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# **TEAM ARMY**

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**OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

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**03 June 2018**

**Sunday**



*Honor. Patriotism. Duty*

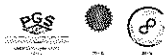
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Honor. Patriotism. Duty



**24- HOUR PUBLIC WEATHER FORECAST**

Issued at: 4:00 AM 03 June 2018  
 Valid until: 4:00 AM Tomorrow

**SYNOPSIS:** As of 3:00 am today, the Low Pressure Area (LPA) embedded along the Intertropical Convergence Zone(ITCZ) was estimated, based on all available data, at 390 km East of Surigao City, Surigao del Norte (10.0°N, 129.0°E).

**TROPICAL CYCLONE INFORMATION:**

**TROPICAL DEPRESSION (OUTSIDE PAR)**

LOCATION: AT 3:00 AM 985 KM WEST OF SAN JOSE, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO (13.0N, 112.0E)

MAXIMUM SUSTAINED WINDS: 45 KPH

GUSTINESS: UP TO 60 KPH

MOVEMENT: NORTH NORTHWEST AT 15 KPH

**FORECAST WEATHER CONDITIONS**

Place	Weather Condition	Caused by	Impacts
Eastern Visayas and Caraga	Cloudy skies with moderate to occasionally heavy rains and thunderstorms	LPA	Possible flooding or landslides due to moderate to occasional heavy rains
Mimaropa, Bicol Region, rest of Visayas and of Mindanao	Cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms	ITCZ	Possible flooding or landslides due to light to moderate rains to at times heavy rains
Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon	Partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers	Localized thunderstorms	No significant impact

**FORECAST WIND AND COASTAL WATER CONDITIONS**

Place	Winds		Coastal Waters (Wave Height)
	Speed	Direction	
Mindanao, Western Visayas and Palawan	Moderate to strong	Southwest to West	Moderate to rough (1.2 - 2.8 m)
Rest of Visayas	Light to moderate	Southwest to West	Slight to moderate (0.6 - 2.1 m)
Rest of Luzon	Light to moderate	East to Southeast	Slight to moderate (0.6 - 2.1 m)

**EXTREMES OF TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY FOR THE 24-HOUR PERIOD ENDING AT 8:00 PM YESTERDAY**  
 Recorded at PAGASA Weather Station, Science Garden, Diliman, Quezon City

**YESTERDAY**

Temperature (C)	Maximum	34.0	10:00 AM	Relative Humidity (%)	Maximum	83	6:00 AM
	Minimum	26.5	6:00 AM		Minimum	52	10:00 AM

**TIDES AND ASTRONOMICAL INFORMATION**  
 Over Metro Manila

	Today		Tomorrow			Today	Tomorrow
	Tidal Predictions for Manila Bay (m) (Courtesy of NAMRIA)	High	12:15 PM	1.13		-	-
Low		8:57 PM	-0.05	-	-	Sunset	6:22 PM
High		-	-	-	-	Moonset	9:03 AM
Low		-	-	-	-	Moonrise	10:10 PM
High		-	-	-	-	Illumination	86 %

PREPARED BY: JEMB

CHECKED BY: MCM



Republic of the Philippines  
 Department of Science and Technology  
**PHILIPPINE ATMOSPHERIC, GEOPHYSICAL AND  
 ASTRONOMICAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (PAGASA)**

WFS-02  
 Rev.1/05-06-2016

Weather Division  
 ISO 9001:2008 Certified  
 Registry No. 01 100 1534769

**24-Hour Weather Forecast and Extended Weather Outlook for Selected Cities:**

ISSUED AT : 4:00 AM 03 JUNE 2018  
 VALID BEGINNING : 4:00 AM TODAY

CITIES	24-Hr Weather, Winds and Sea Condition Forecast from 4AM today until 4AM tomorrow		Extended Weather Outlook Duration: 4AM until 4 AM of the following day			
	03 JUN		4 JUN	5 JUN	6 JUN	7 JUN
Metro Manila	26 °C 34 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Southeast Manila Bay: Slight to Moderate	26 °C 34 °C	26 °C 34 °C	25 °C 32 °C	25 °C 32 °C
Tuguegarao City	26 °C 37 °C	Moderate: East to Southeast	26 °C 37 °C	26 °C 37 °C	26 °C 36 °C	26 °C 36 °C
Laoag City	25 °C 34 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Southeast Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	25 °C 34 °C	25 °C 34 °C	25 °C 34 °C	25 °C 34 °C
Baguio City	17 °C 26 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Southeast	17 °C 26 °C	17 °C 26 °C	16 °C 25 °C	15 °C 24 °C
SBMA(Olongapo) / Clark Zone (Angeles City)	25 °C 35 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Southeast Subic Bay: Slight to Moderate	25 °C 35 °C	25 °C 35 °C	24 °C 34 °C	24 °C 35 °C
Tagaytay City	22 °C 30 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Southeast	22 °C 30 °C	22 °C 30 °C	22 °C 29 °C	22 °C 29 °C
Lipa City	25 °C 35 °C	Light to Moderate: East to Southeast	25 °C 35 °C	24 °C 34 °C	24 °C 34 °C	25 °C 35 °C
Legazpi City	25 °C 30 °C	Moderate: East to Southeast Coastal Waters: Moderate	25 °C 30 °C	24 °C 29 °C	24 °C 29 °C	25 °C 30 °C
Puerto Princesa City	25 °C 29 °C	Moderate to Strong: Southwest to West Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C
Iloilo City / Bacolod City	26 °C 31 °C	Moderate to Strong: Southwest to West Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	26 °C 31 °C	26 °C 31 °C	25 °C 31 °C	25 °C 31 °C
Metro Cebu	25 °C 29 °C	Light to Moderate: Southwest to West Coastal Waters: Slight to Moderate	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 29 °C
Tacloban City	25 °C 29 °C	Moderate: Southwest to West Coastal Waters: Moderate	25 °C 29 °C	25 °C 28 °C	25 °C 28 °C	25 °C 29 °C
Cagayan de Oro City	23 °C 29 °C	Moderate to Strong: Southwest to West Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	23 °C 29 °C	23 °C 29 °C	23 °C 29 °C	23 °C 30 °C
Valencia City	22 °C 28 °C	Moderate to Strong: Southwest to West	22 °C 28 °C	22 °C 28 °C	22 °C 28 °C	22 °C 28 °C
Metro Davao	26 °C 31 °C	Moderate to Strong: Southwest to West Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	26 °C 31 °C	26 °C 31 °C	26 °C 31 °C	26 °C 31 °C
Zamboanga City	24 °C 31 °C	Moderate to Strong: Southwest to West Coastal Waters: Moderate to Rough	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C	24 °C 31 °C

**LEGEND:**

	Clear Skies		Partly Cloudy to at times Cloudy with Rainshower and/ or Thunderstorms		Occasional Rains		Rains with Gusty Winds
	Partly Cloudy Skies		Cloudy Skies with Rainshower and/ or Thunderstorms		Monsoon Rains / Rains		Stormy
	Partly Cloudy to at times Cloudy with Rainshower		Light Rains				

PREPARED BY:

END OF FORECAST

CHECKED BY:

"Tracking the sky... Helping the country"

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# China faces consequences for intimidation, US warns

## FROM A1

By Frances G. Mangosing  
@inquirerdotnet

SINGAPORE—US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis says China's placement of weapons systems on man-made islands in the South China Sea is designed to intimidate and coerce other countries in the region.

Laying out a sharp criticism of Beijing, Mattis on Saturday also blasted Chinese President Xi Jinping for reneging on a 2015 promise made at the White House that China would not militarize the island features.

Mattis, in his remarks at the high-profile security summit Shangri-La Dialogue, said China faced "larger consequences" for its military buildup and deployment of high-end weapons systems in artificial islands in the disputed waterway.

The Pentagon chief said Beijing had deployed a range of military hardware, including antiship and surface-to-air missiles and electronic jammers, on reefs and islets that it had transformed into hardened military facilities.

China has also landed nuclear strike-capable bombers on Woody Island in the Paracel Islands, the territory west and north of the Spratlys which is

also being claimed by Vietnam.

"Despite China's claims to the contrary, the placement of these weapon systems is tied directly to the military use for the purposes of intimidation and coercion," Mattis said.

### 'Larger consequences'

Beijing had faced few consequences for its buildup and sweeping territorial claims in the South China Sea and West Philippine Sea, the part of the former that is within Manila's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone.

Mattis said the recent move to disinvite China to the Rim of the Pacific exercises, the world's largest naval and

marines exercises hosted by the US, was only an "initial response" to China's militarization of the islands.

"I believe that there are more, much larger consequences in the future when nations lose rapport with their neighbors," he said.

"China's policy in the South China Sea stands in stark contrast to the openness our strategy promotes. It calls into question China's broader goals," he added.

But Mattis said the US would continue to pursue a constructive, results-oriented relationship with China when possible.

"We are prepared and will

support China's choices if they promote long-term peace and prosperity for all in this dynamic region," he said.

#### Treaty ambivalence

Mattis declined to give a categorical commitment on whether the Philippine-occupied features in the Spratlys in the West Philippine Sea are covered by the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty.

While he said the United States stood by its treaty allies, he remained ambivalent about whether the treaty would apply in case an armed confrontation breaks out between the Philippines and another country in the West Philippine Sea.

"We stand by our treaty allies but this is a discussion between the current administrations in Manila and in Washington. It's not one that can be answered as simply as your question would indicate," he said in a question-and-answer session after delivering his remarks in the security forum.

The 1951 agreement signed by the Philippines and United States stipulates that both countries will come to each other's defense against an armed attack.

"When we have discussions on these matters, the reason why public figures do not want to give specific answers is that these are complex issues ... To

simply turn it into a military and nonmilitary response is shortchanging the issue," Mattis said.

"This is what diplomacy is all about, taking contrary perspectives and finding common ground," he added.

Mattis' response was in stark contrast to the solid commitment of the US to defend Japan in case of an armed attack.

In 2017, he said that Article 5 of the US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security covered the Senkaku Islands, which Tokyo administers, in the East China Sea.

China also claims the uninhabited rocky formations and calls them Diaoyutai Islands.

The Philippines, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have overlapping claims in the South China Sea. But China claims most of the waters, demarcating its supposed territory with the controversial nine-dash line, and has asserted its claims by building military-grade artificial islands.

It was not the first time that US officials spoke in ambiguous terms on the extent of the PH-US Mutual Defense Treaty. Presidents Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton also gave uncertain assurances to Manila in the past. —WITH REPORTS FROM AFP

AND AP INQ

A13

# Calida, Hilbay say allowances legal

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

Solicitor General Jose Calida and his predecessor Florin Hilbay were on the same side yesterday in defending the issuance of honoraria and allowances to lawyers of their office.

In separate statements, Calida and Hilbay also cited the same laws to support their position.

Calida said the honoraria and allowances were paid in accordance with law, particularly Section 1(i) of Presidential Decree No. 478, which defines the powers and functions of the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), and Section 35(9), Chapter 12, Title III, Book IV of Executive Order No. 292 or the Administrative Code.

"These provisions authorize the OSG lawyers to receive allowances and honoraria for the legal services they render without qualification as to the number of agreements with client agencies and without limitation/cap as to the amount. The authority of these agencies to pay OSG lawyers honoraria and allowances for services rendered is restated in Section 5 of Republic Act No. 9417 (An Act to Strengthen the Office of the Solicitor General)," Calida explained.

"There is therefore no basis

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## Calida From Page 1

for the reported Commission on Audit (COA) finding of alleged payment of 'excessive honoraria and allowances,'" the OSG added.

The OSG was reacting to the 2017 COA report showing that OSG lawyers were allegedly paid excessive honoraria and allowances amounting to P10.774 million for services rendered to their client-government agencies.

The audit report was based on COA Circular No. 85-25-E that limits the honoraria and allowances to 50 percent of an OSG lawyer's salary. But the OSG said this limitation is not found in the laws authorizing the payment of honoraria and allowances.

The COA circular could not prevail over the provisions of law, the OSG added.

"The position of the OSG has always been that the COA circular, an administrative issuance, cannot override an act of Congress. The Congress controls the power of the purse and therefore has clear constitutional authority to provide exceptions to general rules," said Hilbay.

Hilbay believes that a COA circular must yield to the power of Congress.

"There is a reason why the right of OSG lawyers are repeated over and over again in statutes—especially to avoid the circular imposed by COA. That is a legislative judgment that the resident auditors must recognize and respect," he explained.

"There is a practical reason for these allowances—allow the institution to retain good lawyers. Litigation takes time and expertise needs to be developed. If OSG lawyers are so easily pirated by law firms and corporations, it will prevent the government from developing a good career bureaucracy that can litigate for the republic over long periods," said Hilbay.

