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# LP: KILLINGS CREATING LIMATE OF LAWLESSNESS

STORY BY DJ YAP

The opposition Liberal Party warns that the slayings could be intended to justify the imposition of martial law, but the PNP chief says he sees no pattern in the attacks.

A2

FROM A1

By DJ Yap  
@deejayapINQ

The opposition Liberal Party (LP) has warned that the series of killings of local officials could be orchestrated to create an "atmosphere of lawlessness" that would give the Duterte administration grounds for the imposition of martial law.

Mayor Antonio Halili of Tanauan City, Batangas province, who had been linked by President Duterte to illegal drugs, was shot dead by a sniper during flag-raising rites in front of City Hall on Monday.

On Tuesday afternoon, motorcycle-riding gunmen killed Mayor Ferdinand Bote of General Tinio, Nueva Ecija province.

On Saturday afternoon, gunmen in a black pickup fired on a vehicle carrying Vice Mayor Alexander Lubigan of Trece Martires City, Cavite province, killing him outright.

Bote and Lubigan had no known links to drugs. Police said no clear motive for the at-

tack on Bote had emerged yet but they were looking at politics in the killing of Lubigan.

## Atmosphere of lawlessness

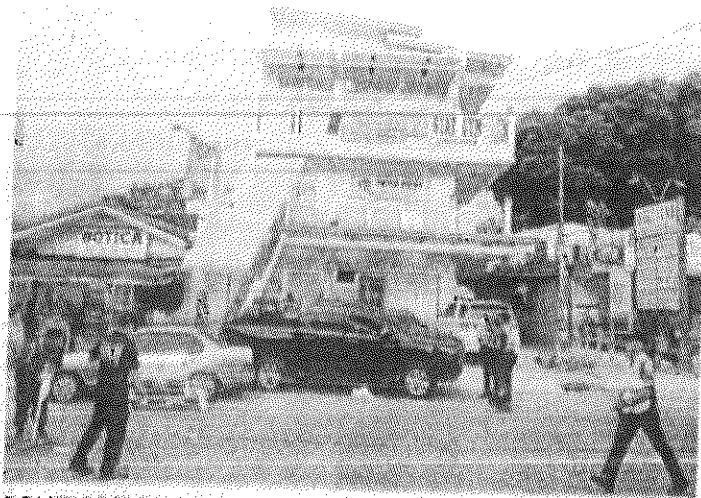
"What is going on? Are these deliberate and orchestrated attempts at creating an atmosphere of lawlessness to justify strongman rule?" Sen. Francis Pangilinan, LP president, said in a statement on Saturday.

"Another local executive in Luzon and two more in Mindanao were killed today even before authorities can provide the lead to the killing of two mayors earlier this week. The warehouse of suspected drug lord Peter Lim in Cebu was bombed on Thursday," Pangilinan said.

The senator was referring to the killing in separate attacks on Saturday of Michael Magalanes, 38, a newly elected village councilor in Zamboanga City, and Nassif Palawan Bansil, 31, a municipal councilor of Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur province.

The LP leader said the Philippine National Police must take immediate action to solve the high-profile killings.

"A swift, sure and lawful



**POLITICS EYED** Police say politics may be behind the killing of Trece Martires Vice Mayor Alexander Lubigan in front of this gym at Barangay Luciano. —RICHARD A. REYES

move by the PNP to bring the killers behind bars is what the public awaits. At the same time, the police must ensure visibility, especially in key critical areas to prevent another bloody incident," he said.

"What we want is a safe, secure and peaceful society, not a gangster land," he added.

Sen. Bam Aquino said the assassination of Lubigan showed the extent to which violence

had become the norm.

"For violence to stop, the government must stop using force. If they keep using violence as the solution to the country's problems, our society will not be peaceful and safe," Aquino said.

#### **Nothing to worry about**

But PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde said the people should not be worried over the

killings of local officials.

"We should not have any worries. We should not be afraid," Albayalde told reporters in Albay province on Saturday when asked about the killings of Halili, Bote and Lubigan.

"These [killings] are not systematic. There is no pattern. We do not know if this involves politics. There are a lot of possible reasons," he added.

The PNP chief said a thorough investigation of the killings was going on.

"We know that here in our country, every election season, although it is puzzling, before, during and after the election, there are elected officials who die," he said.

Police said Lubigan had "no known enemy" and that they had ruled out illegal drugs.

#### **Politics**

Investigators said they were looking at politics behind the attack on Lubigan, as the vice mayor told people close to him on Friday that he intended to run for mayor in next year's midterm elections.

"Initially, what we are looking at is politics," said Chief

Supt. Edward Carranza, director of the Calabarzon police.

Asked for details, Carranza said Lubigan was serving his last term and that investigators had received information that the vice mayor told people close to him on Friday that he would run for mayor in 2019.

In 2016, Lubigan ran as a candidate of the United Nationalist Alliance Mayor Melandres de Sagun, who is also serving his last term, belongs to the same political party.

De Sagun is on leave.

"Trece Martires has this [record] of intense political rivalry," Carranza said, but he declined to name any politician who might be involved in the attack on Lubigan.

In recent elections, however, candidates from local political clans have been running unopposed.

Cavite Gov. Juanito Crispin Remulla said the last election-related violence recorded in the province was about 11 years ago, but added that he, too, would describe as "hot" the political climate in the provincial capital.

—WITH REPORTS FROM MICHAEL JAUCIAN AND MARICAR CINCO, INQ

# Destabilization eyed in local execs' slays

By EDU PUNAY

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) will look into the recent spate of killings of local executives to determine if these were interrelated and had something to do with a supposed destabilization plot.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra has ordered the NBI to probe the killing of Trece Martires City vice mayor Alex Lubigan in Cavite last Saturday — the third local executive to be murdered in a week.

Guevarra directed the NBI to include Lubigan's case in its fact-finding investigation on the killing of Tanauan City mayor Antonio Halili last Monday and of General Tino mayor Ferdinand Bote the following day.

"I have instructed (NBI) Director (Dante) Gierran to determine if there is a pattern in these three cases or if they were unrelated," Guevarra said in a text message yesterday, adding that "we need immediate results."

Lubigan, 44, was gunned

down in front of a Korean hospital on Saturday. He was in a black Toyota Hilux vehicle in Barangay Luciano, Trece Martires City when the still unidentified suspects shot him at around 3 p.m. His driver-bodyguard Romulo Guilmer was also killed.

Among the motives being looked into by the police is local politics, as residents talked of the vice mayor's intention to run for mayor in next year's elections. The residents claimed Lubigan was not known to have engaged in illegal activities. He was also not in the drug watchlist.

In Halili's killing, the police task group is already tracking several vehicles that could have been used for a getaway.

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# Destabilization From Page 1

Senior Supt. Nolasco Bathan, task group head and deputy regional director for operations, said his men are determining the vehicle owners who might be able to help solve the killing of the former Lanao City mayor who was buried yesterday.

But Guevarra wanted the NBI to look into the bigger picture on the killing of Halili, Bote and Lubigan and find out if these are interconnected and part of a scheme to destabilize the Duterte administration.

"The NBI will look at all possible angles because we have to leave no stone unturned," he stressed.

Earlier, presidential

spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said the successive murders could be perpetrated by certain groups to "erode confidence in the President" as the Armed Forces of the Philippines revealed the discovery of documents relating to a communist plot to oust Duterte by October.

Guevarra gave assurance that the NBI would look into all possible angles, including the possible relation of Halili's killing to the illegal drug trade and politics for that of Bote and Lubigan.

## More killings

Director General Oscar Albayalde, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, is disturbed

with the series of killings and made an appeal for the public to help in solving the cases by providing information that could lead to the identification, arrest and prosecution of their attackers and possibly the masterminds.

"We are disturbed and saddened by this and similar incidents involving our local chief executives," he said in a statement. Aside from Halili, Bote and Lubigan, the police also reported the killing of Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur councilor Nassif Palawan Basil last Saturday.

Senior Inspector Jemar de los Santos, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) police spokesman, said the attack was made in the neighboring Balabagan town, adding that former baran-

gay chairman Alvin Abdullah Sampulna and two others were wounded in the attack.

Initial investigation showed that the four victims were inside the compound of former mayor Hadji Amer Sampiano for a visit when five unidentified persons entered and fired at them.

In Bacolod City, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Martin Difo advised local government officials to double their security, especially if they are receiving threats to life.

He said the DILG is more than willing to extend protection to the local officers as they perform their duties.

- With Cecille Suerte Felipe, Ed Amoroso, Gilbert Bayoran

## US warships pass through Taiwan Strait amid heightened tensions with Beijing

WASHINGTON/TAIPEI (Reuters) - Two US warships passed through the Taiwan Strait on Saturday on a voyage that will likely be viewed in the self ruled island as a sign of support by President Donald Trump amid heightened tension with China.

"Two US Navy ships conducted a routine transit through the international waters of the Taiwan Strait on July 7-8 (local time)," Captain Charlie Brown, a spokesman for US Pacific Fleet, told Reuters in a statement.

"US Navy Ships transit between the South China Sea and East China Sea via the Taiwan Strait and have done so for many years," Brown said.

US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the destroyers Mustin and Benfold carried out the passage.

Earlier on Saturday, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said the ships were moving in a north-eastern direction, adding that the situation was in accordance with regulations.

Washington has no formal ties with Taiwan but is bound by law to help it defend itself and is the island's main source of arms. China regularly says Taiwan is the most sensitive issue in its ties with the United States.

The passage through the Taiwan Strait, the first such one

by a US Navy ship in about a year, follows a series of Chinese military drills around the island that have stoked tensions between Taipei and Beijing.

"The US is aggravating Taiwan Strait tensions," state-controlled Chinese tabloid The Global Times, which is run by the People's Daily, said on Twitter.

"The PLA Navy must have monitored the situation and has it under control, a military affairs expert said after two US Navy vessels sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Saturday," it added.

China claims Taiwan as its own and has never renounced the use of force to bring under its control what it sees as a wayward province. Taiwan has shown no interest in being governed by the ruling Communist Party in Beijing.

The move comes as a US-China trade fight is seen as dragging on for a potentially prolonged period, as the world's two biggest economies flex their muscles with no sign of negotiations to ease tensions.

Reuters first reported last month that the United States was considering sending a warship and had examined plans for an aircraft carrier passage, but ultimately did not pursue that option perhaps because of concerns about upsetting China.



## 'Kambisita 2' to be held soon – Brawner

By BONITA L. ENMAC

**MARAWI CITY** – In line with the celebration of 59th Araw ng Lanao del Sur, Joint Task Force Lanao Deputy Commander Colonel Romeo Brawner, Jr. announced that displaced residents of this city may be allowed to visit their residences anew in what he dubbed as "Kambisita 2."

Brawner made the disclosure before government employees at the provincial capitol gym recently.

He also said the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from ground zero or the most affected area in the five-month

conflict that ravaged this city last year may soon be all able to return.

"Very soon magkakaroon po tayo ng Kambisita part 2 para po doon sa nakatira sa ground zero or MAA, we will give you another chance to go back inside", Brawner said.

In the first Kambisita, held last April 1 to May 10, IDPs were allowed to visit their residences for a chance to retrieve whatever they could.

"But this time ang gagawin po natin ay magini measure tayo nung exact measurement ng mga properties ninyo" Brawner said.

