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# TEAM **ARMY**

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## NEWS CLIPPINGS

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*Honor. Patriotism. Duty*

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

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 05 JUNE 2018

Weather Forecast- <a href="http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast">http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast</a>		
PAGE NR.	TITLE	SOURCE
<b>NATIONAL NEWS</b>		
1-2	Overworked teachers ask gov't for pay hike	PDI-A1
3	Rody fires Philhealth chief	P Star-1
4-5	Britain, France to sail warships in disputed South China Sea	PDI-16
6	China disregarded Asean agreement to ease sea tensions, says Aquino	PDI-A6
7	Chinese buildup in SCS: Noy hits back at Rody	P Star-5
8	Aquino on territorial row: Who filed case vs China?	Malaya-B1
9	'PH not capable of defending territories'	M Times-2
10	'Fund lack hampers bid to upgrade military defense'	M Standard-A2
11	DND: PH needs military upgrades amid sea row	D Tribune-3
12	Lorenzana says AFP incapable of defending territories in WPS	Tempo-2
13	Mattis warns of consequences if Beijing keeps militarizing the South China Sea	M Bulletin-5
14	Ex-DFA chief presses for action vs China	M Standard-A2
<b>AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS</b>		
15	Bomb found, defused along Maguindanao road	PDI-A8
16	Phil soldiers prefer US-made guns	P Star-8
17	ICRC helps treat wounded troops in Sulu	M Times-A7
18	6 soldiers wounded in Isabela clash	PDI-A8
19	7 soldiers hurt in clash with Reds	P Star-11
20	6 soldiers wounded in clash with NPA	M Bulletin-7
21	6 soldiers wounded in Isabela clash	M Times-A7
22	6 na sundalo duguan vs NPA	Balita-5
23	6 Army men wounded in battle	Tempo-4
24	Wrong arrest? Group says woman trader not a rebel	PDI-A4
25	Gabriela says its member not an NPA amazon	M Bulletin-13
26	Military inakusahan ng mistaken arrest	Balita-5
27	'If peace talks fail, Joma should never return'	M Bulletin-4
28	Military turns over bodies of slain NPA rebels	M Times-A7
29	Marawi folk back probe of 5-month war on IS	PDI-A4
30	Int'l team investigates death of 9 MILF members in anti-drug raid	M Bulletin-13
31-32	Team probes death of 9 MILF guerillas in drug raid	M Times-A7
33	Zubiri defends anti-political dynasty provision in Senate's BBL	M Standard-A3
<b>EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY</b>		
34	No more tough talk	PDI-A12



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35-36	Should we join America in facing off with China?	M Times-A1
37-38	Reckless, foolish statement	Malaya-B4
39	The feared joint development with China	M Times-A6
40	Travails of state policies	M Bulletin-10
41	Once a traitor...	Malaya-B5
<b>ONLINE NEWS</b>		
42	Army troops encounters NPA again in Isabela	<a href="http://www.dwdd.com.ph">www.dwdd.com.ph</a>
43	Another NPA terrorist surrendered in Sarangani	<a href="http://www.dwdd.com.ph">www.dwdd.com.ph</a>
44	AFP working double-time to develop defense capabilities	<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>
45	AFP conducts first inter-service cooking competition	<a href="http://www.pna.gov.ph">www.pna.gov.ph</a>



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# OVERWORKED TEACHERS ASK GOV'T FOR PAY HIKE

STORY BY JHESSET O. ENANO AND TONETTE OREJAS

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers staged rallies on Monday to demand a starting salary of P30,000 monthly, while the Teachers' Dignity Coalition sought a P10,000 across-the-board pay increase.

## FROM A1

By Jhesset O. Enano and Tonette Orejas @Team\_Inquirer

At the opening of classes in public schools nationwide on Monday, teachers demanded an increase in the basic monthly pay from P20,179 for the entry level to P30,000, an amount almost equal the base pay of a Police Officer I or a private.

In Central Luzon, teachers belonging to the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) Central Luzon Union staged simultaneous rallies to urge President Duterte to increase their salaries.

They mounted their protests during lunch break and did not disrupt classes, according to Romly Clemente, the group's president.

In Iloilo province, teachers of Pavia National High School displayed placards calling for a teacher's starting salary of P30,000 monthly.

Members of the youth group Anakbayan held a picket in Iloilo City to denounce the collection of mandatory fees which, they said, was contrary to a Department of Education (DepEd) directive.

### Lack of classrooms

Monday's school opening was marred by the lack of classrooms and overcrowding, but the Department of Education said classes started without major problems.

In Metro Manila, for instance, about 80 percent of the estimated 800 public schools still practice double shifting because of the classroom shortage.

At Batasan Hills National High School in Quezon City, nearly 16,000 students are enrolled from Grades 7 to 12. Grade 8 has 3,641 students divided in 79 sections.

With a teacher-student ratio at 1:55 for Grades 9 and 10 and 1:45 to 50 in senior high, some teachers used lapel microphones, according to the principal Proceso Lera.

Late enrollees could still further bloat the student population. Around 23.4 million students, including 12.6 million in elementary and 6.7 million in junior high, were expected to attend classes in public schools.

Roughly 2.7 million pupils are in Metro Manila.

### Signature campaign

During their nationwide protest, ACT members donned headdresses, held placards and launched signature campaigns to press their demand to raise the entry salary of teachers.

"We have been promised of salary increase three times in a span of two years, but nothing came out from those sweet

## MONTHLY BASIC SALARY

Position	Salary Grade	2018
Teacher I	11	P20,179
Teacher II	12	22,149
Teacher III	13	24,224
Master Teacher I	18	38,085
Master Teacher II	19	42,009
Master Teacher III	20	47,037
Master Teacher IV	21	52,554
Head Teacher I	13	24,224
Head Teacher II	14	26,494
Head Teacher III	15	29,010
Head Teacher IV	16	31,765
Head Teacher V	17	34,781
Head Teacher VI	18	38,085
Principal I	18	38,085
Principal II	19	42,099
Principal III	20	47,037
Principal IV	21	52,554

## MONTHLY GROSS PAY OF TEACHER 1

Pay	2018
• Basic	P20,179
• Average bonuses and allowances	P6,196.5
Total	P26,375.50

SOURCE: Department of Budget and Management

words." ACT chair Benjamin Valbuena said in a statement. "We cannot help but feel short-changed."

Valbuena earlier assailed the lack of nonteaching personnel in schools, resulting in teachers being assigned to perform other administrative tasks and to serve as guidance counselors, librarians, clerks and custodians.

Teachers I, who are at Salary Grade 11, currently receive a monthly gross pay of P20,179, while Teachers II get P22,149.

The highest teaching position, Master Teacher IV or Principal IV, earn P52,554 a month.

#### **Salary scheme distorted**

ACT assailed the selective salary increase given to uniformed personnel like soldiers and policemen in January, saying it distorted the public sector salary scheme.

"This discriminatory action sows demoralization and resentment among civilian personnel," it said.

The monthly base pay of a private, Police Officer 1, Fire Officer 1 or Jail Officer 1 is now P29,688. The base pay of a general and a police director general has been raised to P121,443 a month.

In a speech in May, President Duterte promised anew that the salaries of school teachers would be raised next, but added that doubling their pay was not feasible at the moment.

#### **Across-the-board increase**

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque explained that under the Salary Standardization Law, there were still two more tranches of salary increase—this year and the next.

Another group, the Teachers' Dignity Coalition, also

launched a separate national signature campaign seeking a P10,000 across-the-board salary increase.

"Unfortunately, the government misses its obligation to the most important factor of education—the teachers," said Benjo Basas, chair of the coalition.

At Epza Elementary School in Angeles City, science teacher Lorna Lacsina gathered 50 of her colleagues who wore black shirts or black armbands as they supported a House bill seeking to increase salaries of public school teachers and personnel.

House Bill No. 7211, sponsored by ACT Rep. Antonio Tinio, seeks to raise the basic monthly pay of nonteaching personnel to P16,000 and to implement an entry level salary of P30,000 for teachers and P31,000 for instructors.

Lacsina, president of Angeles City Public School Teachers Association, said the starting basic pay for teachers was hardly enough to cover costs of food, electricity, water and transportation.

#### **'Smooth' resumption**

Education officials and Malacañang said the resumption of classes went smoothly.

They attributed the smooth opening to months-long preparation of teachers and administrators in over 46,000 public schools nationwide, including the early registration that began as early as January.

In a briefing, Education Secretary Leonor Briones said what were dubbed "usual problems" that marred school openings before should now be considered "unusual." —WITH A REPORT FROM NESTOR P. BURGOS INQ





# Rody fires PhilHealth chief

By ALEXIS ROMERO

**President Duterte has fired Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) interim president Celestina Ma. Jude dela Serna, who was accused of going on costly trips while the state-run health insurance firm is incurring billions in losses.**

While Malacañang did not issue a statement about Dela Serna's dismissal, it released a letter to the PhilHealth board stating that the President has appointed Roy Ferrer as acting president of the agency.

"I am pleased to inform you that President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has approved the nomination of Mr. Roy B. Ferrer as Acting President and Chief Executive Officer of Philippine Health Insurance Corporation," a June 1 letter signed by Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea read.

Dela Serna's travel expenses to and from Bohol and Manila, including plane fare and hotel accommodations, reached P627,000 last year, according to a Commission on Audit memorandum issued last April.

The expenses were incurred in the same year PhilHealth's losses ballooned to P8.92 billion from P251.5 million in 2016.

Dela Serna has insisted that all her travels were authorized.

She also justified her billeting costs, saying she had to stay in hotels because PhilHealth does not have a service apartment.

Last month, presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the President would investigate the allegations against Dela Serna.

## Rody From Page 1

Duterte has fired several officials over excessive or unnecessary trips, including former interior secretary Ismael Sueno, former Presidential Commission on Urban Poor Terry Ridon and his four commissioners, Development Academy of the Philippines president Elba Cruz, former Dangerous Drugs Board chairman Dionisio Santiago, former Maritime Industry Authority administrator Marcial Amaro III, Commission on Higher Education chair Patricia Licuanan and customs deputy com-

missioner Noel Prudente.

PhilHealth officials and employees are already rejoicing after Dela Serna was fired. PhilHealth regional vice president Datu Masiding Alonto Jr. said they welcomed reports that President Duterte has ordered the dismissal of Dela Serna.

"Incompetence and corrupt practices by any officer in government has no place in the Duterte administration," Alonto said.