But the COA was urged yesterday to compel Calida to return the P7.5 million in "excess" allowances he granted himself last year.

Rep. Tom Villarin of party-list group Akbayan said Calida must be required to "give back to the government what he illegally received and can't feign ignorance as alibi."



"His sense of entitlement and privilege got blown out of proportion to what our laws provide. It is not accidental but deliberate when he draws allowances and financial perks way beyond his annual salary," he said.

He said personnel of the Calidas' security agency "must be shaking in disbelief over the good fortunes of their boss now exposed."

"From conflict of interest over the P150-million government contracts with his family-owned security firm and now this illegal withdrawal of P7.5-million allowances. But it seems President Duterte's 'whiff of corruption' test doesn't apply to his favorite enforcer," he added.

Villarín pointed out that aside from Calida, underlings of the solicitor general who received excess allowances must return the money to the government.

The COA report named the other recipients and their corresponding excesses as Renan Ramos (P837,252), Henry Angeles (P697,039), James Cundangan (P448,707), Raymund Rigodon (P363,894), Ma. Antonia Edita Dizon (P273,746), Perfecto Adelfo Chua Cheng

(P158,501), Bernard Hernandez (P136,814), John Dale Ballinan (P99,026), Lilian Abenojar (P90,626), Lcney Layug-Delfin (P70,626), Herman Cimafranca (P62,454), Danilo Leyva (P50,051), Gift Mohametano (P13,739) and Rex Bernardo Pascual (P9,394).

### **P700 M paid to foreign law firms**

Meanwhile, the OSG has insisted that there was nothing wrong with its use of P767.723 million in government funds for the payment of four foreign law firms tapped to represent the country in three international cases, including the arbitration case against China over the West Philippine Sea territorial dispute.

Based on COA report, a total of P149,060,125.61 was paid by the OSG to Foley Hoag LLP from 2015 to 2017 for the services of its private lawyers in connection with the Philippines' arbitration case against China filed before the UN's Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Receiving the largest payment of P417,853,362.24 from the OSG was the White and Case LLP for its services in connection with an arbitra-

tion case between the Philippines and Belgian firm Baggerwerken DeCloedt en Zoon N.V.

The Philippines was ordered by the World Bank's International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes to pay Baggerwerken at least \$16 million or around P800 million after the administration of Benigno Aquino III refused to honor the contract that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources entered with Baggerwerken for the P18.7-billion Laguna Lake Rehabilitation project under the administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In its comment on the audit report, the OSG maintained that EO 292 or the Administrative Code of the Philippines gives the OSG the "exclusive authority to engage the services of foreign counsels in international arbitral proceedings involving the Republic."

The COA however said the legal services of private law firms Paul Hastings, Janofsky and Walker, Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher (GDC) LLP, White and Case LLP, and Foley Hoag LLP were availed of for several years despite "absence of prior acquiescence of the OSG and

written concurrence of COA," which are both required under COA No. 95-011 as amended by COA Circular No. 98-002.

The COA said the contracts were also not submitted to the auditors within five working days from their execution in violation of COA Circular No. 2009-001.

The COA report also shows that P99,569,517.99 was paid to Paul Hastings, Janofsky and Walker for the legal services it rendered from March 2009 to October 2014 in connection with an arbitration case pending in Singapore between the Philippines and the Metro Rail Transit Corp. (MRTC).

As of last Dec. 31, the COA said a total of P101,240,068.85 was paid to GDC LLP for its services from Jan. 29, 2015 to the present, for the same arbitration case between the Philippines and MRTC following the termination of contract with Paul Hastings.

The COA said the OSG did not provide the audit team with a rationale behind the termination of contract with Paul Hastings and the basis or criteria in the selection of GDC LLP as its replacement. — With Jess Diaz, Elizabeth Marcelo

# No Phl territory lost under Duterte

## — Cayetano

By JANVIC MATEO

The Philippines has not lost any part of its territory in the West Philippine Sea under the Duterte administration. Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano insisted amid criticisms of the government's supposed silence over continuing Chinese military buildup in the region.

Speaking to reporters prior to his departure for South Korea Friday night, Cayetano said China has committed not to build on any uninhabited feature in the disputed territories in the South China Sea.

"I reiterate: if anyone, any of the critics can show that we lost one grain of sand or one square-inch of our territory or sovereign rights, I will not just resign — I will neither accept any appointment nor run (for office)," he said in Filipino.

"Are they willing to put their position and profession on the line? No. They lose nothing by inverting," he added.

The secretary denied claims that the government has been silent on the developments in the disputed territories, particularly on the continuing Chinese buildup in their occupied islands.

"We've filed several notes," he said, adding that they could not release details because the documents are classified. "But as I said, this does not all remain classified. At one point in time, it will be released."

Cayetano maintained the Duterte administration's approach is different from that of the previous administration.

"The strategy of the Aquino government in the past is to make noise, be loud to gather world support. What I am saying now is that we already have world support. We want to garner world support if we want to pressure China to do something," he said.

"We do it quietly, effectively. If we have to make noise, we'll file. But the shouting (type of diplomacy) that's the old Aquino administration," he added.

Cayetano claimed that such strategy resulted in standoff at Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, eventually putting the area under Chinese control.

"I'll make it very clear: as a policy, we do not want war," he said. "In accordance with our Constitution, we do not consider war."

Despite the difference in the approach, the secretary said the stand of the Philippines in the region has not changed: the government will not give up any part of its sovereign territory.

"What they want to do is to break it down into instances, and then to isolate in the South China Sea. What we want to do is to look at the bigger picture of the whole relationship," he said.

Cayetano noted that China has been listening to the Philippines and there has been a big development in the relationship of the two.

"Now and then, there are incidents. That's why we're talking, and that's why we're developing new mechanisms like a hotline between our military, between our coast guard," he added.

### No protest

He also said the Philippines is not protesting China's landing of a bomber

on Woody Island in the Paracels.

"They say that the radius of the bombers, it can reach us. But the area where it landed is not our territory. How can we protest when it's not in our territory? We can do that in the multilaterals. In multilateral, in ASEAN, we join our ASEAN brothers in a statement," he said.

"But if you protest when it's not your territory or you are not claiming it, it's quite ridiculous," he added.

Last month, state-run Chinese newspaper *People's Daily* posted on its Twitter account a video of the landing.

Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) said the video was taken on Woody Island, China's largest base in Paracel Islands also being claimed by Vietnam.

AMTI said China has also built large hangars that could accommodate bombers like the H-6 series at its "Big 3" outposts in the Spratlys, comprising Philippine-claimed Zamora (Subi),

Panganiban (Mischief), and Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reefs

According to Cayetano, the Philippines and China are currently working on a framework that would allow joint exploration for oil and gas in disputed territories.

"What's happening is that we're looking at what they want compared to what we want, and then how can we have a framework that will not affect the sovereign rights and territorial rights. In joint development, there are such models. The question is on the wording," he said.

Cayetano claimed that some of those against joint development are obstructionists intent on undermining the Duterte administration.

"If we have joint development, two things will happen: one, Philippines will really progress because there will be inexpensive oil in the country," he said.

- With Evelyn Macairan, Michael Punongbayan, Jaime Laude



# US defense chief hits SCS 'intimidation'

China's placement of weapons systems on manmade islands in the South China Sea is designed to intimidate and coerce others in the region, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said yesterday.

Mattis laid out a sharp criti-

cism of Beijing at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, threatening larger consequences if militarization continues.

He warned that America's recent move to disinvite China from a multinational naval ex-

ercise this summer was an "initial response" to the militarization.

It was a "relatively small consequence, I believe there are much larger consequences in the future," he said.

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# US

From Page 1

China relying on muscle to use weapons to pursue goals not favored by international tribunals "is not a way to make long-term collaboration the rule of the road in a region that's important to China's future," Mattis said, when asked to elaborate more on the consequences.

"There are consequences that will continue to come home to roost, so to speak, with China, if they don't find a way to work more collaboratively with all of the nations who have interests," he said.

Mattis said the US remains committed to ensuring free and open transit in the region, and that he doesn't believe China's actions will pay off.

Militarizing the islands, Mattis said, will not enhance China's standing in the world.

"Despite China's claims to the contrary, the placement of these weapons systems is tied directly to military use for the purposes of intimidation and coercion," Mattis said, referring to the recent deployment of anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, electronic jammers and other equipment on the Spratly Islands, and the landing of bomber aircraft at Woody Island.

Mattis also struck at one of the key, longstanding disputes between the US and China, telling the international security forum in Singapore that America will continue to provide defense equipment and services to Taiwan and oppose any effort to alter the status quo. China claims the self-governing island as its territory to be brought under control by force if necessary.

But in a quick pivot, Mattis said the US welcomes cooperation with China "wherever possible," and announced that

he has accepted Beijing's invitation to visit there soon. It remains to be seen if that invitation will stand after the Singapore conference.

Mattis' comments triggered an equally pointed reaction from a Chinese official at the meeting.

Senior Col. Zhao Xiaozhuo said a US move a couple of years ago to send two warships into China's "territorial waters" was a violation of law, and an "obvious provocation to China's national security and territorial integrity."

Mattis responded that the question reflected a fundamental disconnect with the way international tribunals have spoken on the matter.

"We do not see it as a militarization by going through what has traditionally been an international water space," said Mattis of the US ship movements through the South China Sea. "What we see it as, is a reaffirmation of the rules-based order."

Last week the US withdrew an invitation for Beijing to participate in the exercise known as Rim of the Pacific. China had participated in 2014 and 2016.

The Philippines, often acting as an observer in the drills, will now actively participate in the exercise and deploy two warships under Philippine Naval Task Force (NTF).

The Pentagon said the decision to disinvite the Chinese Navy was triggered by what it called strong evidence that China has deployed weapons systems on the islands, and called on Beijing to remove them.

China says it is within its rights to build up defenses on islands in the South China Sea that it believes are its sovereign territory.

China's activities, Mattis said in his speech yesterday, stand "in stark contrast to the openness of what our strategy promotes; it calls into question China's broader goals."

Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, chairman of the Armed Services Committee who was attending the conference, said China is alienating other nations and nations must band together and say the actions are unacceptable.

The US response to China's weaponization of the islands continued on Sunday, as two US warships sailed close to the Paracel Islands, which lie north of the Spratlys. It was the latest freedom of navigation operation designed to challenge Beijing's claims. China protested the maneuver.

In recent years, the US had sought to stabilize military relations with China, but the militarization of the islands has been a persistent point of conflict. Many nations fear that Beijing will use the construction on the islands to extend its military reach and potentially try to restrict navigation in the South China Sea.

China's delegation at the conference is being led by Lt. Gen. He Lei, vice president of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s Academy of Military Science.

China has not sent high-level officials to the three-day meeting, in an apparent attempt to deflect attention from its campaign to expand sovereignty across virtually the entire South China Sea.

Mattis made clear that the US does not expect nations to choose between the US and China, adding that Beijing should have a voice in shaping the region, while allies have a voice in shaping China's role.

The US, Mattis said, "will continue to pursue a constructive, results-oriented relation-

ship with China, cooperation when possible, and competing vigorously where we must."

### End game

A senior research fellow at Bangkok Thammasat University's faculty law and visiting professor at Thailand's Royal Military Academy warned China's military buildup in the South China Sea is in support of a long range island-hopping invasion plan of all islets and features in the region currently occupied by other claimant-states.

Testifying recently before US Congress, retired US Navy captain James Fanell said the PLA has dramatically increased the size of its Marines troops and already developed amphibious assault ships and vehicles in preparation for occupying the whole South China Sea.

He pointed out the most important aspect of China's maritime domination plan involves the act of physically occupying islands within the First and Second Island Chain in the South and East China Sea.

All Spratlys-claimant states except Brunei have military outposts in the disputed archipelago in South China Sea — the Philippines has nine military outposts, Vietnam has more than 23, Malaysia three and Taiwan with one occupied island. China on the other hand has seven military outposts, all man-made islands.

China's First Island Chain is located within South China Sea's Spratlys and the Paracels while the Second Island chain stretches from northernmost of South China Sea towards the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean passing by the island state of Taiwan. China considers Taiwan as a renegade province.

Fanell said Chinese marines have been conducting amphibious island-seizing exercises in the South China Sea utilizing amphibious dock landing ships, air-cushion landing craft and ship-borne helicopters.

He noted this type of training is ubiquitous across the South and East China Sea.

"These (Chinese marine activities) are the most tangible evidence of the People's Liberation Army intention of being prepared to conduct such mission," Fanell said, as quoted by Bangkok-based *Asia Times*.