He said their properties will be

measured through high technology, such as drones, to take pictures, and with the use of a GPS system.

Brawner underscored that this was to make sure that the IDPs' properties will be properly located when the rehabilitation goes into full swing soon.

He also maintained that the government will properly compensate those whose properties could be affected by the road widening or the other projects during the rehabilitation phase.

Iyang road widening, tinamaan iyang property ninyo, alala po ng

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, ng Task Force Bangon Marawi kung ilang square meters iyong tinamaan sa property ninyo pata po mabigyan kayo ng karampatang bayad. Babayaran po ng ating gobyerno ang property ninyo na tatamaan dahil sa development," Brawner said.

The IDPs will also be asked to inform them of their relatives' burial sites.

"Kung meron pong nakalibing na kamag-anak sa properties ninyo, ituro ninyo," said Brawner, who added that these burial sites will be properly marked so that the necessary steps to respect the dead will be made during the rehabilitation.

# 4 countries offer choppers

BY DEMPSEY REYES

**F**OUR countries — Russia, Turkey, South Korea and the United States — have expressed willingness to supply helicopters to the Philippine Air Force, the Department of National Defense (DND) confirmed on Sunday.

Defense spokesman Arsenio Andolong said executives from South Korea made their offer to DND officials and members of the Air Force's technical working group, which was formed to scout for possible suppliers of combat helicopters.

The Air Force is taking these steps, which is to look for other sources as replacement to the cancelled deal on the helicopters

with Canada," Andolong told *The Manila Times*.

Andolong was referring to the deal terminated by President Rodrigo Duterte after the Canadian government ordered a review of the procurement of combat utility helicopters by the Philippines.

Andolong said the government has yet to decide where to acquire helicopters.

"The technical working group of the Air Force is still conducting its market research over the potential countries that may be the new sources for the choppers and as of this time, they are still pre-studying the countries," he explained.

Andolong said DND officials only discussed the terms of reference on the procurement of helicopters with the Koreans. A2

# 7,000 cops to secure SoNA

By Nelson S. Badilla

About 7,000 policemen will be deployed in and around the Batasan Complex in Quezon City to ensure a safe, peaceful and orderly conduct of President Rodrigo Duterte's third State of the Nation Address (SoNA) on July 23.

Chief Supt. Guillermo Lorenzo Eleazar, director of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), said on radio the policemen will come from the five police districts of NCRPO, aside from the NCRPO command itself.

The police force is expected to be augmented by members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and contingents from various government agencies.

President Duterte has ordered the police and military to observe maximum tolerance in dealing with

protesters during the SoNA, saying he doesn't want them to carry firearms.

Eleazar has been designated commander of the police task force securing the SoNA.

*The first two SoNA had been relatively peaceful, with Duterte even meeting up with protesters last year.*

The police official said they need make sure no untoward incident at the Batasan, where the House of Representatives is located.

Eleazar they would have to separate the anti-Duterte groups with those supporting the government so they would not be able to confront one another.

The first two SoNA of Duterte had been generally peaceful and

Eleazar said they want to keep that record going by preparing long and hard for the third SoNA.

Chief Supt. Joselito Esquivel Jr. echoed Eleazar's statement as he assured that the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) which he heads is ready to take on the challenge.

Esquivel will be the ground commander during the third SoNA.

In keeping with Duterte's directive, Eleazar said the police will not prevent rallies, but that protesters should know the boundaries of their right to freedom of assembly and free speech.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has been tasked to ensure the smooth flow of traffic along Commonwealth Avenue leading to the Batasan Complex.

Duterte has said he wants his third SoNA to be festive but that he would not want protests.

"Seek redress, shout on the streets. I will tell the military and police to exercise maximum tolerance (and) to just back off when pushed to the wall," the President said.

President Duterte said those who would be tasked to deal with SoNA protesters must not allow themselves to be provoked saying policemen must expect themselves to be "spat on."

He said though that "I am not asking you to die" but to "just retreat and retreat" until they are pushed as far back as the Pasig River.

The first two SoNA had been relatively peaceful, with Duterte even meeting up with protesters last year. *JB*

## No coalition gov't with Reds, Rody insists

By ALEXIS ROMERO

After the exchanges between the government and the communists, what's next for the peace talks?

Even President Duterte does not know, but he nevertheless remains firm on the conditions he set for the negotiations.

One of the conditions is that communist negotiators should not push for a coalition government, a setup that Duterte claimed would require him to share power with the rebels.

"I was reading again the entire (proposal)... it still ends to power sharing and coalition (government). I will show you the matrix that I made," Duterte said during the inauguration of Malayan Colleges in Davao City last Saturday.

"When you sum it up, it boils down to power sharing or coalition government, which I cannot give to them because it is not within the power of the presidency to concede anything as important as authority. I cannot give it to them. So I don't know what would be the next step," he added.

The National Democratic Front, which represents the communists in the peace talks, has denied demanding a coalition government.

The NDF accused Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and other officials of peddling "orchestrated lies."

Lorenzana has claimed that the communists have crafted a three-year plan to "advance the revolutionary government," including an effort to oust Duterte if he does not agree to a coalition agreement.

For his part, Interior and Local Government officer-in-charge Eduardo Año urged the rebels to stop hostilities and abandon their call for a coalition government if they want peace talks with the government to prosper.

NDF panel chairman Fidel Agcaoili has said the lies of Duterte's officials "have sounded the death knell on the peace talks" under the present administration.

Duterte has canceled the formal talks scheduled for last month to allow him to "personally" review the agreements signed by his predecessors and the communists.

Other conditions set by the President are the cessation of hostilities and collection of "revolutionary taxes."

2 - With Cecille Suerte Felipe

# Joma: Reds ready for war

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.  
@dtmallarijrnq

LUCENA CITY—Communist rebels are ready to wage war against the government, Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria Sison said on Saturday.

Sison said the CPP had ordered its armed wing, New People's Army, to frustrate the military's counterinsurgency operations in anticipation of the termination of peace talks.

### 'Worse attack'

"I think that the revolutionary forces and people are ready to fight back even against worse attack from the Duterte regime," the exiled CPP founder said in an online interview.

Speaking in Davao City, President Duterte on Friday



ARMED Young communist rebels patrol the countryside.

night balked at the CPP's alleged proposal to share power in a coalition government, declaring "I cannot give it to you. Let's go to war."

Sison, however, said it was Mr. Duterte who expressed openness to a coalition government with the rebels when he was still a mayor in 2014.

Mr. Duterte also said on Saturday night that there was a "small window" for the government to reach a peace agreement with the rebels.

"For the small window that I gave to myself and Sison, we have to have some common agreement. Sixty days and after that, if nothing happens, then I

tell you: Prepare for war," he said in Davao City.

He added: "So I don't know what would be the next step... No coalition government, cessation of hostilities, they must surrender and place themselves in camps, I do not disarm them."

### Public consultations

Jesus Dureza, presidential peace adviser, on Sunday said Mr. Duterte had not shut the doors on the talks.

The President had canceled talks set for June 28-30 in Oslo, Norway, saying the government needed to first hold public consultations on the previous agreements.

Sison said the rebels had been sincere in their quest for peace. —WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, BONG S. SARMIENTO AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ/11

## Duterte dares Reds: Prepare for war

By Nat Mariano

THE doors remain "wide open" for the resumption of the peace talks even as President Rodrigo Duterte challenged the communist rebels to prepare for war, an official said Saturday.

Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza said they had not closed the doors to the peace and efforts to pursue the peace negotiations.

"As I said, the doors are still open for both sides to work on," Dureza said.

"When that precise time comes, we at the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process will again seek the President's guidance as we proceed to do our mandated task to bring a just and sustainable peace in the land."

During an event in Davao City last Friday, Duterte made his remark as he thought the prospects for the continuation of the peace negotiations with the communists had become unlikely.

He said he had carefully read all the documents and previous agreements between the communists, led by the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, and the past administrations.

"If you read it, it all ends up with the power-sharing and a coalition government," said Duterte, believing the negotiations that existed from the previous Ramos, Arroyo and Aquino administrations all indicated that the rebels wanted to share power with the government.

"I cannot give it to you. Let's go to war. Let us all go to war. I studied it one by one [as to] what are the implications and where is the direction. It all ends up to power sharing."

Dureza was quick to dismiss Duterte's combative remarks.

"I was present when President Duterte said last night in an event in Davao City that if he would be removed soon from office as allegedly announced by the enemies of the state, then they would have nobody to talk with. Hence, there would be no more talks," said Dureza, adding that the President was only making an assumption.

Last Wednesday, Malacañang announced that the doors for such peace talks were still open subject to the conditions set by the President.

"The door for the peace talks remains open provided [Duterte's] conditions are met," Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said in a statement following the command conference held Wednesday night.

It has been noted that Duterte wants a stop to the collection of the so-called revolutionary taxes by the communists, to make the venue of the talks here and to have a ceasefire agreement in which the armed members of the New People's Army were encamped in designated areas.

However, Communist Party of the Philippines founding chairman Jose Maria Sison claimed that the conditions was a mere setup for a nationwide martial law.

Malacañang had previously assured the public there were no plans for a declaration of a nationwide martial law as the President deemed it to be problematic.

# Duterte gives 'small window' for peace talks with Reds

BY GENALYN D. KABILING

President Duterte said he was still giving a "small window" for government and the communist

## Duterte gives 'small...

rebels to forge a peace agreement. The President insisted that the rebels must agree to the cessation of hostilities, stop the demand for a coalition government, among others, for the peace talks to resume.

"No coalition government, cessation of hostilities, tapos they must surrender and place themselves in camps. I do not disarm them," Duterte said at the inauguration of the Malayan Colleges Mindanao in Davao City.

"For the small window that I gave to myself and (Jose Maria) Sison, we have to have some common agreement — 60 days and after that, if nothing happens, then I tell you: prepare for war because this rebellion of the Communist Party will go on," he added.

Earlier, the President said he was not interested in talking peace with the rebel group after taking offense at Sison's claim that he would be ousted in three years. Duterte said he was prepared to accept his destiny if overthrown from power but prefers to go to war with the rebels first.

"Sabi nila (They said) instead of fighting, they'll just use their energies to oust Duterte. Ah okay lang kung 'yun ang ginusto ng tao (That's fine with me if that's what the people want). I am ready to be ousted pero fight muna tayo (but let's fight first)," he said during a science and technology forum last Friday.

At the Davao event last Saturday, the President still seemed irritated at Sison's ouster moves against him, telling him to talk peace with his successor instead.

"Sabi niya, 'Ah Duterte will not last three years.' Kaya sabi ko, 'Ayaw ko na lang makipag-usap sa iyo kasi hanggang three years lang man pala ako. 'Di after three years, wala na ako diyari. So 'yang kausap mo, hintayin mo three years' (He said Duterte will not last three years. So I said, I don't want to talk to you since I'll last only for three years. After three years, I won't be there. So wait for three years to talk to someone)," he said.

Duterte said he has reviewed the government's previous agreements with the communists, including the safety guarantee pact. He said he found out that rebels were aiming for a "power-sharing" or coalition government, which he would not accept.

"When you sum it up, it boils down to power sharing or coalition government, which I cannot give to them because it is not within the power of the presidency to concede anything as important as authority," he added.

The government earlier decided to put on hold the resumption of the peace talks with the communist rebels pending a review of previous agreements as well as consultations with various sectors.