The Department of Health (DOH) declined to issue any

statement until Malacañang has come out with an official statement on Dela Serna's ouster.

PhilHealth employees had earlier staged a vigil to protest corruption in the agency and demanded the ouster of Dela Serna.

"We are distraught on how the corporation is being mismanaged and through this vigil we hope our appeal is heard by the board of directors and President Duterte," the officers and employees said in a statement.

Dela Serna also reportedly fired 17 casual employees who allegedly expressed objections

to her oppressive policies.

She also stopped the monthly rice allowance of employees.

Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito, chairman of the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on National Health Insurance, urged Duterte to appoint an expert on finance to head the PhilHealth.

Ejercito said an actuary or one who is an expert in managing risks of financial investments and insurance funds should be appointed, given the huge fund being handled by PhilHealth.

He said charges should be filed against dela Serna as

well as her predecessor Alex Padilla and former health secretary Janette Garin for the mismanagement of PhilHealth.

Ejercito's oversight panel held two hearings last month to assess the performance of PhilHealth and lawmakers were disturbed by what they found.

Aside from losses, it was also discovered that some P10.6 billion in PhilHealth funds intended for senior citizens were allegedly diverted to other government projects in 2016 by Garin and Padilla.

- With Mayen Jaymalin, Paolo Romero, Edith Regalado

# Britain, France to sail warships in disputed South China Sea

Britain and France are sailing warships through the South China Sea this year to challenge China's militarization of the hotly contested waterway, their defense ministers said on Sunday.

The British and French defense chiefs made the remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, echoing the latest US plan to ramp up its freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea.

The US operations are aimed at countering Beijing's expanding military presence in the strategic waterway and the latter's stance that territorial disputes should be a matter between China and its Asian neighbors.

British Defense Minister Gavin Williamson told the forum that Britain had sent three warships to the region to oppose malign influence and preserve the rule-based order for the long term.

## Play by the rules

"We have to make it clear that nations need to play by the rules, and there are consequences for not doing so," Williamson said.

Aboard the HMS Sutherland, docked in Singapore, Williamson said Britain's naval deployments were intended to send the "strongest signals" on the importance of freedom of navigation and to keep up maximum pressure on North Korea.

His comments came a day after US Defense Secretary James Mattis accused China of "intimidation and coercion" in the South China Sea and warned there would be "consequences" if it continued.

The surge of British warships, which include the Sutherland—an antisubmarine frigate—the HMS Albion and HMS Argyll, is the first deployment of three vessels to the region in a generation.

"The reason that they are here and the reason that we are visiting is to send the strongest of signals. We believe that countries should play by the rules," Williamson said.

"This is even more important at a time when storm clouds are gathering and regional fears are rising, when more nations have nuclear and chemical weapons, not to mention the infringement of regional access, freedoms and security," he added.

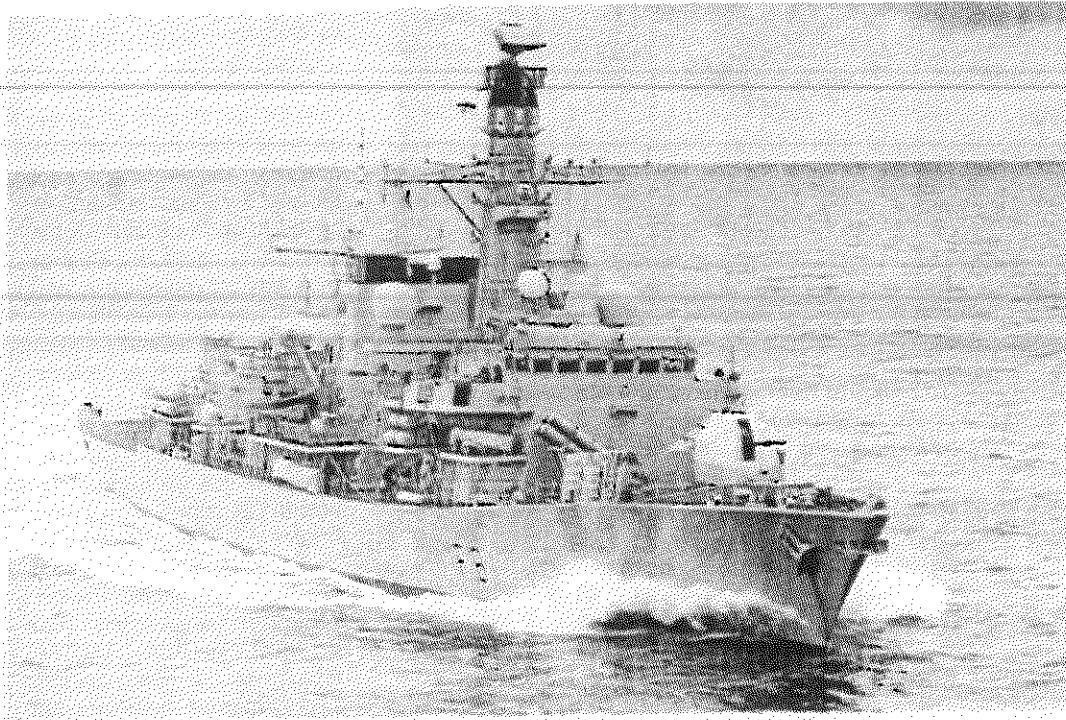
## Disputed territory

Williamson, however, declined to say whether British ships would sail within 22 kilometers of a disputed territory or artificial island built by the Chinese, as US warships had done.

At the end of May, China's military said it had dispatched warships to challenge two US Navy vessels that had passed within 22 km of the Paracel Islands, an archipelago in disputed waters off the coast of Vietnam.

China, whose claim to the Paracels is not recognized by Vietnam, has argued that passage within 22 km constitutes a violation of the country's territory under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos).

China, however, ignores an Unclos ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague invalidating its claim to nearly all of the South China Sea



**NAVAL MISSION** - The antisubmarine frigate HMS Sutherland will join the HMS Albion and the HMS Argyll in Britain's first naval deployment to the South China Sea in a generation. —PHOTO TAKEN FROM WWW.ROYALNAVY.MOD.UK

and declaring it in violation of the Philippines' sovereign right to fish and explore for resources in the West Philippine Sea, waters within the Southeast Asian country's 370-km exclusive economic zone in the strategic waterway.

China has also built artificial islands on seven reefs claimed by the Philippines in the Spratly archipelago and developed them into military bases. It has landed military planes and deployed anti-air cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems on the "Big Three"—Kagiungan, Zamora and Mischief reefs.

Williamson stressed that Britain, France and Australia

had also been asserting their rights of passage in the region.

"We've been sending a clear message to all that the freedom of navigation is absolutely critical," he said.

#### **French task group**

French Defense Minister Florence Parly also told the annual defense forum that a French maritime task group, together with British helicopters and ships, would visit Singapore next week and then sail "into certain areas" of the South China Sea.

Without naming China, Parly suggested the warships would cross into "territorial wa-

ters" claimed by Beijing and envisioned a potential encounter with its military.

"At some point a stern voice intrudes into the transponder and tells us to sail away from supposedly 'territorial waters,'" she said.

"But our commander then calmly replies that he will sail forth, because these, under international law, are indeed international waters," she added.

Although France is not a claimant in the South China Sea disputes, such exercises conducted "on a regular basis with allies and friends" are contributing to a rule-based order,

according to Parly.

"By exercising our freedom of navigation, we also place ourselves in the position of a persistent objector to the creation of any claim to de facto sovereignty on the islands," she said.

Instead of accepting the situation as a *fait accompli*, Parly said France should question it, otherwise it would be established as a right.

#### **Europe mobilizing**

"I believe we should broaden this effort even further," Parly said, adding that Europe was mobilizing more widely to support this endeavor and there were also German observers on board.

The United States is reportedly considering a more assertive approach in the region that, compared to their previous freedom of navigation operations, could involve longer patrols, more ships and closer surveillance of Chinese facilities such as electronic jamming equipment and advanced military radars.

US officials are also pushing international allies and partners to increase their own naval deployments through the vital trade route as the Chinese strengthen their military capabilities in the Paracel and Spratly islands.

"But violation of China's sovereignty will not be allowed," said Lt. Gen. He Lei, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Military Science and head of China's delegation to the Shangri-La Dialogue. —REPORTS FROM SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, THE TELEGRAPH AND REUTERS INQ



# CHINA DISREGARDED ASEAN AGREEMENT TO EASE SEA TENSIONS, SAYS AQUINO

By Marlon Ramos  
@MRamosINQ

Which administration secured the landmark ruling from an international arbitral court recognizing the Philippines' sovereign rights in the West Philippine Sea?

Former President Benigno Aquino III on Monday raised this question as he played down President Duterte's claim that

his administration did nothing to stop China's militarization of the South China Sea, including waters within the country's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone in the strategic waterway known to Filipinos as West Philippine Sea.

Speaking at a news briefing, Aquino said Beijing disregarded an agreement it had entered into with member-states of the Association of Southeast Na-

tions (Asean) in 2002 to ease the tensions triggered by the territorial dispute.

"Do I really have to answer that?" Aquino said in response to a question by a reporter about Mr. Duterte's remarks that Aquino was to blame for China's construction of military bases on Philippine-claimed reefs in the Spratly islands.

"Who filed the arbitration [case]? Who campaigned among

the Asean countries? Which administration produced the communiqué or statement more critical of this island development of China?" he asked.

### PH challenge

The Aquino administration challenged China's claim to nearly all of the South China Sea in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2013 after China seized Panatag

Shoal—internationally known as Scarborough Shoal—from the Philippines in 2012.

The UN-backed tribunal resolved the case on July 12, 2016, ruling that China's sweeping claim has no basis in international law and that Beijing has violated Manila's sovereign right to fish and explore for resources in the West Philippine Sea.

The resolution came down shortly after President Duterte

assumed office on June 30, 2016, but in at least two speeches Mr. Duterte claimed that the arbitral ruling was handed down during the Aquino administration and that his predecessor had failed to invoke it against China. **AG**

Aquino opted not to make a big deal of Mr. Duterte's erroneous claim, saying the President may have just forgotten the correct date of the tribunal's decision. **INQ**

# Chinese buildup in SCS: Noy hits back at Rody

By EDU PUNAY

An administration that had officially protested China's maritime bullying and challenged its massive territorial claim before an international court cannot be blamed for Beijing's unfettered military buildup in the West Philippine Sea and South China Sea, former president Benigno Aquino III said yesterday.