Out to support China's future military occupation of the Spratlys are its artificial islands which, Fanell said, will serve as amphibious assault staging areas.

Aside from landing long-range nuclear capable bombers on Woody Islands in the Paracels, three of China's man-made islands in the Spratlys — Fiery Cross Reef, Subi Reef and Mischief Reef — are all missile capable.

Fanell said additional Chinese forces rapidly deployed to those artificial islands to

stage expeditionary strike missions would require few facilities or enough space for short-term troop and equipment laydown immediately prior to an assault.

The PLA's Marine Corps at sea expeditionary capability will be a version of the US Navy-Marine Corps team, *Asia Times* reported.

As it is currently happening, China has been mimicking all US Navy and Marine Corps capabilities while at sea as shown during the conduct of massive naval drill in the South China Sea. The naval drill was launched by China in response to the presence of three US Strike Groups in the region.

It was also reported that it is planning to expand its Marine force from 20,000 to a corps-level force of 100,000. However, it is expected that this Marine troops expansion will stake another year to become fully operational.

In December last year, Chinese media reported that 30,000 Marines are serving in its three fleets.

- AP, Jaime Laude

# US hits China for coercion

## Beijing intimidating sea claimants – US defense chief

**S**INGAPORE: China's military build-up in the South China Sea and its deployment of high-end weapons systems in the disputed waterway is designed to intimidate and coerce neighbors, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Saturday.

Speaking at a high-profile security summit in Singapore 10 days before President Donald Trump is due to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the Pentagon chief also said the US military continues to support diplomats pushing for the "complete, verifiable and irreversible" denuclearization of the Korean peninsula (see story on D1).

Beijing has deployed a range of military hardware including anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles and electronic jammers across the South China Sea, where it has built islets and other maritime features into hardened military facilities," Mattis said.

China has also landed heavy

► Coercion A2

### ■ COERCION FROM A1

## US hits China

bombers on Woody Island in the Paracel Islands.

"Despite China's claims to the contrary, the placement of these weapon systems is tied directly to military use for the purposes of intimidation and coercion," Mattis told the Shangri-La Dialogue.

He also blasted Chinese President Xi Jinping for reneging on a 2015 promise made at the White House that Beijing would not militarize the island features in the South China Sea.

Mattis' address in Singapore was the second time he had attended the summit since becoming Pentagon chief.

He returned to a theme that he and other senior US officials have hammered home since Trump took office—that America is here to stay in the Asia-Pacific region and that allies should stick with Washington instead of aligning with Beijing.

A Chinese general immediately lashed out at "irresponsible comments" made by Mattis.

"Any irresponsible comments from other countries cannot be accepted," Lieutenant General He Lei said at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

### Tariffs on close allies

But the message of inclusivity, cooperation and working with allies might be a tougher sell for Mattis, who is generally popular on the international scene, after his boss this week imposed metals tariffs on some of America's closest allies in the name of "national security."

Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin asked Mattis whether he thought it was unproductive for Trump to pick fights with allies on trade.

"Certainly we have had some

unusual approaches, I'll be candid with you," Mattis replied.

"But I'm reminded that so long as nations continue dialogue, so long as they continue to listen to one another and to pay respect to one another, nothing is ever based on one decision, one day."

Lynn Kuok, a senior research fellow at the University of Cambridge, said the US approach was a "risky gamble."

"The United States seems to think that it can antagonize partners in certain areas, whilst expecting cooperation in others," she told AFP.

In a dig at China, which the Pentagon has accused of using "predatory" economics to exploit neighbors, Mattis said the US supports the peaceful resolution of disputes, "free, fair and reciprocal trade and investment" and adherence to international rules and norms.

Despite frequent warnings from Washington about China's rising might and the pitfalls of

its "Belt and Road" global infrastructure initiative, Beijing has faced few consequences for its South China Sea build-up and sweeping territorial claims.

One modest exception came last week when the Pentagon disinvented China from biennial maritime exercises in the Pacific. Mattis characterized this action as an "initial response."

But "there are much larger consequences in the future when nations lose the rapport of their neighbors," he warned.

"They believe that piling mountainous debts on their neighbors and somehow removing the freedom of political action is the way to engage them. Eventually these things do not pay off."

Senior Colonel Zhao Xiaozhuo, a PLA academic, told Mattis that US freedom of navigation operations, where US naval vessels sail close to Chinese-claimed features, are an "obvious provocation to China's national security and territorial integrity."

Mattis responded by saying there is a "fundamental disconnect" between China's views on the waters and how international tribunals view them.

"These waters, to us, are free and open international waters," Mattis said.

Delegates hoping for clarity on Trump's intentions for a scheduled June 12 summit with North Korean leader Kim did not get much from Mattis, though he said the issue of the permanent deployment of about 28,500 US troops in South Korea will not be "on the table."

Mattis has tried to avoid weighing in on the summit, deferring questions to the State Department and Trump's national security team.

"On the Korean peninsula, we hold the line with our allies, supporting our diplomats who lead this effort," Mattis said.

"Our objective remains the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula." **AFP**



# Mattis accuses China of 'intimidation and coercion' in S. China Sea

By Thomas Watkins

SINGAPORE -- China's military build-up in the South China Sea and its deployment of high-end weapons systems in the disputed waterway is designed to intimidate and coerce neighbors, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Saturday.

Speaking at a high-profile security summit in Singapore less than two weeks before President Donald Trump is due to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the Pentagon chief also said the US military continues to support diplomats pushing for the "complete, verifiable and irreversible" denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Mattis said Beijing had deployed a range of military hardware including anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles and electronic jammers across the South China Sea, where it has built islets and other maritime features into hardened military facilities.

Beijing has also landed heavy bombers on Woody Island in the Paracel Islands.

"Despite China's claims to the contrary, the placement of these weapon systems is tied directly to military use for the purposes of intimidation and coercion," Mattis told the Shangri-La Dialogue.

He also blasted Chinese President Xi Jinping for renegeing on a 2015 promise made at the White House that Beijing would not militarise the island features in the South China Sea.

Mattis' address in Singapore was the second

time he had attended the summit since becoming Pentagon chief.

He returned to a theme that he and other senior US officials have hammered since Trump took office -- that America is here to stay in the Asia-Pacific region and that allies should stick with Washington instead of aligning with Beijing.

### TARIFFS ON CLOSE ALLIES

But the message of inclusivity, cooperation and working with allies might be a tougher sell for Mattis, who is generally popular on the international scene, after his boss this week imposed metals tariffs on some of America's closest allies in the name of "national security".

Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin asked Mattis whether he thought it was unproductive for Trump to pick fights with allies on trade.

"Certainly we have had some unusual approaches, I'll be candid with you," Mattis replied.

"But I'm reminded that so long as nations continue dialogue, so long as they continue to listen to one another and to pay respect to one another, nothing is over based on one decision."

In a dig at China, which the Pentagon has accused of using "predatory" economics to exploit neighbors, Mattis said the US supports the peaceful resolution of disputes, "free, fair and reciprocal trade and investment" and adherence to international rules and norms.

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ings from Washington about China's rising might and the pitfalls of its "Belt and Road" global infrastructure initiative, Beijing has faced few consequences for its South China Sea build-up and sweeping territorial claims.

One modest exception came last week when the Pentagon disinclined China from biennial maritime exercises in the Pacific. Mattis characterized this action as an "initial response".

But "there are much larger consequences in the future when nations lose the rapport of their neighbors," he warned.

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"Our objective remains the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula." AFP

03

A2

## CHINA TOLD: KEEP OUT OF SPRATLYS

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has asked China to stay away from the Philippine claimed Spratly Islands, Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano told his pre-departure news conference Friday night.

Before he took the four-hour flight from Manila to Seoul, where he joined President Duterte on the latter's first official visit to the Asian country, Cayetano added that aside from Duterte's request to China regarding lending the Philippines billions of pesos worth of loans, that if Beijing stopped entering the disputed Spratly Islands, both countries could be friends. *Turn to A2*

### CHINA...

At the same time, Cayetano said China gave "assurance" to the Philippines regarding the latest "incident" in the disputed West Philippine Sea, which prompted the Department of Foreign Affairs to file a diplomatic protest against its giant neighbor.

Last May 11, a Philippine Navy boat resupplying Filipino troops at the Ayungin Shoal was allegedly challenged and harassed by the Chinese Coast Guard and China's People's Liberation Army Navy.

Cayetano explained that the note verbale on the incident was filed just recently because it "was not settled immediately" through dialogue.

While he did not elaborate on the issue, the foreign affairs chief said the Philippines already received an assurance from China over the incident.

"It's how we should talk and how our resupplying would not be hampered. In fact, someone already went here the other day. The conversation was good—coast guard to coast guard," Cayetano said in Filipino.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China are set to convene negotiations for the crafting of the code of conduct on the South China Sea in August, Cayetano said.

But he admitted all parties were still facing challenges on the substance of the COC, but assured that the Philippines was keen on pushing for a substantial docu-

ment.

"We only have the framework as of now, but this August, there will be a meeting of the Ministers. This time around, like what we had last year, it won't be just the Asean but also our dialogue partners, our strategic partners, they're all included," he said in Filipino.

"We intend to push it to get as far as we can, as fast as we can," he added, adding the Philippines expects no less than an "effective COC."

"We want an effective COC, something that we can rely on because the DOC (Declaration of Conduct), a lot has happened (to) it, so we want the COC clear. For example on the environment, how do we protect (it), what will be the arrangement and how do we implement (it)," Cayetano said.

Last year, the Asean regional bloc and China adopted the COC framework under the Philippines' chairmanship, where both parties welcomed the adoption as a sign of progress after 15 years since the 2002 DOC was signed.

China, Taiwan and some Asean member states including the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Vietnam have overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea.

During the Asean Foreign Ministers Retreat in February 2018, Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan admitted the COC negotiation would be "very complicated" and will require all parties to "ultimately exercise political will" to resolve sensitive issues, adding territorial claims would not be resolved with the COC alone.

**Sara Susanne D. Fabunan and PNA**

## Asean, China to start crafting sea code in Aug

LEADERS of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and China are set to convene negotiations for the crafting of a Code of Conduct (CoC) on the South China Sea in August, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said.

Cayetano admitted that all parties are still facing challenges on the substance of the CoC but he gave assurances that the Philippines was keen on pushing for a substantial document.

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He said the Philippines expects no less than an "effective CoC."

"We want an effective CoC, something that we can rely on because the DoC [Declaration of Conduct], a lot has happened [to] it, so we want the CoC clear. For example on the environment, how do we protect [it], what will be the arrangement and how do we implement [it]," Cayetano said.

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► China A2

■ CHINA FROM A1

## Asean, China to start crafting

said the CoC negotiation would be "very complicated" and will require all parties to "ultimately exercise political will" to resolve sensitive issues, adding that territorial claims will not be resolved with the CoC alone.

Cayetano said he is confident that Singapore, as the current Asean chairman, will steer a fruitful CoC negotiation.

"As I've said, Singapore is the perfect country to lead us now [it] is a perfect country to negotiate all of this because they are open-minded and they have this mindset of no nonsense, get things done," he said. PNA

03

2

# Asean, China dialog for maritime COC set

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# Asean, China dialog for maritime COC set

From page 1

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## Hardware deployment cited

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## 'Predatory' economics

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"Our objective remains the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula."

**AFP, PNA**

## South China Sea Code of Conduct meet set

CHINA and key officials of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are set to convene in August for the negotiations on the Code of Conduct (COC) on the South China Sea, Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano announced Friday night.

Possibly to be tabled are the challenges on the substance of the COC.

Cayetano however assured that the Philippines is keen on pushing for a substantial document.

"We only have the framework as of now, but this August, there will be a meeting of the Ministers. This time around, like what we had last year, it won't be just the ASEAN but also our dialogue partners, our strategic partners, they're all included," he said in

Filipino.

"We intend to push it to get as far as we can, as fast as we can," he added, adding that the Philippines expects no less than an "effective COC."

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Last year, the ASEAN regional bloc and China adopted the COC framework under the Philippines' chairmanship.

Both parties welcomed the adoption as a sign of progress after 15 years since the 2002 DOC was signed.

**Cristina Leo-Pisco**

# AFP financial institutions up for antigraft cleanup

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.  
@dtmallarijrnq

LUCENA CITY—A cleanup of the military's financial institutions is under way, and the country's top soldier wants the troops to know that their contributions, including interests, will be returned to them.

Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, on Saturday said "people with integrity" would soon be tapped to manage two graft-ridden military pension and savings funds.

In his speech at the military's Southern Luzon Command headquarters in Camp Nakar here, Galvez said he was serious about ridding the AFP-Retirement and Separation Benefits System (AFP-RSBS) and the Armed Forces and Police Savings and Loan Association Inc. (AFPSLAI) of corruption.