The rebel group has reportedly agreed to postpone the talks with the government, citing the President's refusal to heed calls for socio economic reforms.

The Palace later opted to push for localized peace talks with communist rebels, citing they were proven successful in the past and have led to the surrender of rebels.

# Dureza: Gov't still open to peace talks

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PEACE Adviser Jesus Dureza yesterday said government remains open to negotiating peace with the communist group despite President Duterte's latest pronouncement that he would no longer talk peace with Jose Maria Sison, founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines and chief political consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

Dureza said the President's statement was based on Sison's recent claim that since Duterte will be ousted after his third year in office the CPP-NPA-NDFP would just wait for the next administration to talk peace.

"I was present when President Duterte said last night in

an event in Davao City that if he would be removed soon from office, as allegedly announced by the enemies of the state, then they would have nobody to talk with. Hence there would be no more talks, the President added. He was obviously making an assumption," Dureza said, referring to the President's speech at the inauguration of the Malayan College Mindanao held in Davao City on Saturday.

"We have not closed the doors to peace. Hence, efforts to pursue peace through negotiations are still possible. As I said the doors are still wide open for both sides to work on. When that precise time comes, we at OPAPP (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process) will again seek his guidance as we proceed to do our mandated task to bring just and sustainable peace in

the land - a dream of every Filipino, and that of President Duterte," Dureza said.

Duterte last month cancelled the resumption of the fifth round of formal talks as he wants a review of all past agreements forged in connection with the peace talks. Malacanang said it is open to holding localized talks and will issue guidelines to local government units that would talk peace talks in their areas.

Duterte, during the inauguration of the Malayan College Mindanao on Saturday, said, "I don't know what would be the next step. We are waiting for their (CPP-NPA-NDFP's next move)."

He said talking peace with the enemies of the state was one of the promises he made and he intends to keep it. But, Duterte reiterated, he would not agree to a coalition

government with the CPP-NPA-NDFP, and if nothing happens and no agreement will be signed soon, "prepare for war because this rebellion of the Communist Party will go on."

The President also said his administration has been trying to talk peace with the communists but Sison recently said his group would no longer talk with the incumbent government since there would be a new administration soon.

"I'm talking to Sison. Eh sabi niya, 'Ah, Duterte will not last three years.' Kaya sabi ko, 'Ayaw ko na lang makipag-usap sa iyo kay hanggang three years lang man pala ako (I'm talking to Sison. He said Duterte will not last three years. So I said, I no longer want to talk to you because I will last only for three years),' Duterte said. *BL*



# NPA amazon surrenders to military

By MIKE H. CRISMUNDO

**CAMP BANCASL**, Butuan City — A New People's Army (NPA) amazon surrendered to the Army's 36th Infantry Battalion (36th IB) in Barangay Dayo-an, Tago, Surigao del Sur, recently, Capt. Francisco P. Garelo, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer of the 36th IB told The Manila Bulletin on Sunday.

He said the female fighter, whose identity was withheld for security reasons, was a member of Squad 2, Platoon

3 of Guerilla Front Committee 30 (GFC 30) of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao regional Committee (NEMRC).

"When some of her comrades in arms surrendered to the government and availed of the government's livelihood, peace and development program, she experienced low morale that triggered her surrender," said Garelo.

He added that based on his initial interview with the NPA amazon, "she was also tired of running in the mountains with lack of food and other logistical

support," further claimed the 36th IB CMO officer.

The returnee is now being assisted by the 36th IB, local government units and other concerned line government agencies for her enrollment into the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP).

She will undergo a series of debriefing and counselling by other government agencies, he added.

In another development, a massive clearing operation was undertaken by troops of the 29th Infantry Battalion

(29th IB) after a gun battle in Mahaba area, Cahadbaran City, Agusan del Norte province, Capt. Al Anthony Pueblas, CMO officer of the Army's 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade based here said.

The 402nd CMO officer said the troops believed that an undetermined numbers of communist terrorists were believed killed or wounded as evidenced by bloodstains found along the rebels' escape route of withdrawal.

A soldier was also killed in the Mahaba area encounter, it said. \

## NPA amazon surrenders

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City - A New People's Army (NPA) amazon voluntarily surrendered to the Army's 36th Infantry Battalion (36th IB) in Barangay Dayo-an, Tago, Surigao del Sur, recently. Capt. Francisco P. Garelo, Civil Military Operation (CMO) officer of the 36th IB on Sunday said the surrendered NPA amazon (name withheld for security reason) was a former member of Squad 2, Platoon 3 of Guerrilla Front Committee 30 (GFC 30) of the CPP-NPA Northeastern Mindanao regional Committee (NEMRC). "She said she was tired of running in the mountains, lacking food and other logistical support," said Garelo. Currently, the rebel returnee is being assisted by the 36th IB, local government units and other concerned line government agencies for her enrollment in the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP). **(Mike U. Crismundo)**

### 11 NPA REBELS SURRENDER IN NUEVA ECIJA, ABRA

GAMU, Isabela: At least 11 New People's Army (NPA) rebels belonging to the Kilusang Larangang Gerilya (KLG) Caraballo in Nueva Ecija and in Abra surrendered recently. Lt. Col. Isagani Nato, Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) public information chief, said the six rebels in Nueva Ecija who surrendered in Barangay San Agustin, Carranglan town were also members of the Millsyang Bayan who initially went on lie-low status and eventually surrendered to the 3rd Civil Military Operations (CMO) Company of the 84th Infantry Battalion and the 70th Cadre Battalion, all under the Joint Task Force (JTF) Kaugnay. Recovered from them were caliber .30 M1 garand rifle, a US carbine M1 with magazine, a US springfield M1903 bolt action, two modified 12 gauge shot gun with live ammunition and magazine and a modified 16-gauge shot gun with ammunition. Nato said the rebels' surrender was a result of a CMO in the tri-boundaries of Nueva Ecija, Eastern Pangasinan and Nueva Vizcaya. He said the other five NPA rebels surrendered to the 24th Infantry Battalion under the JTF Kaugnay and Abra provincial police office with the assistance of residents in Barangay Tumulip, Licuan Baay town in Abra. They surrendered without firearms to the 24th Infantry Battalion. Ranging in age from 15-19, the NPA rebels were from the municipalities of Meyaral and San Fernando, both in Bukidnon province in Mindanao. The surrenderers claimed they fled from their camp in Sallapadan, Abra because of severe fatigue and difficulty of being young red fighters.

A7 LEANDER C. DOMINGO

## NPA leader falls in Davao

A top leader of the New People's Army (NPA) was arrested in a joint operation of the Philippine Army and Philippine National Police units in Purok 2-A, Sinayawan, Hagonoy, Davao del Sur on Saturday afternoon.

Chief Insp. Milgrace Driz, spokesperson of Police Regional Office 11, reported that Reynaldo Cole Saavedra alias Antoy, was nabbed on the strength of a warrant of arrest.

Saavedra is the commanding officer of the NPA's Guerilla Front 71-Far South Mindanao Region.

Driz said the warrant for rebellion was issued by Regional Trial Court 11th Judicial Region, Branch 61, Digos City on Nov. 23, 2017, and was signed by Presiding Judge Carfelita Cardientes Flores.

Capt. Jerry Lamosao, spokesperson of the 10th Infantry Division, said GF 71 operates in the areas of General Santos City, South Cotabato.

The communist group's unit was responsible for extortion, harassment, ambush and recruitment activities in the area.

Driz said the operating teams came from the Regional Intelligence division led by Supt. Leslie Ann Bejarin.

Saavedra is now in the custody of 73rd Infantry Battalion.

The NPA has been hit by mass surrenders in the past few weeks, including a total of 118 rebels who gave up their arms and returned to the fold of the law in Bukidnon.

In turn, the government provided the rebel-returnees with livelihood assistance.

PNA

# Peace window still open

By Angie M. Rosales

President Duterte said the 60-day window for peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines remains open no matter the war of words with CPP founding chairperson Jose Maria Sison. But as to when the renegotiations resume is uncertain at this point.

"I don't know the next step," he said, while ruling out such conditions as a coalition government with the rebels and the extraction of so-called revolutionary taxes.

"But I do not (seek to) disarm them" as well, he quickly added.

According to the Chief Executive, force was the last thing in his mind but that he was prepared to sign a peace pact with Sison if the communist leader

**"Reds won't be asked to lay down arms."**

was up to it. "If nothing happens, I tell you, prepare for war because this rebellion of the communist party will go on," he said in a speech delivered in Matina, Davao City Saturday night.

He emphasized that the peace offer is time bound and extended on the basis that the communist rebels are in no position to demand anything as a precondition to negotiations.

"I no longer want to talk to you if I will just serve three years. After three years, when I'm no longer there, you will have to wait for another three years," he told Sison while referencing part of the communist leader's take on the Presi-

dent's tenure hold on political power.

Mr. Duterte previously ordered for a more thorough review of the peace terms the rebel group offered to government.

**No coalition gov't**

"When you sum it up, it boils down to power-sharing or coalition government which I cannot give to them because it is not within the power of the presidency to concede anything as important as authority. Hindi ko maibigay sa kanila (I cannot give that to them)," he said.

He called on Sison and the CPP-NPA to come to the peace table quickly or risk the rekindling of hostilities with government forces.

Apart from the communist insurgents, the President acknowledged that other peace pact with the Muslim

insurgents who he said should also put down their arms and finding peace in Mindanao as proposed under the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

"(Moro Islamic Liberation Front chair Al Haj) Murad (Ibrahim) is just biding his time, well and good. We hope that someday we can have peace at last," he said.

**Peace deal under review**

He repeated his call for Sison to come home and dialogue with the government under the banner of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), a key agreement between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) extending immunity to rebel peace negotiators.

Unless Sison comes home and forge a peace agreement in an in-country dialogue with the government, then Sison and his rebels cannot possibly find peace.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and Secretary Jesus Dureza reiterated the President wants the rebels to stop the extraction of the revolutionary tax on business and individuals and bluntly ruled out Malacanang's participation in any coalition government.

But he said peace arrangements may be pursued by local government units with insurgents in their respective areas of responsibility.

Dureza said President Duterte's terms for a new round of peace talks with the communist rebels was forged in the wake of the command conference Malacanang convened just last week.

## Duterte gives 'small window' to peace pact with communists

President Duterte said he was still giving a "small window" for government and the communist rebels to forge a peace agreement.

The President insisted that the rebels must agree to the cessation of hostilities and stop the demand for a coalition government, among others, for the resumption of the peace talks.

"No coalition government, cessation of hostilities, tapos they must surrender and place themselves in camps. I do not disarm them," Duterte said the inauguration of the Malayan Colleges of Mindanao in Davao City last Saturday.

"For the small window that I gave to myself and Sison, we have to have some common agreement — 60 days and after that, if nothing happens, then I tell you: Prepare for war because this rebellion of the Communist Party will go on," he added.

The President had earlier said he was not interested in talking peace with the rebel group after he was of-

fended by Sison's claim that he would be ousted in three years.

Duterte said he was prepared to accept his destiny if overthrown from power but prefers to go to war with the rebels first.

"Sabi nila instead of fighting, they'll just use their energies to oust Duterte. Ah, okay lang kung 'yun ang ginusto ng tao. I am ready to be ousted pero fight muna tayo," he said during a science and technology forum last Friday in Davao City.

At the Davao City event last Saturday, the President still seemed irritated at Sison's ouster moves against him, telling him to talk peace with his successor instead.