He made the pronouncement at a press conference to rebut President Duterte's claim that the previous administration was to blame for China's militarization of areas within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

The President had also

claimed China's island-building activities began during his predecessor's administration and that the latter did not lift a finger to stop it.

"Who filed the arbitration (case against China)? Who campaigned among ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members? Which administration produced communiqué or statements critical of all those island developing by China?" Aquino stressed, pointing out that it was his administration that fought China's incursion in the West Philippine Sea.

"From the beginning, we only had Vietnam on our side but that didn't stop us from securing a joint statement,"

Aquino recalled.

Stressing he did not want to offer unsolicited advice to Duterte, Aquino said he believed China violated the 2002 Declaration of Conduct in South China Sea with its recent actions, particularly its deployment of missile system in three reefs in the Spratlys.

"Whatever angle you look at it, there really seems a violation (of the declaration). If I were in their place, I'd ask if sections 4 and 5 of the agreement signed by China with the entirety of ASEAN are no longer valid," Aquino said.

He was referring to provisions requiring parties to resolve conflicts "by peaceful means without resorting to the

threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations with universally recognized principles including UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)."

The agreement also binds parties "to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes" as well as "refrain from action of inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shores and other features."

Aquino explained that the agreement between China and ASEAN remains binding to the parties despite other considerations, including Duterte's much touted economic benefits

derived from his non-confrontational approach in dealing with the maritime dispute.

"China is a big economy and we have a lot of favors from them and our good relationship with China is at stake. But regardless of that, there was a statement and we don't know if the other ASEAN countries would still support us eventually if we don't honor it," he pointed out.

Aquino also cited the country's victory in its case against China before the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in July 2016. The ruling by the UN-backed tribunal in The Hague invalidated China's massive nine-dash line claim and affirmed the Philippines'

maritime entitlements. Beijing had vowed not to comply with the ruling.

Aquino reminded Duterte that the PCA ruling came out when the latter was already president.

Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said they were working "double time" to upgrade the country's military, admitting it is currently not capable of defending its territories, including the West Philippine Sea. 5

"At present, we don't have any capabilities to even just demonstrate to others that we are capable because we are not capable," Lorenzana said in an interview with ANC. - With Michael Punongbayan

# Aquino on territorial row: Who filed case vs China?

**BY ASHZEL NACHERO**

FORMER president Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III yesterday defended his administration's handling of the territorial dispute with China, saying it was his administration which initiated the filing of the historic arbitral case challenging Beijing's sweeping nine-dash claim in the South China Sea.

Aquino made the statement in a press briefing when asked about

recent pronouncements of President Duterte blaming his administration for China's militarization in the area.

"Wala akong ginawa? Who filed the arbitration case? Who campaigned amongst ASEAN countries? Which administration produced the statements more critical of all these island-developing of China? Yung arbitration case, trabaho natin yan (The arbitration case, that's our

work)," Aquino said.

Aside from blaming the Aquino administration, Duterte also said the ruling of the arbitral tribunal in the Netherlands' invalidating China's sweeping claims came during the term of his predecessor.

The arbitral tribunal issued the ruling in July 2016, a few weeks after Duterte was sworn in as president. The case was filed in 2013.

See AQUINO >> Page B3

## AQUINO

Duterte has also repeatedly said that pressing the country's claims in the area will mean trouble or war though he added he is making efforts to address the situation.

Duterte has not called out Beijing over the reported deployment of missile systems on three reefs -- Fiery Cross Reef, Subi Reef and Mischief Reef -- all within the country's exclusive economic zone though Malacañang said it is confident that the missile systems are not directed at the Philippines because of the country's friendly ties with Beijing.

Aquino also said it was he who pushed for the passage of a code of conduct to ease tension among the claimant-countries in the area and prevent the tension from spiraling into a military conflict.

Aside from the Philippines and China, the other claimants in the area are Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Last year, ASEAN and China formally agreed to start negotiations on a legally binding code of conduct to ease tension in the disputed waters and prevent it from spiraling into an armed conflict.

Aquino said Manila has been pushing for the code of conduct as early as 2012, but experts said Beijing was deliberately taking its time because it wants to complete its military-grade facilities in the disputed waters.

Beijing claims almost the entire South China Sea through which more than \$5 trillion worth of goods passes every year, earning concern and criticism from other claimant countries and even other countries with no claim to the area such as the United States.

8

# 'PH not capable of defending territories'

BY DEMPSEY REYES

**T**HE Philippines is not yet capable of defending disputed territories in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) from other claimants, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said on Monday.

Lorenzana made the admission a week after he gave assurances that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) gave priority to territorial defense in areas being encroached by other countries such as China.

"At present, we don't have any capabilities... we don't have capital ships, we don't have the weapons," the Defense chief said in an interview with ABS-CBN News Channel in Singapore.

He said the only airstrip Manila has in the disputed Spratly Islands (Kalayaan Island Group) is being repaired.

"Our sole airstrip in Pag-asa is still very short and it is unpaved, so we are trying also to pave that so we can bring in our aircraft anytime," he said.

The AFP has several aircraft and ships intended for maritime patrol such as the C-90 patrol plane donated by Japan to the Philippine Navy, which was used

by the Northern Luzon Command to patrol the Scarborough Shoal (Bajo de Masinloc).

## 'Nothing we can do'

Lorenzana said the Philippines cannot do anything about China's claims in the South China Sea.

"I think all we can do now is (file a) diplomatic protest, and talk to them. There is nothing we can do," he said.

He cited China's refusal to honor the ruling of the arbitral tribunal invalidating Beijing's nine-dash line claim in the disputed sea.

"But since China won't accept it, what can we do? And China, in fact, during the pendency of the arbitral ruling, they double timed the reclaiming of the reefs," he added.

While in Singapore, Lorenzana met with US Secretary of Defense James Mattis on the sidelines of the International Institute for Strategic Studies' 17th Asia Security Summit, also known as the Shangri-La Dialogue.

Lorenzana and Mattis discussed measures to boost information sharing and maritime domain awareness cooperation.

Captain Jeff Davis, Mattis' spokesman, said that the two Defense chiefs also reviewed the US Indo-Pacific strategy and its implications for the alliance.

"Both leaders emphasized the need to keep the Indo-Pacific free and open and highlighted the central importance of Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in upholding the rules-based order," Davis said in a statement.

# 'Fund lack hampers bid to upgrade military defense'

By Francisco Tuyay

DEFENSE Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Monday the military's territorial defense capabilities will stay below par unless Congress allocates more funds for its defense modernization program.

He said despite the country's armaments, its defense capability was still considered weak.

"We don't have any capabilities to even demonstrate to others that we are capable because we are not," Lorenzana said.

Defense analysts say a P300-billion budget is needed to modernize the military, and that it needs warships, attack aircraft and other equipment.

At the Congressional hearing on the South China Sea issue, the security sector led by Lorenzana, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon and top military officials and Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano urged lawmakers to allocate more funds for the defense and development of the Philippine territories fronting the West Philippine Sea.

A2

President Rodrigo Duterte has promised to allocate P140 billion to boost the capabilities of the military in its external and internal defense missions.

The Philippine Air Force has acquired 12 Korean FA-50 fighter jets intended for internal defense patrol missions, replacing the old US F-5 while the Philippine Navy has no destroyer or submarine in its inventory.

The FA-50 has participated in the campaign against the terrorists in the Marawi City siege and in the maritime patrol in the country's Western frontier to guard against any potential invasion by China that has so far militarized some of the disputed areas in the West Philippine Sea.

"We don't have the capital ships, and we don't have the weapons," Lorenzana said, adding even the development of an airstrip on Pagasa Island was taking time due to budgetary constraints.



# DND: PH needs military upgrades amid sea row

By Mario J. Mallari

The Department of National Defense (DND) is still lacking capability to defend the country's territory in the disputed West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Thus, admitted Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana during a broadcast interview as he stressed the military needs a lot of upgrading to be able to defend the country's interest in the WPS.

Right now, Lorenzana said that the government is fast tracking the improvement of Rancudo Airfield on Pagasa Island.

"At present, we don't have capabilities to demonstrate to others that we are capable because we are not capable," said Lorenzana during a broadcast interview.

"We don't have the capital ships, we don't have the weapons," he added.

While the Philippines is occupying several islets and reefs at the WPS, only Pagasa Island – the seat of government of Kalayaan town, has an airstrip.

According to Lorenzana, the Rancudo Airfield is undergoing improvement to make it longer and an all-weather strip.

Right now, aircraft cannot land on Pagasa Island when it is raining.

"Our sole airstrip in Pagasa is still very short and unpaved so we are trying to pave that so that we can bring in our aircraft anytime," Lorenzana said.

The Defense chief stressed that the improvement on Pagasa Island is still dependent on the budget to be allotted by Congress.

"It will take some time for us to be ready to defend our territories the way we have to," admitted Lorenzana.

"We are working double time but it depends on the funds we get from Congress if they allocate more funds for our modernization program," he added.

Apart from the improvement of the Rancudo Airfield, the government is also putting up lighthouses on Pagasa Island.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said that the construction of lighthouses is not a violation of the Declaration of Conduct signed by claimant-countries.

Aside from the Philippines, China, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam have overlapping claims on islets and reefs in the West Philippine Sea.

China has been aggressive in developing occupied areas – with the installation recently of missile systems on three man-made islands in WPS.

## Lorenzana says AFP incapable of defending territories in WPS

Defense Secretary Delfin T. Lorenzana yesterday admitted that the Armed Forces of the Philippines is at present incapable of defending the country's territories in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea.

In an interview over ANC, Lorenzana said the military is doing its best to upgrade its facilities, especially on Pagasa Island, Palawan, to enable military planes to land there.

"At present, you know we don't have any capabilities to even, just to demonstrate to others that we are capable of defending our territory because we are not capable," Lorenzana said.

"We don't have the capital ships, we don't have the weapons. Our sole airstrip in Pagasa is still very short and it is unpaved so we're trying to pave

it so that we can bring in our aircraft anytime," he added.

The repair of the 1.3-kilometer runway of Rancudo Airfield on Pagasa Island started last month based on a report by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative.

Satellite images taken last May 17 showed dredging equipment on the western edge of the runway that collapsed into the sea years ago.