## President's guarantee

President Duterte, he said, guarantees that the soldier's contributions in AFP-RSBS plus their accumulated interest will be given back.

"The money will be given [back] immediately, so let us not worry that it might be lost," Galvez said to soldiers' applause.

The AFP-RSBS was established in 1976 as a pension fund for soldiers and was funded from their contributions.

But the pension fund has long been mired in corruption. Last year, several of the fund's top officials were convicted of graft and corruption in cases involving hundreds of millions of pesos.

Galvez said they had already stopped the practice by 12 military-affiliated financial institutions of automatic salary deductions.

## Troops better be frugal

Urging soldiers to live a frugal life, he noted that a great majority of them were deeply mired in debt. An estimate of

their total borrowings, he said, is about P200 billion.

"In AFPSLAI, our (the soldiers' total) monthly loan used to be P200 million. Now, it reaches P500 to P600 million. The AFPSLAI is running out of money because of the soldiers' piling debt," he disclosed.

He cited the story of a heavily indebted soldier who had to be contented with just eating the leftovers of his superior because he had already pawned his subsistence allowance.

"You cannot spend what you cannot earn," he said. "For every salary, you save 20 percent and you become a millionaire when you retire."

## Take-home pay

He said the AFP had also stopped the controversial RTS—"return to sender"—practice involving military funds. RTS refers to portions of operational funds allocated to a military division which are allegedly withdrawn and diverted to accounts of senior officers.

The Office of the Deputy Staff for Personnel, he said, will soon issue a directive making the mandatory take-home pay of soldiers at not less than P15,000.

Vowing to be an honest chief of staff, Galvez said everything the government promised would be given to the soldiers. "My motivation is not about money. My motivation is to serve and make people happy, to work for others, to make the organization grow and to be professional."

## 'Duterte very serious'

The AFP, he said, will soon implement its "Integrity Development Program" to help sustain the President's no corruption policy.

"I am reminding you that the President is very serious," Galvez said, apparently addressing AFP logistic and financial personnel, the military men most susceptible, historically, to corrupt practices. "We all see how serious he is."

Corruption still haunted even the AFP General Headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City, he added. "I will admit that at the headquarters there is still corruption." INQ



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### **Militiaman kills mother-in-law**

TUGUEGARAO, Cagayan – A militiaman allegedly killed his mother-in-law at her house in Barangay Ara Benito Soliven, Isabela on Friday night.

Cecilia Vergara, 60, was having dinner when she was shot. She reportedly named her son-in-law Sandy Archeta, 27, as her killer before she died.

Archeta fled with the M14 rifle he used, which he reportedly took from the armory of the Army's 87th Infantry Battalion.

Archeta's wife is an overseas contract worker.

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- Raymund Catindig

# LORENZANA LEADS MINDANAO PEACE, SECURITY SUMMIT

**By Mark Navales**

COTABATO CITY—The first Mindanao Peace and Security Summit recently wrapped up at the Cotabato City State Polytechnic College, highlighted by the presence of Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana, representing President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

Terrorism, violent extremism, illegal drugs, criminality, and the menace of corruption in our country were discussed the focus of the Duterte administration.

"Liberating our society from this problem requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders. These problems are so inter-connected that discussing one will lead to the need to understand the others," Lorenzana said.

The activity bannered the theme "Grasping the Role of the Academe on the War Against Illegal Drugs, Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in the Pursuit of Peace and Development in Southern Philippines."

The Joint Task Force Central and the Cotabato City State Polytechnic College recognized the imperative to engage all stakeholders by giving priority to the youth sector, being the most prone and vulnerable to radicalization.

As she welcomed the peace advocates, Cotabato City Mayor Atty. Frances Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi said, "Others say that Cotabato would be the next Marawi and I said no, because we the leaders and the people will not allow it to happen. We need to work with you and help each other specially the youth. The people of Cotabato deserve more than what they are enjoying now."

The initiative of Cotabato City State Polytechnic in organizing the Peace and Security Summit 2018 is a welcome development because it demonstrates the eagerness of the academe to perform their role.

In this endeavor the traditional and religious leaders have been tapped, being the most influential segment of the society in Central Mindanao.

The new commander of the Western Mindanao Command, Lt. Gen. Arnel B. Dela Vega, said: "There is a need to institutionalize the program on countering violent extremism, combating illegal drugs and corruption in all academic institutions, not only in Central Mindanao, but also all over the country."

"I cannot overly emphasize the importance of the academe's role in countering the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism. The military will continue to work closely with you to sustain what you have started and advocate for the program to be emulated in other academic institutions," Dela Vega.

After the three-day Peace and Security forum last February 2018, the convenors came up a module on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism that can be offered not only for CCSPC but also to all other schools, colleges, and universities all over the country was formulated and tested.

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## 285 candidate soldiers undergo training in Maguindanao

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao  
— The second batch of this year's candidate soldiers took their oath yesterday, and in four months they will become new foot troopers.

Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, newly installed Army's 6th Infantry Division commander, administered the oath-taking of the 285 candidates, witnessed by their proud parents, relatives and loved ones.

Of the 285 candidate soldiers, 256 are male and the remaining 29, female.

After the oath-taking, they were sent to the 6th Division Training School (DTS) in Barangay Semba, Datu Odin Sinsuat, in Maguindanao province.

Capt. Arvin John Encinas, speaking for the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the candidate soldiers were among the more than 1,000 applicants, who went through strict selection process after they passed the physical and medical examinations.

"They are the most competent candidates who will be honed to become future soldiers of the Philippine Army," Encinas said.

After their oath, the candidate soldiers were brought to 6th DTS for a 14-week rigid military training broken down into three modules: Transformation, Basic Squad Training, and Application of Knowledge.

Encinas said the training will mold them to become well-disciplined, competent and capable soldiers to fill in the enlisted ranks of the Philippine Army.

Sobejana said the training will change the candidates' lifestyle.

"The candidate soldiers' training is fundamentally stressful as they will initially experience an abrupt change from being a civilian to adapting the military lifestyle," Sobejana said.

"I am reminding the personnel of 6th DTS to instill discipline and respect to guarantee that these recruits would develop a mind-set of survival in the military profession," he added.

PNA

## PH Army toughens up

The future of the Philippine Army (PA) looks bright as a total of 285 aspiring soldiers will undergo rigid training in Maguindanao in the next 14 weeks to be the country's next military officers, the PA's 6th Infantry Division (ID) announced.

Of the number, 256 are male aspirants while 29 are females, according to Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the PA's 6ID.

Sobejana said the aspirants comprised the second batch of this year's candidate soldiers program of the Army.

Sobejana adds they will be sent to the Division Training School (DTS) in Barangay Semba, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao after they took their oath Friday at the 6ID Grandstand at Camp Siongco.

The chosen candidates are considered to be the most competent ones among over 1,000 applicants after they passed the

strict selection process and the physical, medical, neurological, and psychological examinations, Sobejana said.

The candidate soldiers' training were broken down into three modules namely the "Transformation," "Basic Squad Training" and "Application of Knowledge," all aimed at molding them to become well-disciplined, competent and capable soldiers to fill in the enlisted ranks of the Army.

"The candidate soldiers' training is fundamentally stressful as they will initially experience an abrupt change from being a civilian to adapting the military lifestyle," Sobejana explained.

"I am reminding the personnel of DTS to instill discipline and respect to the recruits, and to guarantee that they will develop a mindset of survival in the military profession," he added.

(Martin Sadongdong) 4

## ICRC donates medical supplies to AFP's Zambo main hospital "

By ALI S. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY - The Zamboanga City-based Camp Navarro General Hospital (CNGH) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) received last week medical supplies from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to treat people wounded in recent clashes in Sulu.

ICRC media liaison specialist Allison Lopez said intravenous fluids and wound-care materials necessary in furthering the services of CNGH to its clientele, especially soldiers and residents injured in military clashes with lawless elements in Sulu, were donated by the international agency.

Piotr Dregiel, head of ICRC-Zamboanga City office, said the initial medical supply could "cover the

needs of 20-30 wounded people."

Rank and file personnel of the CNGH, a main military medical base in Southern Philippines, appreciated the ICRC continuing assistance.

"Their (ICRC's) medical donations since 2016 have supplemented the supplies and medicines of the hospital which at times can become low due to increased patient needs especially during the height of military operations," Lt. Col. Maria Victoria Mandin said during the turnover of the medical supplies.

Lopez said the ICRC regularly supports five hospitals in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, releasing every quarter medicines, vaccines and medical supplies. It also provides ad hoc assistance to hospitals during crises situations.

# AFP, MILF to conduct joint counterterror ops

By JAIME LAUDE

The Armed Forces of the Philippines is looking forward to conducting joint anti-terror operations with Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) units against lawless groups in Mindanao once the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) becomes fully functional.

AFP chief Gen. Carlito Galvez said the passage of the BBL will provide the military and the MILF more areas of cooperation and coordination against terror threats that are now a concern.

"As I said BBL is the antidote of terrorism in Mindanao. Once it is signed into law by the President, the AFP will have the so-called cooperative engagements with the MILF," Galvez said.

But while things are still being ironed out for full enforcement of BBL, a senior military official who asked not be named said that the AFP's operations against all threat and lawless groups in Mindanao will be sustained.

He added that the anti-terror operations will also continue without letup even if BBL is already fully functional, saying that the threat of terrorism is not only the concern of the military nor the MILF but also the entire Filipino people, especially residents of Mindanao.

A military official added that alignment with the anti-terror campaign of the United States and other allied

countries will likewise be strengthened with military exercises like the annual Philippine-US Balikatan exercises.

He said that while the BBL is being ironed out, sharing of intelligence information with the MILF will be reinforced through dialogue among AFP and Moro field commanders.

The official said that there will be no reduction in troops in Mindanao, citing the Islamic State (IS) threat as real and must be dealt with.

"I don't see any change of the units nor the reduction of troops engaged in the anti-terror efforts of the national government in Mindanao," he said.

The bicameral conference, however, could reconcile the divergent versions of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the proposed BBL will be held next month.

"We have agreed with our Senate counterparts that we will have the bicam committee meetings on the BBL on Monday to Friday, July 9-13, 2018," House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas said yesterday.

He said some of the meetings would be held at the Senate, while others could be conducted in the House.

The agreed date is two weeks before Congress opens its third and last regular session on July 23. That's also when President Duterte delivers his third State of the Nation Address. —With Jess Diaz, Marvin Sy

# IMT probes MILF men's killing in drug raid

By JOHN UNSON

COTABATO CITY - The death of nine Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) members in an alleged encounter with anti-drug operatives in Matalam, North Cotabato on May 26 should not affect the peace process, according to the International Monitoring Team.

The IMT, which is composed of military and police officers from Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and conflict resolution experts from Japan, Norway and the European Union, started its investigation into the incident on Friday. They visited the site of the alleged encounter in Barangay Kilada.

The office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the

6th Infantry Division are supporting the IMT probe.

Maj. Gen. Dato Haji Mohd Nazir Bin Haji Mami, IMT mission head, appealed for sobriety from concerned sectors to ensure that the incident would not stifle peace initiatives anew.

Mami assured the public of a thorough investigation into the incident.

The MILF sought the inquiry, saying the slain MILF guerillas were not drug pushers.

Butch Malang, MILF ceasefire committee chairman, also denied allegations that the victims fired at law enforcers who raided their lair.

The government and the MILF are bound by the Agreement on General Cessation of Hostilities to resolve security issues in conflict flashpoint areas.

# Senate BBL bill legal – Drilon

BY BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

**SENATE** Minority Leader Franklin Drilon and Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri believe that the Senate's version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law is "more compliant" with the Constitution than the bill passed by the House of Representatives.

Drilon on Saturday identified at least 10 major differences between the two measures that must be ironed out during the bicameral conference committee meeting.

Zubiri, chairman of the Senate subcommittee on BBL, who sponsored the passage of Senate Bill 1717, said the bicam meeting to reconcile the conflicting would be held from July 9 to July 13.

The Senate contingent in the bicam is composed of Senators Juan Edgardo Angara, Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel, Sherwin Gatchalian, Joel Villanueva, Francis Escudero, Loren Legarda, Risa Hontiveros, Francis Pangilinan, Drilon, and Zubiri.

The Senate and the House passed their respective BBL mea-

sures that will abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and replace it with the Autonomous Region for the Bangsamoro (ARB) before Congress adjourned on May 30.

"I strongly believe that our version is more compliant to the provisions of the (1987) Constitution," Drilon said in a radio interview.