"Sabi niya, 'Ah Duterte will not last three years.' Kaya sabi ko, 'Ayaw ko na lang makipag-usap sa iyo kasi hanggang three years lang man pala ako. 'Di after three years, wala na ako diyan. So yang kausap mo, hinayin mo three years,'" he said. **(Genalyn D. Kabiling)**

# Bicam on BBL held this week

By JESS DIAZ

The bicameral conference that would reconcile the versions of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) starts today at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Pasig City.

The conference will last for five

days until Friday. The two chambers are hoping to agree on a final version that they could pass when they open their third and last regular session on July 23 so that President Duterte could sign it before or during his third State of the Nation Address in the afternoon of that day.

House Majority Leader, Ilocos

Norte Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas and his Senate counterpart Juan Miguel Zubiri co-chair the 29-member conference committee.

The Senate-House conference committee is composed of 19 congressmen and 10 senators.

Critics of the proposed BBL said it contains several constitutionally questionable provisions, including those on taxation, shared powers between the national government and the envisioned new Bangsamoro region, definition of territory, and the creation of regional offices that duplicate the functions of constitutional commissions and national agencies.

Unless such provisions are deleted, critics have vowed to question a

BBL passed by Congress and signed by the President before the Supreme Court.

During the Arroyo administration, the Supreme Court struck down the memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain the government negotiated with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which called for the creation of a Bangsamoro juridical entity in place of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The present proposed BBL and the previous BBL draft, whose approval by Congress was derailed by the Mamasapano massacre on Jan. 25, 2015, are essentially similar to that agreement.

Zubiri, who had chaired the sub-committee on the BBL in the chamber, earlier expressed optimism the bicameral committee can finish its work before the end of the week.

2 — With Paolo Romero

## Bicam meet on BBL set

The Senate and the House of Representatives will meet on Monday to reconcile "contentious" differences in each of their respective versions of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri will lead the Senate contingent while House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas will lead the House contingent in the bicameral committee conference at Crown Plaza Manila in Quezon City.

"It is going to be exciting. Hopefully, we are able to accomplish this and arrive at a version that is acceptable to everyone," Zubiri said in a radio interview on Saturday.

### Contentious differences

Zubiri said he talked with Senate President Vicente Sotto III last week and both agreed that the panel would first discuss the points of agreement instead of the contentious ones.

"Actually, we have identified the contentious differences. We studied those well yesterday, and we are looking for win-win solutions," he said.

The Senate introduced some 150 amendments to the original proposal that was based on the draft of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission. —DJ YAP INQ



# Bicam to rush final BBL bill

By Mario J. Mallari

The bicameral committee is expected to complete reconciled version of the Senate and House bills of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) by Wednesday, Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri said.

Zubiri added the bicameral conference committee consultations with the House of Representatives contingent, led by Majority Leader Rep. Rodolfo Farinas, will start today.

He said contentious issues in the BBL have been identified by the Senate and that amendments have been introduced.

"Hopefully, we can fix them and all that we discussed will be acceptable to all," Zubiri said.

"Hopefully, by Wednesday we can have formal signing of the bicameral report. We will have marathon hearings Monday and Tuesday, then Wednesday we can

have the clean copy for signing," according to Zubiri.

Asked if a three-day timeline is workable, Zubiri said "it can be done if there are no delays...we will just find win-win solution."

Zubiri stressed their amendments to the proposed BBL are not meant to water down the bill.

He said almost 150 amendments were introduced by the Senate to the original BBL.

## Goal is stronger BBL

"These amendments were meant to further strengthen the BBL," Zubiri said as he dismissed concerns that the Senate version provides for an autonomous region which is weaker than the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

"From our view, this is better than the ARMM law," he stressed.

Among the contentious provisions of the original BBL, according to Zubiri, are the sharing of taxes, transportation and communications tax incentives and police and armed forces noting President Duterte's pronouncements there should only be one Philippine National Police (PNP) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Zubiri said the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC), chaired by Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal, was invited to serve as consultant during the bicameral meeting.

He cited the importance of the BTC inputs to the final report.

## Amendments should be acceptable

"We have to make sure that the amendments are acceptable

so that there will be peace in Mindanao. This is the final move for peace," said Zubiri who is from Mindanao.

Zubiri added Senate President Vicente Sotto III is expected to drop by during the meeting.

"He should be there because this is a significant legislation, a landmark one. Once in a lifetime piece of legislation and he is giving support for peace," Zubiri said.

Representing the Senate in the consultations are Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon and Senators Sonny Angara, Aquilino Pimentel III, Sherwin Gatchalian, Joel Villanueva, Francis Escudero, Risa Hontiveros, Loren Legarda, Francis Pangilinan and Zubiri, the panel head.

Apart from Farinas, other members of the House contingent

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# Bicam to rush final BBL bill

From page 1

are Representatives Pedro Acharon Jr., Mauryag Papandayan, Ruby Sahali, Bai Sandra Sema, Juan Pablo Bondoc, Arthur Defensor Jr., Johnny Ty Pimentel, Eugene Michael de Vera, Rodolfo Albano III, Amihilda Sangeopan, Wilter Paima II, Celso Lobregat, Mohammad Khalid Dinaporo, Abdullah Dimaporo, Romeo Acop, Seth Frederick Jabosjos and Shernee Abuhakar Tan.

President Rodrigo Duterte also expressed hopes Muslim insurgents would also put down their arms and work in finding peace in Mindanao through the BBL.

"(Moro Islamic Liberation Front chair Al Haj) Murad (Ibrahim) is just biding his time, well and good. We hope that someday we can have peace at last," he said.

Even if the issues with the Muslim secessionist groups will be settled, the President said he will still be facing so many fronts, including a more serious and brutal enemy that is the ISIS.

"They will come here eventually. *Wala na kasi silang ibang mapuntahan eh* (Because they have nowhere to go to). They are now being edged out from the Middle East. The problem is, what shall these guys do next? They will look for somebody and some place in the Southeast Asia," he said.

# 'Govt risks Islamic State threat if BBL not passed'

THE Islamic State (IS) would menace the Philippine government if the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) was not passed, President Rodrigo Duterte warned on Saturday.

In a speech during the in-

auguration of the Malayan Colleges Mindanao in Marina, Davao City, Duterte said the government will face a backlash from Moro insurgents if his promise is not fulfilled.

"If we cannot [pass the BBL],

then I'll have... I'd be facing so many fronts. I'd be facing the Moro insurgency. There's the mainline Moro National Liberation Front [MNLF], Moro Islamic Liberation Front [MILF],

➤ **ThreatA8**

## ■ THREAT FROM A1

# 'Govt risks Islamic State threat if BBL not passed'

then I'll be facing a more serious and brutal enemy, and that's [IS]," he added.

"They [IS forces] will come here eventually. They cannot go anywhere else. They are now being edged out from the Middle East. The problem is, what shall these guys do next? They will look for somebody and some place in Southeast Asia," the President said.

"And where will they place themselves? It could not be Indonesia, it's predominantly Muslim. They will not do it in Malaysia. Why? Predominantly Muslims will be killed, nor in Brunei. So what happens? They will choose a place where there are infidels to kill. And who are these infidels to kill according to these idiots? They are the non-Muslims," Duterte added.

The President, however, said he is "asking for the grace from Allah" for the passage of the BBL.

His statement came after he again ranted at God, saying that if one can prove the existence of God through a selfie or a self-portrait with Him, he will step down immediately.

"But I'm talking to the BBL, [MILF chief] Murad [Ebrahim] and I'm just hoping that... I'm asking for the grace from Allah that something good will come out of this. It is not in Congress," Duterte said.

"And Murad is just also biding his time, well and good, we hope that someday we can have peace at least," he added.

Earlier, Duterte said he is hoping that MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari will also take part in crafting the Bangsamoro law that seeks to abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to pave the way for the new Bangsamoro Region.

Ilocos Norte Rep. Rodolfo Farinas, also House majority leader, also earlier said Duterte will sign the BBL into law in his third State of the Nation Address on July 23.

The President's peace adviser, Jesus Dureza, had said Duterte will exercise his executive powers to ensure the passage of the law.

**RALPH U. VILLANUEVA**

## 'When will this war come to an end?'

Evacuees in Shariff Saydona town, Maguindanao, look for the end of the war against Islamic State (IS) fighters.

**By Edwin O. Fernandez**  
@InquirerMindanao

**SHARIFF AGUAK, MAGUINDANAO**—Lisa Bayon, 49, of Pamalian village in Shariff Saydona town this province, knows what war looks like.

"When I saw military trucks and tanks rolling toward our village, I knew war was about to happen," she said, recalling the day she fled her house when soldiers and Islamic State (IS) followers from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) clashed anew.

War has been a constant presence where Bayon lived.

At an evacuation center here, one question stuck in Bayon's thoughts: "When will this war end?" she said.

"We are in this situation as evacuees almost every year," Bayon said.

"I am tired of fleeing, I want peace," she added.

### Hunt for IS

Bayon is among 6,294 persons who fled villages in Shariff Saydona when soldiers started a relentless hunt for IS followers among members of the BIFF, a

renegade Moro rebel group that broke off from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front over differences in peace talks with the government.

Many other evacuees were from two other villages in the town.

As she had done in previous evacuations, Bayon had to define her priorities.

"I made sure my children are safe but some of our valuables were left behind," she said, though worrying about losing the stuff she left in her house.

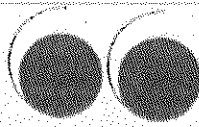
Her husband returned to their house to guard it and tend to work animals that were also left behind.

### Normal life

Emma Ali, head of the Maguindanao social welfare office, said her office had listed at least 30,290 evacuees from the towns of Shariff Aguak, Shariff Saydona, Mamasapano, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Datu Salibo and Datu Paglas in the province.

Evacuees Kadigula Silongan and Wahida Ahmad, of the village of Malingao in Shariff Aguak, had the same question as Bayon's.

"When will this war come to an end?" Ahmad said.



## We are in this situation as evacuees almost every year

**Lisa Bayon**

Pamalian village resident

"We flee every now and then," she said.

Ahmad said villages would know it's time to flee "when we see tanks and helicopters above us."

She said as soon as she saw helicopters hovering above her village, she picked up whatever valuable she could and packed it into a pedicab, her vehicle of flight.

"We are always ready," she said. "But I hope this will stop," she added.

Bayon said she had evacuated at least six times in her life.

"Our clothes and other valuables are already in sacks ready

to be loaded should war break out," she said.

Farouk Rocky Romancap, Shariff Aguak municipal social welfare officer, said most of the evacuees from Shariff Aguak had already received food and nonfood aid.

### Overwhelmed

Romancap, admitting he was overwhelmed by the number of people fleeing the fighting, said social workers set up a community kitchen in evacuation sites and ensured the supply of safe drinking water.

"There are just too many of them," he said.

He said Shariff Aguak officials gave aid to those who were not from the town.

"Disaster response recognizes no boundaries," he added.

Evacuees Bayon, Silongan and Ahmad don't know when they can return to their homes.

"Nobody knows," Silongan said. "As long as there are still explosions in our villages, we will stay here," Silongan added.

Twenty-one BIFF fighters, two soldiers, including an Army lieutenant, had been killed, and 15 other soldiers and militiamen

were wounded since fighting erupted on Sunday.

