This month, reports came out alleging that Special Assistant to the President (SAP) Christopher "Bong" Go intervened in the Navy frigate deal and supposedly lobbied for Hanwha Thales to supply the weapons system. Duterte and Lorenzana have denied Go's involvement in the frigate deal.

Empedrad gets appointment

Also on Thursday, the Palace said President Duterte had made permanent Empedrad's appointment as chief of the Philippine Navy.

In a letter dated January 16, Duterte informed Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana that Empedrad's appointment was approved effective December 19, 2017.

Empedrad, a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1986, was a commander of the Navy's Offshore Combat Force and concurrent project manager of the frigate program.

**DEMPSEY REYES
AND CATHERINE S. VALENTE**

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Ex-Navy chief Mercado says no hard feelings over relief

DESPITE his unceremonious relief as Philippine Navy flag officer-in-command last month, Vice Adm. Ronald Joseph Mercado said he harbors no bitterness toward Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana.

"You know I'm a military officer, I obey orders, I know the secretary of national defense, he has some

justification for doing it, so I respect...[his decision]," he added in an interview on Wednesday.

The former Navy chief added that he understands such a decision, as he has done it many times during his time as a leader of various naval units.

Lorenzana relieved Mercado from his post as Navy chief

last December 18, citing loss of trust and confidence on the integrity and leadership of the naval officer.

This stemmed from the alleged fixation of the former on one company to supply the combat management system of the Frigate Acquisition Project (FAP), a contract won by South Korean shipbuilder Hyundai

Heavy Industries.

At the moment, Mercado is now assigned to the Office of the Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines, on special duties.

Earlier, the ex-Navy chief cleared Special Assistant to the President Christopher Go of alleged intervention on the P18-billion FAP. PMA

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EX-NAVY CHIEF CLEARS BONG GO

FORMER Navy chief Ronald Joseph Mercado on Thursday defended Special Assistant to the President Christopher "Bong" Go, saying that the close aide of the President had nothing to do with the Philippine Navy's frigate project.

"Christopher 'Bong' Go never asked anything about the Philippine Navy's P18 billion Frigate Acquisition Project," Mercado said in a statement.

"On my side, when I was flag officer in-command, we never once, with so many times we were together in many foreign Navy ships, and there was never an instance, not once, that he even

asked me about the frigate. Never," he said.

"He never intervened, much more talk to me about these things," he added.

Mercado said he was "shocked" over news reports that "other personalities" were being dragged into the controversial Navy frigate project.

He also denied that he received a letter inviting him to go to Malacañang to defend why he chose Thales Tacitos.

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'Taking over military pension very prohibitive'

FROM the original estimate of P7 trillion, the cost of taking over the military pension system by the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) has gone up to as high as P9 trillion, according to latest numbers crunching by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

But as stratospheric as that number might be, neither the DBM nor the GSIS has the slightest idea for now on how to craft a military pension system that is self-sustaining and not taken out of the pockets of taxpayers.

Budget Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno on Thursday bared optimism that such a mechanism hopefully could be crafted by midyear, when government planners finally come up with a plan addressing the ballooning pension

cost of military personnel.

"Maybe around midyear. But we still don't know the modality yet," Diokno told financial reporters at the sidelines of an infrastructure forum on Thursday.

The budget chief added that should the GSIS take on the challenge of managing the pension system of the Armed Forces, the government would have to infuse funds to the agency to make the deal more attractive.

"We are still studying several options but a combination, probably using GSIS as the base. But if we want to convince the GSIS to take on the challenge, we have to give something," he said.

Just last year budget officials and the Department of Finance (DOF) began addressing the necessity of a sustainable retirement system for mili-

tary personnel. One proposal was to incorporate such an entity with the GSIS and do away with subsidies from the government.

In February last year Diokno categorically said addressing the cost of military pension through the annual budget was not sustainable. He also said the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council last January agreed to a review of the pension system for military personnel and policemen.

To correct the deeply flawed pension system of military personnel, budget officials said a seed fund equivalent to P5.57 trillion is required. Without so-called indexation and active personnel contributions to the seed fund, the cost was lower at only P2.03 trillion, based on the latest actuarial study

conducted by the GSIS.

Without a self-sustaining military pension system, the cost of extending pension benefits to the uniformed services will have to be taken out of the annual budget of the military. Such a cost had been estimated at 50 percent to 60 percent of their annual budget.

Extending subsidy to the military is also very expensive for taxpayers, as the cost amounts to some P90 billion a year.