"For example, in one of my amendments I said that all those residing in the Bangsamoro (region) are citizens of the Philippines. That's one of the requirements to make it constitutional," he said.

Asked whether the Senate version must prevail over the House version, Drilon said, "It is up to the

[Senate] majority [bloc]. I don't have the control."

"I think our version, with due respect to Congress, will pass the test of constitutionality if someone questions it before the Supreme Court," Zubiri said in another radio interview.

"They (senators) always add the phrase 'within the framework of the 1987 Constitution,' in the almost 150 amendments that they introduced to address issues on constitutionality," he added.

Drilon said the Senate's version maintains the 39 municipalities in North Cotabato as part of the territorial jurisdiction of the ARB. The House version deletes the 39 municipalities as part of the core areas that comprise the ARB.

"This could be a sticky point that both chambers should be able to smooth out when it goes to the bicameral conference committee for reconciliation," he added.

He proposed various amendments to the Senate version "in order to make sure that the measure will not suffer the same fate as the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-



AD)." the proposed BBL crafted under the Arroyo administration.

The Senate adopted the changes to the powers to be given to the Bangsamoro proposed by Drilon, deleting provisions pertaining to the "reserved, concurrent and exclusive powers" of the Bangsamoro government and removing the powers to conduct inquiries, in aid of legislation, and subpoena powers of the Parliament to be headed by a chief minister.

The House version retained the provisions on reserved, concurrent and exclusive powers.

In the version of the House of Representatives, the province of Palawan is included in the list of areas considered as historically part of Bangsamoro territory.

The Senate also added a provision stating that the Bangsamoro people are citizens of the Philippines pursuant to Article 4 of the Constitution, an amendment pushed by Drilon. The said provision is absent in the House version.

Drilon said the Senate and the House must "work hard" to reconcile their differences pertaining

to the share of the national government of taxes collected in the Bangsamoro, other than tariff and customs duties.

The House proposed 25% share for the national government and 75% for Bangsamoro, while the Senate wanted a 50-50 sharing.

Also among the "sticky issues" that both chambers will have to reconcile is the prohibition on political dynasties, which is highly opposed by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC).

The Senate version prohibits a party representative from being related within the second degree of consanguinity or affinity to a district representative or another party representative in the same Parliament. There is no counterpart provision in the House version.

The Senate also provided a qualification on the "block grant" which states that when the national government incurs an unmanageable public sector deficit, the President of the Philippines is authorized, upon the recommendation of the Department of Finance (DoF) and Department of

Budget and Management (DBM) secretaries to make the necessary adjustments in the block grant. The House version does not contain such a provision.

The Senate version also prevents the Bangsamoro Parliament from including the procurement of firearms, ammunition and explosives in its annual appropriations law. The House version does not contain such a provision.

The Senate proposed detailed provisions on the Bangsamoro Regional Police, including the selection of a regional director by the chief minister from a list of nominees submitted by the Philippine National Police Senior Officers Placement and Promotion Board.

In the House version, it is the secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) who will appoint the regional director.

The Senate also removed a provision for the creation of Shari'ah Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), which will recommend nominees to the Shari'ah Courts. The House retained the provision.

## Drilon says Senate, House versions of BBL differ

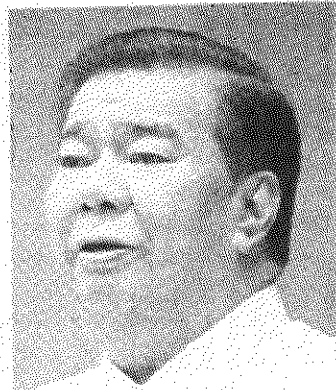
Senate Minority Leader Franklin M. Drilon yesterday identified significant differences between the Senate and the House of Representatives versions of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

The Senate's version maintains the 39 municipalities in North Cotabato as part of the territorial jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro which will replace the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) once the bill is signed into law and ratified in a plebiscite, according to Drilon.

The House's version, on the other hand, deletes the 39 municipalities as part of the core areas that comprise the Bangsamoro.

Drilon said this could be a sticking point that both chambers should be able to smooth out when it goes to the bicameral conference committee for reconciliation.

The minority leader proposed various amendments to the Senate version "in order to make sure that the measure will not suffer the same fate as the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MoA-



DRILON

AD)."

Drilon proposed changes to powers of the Bangsamoro government, which the Senate adopted, deleting provisions pertaining to the reserved, concurrent and exclusive powers of the Bangsamoro government and removing the powers to conduct inquiries in aid of legislation and subpoena powers of the Parliament.

The House, meanwhile, retained the provisions on reserved, concurrent and

exclusive powers.

In the House version, the province of Palawan is included in the list of areas considered as historically part of Bangsamoro territory. The Senate, however, removed the reference to Palawan.

The Senate also added a provision stating the Bangsamoro People are citizens of the Philippines pursuant to Article IV of the Constitution, an amendment pushed by Drilon.

The said provision is absent in the House version.

Drilon also believes that the Senate and the House will have to work hard to reconcile their differences pertaining to the share in national government taxes collected in the Bangsamoro, other than tariff and Customs duties.

The House proposed 25% share for national government and 75% for Bangsamoro while the Senate version wanted a 50-50 sharing.

Drilon sees this as among the contentious issues that both chambers should be able to iron out.

Also among the sticky issues, Drilon added, is

the prohibition on political dynasties which is highly opposed by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC). The Senate version prohibits a party representative from being related within the second civil degree of consanguinity or affinity to a District Representative or another Party Representative in the same Parliament. There is no counterpart provision in the House version.

The Senate also provided a qualification on the block grant which states that when national government incurs an unmanageable public sector deficit, the President of the Philippines is authorized, upon the recommendation of the DoF and DBM secretaries, to make the necessary adjustments in the block grant. The House version does not contain such a provision.

The Senate version also contains a provision preventing the Bangsamoro Parliament to include the procurement of firearms, ammunition and explosives in its annual appropriations law. The House version does not contain such

a provision.

The Senate and the House also differ in the establishment of the Bangsamoro police. The Senate proposed detailed provisions on the Bangsamoro Regional Police, including that a regional director should be selected by the Chief Minister from a list of nominees submitted by the PNP Senior Officers Placement and Promotion Board and approved by PNP chief, confirmed by the National Police Commission (Napolcom).

In the House version, it is the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government who will appoint the regional director.

In relation, the Senate proposed that Chief Minister should sit as ex-officio commissioner of the Napolcom on Bangsamoro Police matters. This provision is absent in the House version.

The Senate also removed a provision for the creation of Shari'ah Judicial and Bar Council which will recommend nominees to the Shari'ah Courts. The House retained such provision.

## Senators to fight for Senate-approved BBL

By YANNE P. TERRAZOLA

Senators on Saturday assured that they will push for their version of the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) in the upcoming bicameral conference committee.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri and Minority Leader Franklin Drilon stood by the Senate-approved BBL as they expressed confidence that it will pass the test of constitutionality should its passage be challenged before the Supreme Court.

Senate Bill 1717 was approved in the Upper Chamber past midnight Thursday with a vote of 21-0, after more than 30 hours of debates in the plenary.

Zubiri, in anticipation of the bicameral meeting, said he hopes that the Lower House would adopt the Senate version.

Drilon, for his part, said that while it is up to the majority of Congress to accept the Senate's version of the BBL, he also vowed to uphold their approved bill.

### Differing provisions

Drilon, who had proposed various amendments to SB 1717, said the bicameral meeting on BBL is crucial in making sure that the measure "will not suffer the same fate as the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD)."

Drilon noted that the Senate and House versions of BBL have "significant differences" which they should reconcile in the bicam.

One of the clashing provisions in the Senate and House BBL versions is the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region's core territory.

The Senate maintained the 39 barangays in North Cotabato as part of the territorial jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro, while the House deleted them in the core areas that would comprise the region.

Another differing provision is on Palawan. In the House version, the province of Palawan is included in the list of areas considered as historically part of Bangsamoro territory. The Senate, however, removed the reference to Palawan.

The Senate also added a provision stating that the Bangsamoro people are citizens of the Philippines pursuant to Article IV of the 1987 Constitution. The said provision is absent in the House version.

The Senate, meanwhile, deleted the provisions on reserved, concurrent, and exclusive powers of the Bangsamoro government and also removed the authority of the proposed Parliament to conduct inquiries in aid of legislation and its subpoena powers. These provisions were retained in the House-approved BBL version.

The two Congress chambers would also have to work on reconciling their differences pertaining to the share in national government taxes collected in the Bangsamoro, other than tariff and customs duties.

The House had proposed 25 percent share for national government and 75 percent for Bangsamoro, while the Senate version wanted a 50-50 sharing.

Drilon said he sees this as among the contentious issues that both Houses should iron out.

# 'No stand down order, no letup in war on NPA'

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.  
@dtmallarijrnq

The military would continue its operations against New People's Army (NPA) until it was ordered to stand down. Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez said on Saturday.

"Let's keep pushing on. We will not stand down," Galvez told troops at the military's Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) headquarters in Lucena City.

Galvez lauded the Army's 2nd Infantry Division (iD) for what he said were counterinsurgency operations and conferred decorations, including a Gold Cross Medal, to soldiers for gallantry in action.

Solcom chief Lt. Gen. Danilo Pamonag presented to Galvez

several firearms and ammunition recovered by troops from NPA rebels in Bicol and Southern Tagalog regions.

## 'White areas'

He reminded soldiers, though, that cities in Southern Tagalog remained to be "white areas" or those where rebels enjoy substantial support.

Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, 2nd ID chief, said soldiers would continue counterinsurgency operations "until such time that President Duterte orders us to stand down."

Galvez made the statements as the government and National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) prepared to sign next month an interim peace agreement (IPA) ahead of formal peace talks.

The IPA was meant to pave the way for a formal ceasefire between the military and NPA during the duration of the formal peace talks.

In preparation for the talks, several detained rebel leaders had asked courts to grant them bail so they could travel to the Netherlands to take part in the talks.

## Top rebels

Communist Party of the Philippines central committee members, Rafael Baylosis and Alan Jazmines, asked courts in Taguig and Quezon City to grant them bail and allow them to travel to Utrecht for the talks on June 5 to 9.

The two were among NDFP consultants who were supposed to take part in negotiations on

"finishing touches" of the IPA.

Aside from Baylosis and Jazmines, four other rebel leaders—Benito Tiamzon, Adelberto Silva, Vicente Ladlad and Randall Echanis—had also asked the court to grant them bail to join the talks, according to NDFP lawyer Edre Olalia.

But just as the rebel leaders sought temporary liberty, another was captured by the military during an operation in Butuan City.

Maj. Ezra Balagrey, spokesperson for the Eastern Mindanao Command in Davao City, said Nerita Calamba de Castro, allegedly a key finance officer of NPA in Mindanao, had been arrested during an operation in Butuan City. —WITH REPORTS FROM KRIXIA SUBINGBONG AND ALLAN NAWAL INQ

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## NDF consultants seek court nod to join peace talks

Five consultants of the National Democratic Front (NDF) have asked a Manila court to allow them to leave the country to join the negotiations with the government for the possible resumption of peace talks in the Netherlands.

Benito Tiamzon, Adelberto Silva, Rafael Baylosis, Randall Echanis and Vicente Ladiad recently filed a petition before the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 32 to allow them to travel abroad.

On May 28, Judge Thelma Bunyi Medina ordered government prosecutors to file their comment before submitting the motion for resolution.

National Union of People's Lawyers secretary general Edre Olaha said the NDF

consultants have to wait for the court order even as the backchannel talks in Utrecht start today.

Tiamzon and Silva also asked the court to lift the warrants issued for their arrest.

The court cancelled their bail last January after government prosecutors sought their detention due to the termination of the peace talks.

Baylosis, an alleged secretary of the New People's Army, is being held at Camp Crame after he was nabbed for possession of illegal firearms and explosives in Quezon City on Jan. 31.

The NDF consultants are on trial for murder in connection with the discovery of a mass grave in Leyte in 2006.

- Marc Jayson Cayabyab

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## Senior NPA leader captured in Mindanao

DAVAO CITY: The Philippine Army is holding a senior communist rebel leader after her capture in Butuan City in Mindanao, officials said on Saturday.

Captain Ezra Balagtey, a spokesman for the Eastern Mindanao Command (EastMinCom), said soldiers and policemen captured Nerita de Castro, 55, in her hideout in Emenville Subdivision in Ambago village.

"She assumed as finance committee head and is in-charge of the extortion activities after Leonida Guao was arrested on February 2. After the arrest of Guao, the NPA's [New People's Army] Komisyon Mindanao put de Castro in charge of all the extortion activities in Mindanao," Balagtey quoted Brig. Gen. Franco Gacal, as saying.