"Because at present planes can only land there if there were five days of sunshine, because if it is soggy it cannot land. That's one of the improvements that we are doing. So it will take some time for us to be ready to defend our territories the way we should defend it in the first place," Lorenzana said. **(Francis T. Wakefield) 2**

# Mattis warns of consequences if Beijing keeps militarizing the South China Sea

**S**INGAPORE (Dow Jones) - The US and China appear to be headed for a more confrontational relationship in Southeast Asia as Washington warns of a more aggressive response to the militarization of disputed islands in the South China Sea.

Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue, a regional security conference, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis warned there could be "much larger consequences" in the future from China's moves to install weapons systems on islands in the sea. He didn't specify what the consequences would be.

The warning, in response to a question from an audience member, came after a speech by Mattis in

which he said "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."

He also called his decision to not invite China to the biennial Rim of the Pacific exercise, slated to begin later in June, "an initial response" to its increased militarization of the South China Sea.

His comments were the most assertive yet in response to what he has described as a ramp-up of Chinese military activity in the past month. This appeared to lay the groundwork for an increased US military—or even economic—response.

Beijing's activities are "in stark contrast to the openness of what our

strategy promotes, it calls into question China's broader goals," Mattis told a packed house of international military officials, senior global lawmakers, experts and others on Saturday.

"Our objective remains the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Mattis said, making no mention of maintaining the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign, which included tough sanctions. Hours earlier, after a White House meeting with a top North Korean official, Gen. Kim Yong Chol, Trump said he would no longer use the term.

12.11.18

## Ex-DFA chief presses for action vs China

FORMER Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario joined the clamor for the Philippine government to file a diplomatic protest against China's landing of bombers on Woody Island within the disputed areas of South China Sea/West Philippine Sea.

"Granted that there is a divergence of views on responding to the developments in South China Sea, the landing of bombers in Woody Island serves, at the very least, to raise tensions and destabilize our region," the former official said. "It is in our interest to file a protest as we should be endeavoring to galvanize the support of countries that, like the Philippines, are strongly opposed to the militarization of the South China Sea," he stressed.

On the question of territory lost during the incumbency of the Duterte administration, Del Rosario said he believed that Sandy Cay is within the territorial sea of Pag-Asa. Under the Baselines Law, Pag-Asa is Philippine territory, he said.

The Philippines lost control of Sandy Cay in late 2017 when President Duterte ordered the cessation of construction there due to vehement reaction from China, Del Rosario said. Chinese coast guard vessels have since then surrounded Sandy Cay at all times, effectively seizing physical control of Sandy Cay from the Philippines. "I think that a very strong protest then should have been filed," Del Rosario said.

**Bomb found, defused along Maguindanao road** <sup>AS</sup>  
CAMP SIONGCO, MAGUINDANAO—A convoy of military vehicles was spared from being hit by a possible explosion on Saturday when soldiers recovered and deactivated a bomb planted by the roadside at Ampatuan town in Maguindanao province. A vehicle carrying Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, newly installed 6th Infantry Division commander, was part of the convoy that was on its way to the Army's 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion camp. The bomb was found along the highway at Barangay Sanlag. Sobejana and his escorts had to delay their trip as bomb experts deactivated the remote-controlled improvised explosive device (IED) made from a 105-millimeter howitzer shell. Sobejana said the IED could be intended for his convoy. —EDWIN FERNANDEZ





### • Phil soldiers prefer US-made guns

In the same speech spiced with expletives, Duterte called Canada "stupid" for having raised concerns that the helicopters the Philippines was buying from it for \$233 million might be used against Filipinos who happen to be rebels.

The Philippines had wanted to buy 16 Bell 412EP1 utility helicopters, but Duterte scrapped the deal in February after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ordered a review over fears of human rights abuses. Duterte said he might buy helicopters instead from South Korea.

He said it was stupid to acquire such helicopters if they would just be used for ferrying supplies and doing evacuation and mercy missions, but not for combat operations against rebels.

He asked: "How stupid can you... Why would you say that I cannot use it against my own citizens when there are citizens in my country who are trying to overthrow my government?" He was referring to the communist New People's Army as well as to secessionists and terrorists.

Meanwhile, a random survey of officers and men of the armed forces shows that most (more than 75 percent) of them prefer using US-made weapons.

For infantry assault rifles, they favor the AR platform in 5.56 mm or caliber .223. However, snipers prefer the Barrett in caliber .50. As for sidearm, the favorite remains to be the caliber .45 model 1911A1.

The rifles given by China have not been issued, reportedly pending their undergoing field testing to ensure they will not be the cause of self-inflicted casualties.

Related to this, sources involved in the Marawi siege disputed claims that terror leaders Isnilon Hapilon and Omarkhayam Maute were killed by snipers using China-made rifles from a kilometer away.

As for fighter planes, it appears that anything supersonic that the cash-strapped government can provide is welcome, although the pilots favor US-made aircraft. The Korean-made FA-50 being used by the Air Force is a clone of the US F-16.

The same preference is seen for combat helicopters, although the Air Force and the Navy now use Poland-made choppers and Augusta-Westland AW 109s.

American-made armored personnel carriers are still preferred owing to Filipino mechanics' familiarity with US equipment.

The only non-US-made APCs that the AFP used were the English-made Simbas acquired during the Aquino-I administration and Portuguese-made clone of the V-150 "Commando" and V-300 "Piranha" bought at the height of the MNLF rebellion when the US refused to sell weapons to the Philippines at the urging of Great Britain.

The government arsenal in Bataan produces 5.56, 7.52, caliber .45 and 9 mm ammunition. Supply is augmented by major service purchases through bidding. Bullets supplied by dealers must also undergo field testing.

★ ★ ★ 8  
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## ICRC helps treat wounded troops in Sulu

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines' Camp Navarro General Hospital (CNGH) in Zamboanga City received medical supplies from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for treatment of soldiers wounded in the recent clashes in Sulu.

Piotr Dregiel, head of the ICRC office in Zamboanga, said part of the ICRC's humanitarian mandate is to help people affected by armed conflicts.

Intravenous fluids and wound-care materials were turned over to the military hospital, which serves as the main operating base for southwest Philippines.

Lt. Col. Maria Victoria Mandin, CNGH commanding officer, expressed appreciation for the donation and the ICRC's continuing support.

"Their 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," Mandin said.

The ICRC regularly supports five hospitals in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao through quarterly donations of medicines, vaccines and medical supplies. It also provides ad hoc assistance to hospitals during crisis situations.

In April, the ICRC donated medical items and jerrycans to the Integrated Provincial Hospital Office (IPHO)-Sulu Provincial Hospital, in response to the diarrhea outbreak in Pata Island.

The ICRC is a neutral and independent humanitarian organization whose mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other forms of violence, as well as provide them with assistance, regardless of their political affiliation.

**REGIONS BRIEFS**

**6 soldiers wounded in Isabela clash**

**A8**  
CAMP MELCHOR DELA CRUZ, ISABELA — Six Army soldiers were wounded during a clash with suspected communist rebels at Echague town in Isabela province on Monday morning, military reports said. Soldiers from the 86th Infantry Battalion were patrolling the village of Mabbayad when they chanced upon a group of suspected New People's Army rebels, said Capt. Jefferson Somera, spokesperson for the military's 5th Infantry Division. The soldiers, whom officials declined to identify, were taken to different hospitals in Canayan City and were later transferred to the 5th ID Hospital in this camp. —VILLAMOR VISAYA JR.

## 7 soldiers hurt in clash with Reds

TUGUEGARAO, Cagayan – Seven soldiers were reported wounded in an encounter with New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Echague, Isabela yesterday.

The soldiers, who are members of the 86th Infantry Battalion under the Joint Task Force Tala, were airlifted to the Isabela Doctors Hospital and Ester Garcia General Hospital for treatment.

Reports reaching Maj. Gen. Perfecto Rimando, 5th Infantry Division commander, showed the clash occurred in Barangay Mabbayad at around 5 a.m.

The firefight, which lasted for around 20 minutes, left an undetermined number of casualties among the rebels, according to Lt. Col. Isagani

Nato, Northern Luzon Command chief.

An encounter between NPA rebels and the same Army unit occurred also in Echague town last week.

Nato said they would continue with "focused military operations" against the rebels in coordination with other law enforcement units.

Meanwhile, in Bukidon, at least 55 rebel returnees and leaders of a *lumad* community received cash assistance amounting to P220,000 after an evaluation conducted by the military last week. They were also promised a hectare of land where they could establish their community and farms. – Raymund Catindig, Ding Cervantes, Michael Punongbayan

# 6 soldiers wounded in clash with NPA

By FRANCIS I. WAKEFIELD

Six soldiers were wounded following in an intense 20-minute encounter with suspected Communist New People's Army Terrorists

(CNTs) in Echague, Isabela yesterday the army reported.

Captain Jefferson Somera, 5th Infantry Division (5ID) spokesman, said the gun battle happened in Barangay Mabbayad in Echague

about 5 a.m. while troopers from the army's 86th Infantry Battalion were conducting security patrol operations in the area.

Somera said the 20 armed fighters of the NPA retreated during the battle

as they, too, suffered casualties. They fled in the northeast direction of Mabbayad.

Somera stopped short of naming the six wounded soldiers but assured that they were already out of

danger.

Some of them were taken to the Isabela Doctors' Hospital while others were recuperating at the Dr. Ester Garcia General Hospital in Cauvan City, Isabela



5

A2

### 6 SOLDIERS WOUNDED IN ISABELA CLASH

SIX Philippine Army personnel under the Northern Luzon Command (Noicom) were wounded in a 20-minute clash with the communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels on Monday morning in Echague, Isabela. Lt. Col. Isagani Nato, Noicom public information office chief, said the skirmish happened while the 86th Infantry Battalion (86IB), under the Joint Task Force (JTF) Tala of the 5th Infantry Division (5ID), was conducting focused military operations within Barangay Mabbayad in Echague. He said the troops confronted about 20 members of the NPA with unknown leader operating in the area that resulted in the wounding of six soldiers and undetermined number of casualties on the enemy side. The NPA rebels were spotted withdrawing towards northeast direction while being pursued by government troops. The Army said the rebels may be the same group the 86IB encountered on Thursday also in Echague town. **A7**

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

## 6 na sundalo duguan vs NPA

Sugatan ang anim na sundalo makaraang makaengkuwentro ang mga hinihinalang Communist New People's Army Terrorist (CNTs) sa Echague, Isabela kahapon.

Ayon kay Army Captain Jefferson Somera, tagapagsalita ng 5th Infantry Division, naganap ang enkuwentro sa Barangay Mabbayad, Echague, Isabela, dakong 5:00 ng madaling araw.