The GSIS has thus far refused to take on the challenge of providing pension benefits to those who bled for the country and have willingly put themselves in harm's way so that the rest of us can live in peace.

The GSIS has said it will help craft a pension system that is not funded by taxpayers' money. *Red Cu*

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Malacañang announces designation of Empedrad as new Phil Navy boss

By Ted Tuvera

Malacañang yesterday made public the designation of Rear Admiral Robert Empedrad as chief of the Philippine Navy.

Empedrad's appointment came on the heels of the controversial P15.5-billion warship acquisition that maliciously implicated President Duterte's right hand man Special Assistant to the President Christopher "Bong" Go.

Malacañang released only yesterday Mr. Duterte's letter dated January 16 addressed to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana naming Empedrad as the new flag commander of the Navy.

Empedrad was made acting Navy chief last December following the sacking of then Navy flag commander Vice Admiral Ronald Mercado for supposedly "jeopardizing" the frigates acquisition project.

Meanwhile, Bong Go's name was dragged into the matter following a leaked Jan. 12, 2017 endorsement paper preferring HTC over TN that

included a handwritten note from Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana addressed to then Navy chief Vice Admiral Ronald Mercado saying: "This was given to me by Bong Go. Go over it and prepare a report/rebuttal to be submitted to the President."

Moreover, a Jan. 18, 2017 letter from Go's office summoned Commodore Robert Empedrad, then chairman of the Navy's Frigate Project Technical Working Group, to Malacañang for a Jan. 20, 2017 meeting.

The letter signed by lawyer Lloyd Christopher Lao, an undersecretary for the Office of the Special Assistant to the President, told Empedrad that they will have to "discuss the issue on CMS Selection."

Interestingly, Mercado was relieved as Navy chief last month. Lorenzana said that it was because of his "lack of confidence" in Mercado.

A few days after demoting Mercado, President Duterte named Empedrad as acting chief of the Philippine Navy.

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DCCCI raises alarm over NPA attacks

DAVAO CITY – The business sector here expressed alarm over the attack launched by members of the New People's Army (NPA) against banana companies in Barangay Janibong, Gallman District in Davao City on January 13. Newly elected Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Arturo Milan said the security situation remains to be a concern, most especially the recent attack against Japanese-owned Sumitomo Fruits Corporation and Ayala-owned Highland Banana Corporation. He said the insurgency would create a negative perception about investing in the city as security plays an important role in the decision making of the companies. (Antonio L. Colina IV)

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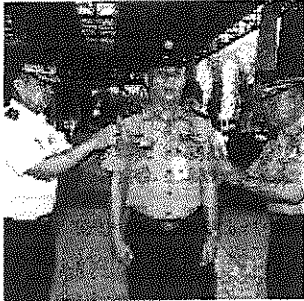
ONLINE NEWS

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TOP AFP NCO | First Chief Master Sergeant Lito Tompayogan

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on January 18, 2018 at 1:46 PM



CAMP GEN EMILIO AGUINALDO, Quezon City (DWDD) – AFP Chief of Staff General Rey Leonardo Guerrero (right) pins the rank insignia of First Chief Master Sergeant to newly promoted AFP Sergeant Major Lito Tompayogan (middle) the highest ranked Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), Monday, 15 January 2018, in a ceremony at Camp Gen Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City. He was assisted by Major General Duco, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, J1 (left). **Photo by PO3 Jayson Rutao PN/PAOAFP**

LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT | Philippine Navy Traditional New Year's Call 2018

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on January 18, 2018 at 1:30 PM

NAVAL STATION JOSE FRANCISCO, Fort Andres Bonifacio, Taguig City (DWDD) – The Philippine Navy (PN) conducted the traditional New Year's Call to the Acting Flag Officer In Command, Philippine Navy (AFOIC, PN), Rear Admiral Robert A Empedrad to affirm the loyalty and commitment of PN personnel to the command on Jan. 15 at Jurado Hall, Naval Station Jose Francisco, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

The activity also aims to give recognition to the selfless devotion of the better halves of the PN active officers and EP who have continuously provided them moral support.