During interrogation, it was found that De Castro, a native of Surigao City, was the

acting secretary of the NPA's Regional White Area Committee of North Eastern Mindanao Regional Committee.

There was no immediate statement from the NPA on de Castro's capture but Lt. Benjamin Madrigal Jr, the regional military commander, praised security forces, saying it was a big blow to the communist rebel group.

The group is negotiating with Manila for resumption of stalled peace talks.

"The command commends the inter-agency effort and the cooperation of the communities. Indeed, we can go after high-ranking personalities of the NPA terrorist group and accomplish our tasks easily if we continue to put our acts together. This accomplishment will have an impact on our effort to bring peace to our communities," Madrigal said.

"The arrest of de Castro is a big blow to the

extortion activities of the NPA in Mindanao, and this will give relief to small business establishments who fell victim to their extortion activities. We expect further that de Castro will be revealing information especially those who are contributing to the NPA terrorist group," he added.

President Rodrigo Duterte scrapped the peace talks after rebel negotiators insisted on the release of over 500 captured and arrested insurgents and their leaders languishing in jails across the country.

Rebel negotiators are also demanding the same before they can sign an interim peace deal with the Duterte government.

Fidel Agcaoili, head of the communist peace panel, said both sides have already agreed on an amnesty for all jailed rebels whom he called political prisoners.

AL JACINTO

## DU30: NPAs to benefit from power plant too

**EVEN** the communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Pagbilao, Quezon stand to benefit from the operation of the Pagbilao Unit 3 power project in terms of jobs, business opportunities and comfort.

President Rodrigo Duterte stressed this during the project's ceremonial inauguration Thursday.

"This will provide employment and business opportunities to residents of Quezon, including the NPA, should they decide to just drop their arms and stop fighting," Duterte said of Pagbilao 3, which is expected to add 420 megawatts to the existing 735 MW power plant of Team Energy Corp. (TEC) and Abottiz Power Corp. (APC) here.

Duterte said the NPA should thank the proponents of the power plant project "because you can run

all your machines or whatever you have, and your lights in the farm."

"But why don't you just come down and let us talk. You're wasting your time," he added.

Quezon was known to be a bastion of communist insurgency in the country before successful civil and military campaigns decimated the number of NPA combatants.

Duterte said Pagbilao 3, located inside the 200-hectare compound in Isla Grande in Bgy Ibabang Polo facing Tayabas Bay, will result in the "distribution of reliable and affordable electricity (to) complement programs and policies that will lay the foundation for a comfortable and productive life for all."

The coal-fired generat-

ing facility and merchant power plant is expected to boost and stabilize energy supply in the Luzon grid, while also generating billions of pesos in taxes for the national and local government.

Erramon Abottiz, APC chair, said the project is "a testament that Epira (the Electric Power Industry Reform Act) is working."

In his speech, TEC president John Alcorido described the Pagbilao 3 project as "an investment in the country's future... (as it) will light up homes and industries, give comfort to families, enable productivity and help create employment for Filipinos."

Alcorido, who is also chair and chief executive officer of TEC, the single largest Japanese invest-

ment in the Philippines, said the new power plant is committed to operating at the highest level of environmental performance, similar to Pagbilao units 1 and 2 that generate 735 MW.

"It is a coal-fired facility that will be equipped with a flue-gas desulfurizer and is designed to ensure compliance with all pertinent environmental rules and regulations," Alcorido said, refuting claims by environment protection groups that the coal-fired power plant would cause pollution in Tayabas Bay.

The new power plant was built at a cost of \$976 million through a joint venture between TEC and Abottiz Power in 2014 under the Pagbilao Energy Corp. **Efren Montano**



## New power plant for all -- DU30

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### NPA finance officer kalaboso

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Nagaresto ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at ng Philippine National Police (PNP) ang unang finance officer ng New People's Army (NPA) sa Butuan City, Agusan del Norte ikahapit.

Arin kay Eastern Mindanao Command Spokesperson Ma. Ezra Balagtey. Inilala ang suspek na si Nerita Calunbe de Castro.

Nadepin si De Castro sa joint police at military operations sa Emevilla Subdivision, Barangay Ambago, Butuan City.

A charge awarded si De Castro sa finance head ng Komisyon Mindanao at acting secretary ng Regional Wide Area Committee (RWAC) ng NPA sa Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC).

Nakapit ang suspek sa Eastern Mindanao Command.

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## Forging peace with MILF, NDFP 111

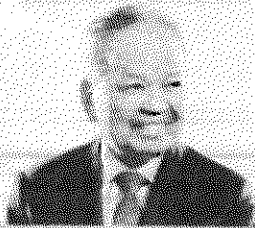
**H**istorically, armed conflicts with religious and ideological overtones, whether here or elsewhere in the world, are the toughest to disentangle. However, after decades of on-and-off negotiations, peace with (1) the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and (2) the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), is finally within reach.

The peace process with the MILF has pivoted to a very advanced stage with the congressional approval of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) a few days ago. Though the Senate and the House versions are quite disparate, the bicameral Conference Committee will harmonize them to get the final nod when Congress resumes its session on the morning of July 23, in time for the President's State of the Nation Address in the afternoon of that day.

I hope the final version will satisfy the MILF's ardent longing and avoid the constitutional pitfalls (see my column on 2/11/18) that led to the debunking by the Supreme Court (in *North Cotabato vs Government*, Oct. 14, 2008) of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain earlier entered into by the MILF with the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

On the other hand, the peace process with the NDFP (plus CPP and NPA) is still a work in progress.

As background, the CPP—according to Ateneo Law Dean Sedfrey Candelaria in a recent public lecture (accessible at [www.libpros.com](http://www.libpros.com)) sponsored by the Foundation for Liberty and Prosperity—was founded on Dec. 26, 1968, in Alaminos, Pangasinan by Jose Maria Sison.



### WITH DUE RESPECT

ARTEMIO V. PANGANIBAN

In opposing President Ferdinand Marcos, it espoused the Marxist-Maoist theme of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," an ideology that attracted the poor and the marginalized. Its armed wing, the NPA, has since conducted a "protracted people's war," making it the longest-running communist insurgency in the world.

After Marcos was ousted, the NDFP entered into cease-fire negotiations with his successor President Corazon Aquino on Dec. 10, 1986, continued serious "exploratory talks" during the term of President Fidel V. Ramos (1992-1998), eventually opened formal negotiations on June 26, 1995, in Brussels and signed several agreements with the GRP during the Ramos years.

The Hague Declaration, the most vital of these agreements, listed the four topics or agenda items of future peace negotiations: (1) human rights and international humanitarian law, (2) socioeconomic reforms, (3) political and constitutional reforms, and (4) end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

Of these four, only the first has so far been

concluded when the parties executed the "Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law," or CARHRIHL, on March 16, 1998.

However, Philippine law does not recognize it as a "treaty or international agreement" because it has not been "concluded in by at least two-thirds vote of all the members of the Senate" and because, under the Vienna Convention, only states can enter into a treaty. Neither the CPP nor the NPA nor the NDFP is a state.

While it is "not a final and binding agreement" cognizable by our courts, it is nonetheless an important milestone because it enables the parties "to reach a final agreement."

Moreover, while it may be legally difficult to implement the CARHRIHL directly by its own terms, the GRP can indirectly enforce it by adverting to the Constitution's "Declaration of Principles and State Policies" (Art. II), "Bill of Rights" (Art. III) and "Social Justice ... and Human Rights" provisions (Art. XIII), which arguably mirror the CARHRIHL, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is deemed a "generally accepted principle of international law" forming a "part of the law of the land."

The second item in the four-point agenda—socioeconomic reforms—is more complicated than the first, because the NDFP's proposals would require radical changes in our Constitution, laws, policies and programs.

The good news is that the GRP and the NDFP panels have agreed to meet on June 28 to resume formal talks on this sensitive topic. I will take it up next Sunday.

Comments to [chiefjusticepanganiban@hotmail.com](mailto:chiefjusticepanganiban@hotmail.com)

03

## US assurances too little, too late?

Uncle Sam's efforts to woo back the Philippines even while President Rodrigo Duterte is infatuated with Beijing look like a case of too little too late – but a way may still be found for the White House to regain Malacañang's favor.

For starters, US President Donald Trump, whose eye Duterte has been trying to catch, will have to match the lauriat of aid, loans and investments that China President Xi Jinping has been serving Duterte from Day One.

Not only that, Trump should come around to endorsing, even if only impliedly, Duterte's violent war on drugs that has been denounced by many world leaders and respected institutions. Welcoming the strongman in a state visit would be a tremendous plus.

Those moves could not only be costly to American taxpayers but also dent Trump's political capital. Somebody has to pay, however, the price of US neglect of an old ally that is suddenly strategically important.

Washington has a lot of catching up to do. China's ambassador to Manila did his job well taking advantage of the difficult transition from President Barack Obama to Trump during which the White House failed to pay Duterte and his country the attention due them.

The Philippines, with its strategic location, happens to have a key role in the US containment of China. But with Duterte having drifted toward Beijing, the Philippines' part in the American geopolitical scheme has become somewhat blurred.

Sources said that in the negotiation of the 1951 Phi-US Mutual Defense Treaty and the forming of the now defunct Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, when Filipino and US diplomats discussed potential aggression in the region, they had in mind China. Apparently that reference has not changed.

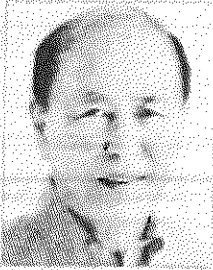
Despite his denial, the warning this week by Joint Staff Director Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie that the US has extensive experience in World War II blowing up small man-made islands in the Western Pacific referred to China's militarized artificial islands in the South China Sea.

McKenzie told the media that he was not trying to send a message to China, but he was. He also reassured US allies, the Philippines among them, not to worry about Beijing's buildup in the disputed sections of SCS. The message appeared to be that Big Brother is there.

In his briefing at the Pentagon about US capability to neutralize military installations dotting the SCS, McKenzie said:

"We have a lot of experience, in the Second World War, taking down small islands that are isolated. So that's a – that's a core competency of the US military that we've done before. You shouldn't read anything more into that than a simple statement of historical fact.

"We continue to seek areas to cooperate with China where we can. But, where we can't, we're prepared to certainly protect both US and allied interests in the region."



Similar brave, if threatening, words were uttered Saturday by US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis at an international security forum in Singapore. He lashed out at China's setting up weapons systems on its man-made islands to intimidate neighbors.

Mattis warned that the US's disinclining China from a multinational naval exercise this summer was an "initial response" to the militarization of the islands. "Much larger consequences," he added, could follow if China refuses to be more "collaborative" with other nations.

He said the US will continue to provide defense equipment and services to Taiwan – which China regards as a rogue province. He did not mention assistance to other allies in the region such as the Philippines.

### • US to catch up in courtship of Phi

The White House will have to work overtime convincing Malacañang of American resolve to give Manila its due.

Filipinos had watched in disbelief as the US, for whom it fought in the last Pacific War, paid more attention to rehabilitating Japan, the erstwhile enemy.

Although the US maintained security installations in key locations in its former colony under a Military Bases Agreement (which expired in 1991), it failed to help the Philippines develop its own defense capability – leaving its military the weakest in the region.

The historical wrongs that sometimes crop up in Duterte's speeches should be studied, and addressed, by the US if it finds worrisome his being courted by China. With Beijing's offering aid and comfort, Washington halfway around the globe may find itself drifting farther from Manila's consciousness.

*(A biography writer has mentioned personal hurts of Duterte as having contributed to his disenchantment with America. It seems he once applied for a US visa to visit somebody close to him but his application was rejected.)*

*Last year, I asked PCOO Secretary Martin Andanan about the visa matter, but he ignored my query despite his boasting of an executive order having been issued to implement a Freedom of Information policy.)*

As the US Navy stepped up its freedom of navigation challenges to China's controlling and claiming exclusive rights to features it has built up in the high seas, its Pacific Command has been renamed the US Indo-Pacific Command.

The move looks like a recognition of then President Obama's "pivot" of naval focus to Asia-Pacific – a move of the Democratic leader that Trump, a Republican, has dropped.

The renaming of the command without significant change in its military assets and area of operation was described officially as "a largely symbolic move underscoring the growing importance of India to the Pentagon."

The command, whose area of responsibility is the greater Pacific region, including India, has about 375,000 civilian and military personnel.

The renaming was announced Wednesday by Secretary Mattis in a turnover ceremony where Admiral Philip Davidson took over from Admiral Harry Harris, whom Trump has nominated to be ambassador to South Korea.