### Protecting civilians

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, 6th Infantry Division (ID) commander, said the hunt for the group of Abu Turaike, the BIFF leader who swore allegiance to IS, would continue even up to the marshlands of Maguindanao.

Sobejana said all Army units in Maguindanao were under strict orders to protect civilians in the course of the hunt for the IS followers.

Capt. Arvin John Encinas, 6th ID spokesperson, said no civilian had been hurt in the ongoing military operations.

Lt. Col. Harold Cahunoc, head of the 33rd Infantry Battalion, appealed to displaced families for understanding.

"It's our duty to protect you," said Cahunoc, whose battalion clashed with IS followers who tried to take over the town hall of Datu Paglas. *ML*

"We did our best to ensure that your abandoned homes were not destroyed," he said in front of evacuees, admitting at least 10 houses were damaged during the operations. *INQ*

## 45 BIFF, 4 soldiers killed in anti-terror operations

FORTY-FIVE members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and four soldiers have been killed while dozens were wounded since the operations against the terrorists in Central Mindanao started last month, the Philippine Army said on Sunday.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said there were 28 wounded from the BIFF side and 20 from the ranks of government troops since the operations was launched on June 1.

Sobejana added that three BIFF gunmen were arrested while three surrendered.

The military also recovered 28 firearms and 10 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) while a firearm manufacturing facility and an IED factory have been destroyed. At least four BIFF encampments have been seized.

As of Sunday, Sobejana said an encounter happened within the so-called SPMS box, composed of the adjoining towns in Maguindanao — Shariff Aguak-Pagatin (Datu Saudi), Mamasapano and Datu Salibo; three soldiers were wounded.

"They sustained shrapnel wounds when an IED exploded while maneuvering. It hap-

pened while we were conducting operations against the BIFF under the command of Samad Simpay, one of the sub-commanders under the Bungos faction of the BIFF," Sobejana said.

But he declined to specify the exact town in SPMS box where the bombing happened.

The military has been conducting operations against the BIFF bandits since last month in the Liguasan Marsh, North Cotabato and Maguindanao, where the SPMS box is located.

The Philippine Air Force had conducted airstrikes against the BIFF members within the Liguasan Maish that resulted in the dismantling of the IED factory of the BIFF.

Sobejana refused to set targets on ending the operations against the BIFF, saying it would lead to a "hasty" cleansing of terrorists.

"What I am doing right now is sustaining the operations. For as long as the BIFF still exist, I will not stop. This will be continuous, I have all the forces available doing rotations, of course, and we are targeting the same group of enemies," he explained.

About 300 to 400 BIFF members are within the area, he added.

KJ DEMPSEY REYES

# Army kills 45 BIFF, loses 4 men, steps up attacks

By Francisco Tuyay

THE military has killed at least 45 members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in at least four areas in Maguindanao province as operations against the terrorist group intensify. Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said Sunday.

Sobejana said 28 others terrorists were injured in the month-long security operations aimed at neutralizing the BIFF. Four soldiers were killed and 20 others were wounded.

On Sunday, BIFF rebels detonated a roadside bomb wounding three soldiers who were maneuvering towards the

*Next page*

## Army...

From A1

direction of rebel positions reportedly led by BIFF sub-commander Samad Simpay under the Bungos faction.

Sobejana said fighting was still raging the other day and Army troops continued to pursue the BIFF who sent reinforcements in Shariff Aguak, Pagatin (Datu Piang), Mamasapano and Salibo.

He said Army blocking forces were mobilized to intercept the BIFF back-up force while artillery fire pinned down the rebel fighters.

Sobejana, who became commander of 6th ID May 26, has initiated no let-up operations against the BIFF who continue attack military posts and civilian targets.

"For as long as they still exist, I will not stop, it will continue," said Sobejana of the BIFF, adding that he had enough forces to sustain the operations.

"We are doing our best effort to put a rapid conclusion to this problem, because the more we prolong it, the more it prolongs the agony of many civilians in Maguindanao," Sobejana said.

Sobejana's has been successful in operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group.

"I'm trying my best, just like what I did in Sulu," Sobejana said.

He said operations will be deliberate to avoid collateral damage.

## 45 BIFF members killed since June 1: Military

BY VICTOR REYES

FORTY-FIVE members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters have been killed in the renewed military campaign against the Daesh-inspired group in Central Mindanao since June 1.

The continuing campaign against the BIFF was launched five days after Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana assumed command of the Army's 6th Infantry Division based in Maguindanao on May 26.

"After my assumption, we had five days of mission planning, after which we launched the operation June 1. We've been conducting the operation for a month and eight days already," said Sobejana.

Sobejana said 45 BIFF men died, 28 were reported injured, and three others were captured "in the sustained operations that we are conducting." He said there were at least 10 major armed encounters with the group during the period.

He said the operation also resulted in the recovery of 28 assorted firearms and 10 improvised explosive devices, destruction of an IED factory and firearm manufacturing facility, and capture of four camps.

On the military side, Sobejana said four soldiers were killed, 20 others were injured, three of them hit by an IED that exploded while the soldiers were maneuvering.

"For as long as they (BIFF) still exist I will not stop, we're going to continue with our operations...In due time, we hope to put an end to this group," said Sobejana, adding they are not setting a timeline.

"I don't want to set a timeline because it will just result to hasty decisions. I want it done deliberately, without collateral damage. We're exerting our best. In due time (we will end BIFF) but we don't need a timeline," he said.

Sobejana said he is utilizing all available military resources to defeat the BIFF, which he said is composed of around 300 to 400 members, mostly former members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The BIFF was established in 2010 by former MILF commander Ameril Umbra Kato who died of heart attack five years later. The group later pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

"We are doing our best effort to put a rapid conclusion, immediate conclusion to this problem because the more (we) prolong it, the more we prolong the agony of the civilians," Sobejana said.



# 13 ASG fighters yield in Sulu

By **NONDY E. LACSON**

**Z**AMBOANGA CITY - Thirteen members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) formally surrendered to the military in Talipao, Sulu, after a negotiation initiated by local residents, Saturday night.

Joint Task Force Sulu (JTF Sulu) Commander Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo said yesterday the ASG gunmen voluntarily surrendered to Lt.

Col. Jessie R. Montoya, commanding officer of the Second Special Forces Battalion (2SFBn) in the village of Samak, Talipao Sulu around 9 p.m., Saturday, July 7.

Pabayo said the ASG fighters also brought with them assorted firearms and even promised to bring more later after their initial processing at the headquarters of the 2SFBn.

"This is a clear manifestation that we are achieving our goal of clearing Sulu Province of ASG bandits through

peaceful means," Pabayo said.

For his part, Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMindCom) Commander Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega said: "We welcome the surrenderers and will ensure that they will be covered by the support packages offered in the Government's 'Oplan Babkloob.'

"We also urge the remaining ASG members surrender and live to a normal life again in the community," Dela Vega said.



## 13 Abu Sayyaf members give up to military

BY VICTOR REYES

AT least 13 members of the Abu Sayyaf surrendered to the military in Sulu on Saturday night in what officials said was a result of continuing combat operations against the terrorist group.

The 13 included Mudjakar Bagade, alias Jack; Madzramil Bagade, alias Madz; and Benarauf Bagade, all brothers of Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Alden Bagade who the military said was accidentally shot and killed by another brother, Muslim Bagade, on June 17 in Indanan town.

The 10 others who surrendered were Albaser Hadjiti, alias Bas; Junimar Sampangan, alias Kanoh; Alvarez Rasid, alias Bari; Aksan Adam; Sahari Absari; Jeneyvar Muammil; Amil Sangkaan; Albenal Dawadil, alias Joko; one Nanoh, alias Sab Abdulhasad; and Sabri Bidin, alias Sab.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said the 13 surrendered around 9 p.m. to the Army's 2nd Special Forces Battalion in Barangay Samak in Talipao town.

Besana said the terrorists, who are undergoing custodial debrief-

ing, turned over six high-powered and three low-powered firearms during their surrender. He said the 13 vowed to yield more firearms soon.

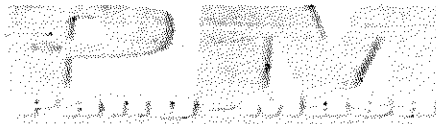
"Our combat operations are continuous. Its (surrender) also due to social pressure by the civilians and LGUs (local government units)," said Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, commander of the military's Joint Task Force Sulu.

"It's due to social pressure, plus our relentless combat operation. They are growing hungry and they are on the run," Pabayo added.

Pabayo said the surrender of the 13 terrorists means the military is on track to clearing Sulu "from the menace of the ASG through peaceful means by giving them a better option and to re-embrace the true essence of Islam."

Westmincom commander Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega vowed the 13 will be given "support packages" under the government's "Oplan Balikloob."

"We also urge the other remaining ASG members to do the same because there is nothing more fulfilling than to accomplish our mission without any bloodshed," Dela Vega said.



### **13 Abu sumuko**

Sumuko ang nasa 13 miyembro ng Abu Sayaff Group (ASG) at kusang isinuko din ang kanilang mga baril sa tropa ng militar sa Talipao, Sulu.

Batay sa ulat, dakong alas 9:00 ng umaga nang sumuko sa 2nd Special Forces Battalion ng Philippine Army ang mga miyembro ng ASG na sina Madjakar Bagadi alyas 'Jack', 26; Madzramil Bagadi alyas 'Madz', 31; Benarauf Bagadi, kapatid ng nasawing sub-leader na Alden Bagadi; Al-baser Hadjiri alyas 'Bas'; Junimar S. Sampangan alyas 'Kanol'; Alvarez I Rasid alyas 'Bari'; Aksan I Adam; Sahari S Absari; Jencyvar J. Muammil; Amil J. Sangkaan na pawang mga residente ng Indanan, Sulu sa ilalim ni ASG Sub-leader Alden Bagade alyas 'Sayning'; at Albenal S. Dawadil alyas 'Joko' ng Brgy. Laba, Maimbung, Naoth alyas 'Sab' Abdulhasad' ng Brgy. Manggis, Indanan; at Sabri J. Bidin alyas 'Sab' ng Brgy. Tikong, Parang, Sulu sa ilalim ni ASG sub-leader Apo Mike.

Isinuko ng mga ito ang tatlóng US M16 rifles, dalawang US M1 garand rifles, 1 Cal. 30, tatlóng kalibre .45 na baril. *Gemma Garcia at Rhoderick Beñez*

### 13 Sayyaf sumuko sa Sulu

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Nasa 13 miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), kasama ang kani-kanilang armas, ang sumuko sa militar sa Talipao, Sulu, sa pamamagitan ng mapayapang negosasyon, nitong Sabado ng gabi.

Ayon kay Joint Task Force Sulu (JTF-Sulu) Commander Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pahayo, nasa 13 ASG gunman ang boluntaryong sumuko kay Lt. Col. Jessie R. Mentoya, commanding officer ng 2nd Special Forces Battalion (2SFBn), sa Barangay Somak, Talipao Sulu, dakong 9:00 ng gabi kanakalawa.

Aniya, bitbit ng ASG ang iba't ibang matalaas at mababang kalibre ng baril at nangakong mas marami pang isusuko matapos ang kanilang initial processing

sa 2SFBn headquarters.

"This is a clear manifestation that we are achieving our goal of clearing Sulu Province of ASG bandits through peaceful means," aniya.