Formers FOICs, PN Unit Commanders, Senior Naval Officers from PN and General Headquarters/ AFP Wide Support Units; Senior Enlisted Personnel, Reservists and Civilian Employees together with their spouses attended the event. **NPAO/MCAG**

www.dwdd.com.ph

CHANGE OF COMMAND | 3rd TOW Welcomes New TOG-SULTAW Commander

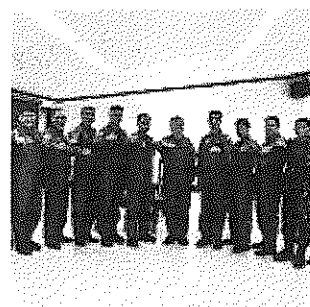
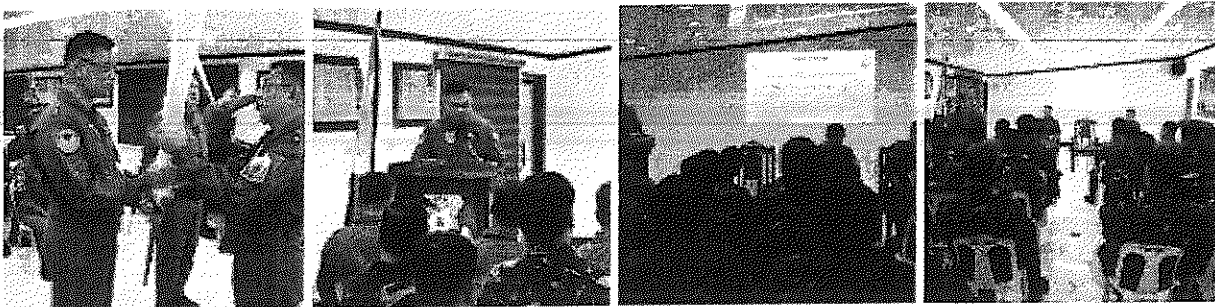
Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on January 16, 2018 at 11:05 AM



EDWIN ANDREWS AIRBASE, Zamboanga City (DWDD) – The 3rd Tactical Operations Wing of the Philippine Air Force welcomed the newly-designated Tactical Operations Group SULTAW (Sulu Tawi-Tawi) Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Paulo C Teodoro PAF (GSC) during the Change of Command Ceremony held on January 16, 2018 at the headquarters of 3rd TOW, Edwin Andrews Air Base, Zamboanga City, which was presided by the Wing Commander, Brigadier General Augusto D Dela Peña AFP.

Lieutenant Colonel Teodoro replaced Lieutenant Colonel Acmad U Omar Jr PAF (GSC).

As the outgoing Group Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Omar thanked all the personnel for their unwavering support throughout his stint as GC of TOG SULTAW. **3TOW/MCAG**

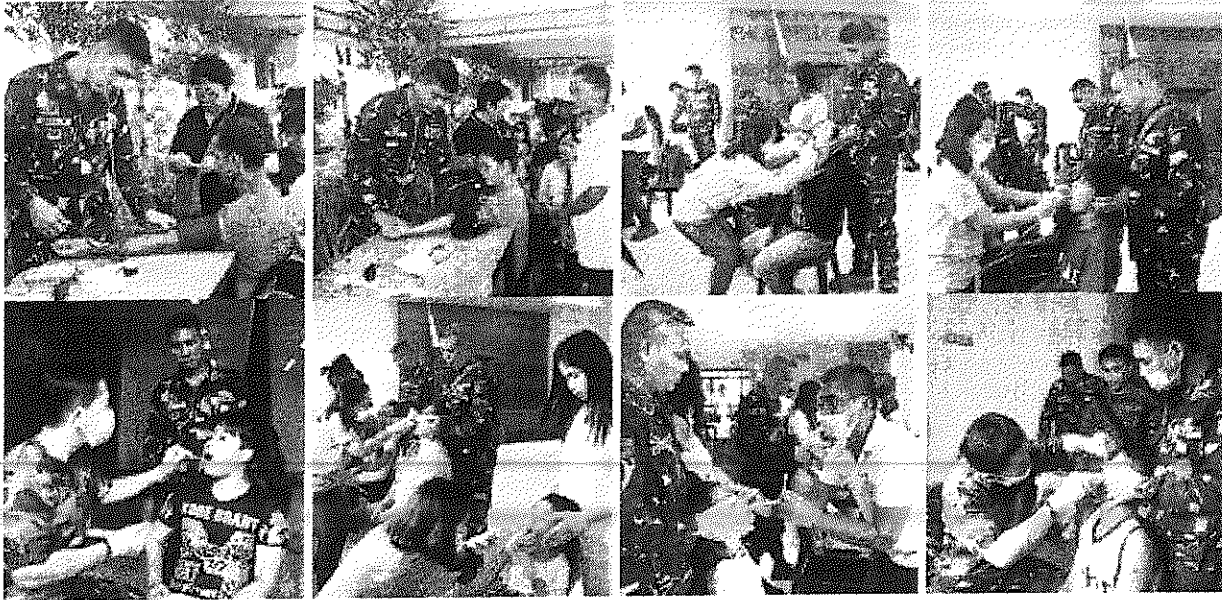


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COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE | 78IB conducts Dental Outreach in La Paz