Nagsasagawa ng security patrol operations ang mga tauhan ng 86th Infantry Battalion nang makababakan ang nasa 20 terorista.

Sinabi ni Somera na tumagal ang bakbakan ng 20 minuto matapos tunahak ng mga kalaban sa hilagang-silangan ng Bgy. Mabbayad.

Bilang resulta, sugatan ang anim na sundalo habang inaalam pa ang bilang ng mga sugatan sa hanay ng kalaban.

Isinugod ang mga sugatan sa Isabela Doctors Hospital at Dr. Ester Garcia General Hospital sa Cauyan City, Isabela.

"As of this time, those who were wounded are in stable condition," ani Somera.

Francis T. Wakefield

## 6 Army men wounded in battle

Six government soldiers were wounded following an encounter with suspected Communist New People's Army Terrorist (CNTs) in Echague, Isabela on Monday. Army Captain Jefferson Somera, 5th Infantry Division Spokesman, said the encounter happened at Brgy. Mabbayad, Echague, Isabela at about 5 a.m. It was learned that troops from the 86th Infantry Battalion were conducting security patrol operations when it encountered more or less 20 communist NPA terrorists. Somera said the firefight lasted for more or less 20 minutes after which the enemy withdrew towards the Northeast direction of Brgy. Mabbayad. As a result, six government soldiers were wounded in the firefight while reports are still being verified if the enemy incurred any casualty. Somera said the wounded were brought to Isabela Doctors Hospital and Dr. Ester Garcia General Hospital in Cauayan City, Isabela for treatment. As of this time, those who were wounded are in stable condition (and recuperating from their wounds), he said. **(Francis T. Wakefield)** 4

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Wrong arrest? Group says woman trader not rebel**

Women's group Gabriela said the supposed rebel leader arrested by authorities on Thursday was a volunteer active in promoting women's rights since 2006. Atel Hijos, Gabriela Women's Party secretary general in Caraga region, said Nerita de Castro's arrest was based on trumped-up charges. De Castro, Hijos said, was "an ordinary citizen and defender of women's rights" and not a leader of New People's Army (NPA) as the military had claimed. De Castro was arrested in a raid by soldiers and policemen on her house in Emenville Subdivision at the village of Ambago in Butuan City. Maj. Ezra Balagtey, Eastern Mindanao Command spokesperson, said a warrant of arrest had been issued for De Castro but details of the case against her were not available. Brig. Gen. Franco Nemesio Gagat, head of the 402nd Infantry Brigade, said De Castro was finance officer of NPA in Mindanao. But Hijos said De Castro was "a small businesswoman who devoted part of her time for the promotion of women's rights." —ERWIN MASCARIÑAS

# Gabriela says its member not an NPA amazon

By YAS D. OCAMPO

**D**AVAO CITY – The Gabriela Women's Party has accused the government of "red-tagging" one of its members as a New People's Army (NPA) amazon, when she is actually just a small-time businesswoman and a human rights advocate.

In a statement, Gabriela-Caraga said the arrest of Nerita De Castro last week by the military was a "misogynistic move" meant to silence all those who are critical of the Duterte government. It also said the suspect has been its member since 2006.

"The arrest is meant to sow fear among the people of Caraga who dare to expose and criticize President Duterte and his military and police's misogynistic and anti-people actions,"

the women's rights group said.

De Castro was arrested by combined elements of the Crime Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) Davao and Caraga, and the 402nd Infantry Battalion in Emenville Sub-division, Barangay Ambago, Butuan City last May 31.

Gabriela charged that De Castro's arrest was made based on a "trumped-up murder charge filed in Liana, Surigao del Sur."

The group also said De Castro was denied her right to counsel and access to her family after she was arrested.

"Despite her constant demand for a lawyer while being interrogated, she was denied her right to be accompanied by counsel when questioned by state agents," the statement said.

The group tagged the CIDG, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on

the Peace Process (OPAPP), the Presidential Management Staff (PMS), and Caraga Philippine National Police as liable for the illegal arrest of De Castro.

It also said the military erred in announcing that De Castro was a high-ranking member of the NPA as finance officer of the Komisyon sa Mindanao and the secretary of the Regional White Area Committee of the Northeastern Mindanao Region. **B**

"She is a human rights advocate, working fulltime first with the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) during the 1980's under Marcos' Martial law when her brother was tortured by the military, and for Karapatan-Surigao del Sur during the 1990's until around 2006 when she focused on her small buy and sell business for her children's education," the group said.



## Militar inakusahan ng mistaken arrest

Inakusahan ng Gabriela Women's Party ang pamahalaan sa pagtukoy sa kanilang miyembro bilang miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA), matapos ipahayag ng 402nd Infantry noong nakaraang linggo na naaresto nito ang isa umanong opisyal ng rebelde.

Sa isang pahayag, tinawag ng Gabriela chapter sa Caraga ang pag-aresto kay Nerita De Castro na isang "misogynistic move meant to cow fear among the people of Caraga who dare to expose and criticize President Duterte and his military and police's misogynistic and anti-people actions."

ayon sa women's rights group.

Inaresto si De Castro ng mga tauhan ng Crime Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) Davao at Caraga at ng 402nd IBde sa Emenville Subdivision, Barangay Arribago, Butuan City noong May 31, 2018.

Ayon sa Gabriela, ang pag-aresto ay base sa iniminentong kasong murder na mihain sa Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

Inisyu ni Judge Lilibeth O. Ladaga ng Regional Trial Court 11, judicial Branch 28, ng Lianga, Surigao del Sur ang warrant of arrest.

5 **Yas D. Ocampo**

# 'If peace talks fail, Joma should never return'

H. ANGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

**P**resident Duterte said Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria "Joma" Sison should never return to the country if the renewed efforts for the peace negotiations between the government and the Reds will fail.

Duterte made the statement as he reiterated that more businesses would

come in Mindanao if there will be peace on the southern island.

The President said his administration is trying to succeed in the talks with the communist rebels in order to achieve a business-friendly Mindanao.

"Hindi muna maka-access doon ngayon kasi magulo (We can't access some areas there because there's still disorder). So we are trying to find out if we can succeed in the talks with the Communist Party," Duterte said.

Duterte also reiterated that his invitation for Sison to return to the Philippines for the talks remains open, but said he has yet to hear a response from the rebel leader who is his former professor.

"I have invited Sison. I do not have the clear answer," he said. "If you come home, I will guarantee your safety and your security. If the talks fail, I'd be glad to escort you here and see you leave the Philippine territory pero sana huwag ka

nang bumalik (but I hope that you never come back)," he added.

Duterte also stressed that he means it when he said that Sison should not return, noting the many resources and lives lost in the war with the Reds.

"Sana matagumpay. Pero kung hindi naman, sabihin ko na lang sa iyo na huwag ka nang bumalik (I hope this succeeds. But if not, then I tell you, never return)," Duterte said.

## Military turns over bodies of slain NPA rebels

**CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY:** The military has retrieved and turned over the bodies of two communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels killed in an encounter with government troops in the hinterlands of Misamis Oriental on May 27.

Lt. Tere Ingente, public affairs division head in Camp Evangelista based here, said the decomposing body of Cesario Latio, alias Bobby, was buried in a public cemetery in Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental while the body of Odelo Compas, alias Sapayanan was claimed by his family.

As the bodies of the NPA rebels were recovered, about 140 members of the Higaonon tribe consisting of 40 families evacuated and settled at the provincial capitol grounds here on Monday morning.

Datu Renato Ayuman, the group's leader, said they came down to seek food, relief and government assistance for the displaced Higaonon tribe.

The military and the NPA rebels engaged in a running gun battle in the mountain of Camansi, a village in the outskirts of

Lagonglong where armed skirmishes between government troops and the communist rebels take place every now and then.

Ayuman said they would not return to their village until the military leaves the area for fear of their lives.

"If the military puts up a camp in our village, we would no longer return there," Ayuman said.

The military continued clearing operations in the villages of Camansi, Banglay and in the borders of Balingasag and Lagonglong to flush out NPA rebels in the area.

CRIS DIAZ

**Marawi folk back probe of 5-month war on IS**

A group of displaced residents has rallied support for the proposed Senate inquiry into the five-month war on Islamic State (IS) in Marawi City. Moro Consensus Group, composed of Marawi residents displaced by combat between government forces and IS followers, said many questions were left unanswered by the war that destroyed Marawi's commercial area and rendered thousands of people homeless. Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, critic of the Duterte administration and former Navy officer, filed proposed resolution No. 743 demanding a probe of the circumstances that led to the five-month fighting. Trillanes said the government knew about the threat to Marawi months ahead of the war but was unable to prevent terrorists from occupying dozens of houses in the city and using these to launch a campaign to establish an IS base there. Lininding said people were wondering where government forces were on May 23 last year, the day before Abu Sayyaf and Maute gunmen made their presence in the city known. She added that Marawi residents were also wondering why the government rejected local officials' offer to take up arms against the terrorists. "They knew the area better," Lininding said. —ALLAN NAWAL **AA**

# Int'l team investigates death of 9 MILF members in anti-drug raid

By ALI G. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY - In keeping with the spirit of the current Mindanao peace process, the International Monitoring Team (IMT) is investigating the killing of nine Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) members in a reported anti-drug police operation in North Cotabato on May 26.

The IMT, composed of military and police officers from Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and conflict resolution experts from Japan, Norway and the European Union, has been overseeing, since 2004, the enforcement of an interim ceasefire pact forged by the government and the MILF two decades ago.

The Malaysian-led IMT started its

probe on Friday following a complaint from the MILF, which belied police reports that their members were not involved in drugs but were "massacred" in a village in Matalam, North Cotabato on May 26 by joint police and military elements purportedly serving search warrants on drug suspects.

IMT mission head Malaysian Army Major Gen. Dato Haji Mohd Nazir Bin Haji Mami has reportedly called for sobriety among MILF and government stakeholders to prevent the incident from turning into an issue that may affect the progress in the Mindanao peace process.

The incident happened just as the Senate and House of Representatives were on the verge of asking President Duterte to certify as urgent the Bang-

samoro Basic Law (BBL). The BBL will be the enabling law of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro forged by the MILF and the government in 2014.

Mami reportedly gave his assurance that the IMT will make sure that its probe on the alleged shootout between state forces and the nine MILF members will be comprehensive.

The MILF had said its slain guerillas were not drug traffickers, contrary to claims made by the police. 13

The chairman of the MILF's ceasefire committee, Butch Malang, said they found out that nine fatalities surrendered their firearms to the searching police-military elements but were subsequently "massacred" in barangay Kilada, Matalam town.