Sa kanyang parte, sinabi ni Armed Forces of the Philippines, Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMindCom) Commander Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega na, "We welcome the surrenderors and will ensure that they will be covered by the support packages offered in the Government's 'Oplan Balikoob.'

"We also urge the remaining ASG members surrender and live to a normal life again in the community," sabi ni Dela Vega.

**Nonoy E. Lacson**

CTALK  
CITO BELTRAN

Mayor – wanted:  
Dead or alive?

“There is no culture of impunity in the country.”

So says answering machines in Malacañang. Well there could be some truth in it because cold-blooded killings have long been happening all over the country. They simply got worse in the current administration because now, even priests, minors and mayors are being shot in public and in cold-blood! I guess the Malacañang answering machines don't want us to label all of it as murder with impunity especially when law enforcers claim they were doing their job when they had to shoot several hundred suspects if not several thousand drug dealers and users. How dare we use the term "Impunity" when cold-blooded murders of lawyers, environmentalists, mayors and priests are so common place and appears to be the standard for dealing with anti-government forces or anti-administration NGOs and personalities.



There is no culture of impunity because criminals and hit men in the Philippines are simply killing at will because they believe they won't be caught. No there is no culture of impunity, we are just a nation surrounded by assassins chanting "No Fear."

The assassination if not cold-blooded murder of Mayor Antonio Halili of Tanauan, Batangas alongside the killing of Mayor Ferdinand Bote of General Tinio, Nueva Ecija has placed many Mayors on full alert in terms of their personal safety and security. The "sniper" hit on the late Mayor Halili completely exposes how vulnerable public officials are from a determined gunman especially a sniper. To make matters worse, the use of a "sniper" has brought about a completely new way of killing mayors.

As a result some mayors have asked for additional police security while others have hired more bodyguards, bought bulletproof vests and level-6 armored SUVs. Even those aligned with the President have started to take the necessary precautions because there is no telling who would put out a hit on them; it could be political rivals, the NPA, gambling lords or drug lords and the perpetual political opponent. Now some sectors are saying that being on the Presidential Narco-list is equivalent to a death sentence. So far, four out of a previous 10 have been shot either in a defenseless situations such as inside his jail cell at 3 in the morning, treacherously shot behind the head or gangland style at a pier or Jose Rizal style with a bullet through the heart while singing "Bayang Magiliw."

Times have certainly changed, even the ways of getting rid of political or business enemies. In the early days, the worst attack you could launch at a public official was to impute or create rumors and gossip that an elected official was immoral and adulterous. But that began to lose impact as people became westernized and liberal. In place of questions on morality, political enemies then focused on accusations of abuse of power through private armies. While effective, that form of attack did not pick up speed and volume because not every mayor was nasty or had private armies. From there, critics used accusations of graft and corruption particularly Jueteng.

Today, Jueteng as well as most private armies have been dismantled or minimized by the police. Unfortunately, evil and wicked men won't stop at obstructions and corrections. Lets not forget nuisance suits being submitted before the Ombudsman and the Sandiganbayan. Filing charges in those courts with cameramen tagging along is a sure fire method of discrediting and destroying reputations. But now the ultimate political move is to label political enemies as a drug coddler or a drug lord and make sure that PDEA includes it in their list and it gets to the President!

The mere mention or statement of President Duterte that you are on the drug list is enough to ruin you socially, politically, as well as get you shot in a jail cell, at home or during a flag ceremony at City hall. The only stay out of jail card you get is if you died before the list came out! Mind you at least two to five names on the "Presidential Narco list" were of persons who have long died! Long before Duterte became President!

Unless the Duterte Administration is able to put a stop to all the assassinations, rub out and gang-land style executions, we will surely see more and more public officials and enemies of the government adopting a fight or flee mode. Iloilo Mayor Mabilog reportedly skipped town rather than become next on the hit list. Unfortunately in his absence Mayor Halili drew the short straw. Historically speaking, politicians or public figures who are marked for jail or assassination have all taken flight when given the choice or chance. But the greater number of Mayors or public figures who feel indirectly at risk or threatened are adapting the fight/protect mode.

This in turn could bring back the "War Lord" era where "It takes a Village to" protect a Mayor or a Congressman! If the PNP can't solve the voluminous murders of the last two years both of the rich and poor, if killers of mayors, lawyers and priests continue to roam unchallenged and fearless, how do you convince the rest of the population to be peaceful and law abiding? How do we convince the world that we are civilized, a tourism and investment destination when the President publicly threatens enemies and ghosts alike that he will kill them. According to the Malacañang answering machine just say: "It's Fake News." 13

# New president, same CPP-NPA-NDFP

**M**ALACANANG has warned the public about the plans of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to penetrate all institutions, including the Roman Catholic Church, now that the peace talks are off. "It's 60 years of experience with the CPP-NPA, we know that," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said in his July 3 press briefing.

The purpose of the infiltration or penetration is to oust President Rodrigo Duterte. The ouster plan was contained in documents recovered from rebels, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman Col. Edgardo Arevalo revealed ("Radyo Natin," July 4).

Well, we need not consult clandestine documents to know the intention of the CPP. As Roque put it: "It's 60 years of experience with the CPP-NPA" (though actually it's only 49 years): CPP founder Joma Sison announced that "it is relatively easier and more productive for the [National Democratic Front of the Philippines] to participate in the Oust Duterte movement and to prepare for peace negotiations with the prospective administration that replaces the Duterte regime," (Rappler, June 28), reflecting the CPP's belief that "the Filipino people are increasingly determined to push for Duterte's resignation or removal by any means at the soonest possible time" (CPP, June 30).

In December 2013, the CPP announced that it "has no choice but to wait for the next regime to engage in serious negotiations.

Let us do our best to cause the ouster of the Aquino regime or compel Aquino's resignation from his office." Same line, different president.



## RESURGENCE

**MARIT STINUS-CABUGON**

"After assessing ... the process itself, I was convinced that it was a process that would never end. That it was a process actually intended not for peace but to continue the war [and for the CPP-NPA-NDFP] to get concessions in the meantime," Alexander Padilla, the then head of the government peace panel, told Maria Ressa on June 20, 2013. Two of the "NDFP consultants" demanded released by the communists went underground. "Why would we release people for them to just continue to [wage] war?" Padilla asked.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has reached the same conclusion, expressed in "The Public Should Know" wherein he argues for a termination of peace talks. In response, the CPP called Lorenzana a militarist who is afraid of a non-military solution. "He fears losing significance if the present civil war in the country is settled politically through peace negotiations," the CPP said (Kodao Productions, July 3). As if peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDFP is the only non-military solution to the conflict!

Yet, the government remains open to peace talks, according to Jesus Dureza, the presiden-

tial adviser on the peace talks. However, the government made these conditions: that the NPA must stop its extortion activities, the fighters must stay inside designated areas, talks shall be held in the Philippines, and the demand for a 'coalition government' must be dropped. NDFP peace panel chairman Fidel Agcaoili denies that such a demand was made.

A point is missed here: While the communists may or may not have made a demand for a coalition government, their end goal is the communist state. A coalition government would just be a step, an unnecessary one at that, towards the ultimate goal. "They have been very, very consistent," Padilla explained, "that the peace process is but a means to an end and that end is to overthrow government and establish a national democratic state leading to a communist state eventually." The appointment of several leaders of the communist movement as cabinet secretaries and undersecretaries could actually be seen as a coalition - or penetration by invitation.

Padilla questioned why the government is talking with the NDFP when it is the CPP that is on top. During his time, he saw Joma Sison as "the more practical member of their negotiating panel." Maybe this was Sison's way of staying relevant. The real bosses, however, were the Tiamzons - Benito Tiamzon, the head of the CPP, and his wife Wilma. They are designated "NDFP consultants" and were—with almost 20 other jailed "consultants"—released from prison last August 2016 so they could participate in the negotiations.

Agcaoili in an interview on ANC Channel last June 1 made it clear that the NPA will not necessarily disarm even if the peace talks are successful. The communists want "flexibility." Decommissioning of the NPA fighters will not happen, he said, and suggested that they could be integrated in the Armed Forces or they could become (armed) forest guards. Sen. Ralph Recto in fact has suggested this - turning the red army into a green army (September 18, 2016 Senate press release). **AT**

The NPA has dwindled from about 19,000 fighters in 1990 to about 4,000 now. This is obviously a protracted war but the government is winning it, one rebel and one community at a time. Politically negotiated concessions may cause an immediate silencing of the guns but decades of experience with the CPP-NPA-NDFP should have taught us to be cautious.

# Del Rosario admits he was hoodwinked into giving up Panatag

**BY RIGOBERTO TIGLAO**  
Columnist

Fourth of a series on the South China Sea dispute\*

**H**URT by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana's remarks that "President Aquino mismanaged the Philippine sea dispute with China," former Foreign Secretary Alberto del Rosario blabbered too much in order to hit back.

In an article posted at the website of the pompously named "Stratbase Albert del Rosario Institute for Strategic and International Studies" — which the billionaire appears to have bankrolled — del Rosario admitted what he and his boss Aquino had hidden from the nation since 2012: We lost Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, just 124 nautical miles off Zambales, because of their huge blunder.

In his article, del Rosario wrote: "During the impasse at Scarborough Shoal with

► TiglaosA4



■ Del Rosario and Pangilinan, chairman and vice chairman of the anti-China, anti-Duterte Stratbase ADR Institute.

## ■ TIGLAO FROM A1

China, we were approached by the US, an honest broker, for both China and the Philippines to agree to a simultaneous withdrawal of ships from the shoal. We therefore agreed. At the appointed time, we withdrew, whereas China did not — in violation of our agreement."

Del Rosario's statement, though, is flawed. Neither the US nor China has admitted that there was such an agreement; only *talks* for such an agreement. Indeed, if there was such an agreement, would the "honest broker" US not have raised a ruckus that China reneged on an agreement it brokered?

Del Rosario's statement in his article is in sharp contrast to what he said on June 16, 2012, quoted in nearly all media that day two weeks after our ships left the shoal June 3: "Citing bad weather, President Aquino has ordered home two Philippine ships engaged in a standoff with China over Scarborough Shoal."

Until his piece was posted in his website, del Rosario had not himself claimed that that there was an agreement with China for a simultaneous withdrawal of each country's vessels from Panatag.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes 4th, appointed as back-channel envoy in that crisis, claimed there was no such agreement yet when del Rosario — and not Aquino — ordered the vessels out.

## Backchannel talks

Both in an interview with Trillanes with me in 2015, and in his aide memoire "Backchannel Talks" that he gave me, the senator claimed it was del Rosario who was responsible for the boo-boo, with Aquino himself blaming his foreign secretary.

"PNoy called me to inform me that our two BFAR (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources) vessels already left the shoal but China reneged on the agreement of simultaneous withdrawal of their ships, so two of them [were] still inside the shoal." Trillanes wrote in his aide memoire.

"I asked him who agreed with what, since I was just hammering out the details of the sequential withdrawal because the mouth of the shoal was too narrow for a simultaneous withdrawal. The President told me that Sec. del Rosario told him about the agreement reached in Washington," Trillanes wrote.

Trillanes continued: "This time I asked PNoy: 'If the agreement was simultaneous withdrawal, why did



## RIGOBERTO TIGLAO

we leave first?" PNoy responded to this effect: 'Kaya nga sinabihan ko si Albert kung bakit niya pinalabas yung BFAR na hindi ko nalalaman.' (That's why I asked Albert [del Rosario] why he ordered the BFAR vessels to leave without my permission.)'