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on January 18, 2018 at 10:16 AM

LA PAZ, Leyte (DWDD) – A Medical Team of 78th Infantry “Warrior” Battalion led by Captain Jay-ar Cuevas and Dental Team of 802nd Infantry Brigade led by Major Roy Abad, Dental Officer, participated in the Medical Outreach Program (Dental and Minor Surgeries) last January 16, 2018 as initiated by the Local Government Unit of La Paz, Leyte headed by Mayor Lesmes C Lumen, held at ABC Hall, La Paz, Leyte as part of celebrating the Centennial Foundation of said municipality. A total of two hundred eight (208) patients benefited from the said activity. **8DPAOMCAG**



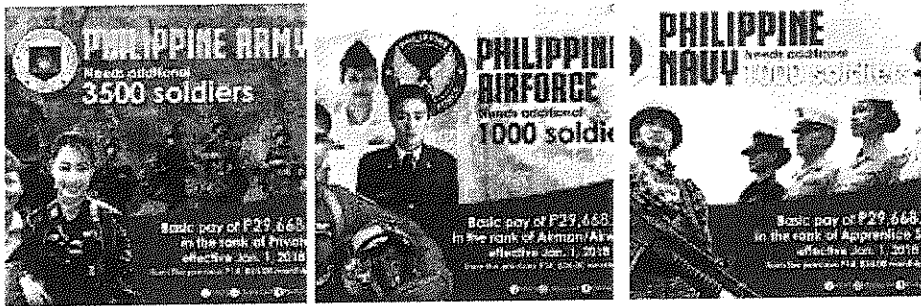
www.dwdd.com.ph

SERVING THE PEOPLE | AFP to recruit 5,500 Soldiers

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on January 14, 2018 at 10:12 AM

CAMP GEN EMILIO AGUINALDO, Quezon City (DWDD) – In line with efforts to beef up its forces in the ongoing campaign against terrorists and other lawless elements, the Armed Forces of the Philippines announced that it is recruiting 5,500 troops for this year.

Of the 5,500 troops to be recruited this year, 3,500 will go to the Philippine Army and remaining 2,000 to be split evenly between the Philippine Navy and Philippine Air Force. **MCAG**



TAGS: [Philippine Army](#), [Philippine Air Force](#), [Philippine Navy](#)

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WOUNDED PERSONNEL MEDAL | 8ID Pins Award to Wounded Soldier

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on January 15, 2018 at 5:01 AM



CAMP LUKBAN, Catbalogan, Samar (DWDD) – The Commander of the 8th Infantry (Stormtroopers) Division Maj. Gen. Raul M Farnacio AFP pinned the award of the Wounded Personnel Medal (WPM) to Corporal Artemio Bendo Jr. (Inf) PA who was wounded during an encounter with undetermined number of communist terrorists (CTs) on January 16, 2018 at Camp Lukban Station Hospital.

Corporal Bendo along with his fellow soldiers from 43rd Infantry (WE SEARCH) Battalion were in the area of Barangay Somoroy, Lope de Vega, Northern Samar last January 14, 2018 to conduct humanitarian assistance to residents affected by torrential rains when the encounter with CTs transpired.



In his short message, Maj. Gen. Raul M Farnacio said that, *“This award is a manifestation of the degree of sacrifice that a soldier has to pay in order for our fellow Filipinos to continue to live in peace. It is just fitting to commend personnel such as Corporal Bendo who risked his life in helping and protecting the less fortunate in the far-flung areas.”*

Since the beginning of the year, the 8ID has been intensifying its campaign to defeat the CTs as per marching order given by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte declaring the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army as an identified terrorist organization.

It can be recalled that on January 4, 2018, two CTs were killed and two high powered firearms were recovered by the soldiers of 78th Infantry (Warriors) Battalion during an encounter at Barangay Hilapnitan, Baybay City, Leyte.