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## We continue to work on strengthening US-Philippine ties

This June 12, we are celebrating the 120th anniversary of our independence, and the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. is preparing for a special celebration. All our consulates in the United States are also planning their respective programs to make the celebrations very meaningful.



In the past few weeks, we have been showcasing our unique heritage and culture through various activities such as the Embassy's participation in the first ever Embassy Showcase organized by the Congressional Asian Pacific American Staff Association (CAPASA), a non-profit congressional staff organization that promotes diversity among staffers on Capitol Hill and beyond.

We put up a booth that shared information about our top tourist destinations that include Bohol, Davao, Cebu, Palawan and Ilocos, among many others. It was a great opportunity to connect with Congressional staffers who are also members of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, with the event serving as an avenue to build synergies among various players in public and foreign policy.

We are also in the middle of discussions regarding a bilateral free trade agreement which hopefully will boost the trade and economic partnership between the Philippines and the United States even more. Many American business groups are supportive of this initiative, and we are glad to note that a delegation from the US headed by Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish visited the Philippines recently and had discussions with members of the Duterte administration's Economic team.

Every time I speak before business groups, I always urge them to increase their participation in the economic transformation that is happening in the Philippines, with reforms and changes being implemented to ensure that the effects of economic progress and development will be felt by the poor.

President Duterte's recent signing of Republic Act 11032, otherwise known as the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Delivery Act, is a very welcome development as it could solve the perennial problem of bureaucratic red tape because it reduces the processing time for business transactions in government offices.

Under this law - which amended the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 - simple transactions should only take three days while the really complex and highly technical ones should be finished in 20 working days. What's more, local government units must have a unified business application form for business permits and clearances, and are required to set up a one-stop-shop where people can secure applications and different kinds of clearances and permits in just one location.

Clearly, the Philippines is an exciting investment destination, and we have been working to elevate awareness about this through speaking engagements and various other undertakings. But aside from trade, there are also other areas of shared concern between the Philippines and the United States, among them climate change whose damaging effects - such as floods and droughts - will impact the poor who are the most vulnerable.

Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Undersecretary Renato Solidum was in Washington, D.C. recently and spoke before multi-sectoral audiences at the Philippine Embassy and the World Bank. During his lecture at the Philippine Embassy before an audience composed of academics and analysts, government officials, representatives from the private sector as well as members of the Filipino-American community, Dr. Solidum stressed the importance of science and technology as well as innovation to assess risks and hazards, and provide technology solutions to mitigate these risks.

The Philippines is a country exposed to various natural hazards, and is extremely vulnerable in both the Pacific typhoon belt and ring of fire. Aside from monitoring and forecasting, appropriate - not to mention timely - response during and after disasters can spell the difference between life and death.

A great concern among Filipinos especially those living in Metro Manila is a major earthquake dubbed as "the big one" with a 7.2 magnitude. One can just imagine the chaos that could happen, which is why government is taking steps to ensure the physical safety of the more than 25 million residents of Metro Manila if - God forbid - the "big one" happens.

Even the recent Balikatan 2018 exercises participated in by members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the US Army units had a humanitarian and disaster relief (HADR) component, which is a current focus of the partnership between the Philippines and the US. Interestingly, the first project under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) is the construction of a warehouse in Basa Air Base in Pampanga where HADR assets will be stored.

The continuation of EDCA - which is an agreement signed in 2014 during the administration of President Barack Obama - underscores the solid military alliance between the Philippines and the United States. Even as President Duterte pursues friendships and alliances with other nations in keeping with our independent foreign policy, he respects the Mutual Defense Treaty between the two nations.

The ties that bind the US and the Philippines are strong, having endured for more than seven decades - and it is this thought that makes many Filipinos calm and unflustered despite the developments involving the South China Sea. Those who know the president well say there is an overall strategy with regard to sensitive issues, with talks being conducted away from the glare of the media and public. We need to trust his judgement call.

Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said in resolving the territorial issue with China, we need to be "prudent, patient and pragmatic." When all is said and done - we would all realize that patience is indeed a virtue.

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# Compromise

## **A**s the saying goes, a compromise is an agreement where

each party gets what neither of them wanted.

The same can be said about the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law.

The original BBL was the outcome of the peace negotiations between the Philippine government under the previous administration and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Unfortunately, the government's peace negotiators gave concessions to the MILF panel that were virtually impossible to fulfill as they are unconstitutional, too broad, and generous to a fault.

That was bad enough. But when 44 Special Action Force troopers were massacred in Mamasapano in January 2015 in a clash with MILF fighters after an operation to neutralize the foreign terrorist Marwan, the BBL was doomed.

Fast forward to the present, the House of Representatives and the Senate have approved their respective versions of the BBL pursuant to the appeal of President Rodrigo Duterte to pass the measure, which could be the best weapon against the looming threat of Islamic extremism.

The Marawi siege by the Maute group affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is an all-too-real reminder of a clear and present danger to our country.

And so, while many lawmakers expressed reservations over several provisions of the present

## **COMMENTARY**

BBL, they nevertheless went on to vote for its passage, amending many of the

provisions that were deemed inconsistent with the Constitution or would only stoke further unrest in Mindanao.

As one lawmaker who had vociferously opposed the BBL said after the approval of the bill at the House, most of his concerns were addressed—substantially but not fully.

In the same manner, disappointment was voiced by several sectors of the Moro community over the apparent departure of the approved BBL versions from the terms of the MILF peace pact with the government.

It remains to be seen what the final feature of the new BBL would be after the bicameral conference committee deliberations to iron out the differences in the House and Senate versions.

But one thing is certain: Whatever BBL version President Duterte signs would face challenges before the Supreme Court on constitutional grounds.

Despite this, it would do well for both parties—our Moro brothers and critics of BBL—to let sobriety reign and to refrain from any actions outside of the legal and constitutional frameworks that could hamper rational discussion towards a mutually-acceptable version of the measure.

Let us realize that there is a price to pay for every gain. Each side must be willing to give up something to attain what everyone regards as precious: peace.

**CNC**

**EDITORIAL****BBL acceptable to all**

THE Senate and the House of Representatives have finally passed the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which is seen to address the various problems confronting Mindanao.

A bicameral conference will be convened to reconcile the Senate and House drafts before President Duterte can sign the bill into law on the day he delivers his State-of-the-Nation Address (SONA).

The House of Representatives passed its version of the BBL Wednesday night, while the 24-member Upper House of Congress approved its version before dawn Thursday.

Note that Malacañang was reportedly "pleased" with the approval of the highly-controversial BBL in both chambers of Congress after President Duterte certified the measure as urgent.

But we, like other well-meaning people, cannot overemphasize the need for our lawmakers -- senators and congressmen -- to come up with a final version of the bill that is acceptable to all.

No less than Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque, a lawyer, said that cooperation is needed among all stakeholders so that the proposed piece of legislation would pass judicial scrutiny.

Otherwise, he said, we might end up with no BBL at all. The proposed law would grant greater autonomy to Muslims in troubled Mindanao, otherwise known as the "Land of Promise."

The various stakeholders may have their respective positions on certain issues, but at the end of the day, what is important is for all of us to consider the future of Mindanao.

As Mr. Roque, a former party-list congressman, said, "the President's appeal is while we have our respective interests, let's find a common ground so we can move forward."

Thus, our senators and congressmen ought to exert every effort to come up with a BBL that is acceptable to all.

# ONLINE NEWS

08 JUNE 2018

## China gave PH 'assurance' on Ayungin incident: Cayetano

From the Philippine News Agency (Jun 2):

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said Friday China gave "assurance" to the Philippines regarding the latest "incident" in the disputed West Philippine Sea, which prompted the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to file a diplomatic protest against its giant neighbor.

Last May 11, a Philippine Navy boat resupplying Filipino troops at the Ayungin Shoal was allegedly challenged and harassed by the Chinese Coast Guard and China's People's Liberation Army Navy.

Cayetano explained that the note verbale on the incident was filed just recently because it "was not settled immediately" through dialogue.

While he did not elaborate on the issue, the foreign affairs chief said the Philippines already received an assurance from China over the recent incident.

"It's how we should talk and how our resupplying would not be hampered. And in fact, a feature already went here the other day. The conversation was good – coast guard to coast guard," Cayetano said in Filipino.

The country's filing of a diplomatic protest was announced by Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque on Thursday, a day after a congressional hearing on issues concerning the West Philippine Sea was conducted, where Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano revealed the May 11 incident at the Ayungin Shoal.

The hearing and the announcement followed two separate meetings on the West Philippine Sea: one on Saturday where Cayetano and Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua met, and the other one on Monday, where the foreign affairs secretary and Philippine Ambassador to Beijing Jose Santiago Sta. Romana and other high-level officials briefed the Chief Executive on the situation in the disputed waterway.

It was not clear, however, when the DFA issued the latest note verbale and when China gave its response.

"If I tell what was filed, where it was filed, et cetera, then it means I'm not following our policy. But as I said, this does not mean all remain classified. At one point in time, this will all come out," Cayetano said in a mix of English and Filipino.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1037278>



## **45 families evacuated to safe place in Zambo Sur town**

From the Philippine News Agency (Jun 2):

**DUMINGAG, Zamboanga del Sur --** Some 45 families consisting of 230 people have been ordered to evacuate to a safe area as the military launched an offensive against the New People's Army (NPA) rebels in the outskirts of this town.

**Chief Insp. Andrew Limos, the local police chief, on Saturday said the 45 families are from Barangay Saad, a remote village in this town, the center of the military offensive against the NPA rebels.**

**Limos said the families were told to evacuate to avoid being caught in the crossfire as the NPA rebels might mingled with the community in Barangay Saad.**

**Barangay Saad is located in the boundary of this town with the municipality of Siayan, Zamboanga del Norte.**

**Limos said the 45-family-evacuees are temporarily sheltered at the covered court of Barangay Poblacion.**

**Limos said the municipal social welfare and development office has immediately provided food supplies and other needs to the affected families.**

**He said the offensive was launched Friday after the NPA rebels threatened to burn the heavy equipment of a construction firm undertaking a government project in Barangay Saad.**

**The NPA rebels have demanded payment of protection money, which the construction firm turned down.**

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

## 285 candidate soldiers undergo training in Maguindanao

From the Philippine News Agency (Jun 2)



*TRAINEES. Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Army's 6th Infantry Division commander, addresses the 285 candidates soldiers, who started formal training on Friday (June 1, 2018) at the 6th Division Training School in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao. (Photo courtesy: Army's 6th Infantry Division)*

**CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao** – The second batch of this year's candidate soldiers took their oath on Friday, and in four months they will become new foot troopers.

**Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, newly-installed Army's 6th Infantry Division commander, administered the oath-taking of the 285 candidates, witnessed by their proud parents, relatives and loved ones.**

**Of the 285 candidate soldiers, 256 are male and the remaining 29, female.**

After the oath-taking, they were sent to the 6th Division Training School (DTS) in Barangay Semba, Datu Odin Sinsuat, in Maguindanao province.

Capt. Arvin John Encinas, speaking for the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the candidate soldiers were among the more than 1,000 applicants, who went through strict selection process after they passed the physical and medical examinations.

"They are the most competent candidates who will be honed to become future soldiers of the Philippine Army," Encinas said.

After their oath, the candidate soldiers were brought to 6th DTS for a 14-week rigid military training broken down into three modules: Transformation, Basic Squad Training, and Application of Knowledge.

Encinas said the training will mold them to become well-disciplined, competent and capable soldiers to fill in the enlisted ranks of the Philippine Army.

Sobejana said the training will change the candidates' lifestyle.

"The candidate soldiers' training is fundamentally stressful as they will initially experience an abrupt change from being a civilian to adapting the military lifestyle," Sobejana said.

"I am reminding the personnel of 6th DTS to instill discipline and respect to guarantee that these recruits would develop a mind-set of survival in the military profession," he added.

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

## Senior NPA leader captured in Mindanao

From the Mindanao Examiner (Jun 1):

DAVAO CITY – The Philippine Army is holding a senior communist rebel leader following her capture in Butuan City in the southern region of Mindanao, officials said Saturday.

Captain Ezra Balagtey, a spokesman for the Eastern Mindanao Command, said soldiers and policemen nabbed Nerita de Castro in her hideout in Emenville Subdivision in the village called Ambago.

He said the 55-year old De Castro is the head of the NPA's finance committee who is in-charge of the rebel group's extortion activities. De Castro took over the post left behind by Leonida Guao who was arrested in Butuan City just this year.

"She assumed as head of finance committee and is in-charge of the extortion activities after Leonida Guao was arrested on February 2, 2018. After the arrest of Guao, the Komisyon Mindanao of the PA designated De Castro to be in charge of all the extortion activities in Mindanao," Balagtey quoted Brigadier General Franco Gacal, as saying.