Based on accounts of very credible sources, what actually transpired was as follows:

Fu Ying, China's vice minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of Asia (who had been ambassador here from 1998 to 2000) met June 1 in Washington with Kurt Campbell, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to discuss Aquino and del Rosario's request for the Americans to intervene—even militarily, my sources claimed—in the Scarborough Shoal crisis. Campbell relayed President Obama's position that the US cannot intervene in the dispute, and instead suggested a simultaneous withdrawal of vessels from Panatag Shoal (also known as Bajo de Masinloc) to de-escalate the tension.

The Chinese official told Campbell that she would relay the suggestion to her superiors in Beijing. However, for some unexplained reason, the then US Ambassador to Manila Harry Thomas that very day told del Rosario that China had already agreed to a simultaneous withdrawal.

### Middle of the night

Del Rosario immediately ordered, in the middle of the night, the BFAR and Coast Guard vessels to pull out, leaving the Chinese in complete control of the shoal. Aquino would only find out about the pull-out when he woke up – a bit late – the following morning. With our vessels leaving what we claim as our territory, we have lost it – forever, as it were.

Neither the US, China nor even President Aquino, nor anybody else at the foreign affairs department—except del Rosario's protégé, then Ambassador to the US Jose Cuisia—has confirmed that there was such an agreement.

It is del Rosario and del Rosario alone, who continues to claim that China agreed with the Philippines on a simultaneous withdrawal, as bro-

kered by the "US, an honest broker."

Did Campbell really tell their ambassador Thomas, to tell del Rosario that the Chinese agreed to withdraw from the shoal? Or did Thomas misinterpret his superior's communication?

But diplomats are trained to get exactly what their headquarters ask them to relay to a host country. If unsure, an ambassador would request a written memorandum, especially on such an important episode as a stand-off in disputed seas that could even lead to a shooting war.

Or did the 73-year old del Rosario hear what he wanted to hear, as the stand-off had lasted for seven weeks, and he was crumbling under the tension?

Another interpretation would be that, unwilling to intervene, the US tricked the Aquino government into abandoning the shoal, in order to push the Philippines to file a case against China in an international body as a propaganda tack against the Asian superpower.

### Nine-dash line

Indeed, the Aquino government's suit against China was not just over the Philippines' territorial disputes with it but over the superpower's sweeping claim over the South China Sea, particularly its so-called "nine-dash line." China asserts in its maps that this crudely sketched tongue-shaped line, even if undefined in terms of geographical coordinates, demarcates its territory in the South China Sea.

Del Rosario's bungling of the Panatag issue is important as it explains his public detestation of China, as this conceals the fact that China didn't really just grab the shoal from us. He and Aquino let go of it, making the Aquino presidency the first administration to lose Philippine territory it already had control of.

Because of his personal hurt over being hoodwinked—by China or by the US—into losing the Panatag Shoal for the Philippines, del Rosario has been relentless in his and his stable of salaried academics' advocacy that our government adopt an aggressive anti-China stance.

Unfortunately for us, with the billions of pesos he's amassed as one of the top executives of the Indonesian tycoon Anthoni Salim—other than Manuel V. Pangilinan, he is the only other Filipino director in the Hong Kong based First Pacific Co. Ltd.—del Rosario can bankroll the anti-Chinese

propaganda through the "institute" he named after himself. They would even have a vast media empire to disseminate such propaganda: the *Philippine Star* and the Channel 5 group which Pangilinan controls.

What a country. A gang of big businessmen and executives are trying to control our most important foreign-policy stance, led by del Rosario who has a personal beef against China. And government doesn't have its own independent think-tank. This is the kind of thing Congress should be investigating.

If not for President Duterte's independent intellect and strength of character, the Philippines would have been steered by del Rosario, his big business gang, Fidel Ramos' ideologue Jose Almonte, and Justice Antonio Carpio toward a disastrous, belligerent course against the inarguable superpower in Asia.

\* Others in this series:

"Aquino, Del Rosario and media hid the loss of Panatag to China from the nation," June 25, 2018

"Aquino, Trillanes blamed Del Rosario for Panatag loss," June 20, 2018

"Yes, Senate must investigate how Aquino, Trillanes and Del Rosario lost Panatag," June 18, 2018

\*\* Del Rosario is chairman of both Stratbase and Stratbase ADRI. ADRI's co-chairman is Manuel V. Pangilinan, chief executive officer of First Pacific Co. Ltd., PLDT, and other huge firms in the Philippines that Indonesian tycoon Salim controls. Other tycoons in this outfit's board of trustees are Cory Aquino's nephew Antonio Cojuangco and Philip Romualdez, the husband of *Philippine Daily Inquirer* president Alexandra Prieto.

Stratbase reports that it is the Philippine partner of Bower Group, an American research and lobby group based in Washington, D.C. The head of Bower's Korea operations was a former CIA analyst and deputy intelligence officer in the US National Security Council.

ADRI's publication *Sparkis* is an anti-Duterte brochure, with the institute's academic pretensions shed off by sweeping statements such as the President "shielding China from global criticism" and the economy under him confronting a "perfect storm."

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## Not like St. Leo I and Attila, but why not?

**P**RESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte meets with Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), in Malacañang today (July 9, 2018) in an effort to end the controversy over DU30's gratuitous remark against God and the Catholic Church,



**FIRST THINGS FIRST**  
**FRANCISCO S. TATAD**

which has provoked all religions in the country, except  
► **TatadA5**

### ■ TATAD FROM A1

the Muslims and the *Iglesia ni Cristo*. DU30 has tried to explain that, contrary to reports, he never called God "stupid"; it was only the creation story, notably about the Fall of Man and Original sin, which he has called "stupid," he said. He has declared he will not apologize for his rant. Not in a million years, he said.

However, Malacañang offered to dialog by naming four individuals for this purpose: the communist ex-priest Leoncio Evasco Jr., who serves as Cabinet Secretary in charge of the Office of the President; presidential spokesman Harry Roque, who tends to talk more than the President; former spokesman and Protestant pastor Ernesto Abella, who now occupies a sinecure in the Department of Foreign Affairs; and the political activist Pastor "Boy" Saycon, who likes to be seen in Church-related political activities.

Before the terms of the dialogue could be set, Roque showed up at the Papal Nuncio's diplomatic reception on the Pope's Day on June 29, as DU30's representative, and later described his social conversation with the nuncio as the start of the dialogue. Saycon for his part started talking about the alleged involvement of certain Church personalities in anti-DU30 activities.

### DU30 meets CBCP head

Then DU30 decided to meet with Valles himself. DU30 alone can explain his rant against God and the Church. It is a deeply personal matter and no political subaltern can possibly explain it better than himself. This is the first time this meeting is being held between the Philippine head of state and the head of Catholic episcopal conference on a live Church-State issue. It is taking place immediately after the mid-year assembly of the CBCP, amidst an apparent groundswell against DU30 arising from a multitude of unresolved grievances. The other bishops presumably provided Valles their own inputs for the dialogue.

The immediate trigger is not just DU30's rant against God and the Church, but also the rash of priest killings which have remained unsolved, and DU30's unexplained act of distributing a book that defames the clergy and the Church. Many are hoping the dialogue would take up the thousands of unresolved drug killings, which have recently claimed the lives of some mayors, the perceived territorial sellout to China, the suspected plan to railroad a coalition government with the communists while supposedly rejecting any "peace talks" with the CPP-NPA-NDF, and the effort to bulldoze a "federal" Constitution for the Republic of the Philippines.

### The road to Damascus

In the long history of the Church, this dialogue has had some outstanding precedents. Perhaps the most outstanding is Christ's meeting with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. As Saul nears Damascus, a light shines from the sky and he falls sightless

to the ground. Then a voice is heard, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asks, and the voice answers, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Saul, the persecutor of Christians, is thus converted, and becomes Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles.

Five centuries later, St. Pope Leo the Great meets with the barbarian conqueror Attila the Hun. In the spring of 452, Attila the Hun leads his army into Italy, taking the Romans by surprise. Roman defenses quickly crumble. Attila razes the city of Aquileia near modern Trieste, and pushes on virtually unopposed. City after city falls, and Western Emperor Valentinian III, who defeated the Huns in another battleground the year before, now contemplates flight. Finally it is decided that Pope Leo I should lead an embassy to Attila. And so the Pope goes and the man of God and the man without God meet at the river Mincio near the great city of Mantua.

37



## Attila capitulates

There is no record of what words were exchanged between the great Pope and the brutal bandy-legged pagan Hun. But when the talk was over, according to Warren H. Carroll in Volume 2 of his monumental multi-volume "A History of Christendom," Attila turned his army around and rode out of Italy, never to return. A year later, back in the lands along the Danube, he died suddenly and mysteriously after a night of hard drinking.

Archbishop Valles cannot possibly hope to convert the blasphemous DU30 in just one sitting. But he cannot deny himself the opportunity to pray for a Damascene "miracle." As DU30's archdiocesan pastor, Valles could ask DU30 a variant of the question Christ asked Saul, and leave the rest to Providence. Even if nothing like Saul's conversion happens, perhaps we could all pray that what happened in Mantua 16 centuries ago should happen in Malacañang.

If even this is too much to wish for, Valles should at least aspire for the President's correct appreciation of the citizen's fundamental right to worship God, and the principle of constitutional separation between Church and State. He evidently does not have it, but no statesman can possibly function in a democratic and republican state without it.

## The Catholic perspective

We are first God's creation before we are citizens; therefore, our relationship with God should precede our relationship with the State or those who represent the State. They do not and cannot dictate how we are to worship God and live our Faith. Moreover, DU30 is not yet the State.

He has no right to denigrate God or his Church in any of his public statements. No one is obliging him to become a Catholic like the majority of Filipinos; he could opt to become a pagan, a Muslim, a follower of *Iglesia ni Cristo*, or anything else, and

no Catholic would take offense so long as he does not attack the Catholic or any other faith. Simple respect for religion is all that is expected of him.

But while DU30 is so careful not to offend the Muslims and the INC, in particular, he seems so eager to offend the Catholics, despite their large numbers. Why is this? Some political analysts believe the reason is not religious but mainly political—it is DU30's way of finding out how far he could go in his use of terror to eliminate all possible opposition to what he wants to do beyond his constitutional mandate.

## Terrorizing the political sector

By threatening to kill those who use illegal drugs, and killing thousands of drug suspects without documentation or due process, he has succeeded in terrorizing the political sector to submit to his one-man rule. His message is simple: what he has done to thousands of nameless drug suspects and a few known personalities, he can do to anybody else, if he wills. This was his message to the congressmen and other officials. They understood it, so it was not hard for them to cut off their tongues, migrate to the three-member PDP-Laban party and create the so-called "super majority" that would say yes to everything DU30 wants.

Thus, DU30 could commit every impeachable offense, and any complaint against him would be automatically thrown out of the House of Representatives, by the committee on justice. He could even call on the Supreme Court justices, as he just did, to exercise a power they did not have, in order to remove an offensive Chief Justice, and not a voice would be raised from the entire Congress questioning the emergence of a *de facto* revolutionary government that has made a total wreck of all our democratic institutions and processes.