# Team probes death of 9 MILF guerrillas in drug raid

BY JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

**S**HARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: The International Monitoring Team (IMT) and local peacekeepers urged stakeholders not to let the death of nine Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) guerillas during a Philippine National Police (PNP) anti-drug operation in Matalam, North Cotabato affect the peace process between the front and the government.

The IMT, comprised of military and police officers from Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and civilian uniformed conflict resolution experts from Japan, Norway and the European Union, is now investigating the incident over the MILF's denial of the involvement of their members in illegal drugs business.

The transnational peacekeeping contingent has been observing since 2004 the enforcement of an interim ceasefire pact forged by the government and the MILF

some two decades ago.

The Malaysian-led IMT started its inquiry on the incident on Friday based on MILF complaint.

Malaysian Army Major Gen. Dato Haji Mohd Nazir Bin Haji Mami, IMT mission head, appealed for sobriety on the MILF and the government to avoid the incident from turning into an irritant that could derail the current common peace initiatives by both sides.

Mami said the IMT will see to it that its probe on the alleged shootout between the nine MILF members and the police shall be comprehensive.

The MILF had said its slain guerrillas were not drug traffickers, contrary to claims by the PNP operatives.

On May 26 nine members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces of the MILF were killed while three others, including a woman, were wounded during an anti-drug operation in Barangay Kilada of Matalam.

Killed were Dading Hassan, Muhamidin Hassan, Konne Hassan, Burtah Salping, Muhalidin Salping, Tiyo Mantik, Orom Mantis, Deng Malungon and a certain Abu.

Authorities said joint anti-narcotics and police operatives were about to serve search warrants against Hassan and Bai Intan Aban in Sitio Biao, Barangay Kilada when the suspects opened fire triggering a firefight.

But Butch Malang, chairman of the

MILF's ceasefire committee, said there is no truth to allegations that the victims provoked the gunfight.

The government and the MILF are bound by an interim accord – the July 1997 Agreement on General Cessation of Hostilities – to resolve security issues that may affect either side.

The joint ceasefire committee, a bloc of senior officers from the PNP, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and MILF representatives, enforces bilateral security protocols meant to prevent hostilities between state and MILF forces in far-flung areas.

The IMT probe is supported by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the Army's 6th Infantry Division (6ID).

Brig. Gen. <sup>AF</sup> Cirilito Sobejana, 6ID commander, has directed the 602nd Brigade to help local officials restore normalcy in Barangay Kilada through multi-sectoral interventions meant to ease the tension caused by the bloodshed.



## Zubiri defends anti-political dynasty provision in Senate's BBL

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

SAYING they are essential to Bangsamoro, Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri defended on Monday the anti-political dynasty provision and the enumeration of the powers of the Bangsamoro under the Senate's version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

Zubiri, chairman of the upper chamber's subcommittee on the BBL, said the issues on political dynasties has long been a problem in Mindanao so he put a provision that

prohibits political families within second degree of consanguinity in the Bangsamoro parliament.

He said this would ensure that not only one family would sit in the Bangsamoro parliament.

Under the Senate version, he said, they also removed the provision stating that the Bangsamoro has reserve concurrent and exclusive powers in a bid to make the BBL organic Act simple.

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.

He noted that all powers that are not stated in their proposed BBL would automatically be exclusive to the national government.

He likewise renewed his earlier statement that their version would "pass the test of constitutionality in the Supreme Court" and that the Congress would finish crafting a unified version of the BBL in time for its ratification and signing into law on July 23.

Last Wednesday, the House over-

whelmingly approved on final reading House Bill 6475 or the chamber's version of the BBL. Senate also did the same with Senate Bill 1717. **A3**

Representatives of the Senate and the House are set to meet on July 9 to 13 in a bicameral conference to craft a unified version of the BBL which seeks to abolish the ARMM and establish a new Bangsamoro government.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, meanwhile, identified significant differences between the Senate and the House of Representative's versions of the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

## NO MORE TOUGH TALK

**T**he editorial "Cayetano's bluff" (6/1/18) should have been titled "Cayetano's mediocrity." I used to admire the guts and gumption of then senator Alan Peter Cayetano, who always asked the toughest questions and went for the jugular in any Senate committee investigation on corruption in high places.

His crusade against the Arroyo administration's supposed attempt to make a mess of the \$329-million contract for a National Broadband Network with China's ZTE Corp. precipitated its junking. His persistence during another investigation into the alleged shenanigans of the Binay dynasty in Makati must surely have caused the shellacking of then presidential candidate Jejomar Binay.

Now, as foreign secretary, Cayetano is mostly

dishing out nonsense in defense of his boss, right or wrong in the teeth of China's military buildup in the West Philippine Sea. public clamor for a reaction from the Duterte administration has grown to deafening proportions. Cayetano's response? His office has been making "several protests, maybe 50, 100—I'll have to count..." Yet, he couldn't show any!

Even to the ordinary observer, that snarky and dismissive response had "liar, liar, liar" heard unmistakably in the backdrop, and spoke volumes of the level of mediocrity Cayetano has sunk to. What happened to you, sir?

A12

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## Should we join America in facing off with China?

**BY RICARDO SALUDO**  
Columnist

**S**HOULD the Philippines join the United States in its campaign to counter China's actions

in the South China Sea?

Washington's posse against Beijing's reclamation and military deployment in disputed waters just got bigger, with Britain and

► **SaludoA5**

# Should we join America in facing off with China?

France set to sail with the United States and its Quadrilateral allies, Japan, Australia and India, against what critics call Chinese militarization on the high seas.

US Defense Secretary John Mattis escalated the rhetoric at the Shangri-la Dialogue security forum in Singapore last week, accusing China of coercing and intimidating its neighbors, and weaponizing man-made islands.

Washington is considering more "freedom of navigation operations" (fonops) to challenge Beijing's claim over nearly all the South China Sea, including territorial waters reaching 12 nautical miles around the three Chinese-reclaimed islands in the Spratlys.

In these fonops, the US Navy sails close to the 12-nm line, which is not valid under international law, since reclaimed land around shoals cannot have territorial waters.

In response, Chinese ships and planes confronted the Americans. The PLA has also installed anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles on the reclaimed island at Fiery Cross Reef. Separately, long-range bombers made trial landing and takeoffs at Woody Island in the Paracels, taken by Chinese troops from the Vietnamese decades ago.

Further stoking the word war was the remark by Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, director of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff office, that "the United States military has had a lot of experience in the Western Pacific taking down small islands."

Beijing let loose its own verbal volley against claims of Chinese militarization. "The United States military presence in the South China Sea is greater than that of China and other countries that surround the seas combined," Chinese foreign ministry



REPUBLIC SERVICE

RICARDO SALUDO

spokeswoman Hua Chunying said. And defense ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang retorted that the US was "turning a blind eye to the facts and hyping up" militarization.

## 'No better ally' than America

While mobilizing allies against Chinese actions, Secretary Mattis claimed that Washington was not asking Asian nations to choose sides in the tiff with Beijing. But many may ask, Who's he kidding?

At the Rim of the Pacific in Hawaii last month, the US disinvented China and added Quad ally India to the 26 nations in the world's largest military exercises. And the new Pacific Command chief, Admiral Phil Davidson, declared: "To our allies here in the Indo-Pacific, you will have no better ally."

In fact, advocates of toughness toward China have pushed for joining US patrols, and boosting America's military presence and use of Philippine bases under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). This despite Washington's longstanding non-involvement in territorial disputes, as Mattis himself reiterated.

Asked if America would stand by the Philippines in an armed conflict over disputed waters, the defense chief said: "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."

Yet certain quarters continue to urge the government to partner with the US in challenging China.

And at the Singapore security forum, Secretary Mattis underscored the Philippines' key role in security. "Without the cooperation of the Philippines, the US will find it difficult to achieve the goal of its regional strategy," wrote Dr. Rommel Barilao, the president of the Center for Intelligence and National Security Studies.

Plainly, if the Duterte administration continues to stall full EDCA implementation, the US Pivot-to-Asia plan to move 60 percent of its naval assets to Asia cannot happen.

## To side or not to side

So, going back to the opening question, should the Philippines join America in confronting China, as Japan, Australia, India, Britain, and France have done? Well, let's look at the pros and cons.

Many Filipinos may feel safer as the Seventh Fleet escalates rotations in our islands and move their grunts and gear into bases next to Cebu, Puerto Princesa, and Cagayan de Oro, and in Pampanga and Nueva Ecija.

As long as China and North Korea target American forces and base facilities with ballistic and cruise missiles.

Certain quarters would call on the US to help enforce the July 2016 ruling recognizing the Philippines' sovereign rights over our 200-nm exclusive economic zone and 320-nm extended continental shelf under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Except that the US has not ratified UNCLOS.

And while pro-American circles may feel thankful for US military protection,

their sense of security may just dwindle once they realize that hosting American forces comes with the danger of getting dragged into their conflicts in Asia, including flashpoints in Taiwan, North Korea, and the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands held by Tokyo, but also claimed by Beijing.

And the cons of joining America's posse against China? Well, look at Cuba, which allied with Russia against the US, nearly hosting Moscow's nukes. Washington punished the island with a half-century economic embargo, and blocked its access to development assistance.

If the Philippines harbors nuclear-capable American warships, submarines, aircraft, missiles and drones, threatening vital sea lanes and China itself, would the Philippines be more kindly treated than Cuba?

But the biggest negative of rolling out the EDCA is not the debacle for the Philippines, but then devastation that could come to Asia and the world.

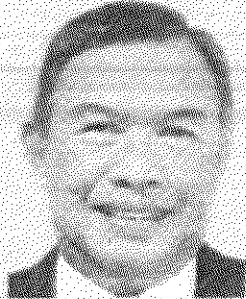
If Washington is able to move its massive forces into Asia to confront Beijing, the PLA would surely build up even more fearsome armaments to defeat the escalating American threat. And getting other nations to join forces against China would further steel its resolve.

Indeed, the current US-led group of seven nations is sure to recall the ugly history of Western domination in China, when Western nations and Japan extracted embarrassing concessions and took bits of territory from imperial China. No leader and no government in Beijing can survive if it ever capitulated to foreign powers.

If the Philippines ever became Uncle Sam's military platform in Asia, we may well pave the way for global war.