During her interrogation, De Castro, a native of Surigao City, turned out to be the NPA's Acting Secretary of Regional White Area Committee of North Eastern Mindanao Regional Committee.

There was no immediate statement from the NPA on De Castro's capture, but Lieutenant Benjamin Madrigal, Jr, the regional military commander, praised security forces for the capture of De Castro, saying, it was a big blow to the communist rebel group which is currently negotiating with Manila for the resumption of stalled peace talks.

"The Command commends the inter-agency effort and the cooperation of the communities. Indeed, we can go after high ranking personalities of the NPA terrorist group and accomplish our tasks easily if we continue to put our acts together. This accomplishment will have an impact in our effort to bring peace in our communities."

"The arrest of De Castro is a big blow on the extortion activities of the NPA in Mindanao, and this will give relief to small business establishments who fell victim of their extortion activities. We expect further that De Castro will be revealing information especially those who are contributing to the NPA terrorist group," Madrigal said.

President Rodrigo Duterte scrapped the peace talks after rebel negotiators insisted on the release of over 500 captured and arrested insurgents and their leaders languishing in jails across the country.

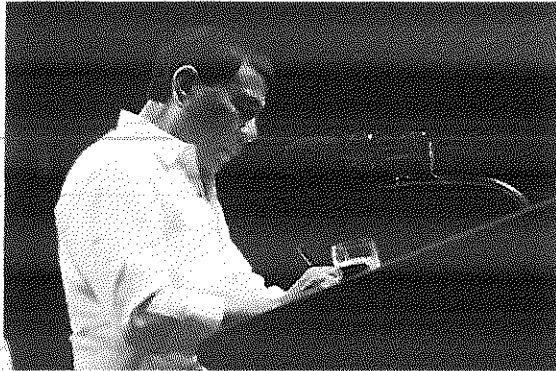
Rebel negotiators are also demanding the same before they can sign an interim peace deal with the Duterte government. Fidel Agcaoili, head of the communist peace panel, said both sides have already agreed on an amnesty for all jailed rebels he called political prisoners.

<http://mindanaoexaminernewspaper.blogspot.com>

## Duterte 'seriously concerned' about Navy soldiers harassed by China chopper

From Rappler (Jun 1)

*While Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has refrained from speaking publicly about the Ayungin Shoal incident, he conveyed concern about it in a confidential meeting*



*'CONCERNED.' President Rodrigo Duterte has been briefed about the incident of a China chopper harassing a Philippine Navy rubber boat in Ayungin Shoal. Malacañang file photo*

MANILA, Philippines – President Rodrigo Duterte may not be making any public statements so far about a China chopper harassing a Philippine Navy rubber boat in Ayungin Shoal, but he expressed concern about the safety of the military personnel involved.

He had conveyed this during a confidential meeting with Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano and Philippine Ambassador to China Chito Santa Romana on Monday, May 28.

Duterte was "seriously concerned about the safety of the Philippine soldiers," a source privy to the meeting told Rappler.

The meeting had been called to brief Duterte on the then-upcoming congressional hearing on the West Philippine Sea and tackled the note verbale sent by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to China on the incident in Ayungin Shoal.

There had also been a report on the progress of Philippine government projects in Pag-asa Island and other West Philippine Sea features held by the Philippines.

Duterte gave "strong instructions" during the meeting, said Cayetano in the hearing at the House of Representatives on Wednesday, May 30.

Duterte has not publicly referred to the May 11 Ayungin Shoal incident in any of his speeches. He has, however, been stressing in recent public speeches that he has no choice but to stay on China's good side because the only alternative, supposedly, is to go to war against the Asian giant.

"Ako, gusto ko (Me, I want to). I really want to do something to assert," said the President in a speech on May 22.

Cayetano had previously said that the Monday meeting with Duterte was "to propose two more systems to allow immediate action" in the West Philippine Sea.

<https://www.rappler.com>

## **Army: Don't give in to NPA extortionists**

From the Visayan Daily Star (Jun 1)

The Army's 3rd Infantry Division yesterday urged businessmen and private contractors not to give in to extortion demands of the New People's Army in Negros Island, as it will help further strengthen rebel forces.

Maj. Gen. Dinoh Dolina, 3rd Infantry Division commander, made the appeal after noting a series of arson activities perpetrated by communist rebels in central Negros in the past several weeks.

The NPA had recently claimed the burning of a farm tractor, two cargo trucks and a heavy equipment in La Castellana, Moises Padilla, and in Kabankalan City, in Negros Occidental, as well as in Canlaon City, Negros Oriental, respectively.

Two weeks ago, suspected rebels also simultaneously burned heavy equipment of two private construction firms contracted by the government to build farm-to-market roads in the hinterland barangays of Mabinay, Negros Oriental.

Dolina ordered Col. Alberto Desoyo, whom he installed yesterday as the new commander of the 303rd Infantry Brigade, to ensure the effective coordination between them and the police, as well as the Department of Public Works and Highways, to secure the flagship programs of the government in Negros.

Desoyo, who was the commander of the 62nd Infantry Battalion stationed in Sagay City, almost a decade ago, has replaced Brig. Gen. Eliezer Losanes, who is slated to assume the position of Assistant Division Commander of the 8th Infantry Division in Samar.

Dolina also instructed Desoyo to focus his efforts on clearing central Negros of communist rebels, as the 3ID has a mandate to accomplish the target set for them by the Armed Forces of the Philippines of dismantling guerilla fronts in Negros Island.

Negros Island is a priority area for clearing of local insurgents by the 3ID, Dolina admitted.

He slammed CPP-NPA for the rising atrocities it has committed in Negros Island, which he called an anti-people and terrorist organization.

On his part, Desoyo stressed the need for politicians not to provide support to the rebels.

"As I assume command of the Brown Eagle Brigade I cannot help but feel honored to be welcomed by all the combat support and its service unit commanders, and by no less than three fighting battalions," Desoyo said, after receiving the unit colors from Dolina.

Desoyo supervises three Army battalions in Negros Island, composed of about 1,500 regular soldiers.

Dolina urged Negrense stakeholders to show Desoyo the same support they gave to Losanes.

<http://www.visayandailystar.com>

## **Alleged NPAs torch vehicle, equipment of inland resort**

From the Mindanao Times (Jun 1):

ONE MULTICAB, generator set, and electric steel cutter were torched by armed men who introduced themselves as members of the New People's Army (NPA) in Barangay Ompao, Tarragona, Davao Oriental around 6 a.m. on Wednesday. Chief Insp. Milgrace Driz, spokesperson of Police Regional Office (PRO) XI, said that the vehicle and equipment were owned by Adam's Haven Mountain Resort owned by Engr. Ariel Carmina Mosquera. Initial investigation conducted disclosed that more or less 26 men arrived at resort and looked for the owner.

They told the caretakers that the owner didn't ask permission to build a resort in the area. "This is still our AOR (area of responsibility), you should give revolutionary tax because we are the government of the poor," the caretakers quoted the men as saying.

The estimated cost of the damage reached P600,000.

<http://mindanaotimes.net>

## **No. 1 councilor slain by communist rebels**

From the Mindanao Times (Jun 1):

A NEWLY elected barangay official was killed by alleged members of the New People's Army (NPA) in Barangay Mahaba, Cabadbaran City, Agusan del Norte around 12:45 a. m. on Wednesday. Capt. Al Anthony B. Pueblas, spokesperson of the 402nd Infantry Brigade, identified the victim as Edgar Rosal Panisan, 40.

Pueblas said Panisan was shot to death by members of the Guerrilla Front 21C of North Eastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC).

Accordingly, Panisan was the first councilor of Barangay Mahaba and also an active member of the Caggu.

"While serving his constituents during their barangay fiesta celebration, the victim was shot by the NPA hitting his left chest which caused his instantaneous death," Pueblas said.

A witness reportedly identified the gunman as a full-time NPA member of GF 21C.

It can be recalled that on April 18, 2018, a pastor named Jepti Acido was killed by the NPA in Barangay Lahi, Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte.

In his statement, Lt. Col. Gleen Joy Aynera, commander of 29th Infantry Battalion, vowed that justice will be served for the killing of Panisan.

"Being the no. 1 in the latest barangay council election is a manifestation that indeed kagawad Panisa was loved by the people," he said.

Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Franco Nemesio M. Gacal, commander of the 402nd Infantry Brigade, said the murder of Panisan was also an assault on the right of suffrage of the community.

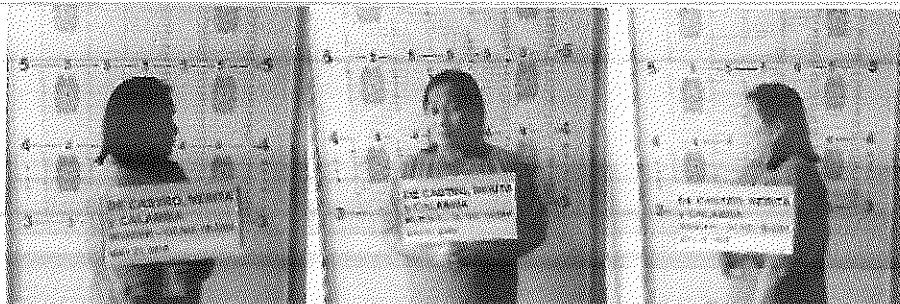
"The victim was a duly elected official and was serving well his constituents," he said. "The NPA should stop this senseless killing and adhere to the provisions of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law."

<http://mindanaotimes.net>

## LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATION | New NPA Finance Head in Mindanao arrested

Posted by Alvin Santiago on June 1, 2018 at 3:43 PM

NAVAL STATION FELIX APOLINARIO, Panacan, Davao City (DWDD) – The new Head Finance of Komisyon Mindanao (KOMMID) of the New People's Army was arrested in an inter-Agency Law Enforcement Operations composed of elements of the 402Bde, 4ID, PA and PNP units of PRO 13 on May 31, 2018 at around 12:40 A.M. at Emenville Subdivision, Brgy Ambago, Butuan City.



In a report rendered by BGen. Franco Nemesio M. Gacal, Commander of the 402nd Infantry Brigade to Eastern Mindanao Command (EMC), he identified the high profile NPA as Nerita Calamba De Castro, 55 years old, also known as Nene/Nening/Nora.

Accordingly she assumes as head of Finance Committee and in charge of the extortion activities after Leonida Guao alyas Leah/Ligaya/Laya was arrested at Barangay Bading, Butuan City on February 2, 2018.

*"After the arrest of Guao, KOMMID had designated De Castro to be in charge of all the extortion activities in Mindanao,"* BGen Gacal said.

De Castro, a resident of Purok Malinao, Poblacion, Surigao City, who is also acting as the Secretary of Regional White Area Committee (RWAC) of North Eastern Mindanao Regional Committee (NEMRC) was arrested by virtue of warrant of arrest under criminal case number 183304 (murder) issued by Judge Lilibeth O. Ladaga of Regional Trial Court 11, Judicial Branch 28, in Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

Meanwhile, Lt. General Benjamin Madrigal Jr., Commander of EMC expressed optimism on the impact of the arrest of the said NPA leader.

*"The Command commends the inter-agency effort and the cooperation of the communities. Indeed, we can go after high ranking personalities of the NPA Terrorist and accomplish our tasks easily if we continue to put our acts together. This accomplishment will have an impact in our effort to bring peace in our communities. The arrest of De Castro is a big blow on the extortion activities of the NPA in Mindanao, and this will give relief to small business establishments who fell victim of their extortion activities. We expect further that De Castro will be revealing information especially those who are contributing to the NPA Terrorist Group".* Lt. Gen Madrigal Jr said. **EMC / MCAG**



## NOLCOM Troopers clashes with NPA in ISabela

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on June 1, 2018 at 3:27 PM

CAMP GEN SERVILLANO AQUINO, Tarlac City (DWDD) – Army troops of Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) encountered Communist New People's Army Terrorist Group (CNTG) in the province of Isabela at 8:50 in the morning today, May 31, 2018 (Thursday).



While conducting Focus Military Operations (FMO), Army troopers from "C" Company of 86th Infantry Battalion (86IB), under the Joint Task Force (JTF) "Tala" of the 5th Infantry Division (5ID), skirmishes with more or less twenty (20) Terrorist NPA's at Brgy Benguet, Echague, Isabela.

The firefight lasted for almost five (5) minutes prompting the enemy to withdraw to different directions. No casualty on the government side was reported by the operating troops while undetermined casualties on the enemy side as of the press time.

NOLCOM will continue to pursue the terrorist groups and other lawless elements that may undermine the peace and stability of the area, which eventually impacts on the development of the community. **NOLCOM / MCAG**