This is not all. Usurping a power granted solely to a legitimate Congress and the sovereign electorate and clearly denied to him by the Constitution, which prescribes the precise manner by which it is to be amended or revised, DU30 unlawfully appointed a 22-man commission to propose constitutional amendments and revisions, in violation of these rules, and this illegal body has now come up with a draft constitution for a "Federal Republic of the Republic," which he will submit to his rubber-stamp Congress on July 23.

Unless one includes the islands that the Philippines claims in the Spratlys, which have been fortified, militarized and taken over by China, and the state of Sabah, which has been made part of the Federation of Malaysia, there are no separate and independent or autonomous territories within or outside the unitary Philippine state, which can be legitimately "federated" into a new Federal Republic of the Philippines. What the illicit draft constitution proposes to do is to "balkanize" the present Republic into 18 regions, and call it a "Federal Republic" in total disregard of right reason and objective reality, and solely in obedience to DU30's insane diktat, as *de facto* revolutionary president.

## When the inmates rule

Should this fraudulent proposal ever materialize, the Philippines would become the laughingstock of the world. The Philippines would become the only fictional Federal Republic that arose from the fragmentation of an existing unitary State, rather than the cohesion and fusion of several separate and autonomous or independent regions or states into one Republic. This could provoke serious political debates at the United Nation, and perhaps some UN member-states would withhold their recognition of the new "federal" republic. This period would go down in our history as a time when the inmates took over the asylum and outlawed the rule of right reason and common sense.

Not only is this perverted "federalism" insane, there are also no studies to show that a unitary state which generates 65 percent of all its revenues from only three regions can now be subdivided into 18 regions with sufficient wherewithal for the 15 other regions. The draft constitution creates a new layer of government in each region—a regional assembly, a regional Supreme Court, regional appellate court, regional trial courts and special courts—without saying anything about how this is to be funded. This will have to be housed in official buildings and supported by adequate services and personnel—these alone will require billions of pesos each year.

## DU30's real game plan

Sources close to Malacañang assure us there's nothing to worry about. According to them, DU30 is not really interested in the federal system, but only in the Transitory Provision, which will put him in charge of the transition once the shift to federalism is approved. Within five days after the new Constitution is ratified, a Federal Transition Commission will be created, with 10 members to be appointed by DU30, which will formulate its own rules. DU30 will then preside over an indefinite and open-ended transition period.

How is all this related to DU30's attack on God? Simple. Since the political opposition no longer exists, the only opposition to this naked assault on the nation will have to come from the People themselves. Most of them are Catholic. But if they have already allowed DU30 to attack God unopposed, the tyrant can now do anything, even without having to formally declare a revolutionary government in coalition with the communists. He will be in no hurry to terminate the TRANSITION period.

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# Two years after



OPEN THOUGHTS ORLANDO OXAES

HISTORY was made two years ago on July 16 when the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague ruled in favor of the Philippines and declared that China has "no historical rights" over what it claims to be within its "nine-dash line" map in the South China Sea.

The decision marked a pivotal term in the protracted decades-long dispute over the important sea lane that began in 1947 when China attempted to annex some 3.5 million kilometers of sea by drawing an arbitrary perimeter around the important sea lane on a map.

The nine-dash line is the biggest territorial grab since World War II that serves to secure food and natural resources to feed China's population and fuel economic objectives. Through the South China Sea passes a big percentage of global maritime trade traffic. From it is harvested an untold quantity of marine resources, sustaining the livelihood of tens of millions in Southeast Asia.

Nearly 70 years later, the 2016 decision assailed Beijing's stance as contrary to and in violation of international law as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, or Unclos. It was a stinging rebuke to the Asian superpower, a turnaround for the so-far-futile diplomatic measures attempted by a number of countries.

Crucially, the ruling was lauded all over the world as a victory for justice and the rule of law, especially between nations of disparate clout and power. Filipinos also celebrated, some rightly painting a just-concluded David versus Goliath scenario, in the wake of what was generally seen as bullying by Beijing.

*"Filipinos won because we took a stand against a baseless claim, not with threats of war but with the sensible and peaceful path of arbitration before an international panel of neutral experts."*

Filipinos won because we took a stand against a baseless claim, not with threats of war but with the sensible and peaceful path of arbitration before an international panel of neutral experts. It was a vindication unlike anything else in the history of the country's territorial claims, our contribution to international jurisprudence and therefore a rules-based global order.

Today, two years later, we must again bring to the nation's consciousness the groundbreaking Hague decision.

For its part, China refused to participate in the arbitration proceedings up until the end, opting to flex its political and economic muscle to coerce its smaller neighboring states. The militarization of the South China Sea even accelerated, all while the rest of the world watched. All this was no surprise.

What was surprising—and shameful—was our own government's willful complicity in the wake of China's tac-

tics. Faced with reports of unmitigated aggression on Philippine territory and downright bullying of Filipino fishermen, administration officials took great pains just to defend its inaction.

Most recently, news spread that anti-ship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems had been installed on reefs claimed by the Philippines in the South China Sea. It was a brazen move that earned the ire of so many, Filipinos and foreigners alike.

But we can't go to war with China, Malacañang said, as if silence and war are the only available options. A cursory

understanding of global economics should reveal that war is not even a viable option for China, an economy heavily reliant on the status quo of peaceful global trade. Some maritime commons it needs—the Malacca Strait and the Indian Ocean—are controlled by our allies, India and the United States.

Besides, it is foolish to suggest that no other option exists. As we have witnessed in the wake of the arbitration ruling two years ago, there is an overwhelming consensus as regards the validity of our position in the South China Sea. A way to challenge an aggressor that seeks to intentionally undermine a rules-based international order is to harness the political ascendancy by deepening existing relations and forging new ones.

Manila's chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations last year thus represented a missed opportunity in this regard amid a surge in support for the arbitration ruling from member states. This opportunity could have been activated to consolidate a position for Ascan as a body.

Instead, the deafening silence of Manila on the issue only served to weaken the regional bloc's centrality in the context of guaranteeing security in the region.

There are other strategic ways. Minor powers like the Philippines can foster diplomatic linkages and economic activities with two or more competing major powers to a point that influences policy but without surrendering its sovereignty. This way, a small state does not compromise its economic position and can even advance its own political interests. Bilateral and multilateral dialogs with states and formations should also be explored.

In all these, vigilance from the citizenry is key. Two years after the epoch-defining decision, we need to call upon our government to stop kowtowing to Beijing supposedly as a way to maintain goodwill and jumpstart a revived economic partnership.

It is not a zero-sum game for the Philippines. There is a way to stand for a peaceful, rules-based international order without causing harm to the economy. Unchallenged aggression has no place in diplomacy. It is time to push back and stand up as a nation. AS

# ONLINE NEWS

## 09 July 2018

### Top NPA leader falls in Davao Sur

From the Philippine News Agency (Jul 8): Top NPA leader falls in Davao Sur

A top leader of the New People's Army was arrested in a joint operation of the Philippine Army and Philippine National Police units in Purok 2-A, Sinayawan, Hagonoy, Davao del Sur on Saturday afternoon.

Chief Insp. Milgrace Driz, spokesperson of Police Regional Office 11, reported that Reynaldo Cole Saavedra alias Antoy, 22, commanding officer of the NPA's Guerilla Front 71-Far South Mindanao Region, resident of Pitu, Malalag, Davao del Sur, was nabbed when authorities served the warrant for his arrest.

Driz said the arrest warrant for rebellion was issued by the Regional Trial Court 11th Judicial Region, Branch 61, Digos City on Nov. 28, 2017, and was signed by Presiding Judge Carfelita Cardientes Flores.

Capt. Jerry Lamosao, spokesperson of the 10th Infantry Division, said GF 71 operates in the areas of General Santos City, South Cotabato.

The communist group's unit was responsible for extortion, harassment, ambush and recruitment activities in the area.

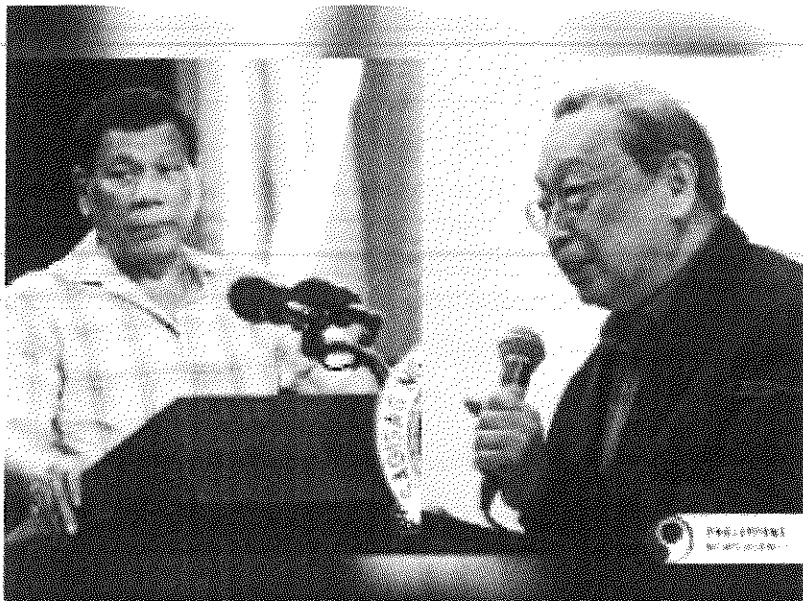
Driz said the operating teams came from the Regional Intelligence division led by Supt. Leslie Ann Bejarin, Regional Intelligence Unit led by Chief Insp Gregorio Cuevas Jr., 1104th Regional Force Mobile battalion led by SPO3 James Rafniel Rago, Intelligence police non-commissioned officer led by Chief Insp. Kristoper Sabsal, Intelligence operatives of 73rd Infantry battalion and elements of Hagonoy municipal police station led by Senior Insp. Eli Asor.

Saavedra is now in the custody of 73rd Infantry Battalion.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1040766>

## 60-day peace window with Joma still open: Duterte

From the Philippine News Agency (Jul 8): 60-day peace window with Joma still open:  
Duterte



President Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday said the 60-day timeframe for peace talks between him and Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding Chairperson Jose Maria Sison remains open but the possible resumption of peace negotiations is still uncertain.

"I don't know for the next step," Duterte said, emphasizing the agreed agreements to resume talks including a no coalition government. "But I do not disarm them."

The President said he stands firm on no power-sharing or a coalition government with the communists, saying it is not within his authority to concede some powers of government.

Duterte said he has been reviewing the entire peace agreements including the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), a key agreement between the government and the NDF which guarantees the legal immunity of rebel peace negotiators.

"When you sum it up, it boils down to power-sharing or coalition government, which I cannot give to them because it is not within the power of the presidency to concede anything as important as authority," he said during the inauguration of the Malayan Colleges Mindanao here.

Since he wanted the talks to be in the country, the President had asked Sison to return home, guaranteeing his safe travel and stay in the country.

If nothing happens on the resumption of the peace talks, Duterte said "rebellion of the communist party will go on."

Earlier, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza said any resumption of talks remains subject to the demands of Duterte.

He said aside from stopping the NPA's collection of revolutionary taxes, Duterte wanted no coalition government with the communist rebels.

Dureza added that localized peace arrangements may be pursued by local government units with insurgents in their respective areas of responsibility.

According to Dureza, this "way forward" in the stalled peace talks was decided upon, following the consolidation of various positions expressed during the command conference convened by Duterte last week.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1040763>