# Reckless, foolish statement

REY O. ARCILLA



*'A high ranking US military officer said the US, having "had a lot of experience taking down small islands," has the ability to "blow apart" the military outposts built by China in the Paracels.'*

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis declared that the US will continue freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS) in the South China Sea notwithstanding China's opposition to such operations, particularly near the controversial reefs claimed and militarily fortified by her.

How I wish the US would, for a change, be more honest and forthright by admitting that her real intention for forever plying and monitoring the South China Sea (SCS) is simply to preserve and protect her domination of the Southeast Asian region, bolstered by her military presence in Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.

Freedom of navigation operations? Yeah, right!

When did the US actually start harping on freedom of navigation and unimpeded flow of commerce in the SCS? Only when China decided to tell the world that she owns virtually the whole of the sea named after her and subsequently occupied, reclaimed and fortified some isles and reefs in the area.

Expectedly, countries within the vicinity that have legitimate claims over certain areas in the SCS, including the Philippines, protested vigorously against what many believe is the ludicrous Chinese claim.

What did the US do after that? Nothing, except to say that she is neutral insofar as territorial disputes are concerned and the usual call on all parties to settle their differences peacefully.

But when China started reclaiming the isles and reefs that she illegally occupied and subsequently converted into military outposts complete with airstrips and missiles, the US naturally felt threatened. However, what she has built, China says, are only intended to protect an area that she claims to be her own.

China, at the same time, said that like the US, she also wants to ensure freedom of navigation and the unimpeded flow of commerce in the sea lanes used to transport goods to and from other parts of the world.

I personally believe that China is one of the biggest, if not indeed the biggest, users of those sea lanes. It would, therefore, not be in her interest to restrict navigation and impede commerce flow in the area. If she did that, it would be like cutting her nose to spite her face. The US Navy and, conceivably, the navies of Japan, South Korea and Australia would

be swarming all over the SCS to stop her from doing that. Of course, no one knows how such a situation could end up.

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In the meantime, Mattis asserts that China's military buildup in the SCS and the deployment of high-end weapons systems is designed to intimidate and coerce her neighbors. How? By land invasion and/or aerial bombardment?

I don't buy that.

China must know that the US will almost surely come to the defense of Japan, and perhaps South Korea too, should such a scenario occur.

What about the Philippines? This is what Mattis said in Singapore recently when asked what the US would do in case of an attack against our territories disputed by China:

"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 non-military response is short-changing the issue. This is what diplomacy is all about, taking contrary perspectives and finding common ground."

No categorical commitment whatsoever notwithstanding the existence of a Mutual Defense Treaty between us.

Mattis, of course, merely reiterated, in reply to the same question, ex-President Barack Obama's "We don't go around sending ships and threatening folks" and ex-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's "I don't want to discuss hypothetical events but I want to underscore our commitment to the defense of the Philippines."

Such gobbledeyook! In other words, we cannot depend on the US to help safeguard our interests. That should by now be as plain as daylight for everyone to see.

I hope the Yellowtards, the critics (foreign and local), the US and her lackeys here and abroad, as well as the "Amboys" in the present government, now understand the position taken by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte aka Digong on the territorial disputes in the SCS. It is not anti-US or pro-China. It is pro-Philippines!

Capeesh?!

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Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, director of the office of the US military's Joint Chiefs of Staff,

See RECKLESS ► Page B5

37

## RECKLESS

said that the US has the ability to "blow apart" China's controversial reclaimed isles turned into military outposts in the SCS.

"I would just tell you (CNN) that the United States military has had a lot of experience in the Western Pacific taking down small islands... So that's a core competency of the US military," he said.

Although McKenzie said that no one should "read anything more into that than a simple statement of historical fact", how else does he think China would interpret his statement, other than it being a warning or a threat?

What a reckless, foolish and irresponsible statement, especially coming from a very high official in the US military establishment! Surely, he must know that US military bases in Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, are within range of China's weaponry in the mainland. I presume China also has weapons capable of reaching the US.

This is precisely why the govern-

ment has to take steps forthwith to rid the country of US troops as promised by Digong. We become a target in the event armed hostilities break out between China and the US.

Furthermore, since the US thinks China has no good intentions towards us and since she (US) would not commit herself to defending us, we ought to seriously consider forging a security treaty or at the very least, a non-aggression pact, with China.

Such a move should give us a modicum of assurance that China has no evil designs against us. And perhaps equally important, it will make the US stop trying to portray China as our potential enemy.

If China balks, Digong may have to re-visit and re-assess his foreign policy thrust.

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### REMINDERS

This segment is intended to remind the Duterte administration of some of its yet unfulfilled promises and matters that need attention and/or follow-up action. More importantly, the peo-

ple are entitled to know what's being done about them.

1) Digong's promise to rid the country of foreign troops. This, of course, necessitates re-visiting the lopsided VFA and the EDCA with the US.

2) Reciprocal visa arrangements with the US and other countries. (What is the DFA doing about this? Our embassy in Washington?)

3) The retrieval of the Balangiga bells. (Sources say the return of the bells is now awaiting a certification of some kind from the US Defense Department to be submitted to the US Congress. Is our embassy in Washington on top of this?)

4) The return of the Canadian waste. (Sources say the DOJ has filed a motion before the proper court for the importer to return the waste to Canada. No decision yet. No word about what Canada is doing.)

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Today is the 38th day of the

twelfth year of the enforced disappearance of Jonas Burgos, son of the late press icon and founder of this newspaper, Joe Burgos.

After the acquittal of Major Harry Baliaga, Jr., the only person formally charged with Jonas' kidnaping, I guess what happens next is now up to Divine Providence.

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From an internet friend:  
Little Johnny and Silly Billy were engaging in the time-honored tradition of a verbal battle like little boys all over the world. "My Father is better than your Father!" Billy declared.

"No, he's not!" Johnny responded.

"My brother is better than your brother!" Billy said.

"He is not! He is not!" yelled Little Johnny.

"My Mother is better than your Mother!" Billy continued.

A long pause ensued, then Little Johnny said, "Well, I guess ya got me there. I've heard my father say the same thing more than once."

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# The feared joint development with China

**P**UNDITS and politicians fear the joint development that the Duterte administration is exploring with China in the disputed areas of the South China Sea. Entering into such agreement, these folks say, would "legitimize" the claim of China, which



FOR THE MOTHERLAND

**SASS ROGANDO SASSOT**

they believe has already been invalidated by the decision the arbitration court at The Hague issued in July 2016.

On June 2, the *Philippine Star* highlighted the concerns of unidentified experts worried about the constitutionality of joint development with China ("Cayetano: Philippines, China in talks about joint development in South China Sea"). Their main contention: the areas are no longer disputed because of the arbitral ruling.

That's funny. Obviously, the areas are still disputed. The decision didn't put the disputes to rest because in the first place the disputants didn't mutually agree to enter into an arbitration proceeding in order to resolve their conflict. Without that agreement the arbitration proceeding, instead of contributing to the end of the disputes, created a new dispute.

Not only has the arbitral decision not ended our dispute with China, it also didn't end our disputes with other claimants—Vietnam, Taiwan and Malaysia.

The line of thinking of these unidentified experts assume that the way disputes end in the domestic system is the same way they do in the international one. In the former, court decisions effectively end a dispute because of the force behind them. In the latter, all disputes end through an agreement between the conflicting states.

Jay Batongbacal, a professor of maritime affairs and the Law of the Sea at the University of the Philippines, is one of the experts concerned about joint development with China.

On May 28, Batongbacal said: "A joint oil and gas exploration by China and the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea will 'somehow give up' the arbitration ruling that said Manila had sovereign rights over the disputed areas in the sea" (*Manila Standard*, "Philippines-China oil hunt 'gives up' arbitral ruling").

Interestingly, in a paper he co-wrote with Aileen Baviera in 1999, "When Will Conditions Be Ripe: Prospects for Joint Development in the South China Sea," joint development was lauded as an "attractive" approach.

"The [Joint Development Zone] approach is attractive because its flexible and provisional nature allows it to reconcile in principle the needs of parties for simultaneously preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity, promoting peace and security with its neighbors, and advancing profitable economic uses of the ocean," they wrote.

Will the pursuit of joint development with China which Batongbacal and Baviera considered "attractive" in 1999 really "give up" the arbitral ruling? More importantly, will joint development with China no longer contribute to "promoting peace, and security...and advancing profitable economic uses of the ocean"?

Entering into joint development is not a violation of the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (Unclos) nor of the arbitration ruling. There's nothing in Unclos that prohibits joint development. That the arbitral ruling decided that we have exclusive rights over the natural resources in our EEZ doesn't mean that we would give up the arbitral ruling if we pursue joint development.

In fact, having sovereign rights over the natural resources (such as oil and gas) means that you also possess the right to make decisions on how you're going to exercise it. If a state wants to exploit oil and gas with a foreign country or if it wishes to enter into a joint venture with another interested party, that is its choice. And it precisely has this choice because it has sovereign rights. Hence, joint development doesn't give up our sovereign rights but a legitimate exercise of those rights.

There's no reason to believe that joint development with China after the arbitral ruling will no longer be "promoting peace, and security...and advancing profitable economic uses of the ocean."

Joint development with China will promote peace because it will deepen our relationship with China through a cooperative venture. Without cooperation, there can never be peace. So, those who are against cooperation are actually against the cause of peace.

Since it will promote peace, joint development will also advance our security interests. By forging a cooperative relationship with China, we are turning it from a threat into a partner.

In constructivist international relations theory, this is the transformation of China's identity as our enemy into our friend. This transformation is essential for a stable peace. It is a crucial stage in the process of how peace breaks out between two enemies, as Charles Kupchar outlined in his very insightful book, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace*.

It's worth remembering what Lincoln once said: "I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends."

Of course, friends also disagree. But friends who disagree are in a much better position to resolve their differences than enemies whose disagreements often transform into a desire to thoroughly defeat each other. So, those who are against turning China into our friend simply want Beijing to remain our enemy, and thereby a perpetual threat to us. I wonder whether it's really in our national interest to keep having an adversarial relationship with China.

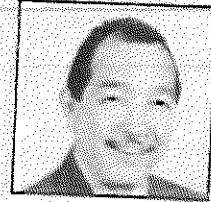
And lastly, it's quite evident that joint development would be "advancing profitable economic uses of the ocean." We did it in Malampaya, there's no reason why we can't do it in the disputed areas in the South China Sea.