“The successful encounters of our government troops are the result of 8ID’s effort to defeat the communist terrorists in support to President Duterte’s campaign against the CTs who continue to extort money from communities and private businesses and employ atrocities against civilians.” Farnacio added. **8DPAO/MCAG**

www.pna.gov.ph

NPA returnees receive livelihood assistance in Aurora

From the Philippine News Agency (Jan 18): NPA returnees receive livelihood assistance in Aurora



The local government of Aurora, through the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) and in partnership with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), has granted financial assistance to six former New People's Army (NPA) rebels in this province.

Lt. Col. Edwin M. Paredes, battalion commander of the 56th Infantry "Tatag" Battalion, Philippine Army, told the Philippine News Agency in an interview earlier this week that the financial assistance amounting to PHP65,000 for each of the former rebels was provided under the government's Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP). Under the CLIP, rebels who surrender receive PHP50,000 for livelihood assistance and PHP15,000 for immediate financial assistance.

The CLIP beneficiaries were Marites Esteban Ilaguno, alias Ka Jenjen/Nimfa/John Well/Lea, political guide and regular member of Kilusang Larangang Guerilla (KLG) Sierra Madre (SM) of NPA; Joseph Ilaguno, alias Ka Erwin/Moymoy, squad leader Tersera KLG; Ardie Catipon, alias Soter, vice commanding officer of Larangang Guerilla sa Pataq (LGP); Jose Gallegos, alias Ka Jeff of Sangay ng Partido sa Piaton (SPP) Central Aurora; Edgar Baldonade, alias Ka Adim, vice commanding officer and Carl Rissa Baldonade, alias ka Kim, political guide SPP central Aurora.

Paredes said these former NPA rebels decided to go down and surrender because they wanted to live peacefully and to avail of the government's livelihood, peace and development program.

"The CLIP program started in 2011 benefitting former rebels on social welfare, livelihood, health which also aims to facilitate the mainstreaming of former NPA rebels as productive citizens in their communities," he said.

Based on joint circular issued by the DILG and Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), qualified beneficiaries of CLIP are those regular members of NPA who surfaced 2011 onwards and have expressed the desire to abandon armed violence and become productive members of the society including their partners/spouses (whether legitimate or illegitimate), parents or siblings, if applicable.

Also qualified are those who did not receive full assistance under the Social Integration Program based on OPAPP's special list of former rebels that surfaced in 2007 to 2009.

Paredes also vowed to assist the former rebels to live normal lives.

Meanwhile, Governor Gerardo Noveras is very grateful that the rebels finally returned to the mainstream of the society and is hoping they will become productive partners of the government in establishing peace and order in the community.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1022034>

www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

Philippine military welcomes LGBT applicants

From Update Philippines (Jan 18): Philippine military welcomes LGBT applicants

In searching for 10,000 Filipinos who want to volunteer to become new soldiers, sailors, airmen, or marines, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said they would not discriminate against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community who may want to apply.

But along with the open invitation came repeated reminders for the LGBT community to behave properly, if they so wish to join the Philippine military.

"We were being asked kung ang recruitment ba namin will include members of the LGBT – the so-called LGBT community. Are we not going to discriminate against them? Ang sagot po namin, no. The AFP is not going to discriminate against them. Malaya po silang makapag-apply at pumasok sa Armed Forces," said Colonel Edgard Arevalo, AFP chief of public affairs.

"Subalit ang amin pong taqubilin ay tiisa lamang. Sa sandaling sila po ay mag-apply at tanggapin na po sa Armed Forces of the Philippines, atin po silang pinapa-alalahanan na kailangan po nilang mag-act at kumilos nang may dignidad at pag-iingat sa kanilang unipormang isusuot. Sapagkat an AFP is a uniformed service. It is a noble profession of arms," he added.

Arevalo said there are provisions in military law defining good conduct.

"Ang ating AFP has punitive laws. Lalong-lalo na ang nakalagay sa articles of war, na sinasabing nagpo-proscribe ng conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline," he said.

He stressed that anyone who could fulfill the application requirements would be welcomed into the AFP, regardless of their gender.

"They are welcome. Pwede po silang mag-apply. Tatanggapin po natin sila sa AFP, but of course they have to pass all the examinations, all the tests," he said.

Arevalo expressed his belief that the LGBT community would be able to contribute greatly to the Armed Forces, but again ended with the warning that military discipline is required under the articles of war.

The public affairs chief however did not explain why he felt the need to issue such reminders in discussing the prospect of recruiting members of the LGBT community.

<https://www.update.ph/2018/01/philippine-military-welcomes-lgbt-applicants/23884>