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CHAFF FROM THE GRAIN

# Travails of state policies



S. HECTOR R. R. VILLANUEVA

*"To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war." — Winston Churchill*

**P**RESIDENT Rodrigo Roa Duterte has the correct and sensible attitude towards China though the unbridled romancing with the rapidly emerging world power carries long-term political and economic implications and consequences.

When it comes to international geopolitics, and dealing with superpowers, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte is an amateur naive, and a student of geopolitics with insufficient erudition and historical background in the vagaries of international geopolitics.

To add to the aggravation, it has been cynically said that "one cannot soar like an eagle in the pursuit of national interest when one is surrounded by turkeys."

However, the show must go on.

Thus, Cambodia is an example of an ASEAN member country that is reluctant to join an ASEAN collegial resolution on the

South China Sea territorial dispute and commiserate with the Philippines, as Cambodia is deeply indebted to China for investments, long-term loans for infrastructure, grants, and technical services.

On the other hand, China, which claims the entire South China Sea as its inland waters, and Taiwan as a province, cannot annex the island as Taiwan, formerly Formosa, is not only industrialized and prosperous, but is also militarily aligned, like Japan and South Korea, with the United States.

At other end of the world in the Alps is Switzerland which has remained neutral by staying out of European wars for the last 300 years.

It is land-locked and is one of the world's mineral-poor lands with neither iron ore nor oil nor coal to call its own.

Yet, Switzerland is among the most affluent countries in the world with per capita income comparable with the world's richest nations and with a strong and stable currency to boast.

Somehow, over the centuries, hordes of invading armies had criss-crossed and by

passed the mountainous nation.

Thus, without a credible navy and air force, and still struggling to eradicate poverty, and industrialize at the same time, there is an urgent need for the Philippines to have a paradigm shift in strategy and vision.

There is a need for radical changes in the current culture and mode of self-serving vested interests, burgeoning population growth rate and excessive politics.

Summing up, there is a need to rationalize both our

foreign policy especially with China vis-a-vis the United States, by assembling an elite group of scholars, senior diplomats, legislators, academics, and the best and brightest experts into the government on a contractual basis instead of the haphazard way recruits are being hired today.

10

When all is said and done, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte needs advising and direction profoundly. You be the judge.

• READERS FORUM •

**Once a traitor...**

ONCE a traitor, always a traitor. I don't know okay but if you will give me a fair share of opinion regarding the recent slain NPA in Misamis Oriental and septuagenarian NPAs who have been giving up the fight, I certainly will just repeat the nodding in favor with the government's effort in combating insurgency in the Philippines.

On the other hand, I guess there are two reasons why there are still surrendered NPAs. One, they still have vested interests to unify NPA conglomerates and the second, is to earn more money.

In relation with the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP) of the national government, rebels who surrendered to the government with their firearms are given monetary assistance of P15,000 and P50,000 for livelihood projects coupled with trainings and technical support from appropriate government agencies which are also accorded to their dependents to ensure sustainability. CLIP focuses on integration of members of the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and National Democratic Front who decided to abandon the armed struggle and re-joined the mainstream society.

Meanwhile, I laud the local government units and partner agencies for jointly facilitating the release of the fund assistance to the former rebels; young and septuagenarians.

I encourage the public to denounce NPA. Do not be like those people who tolerated extortions and atrocities of NPA like the recent 7 MILLION that was being torched by the government. They have all the luxury of time to start a new life, a changed and good one. That sum of money probably be another source of fund in recalibrating their plans and organization to make it stronger.

Never again support or participate in any form of armed struggle or legal struggle they keep on pushing through. - JUMEL G. ESTRANERO, Defense Research Analyst & College Faculty, bluebaby\_lemuj@yahoo.com

## **ONLINE NEWS**

### **05 JUNE 2018**

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# **ARMY TROOPS ENCOUNTERS NPA AGAIN IN ISABELA**

Posted by **Alvin Santiago**

**Camp Aquino, Tarlac City** –Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) Army troopers clash with the Communist New People’s Army Terrorist Group (CNTG) at 5:10 in the morning today, June 4, 2018, Monday, in Isabela province.

The skirmish transpired while a company of the 86th Infantry Battalion (86IB), under the Joint Task Force (JTF) “Tala” of the 5th Infantry Division (5ID), was conducting Focused Military Operations (FMO) in the vicinity of Brgy. Mabbayad, Echague, Isabela.

The Army troops confronted about twenty (20) members of the NPA Terrorist Group, with unknown leader, operating in the area. The firefight also lasted for about twenty (20) minutes which resulted to the wounding of four (4) army personnel and undetermined number of casualties on the enemy side.

The NPA remnants immediately withdrew towards Northeast direction while the government troops continue to pursue them as of this press time. Wounded Army personnel were given first aid and were now for air evacuation to the nearest hospital for treatment.

Just five (5) days ago, an encounter between the NPA Terrorist and the same Army unit also happened in the same municipality of Echague, Isabela.

NOLCOM will continue to conduct pursuit and focused military operations, in coordination with other law enforcing units, in order to bring these terrorist groups, detrimental to people’s safety and hindrance to community development, into the hands of the authorities.

*By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.*

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## **ANOTHER NPA TERRORIST SURRENDERED IN SARANGANI**

Posted by Alvin Santiago

CAMP BGEN AGAAB, MALUNGON, SARANGANI – NPA terrorist who operates in Sarangani Province, surrender along with his firearm to the troops of 73rd IB in Barangay Upper Suyan, Malapatan, Sarangani Province on Friday morning 01 June 2018. Boy Cabisa Diale @BUSAW 75 years old, married and a resident of Sitio Lino, Barangay Upper Suyan, Malapatan, Sarangani Province, surrender along with his M16 (Bushmaster) rifle to the troops of 73rd IB.

"Kapoy na kog tinago sa bukid ug nahadlok ko basi mapatay ko sa engkwentro mao ni hawa na ko sa walay klarong saad sang hubiag." I left the armed group because of their false promises and fear of being caught in the firefight during encounter, and I am tired of hiding from the government troops, @BUSAW said.

It can be recalled that last May 18, 2018 an armed cache was discovered in Barangay Upper Suyan, Malapatan, Sarangani Province and recovered thereat are three AK47 rifles, after the information receive from the NPA terrorist who surrender to the troops of 73IB. "With our intensive security operations and continuous collaborations to our Local Government Units and other stakeholders, we can align our efforts in attaining a peaceful and conflict resilient communities within our area of operation." Lieutenant Colonel Angcao 73IB commander said. The former rebel will be presented to the LGU of Sarangani Province for immediate assistance and enroll him to the CLIP (Comprehensive Local Integration Program). He will be provided a livelihood assistance and he will also receive additional cash assistance for his surrendered firearm that will help him to start a new and peaceful life.

"We SARANGANS should stand together as one. We should not fight fellow Filipinos. The Province of Sarangani is encouraging those who want to be part of a productive and democratic Philippines to come down and be one with the administration in protecting all Filipinos". Hon. Steve Chiongbian Solon Governor of Sarangani Province said. "

The brigade is always open for NPA who are willing to surrender and enjoy the peaceful life, the government has a program that will provide livelihood assistance to help them start a living" Brigadier General Roberto Ancan 1002nd Brigade Commander said. "We are grateful to the leadership of the Sarangani Province for their unending support to peaceful initiatives especially in the implementation of the Comprehensive Local Integration Program for the former rebels. As always we recognize and further affirm the vital role of local government and other stakeholders in their transformation and eventual integration in the mainstream society as productive citizens". BGen Ancan added.

Major General Noel S Clement Commander, 10ID lauded the troops' accomplishment. "Boy Cabisa or alias Busaw's surrender finally brought him freedom from his long years of struggle, suffering, discrimination and intimidation in the hands of his NPA-terrorist leader.

We assure every NPA-terrorist who would like to surrender or go back to the folds of law, 10ID will accord what is due to you in accordance to our existing laws and programs of the government that can help you live productively and peacefully with the mainstream society," MGen Clement said.



43

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## AFP working double-time to develop defense capabilities

By Priam Nepomuceno

**MANILA** – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is working double-time to acquire the capabilities needed to protect the country's territories.

This was stressed by Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana during an interview Monday with ABS-CBN News Channel on the sidelines of the 17th Shangri-La Dialogue held in Singapore from June 1 to 3.

"We don't have capabilities now, so we are making double-time, but it depends on the funds that we get from Congress if they allocate more funds for our modernization program (then we can expedite the development of these capabilities)," he said when asked about the AFP's readiness capabilities.

At the moment, Lorenzana said that AFP does not have the capabilities to defend the country.

"At present you know we don't have any capabilities to even just to demonstrate to others that we are capable (of defending our territories) because we are not capable, we don't have the capital ships, we don't have the weapons," the DND chief added.

Also, Lorenzana cited the case of the 1.2-kilometer Rancudo Airfield on Pagasa Island, the country's sole operational airstrip in the Kalayaan Island Group, which is short, unpaved and incapable of handling aircraft when it rains.

"Our sole airstrip in Pagasa is still very short and it is (unpaved), so we're trying also (to pave) that so that we can bring in our aircraft anytime, because at present it can only (land) there if there was five days of sunshine, because (it is) soggy," he added. **(PNA)**

[www.pna.gov.ph](http://www.pna.gov.ph)

## AFP conducts first inter-service cooking competition

By Priam Nepomuceno

**MANILA** -- Soldiers fight well with full stomachs.

With this old adage in mind, the Armed Forces of the Philippines conducted its first "AFP Battle of the Kitchen Warriors" last May 28 to June 1, military public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato said over the weekend.

The goal of the five-day competition is to come up with a truly unique Filipino cuisine, which can be integrated into the AFP Commissioned Officer's Club (COC) and provide soldiers and the AFPCOC staff with opportunities to improve their cooking skills, as well as their professional networks, he added.

This is aside from boosting the morale of AFP personnel by enhancing AFPCOC and its counterpart service providers in the Major Services' capability in developing and promoting high standard of food services for the soldiers and its guests.

Detoyato said the five-day event was organized by the AFPCOC management in partnership with the Center for Culinary Arts, Manila.

He added that kitchen personnel from the Army, Air Force, Navy, and AFPCOC participated in the cooking contest.

Declared as overall winner was Team AFPCOC, composed of Jessie Magcalas, Nonie Santiago, and Allen James Bernardez, who prepared the following cuisine: malunggay-tinapa bites or malutina for appetizers; stuffed and steamed boneless bangus (milkfish) with malunggay pesto, also called the "Marawi Tower," for main course; and bikoron (biko and turon) with langka (jackfruit) and latik sauce for dessert. *(PNA)*