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20 June 2018

Wednesday



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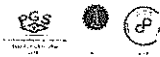
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Honor. Patriotism. Duty

SEARCH FOR CHIEF JUSTICE BEGINS

President Duterte has 90 days to appoint a replacement for Maria Lourdes Sereno after the Supreme Court upheld its decision to oust her from the top job in the judiciary

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

The search for a new Chief Justice began on Tuesday after the Supreme Court upheld the expulsion of Maria Lourdes Sereno as the Philippines' top judge, in a final ruling that critics

warned was unconstitutional and threatened judicial independence and the country's fragile democracy.

Under Section 4, Article VIII of the 1987 Constitution, President Duterte has 90 days to appoint a replacement for Sereno.

Supreme Court spokesperson

Theodore Te said the justices voted 8-6 to uphold their May 11 decision to oust Sereno from the top job in the judiciary.

"The Supreme Court denied with finality [Sereno's] motion for reconsideration," Te told reporters.

Two court insiders said the jus-

tices had directed an entry of judgment to put the case to rest and prevent further motions from being brought.

Mr. Duterte's top legal defender, Solicitor General Jose Calida, had asked the court to remove Sereno for allegedly failing to

Search for Chief

Justice begins

FROM A1

file some of her past financial disclosures—called statements of assets, liabilities and net worth—a charge that she had denied.

Te said all the 14 justices who participated in the deliberations on Calida's quo warranto petition maintained their original votes.

Associate Justice Noel Tijam, who wrote the ruling for the majority, was joined by Associate Justices Diosdado Peralta, Samuel Martires, Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Lucas Bersamin, Francis Jardeleza, Andres Reyes Jr. and Alexander Gesmundo.

Acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio and Associate Justices Marvic Leonen, Presbitero Velasco Jr., Mariano del Castillo,

Estela Perlas-Bernabe and Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa voted against Calida's petition.

The ruling did not come as a surprise for Sereno, who had accused her eight former colleagues on the tribunal of prejudging the case brought by Calida.

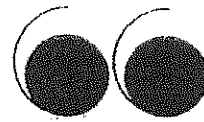
Unjust decision

"We were not surprised by the final result of the Supreme Court's decision, but we remain convinced that the decision is unjust and will be questioned by the people for a long time to come," said Jojo Lacanilao, a spokesperson for Sereno.

Asked about Sereno's immediate plans, Lacanilao said the former Chief Justice would vacate her office but continue to be a "voice for the people."

"To me, this is a triumph of justice," Calida told reporters.

"The Supreme Court ruled in



We were not surprised by the final result of the Supreme Court's decision, but we remain convinced that the decision is unjust and will be questioned by the people for a long time to come

Jojo Lacanilao

Sereno spokesperson

our favor to uphold the majesty of the law that no one is above the law even if you are the Chief Justice," he said.

Mr. Duterte's allies said the ruling should be respected, but critics deplored it, with one opposition group—Tindig Pilip-

inas (Rise, Philippines)—labeling the tribunal as a "supremely erroneous court" and threatening to file impeachment complaints against the eight justices who voted to grant the government's quo warranto petition.

But presidential spokesper-

son Harry Roque said the Supreme Court's decision was now final and executory, bringing closure to the controversy.

"Her days as Chief Justice [are] now over," Roque told reporters in Davao City, Mr. Duterte's hometown.

"What President Duterte asks is that the Filipino people unite once more," he said.

Mr. Duterte, he said, was waiting for the list of nominees for Chief Justice from the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), the body that vets candidates for positions in the judiciary.

Impeachment bid mooted

Sereno's expulsion cut short a separate congressional impeachment attempt against her.

Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez said the Supreme Court's final ruling had mooted the impeachment bid.

He said the tribunal's ruling

should be respected.

"Our Constitution mandates the Supreme Court to be the final arbiter of legal and constitutional questions. Let us respect its decision," Alvarez said.

Sereno was the Philippines' first female Chief Justice and the first to be forced out through a government petition.

Her predecessor, Renato Corona, was impeached by the House in 2011 for failing to accurately disclose his bank accounts and properties and became the first Chief Justice to be convicted by the Senate after a trial in 2012.

Sereno earned Mr. Duterte's ire after she disagreed with his efforts to take action against judges linked to illegal drugs in 2016, saying the Supreme Court should be the one to punish erring officials of the judiciary. —WITH REPORTS

FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, JEROME ANING, ALLAN NAWAL AND AP INQ

It's final: Sereno out

By EDU PUNAY

It's final: the Supreme Court (SC) has affirmed its May 11 ruling ousting Maria Lourdes Sereno as chief justice on the basis of a *merito* *waran* petition rather than impeachment.

The justices yesterday voted 8-6 — just as they did in the original ruling — to deny Sereno's motion for reconsideration for lack of merit.

The high court stressed that the denial was final and "no further

pleadings shall be entertained."

It also directed the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) to now start the search for the next chief justice.

Under the Constitution, the President should appoint Sereno's replacement within 90 days from

yesterday.

The majority — composed of Associate Justices Teresita Leonardo de Castro, Diosdado Peralta, Lucas Belandier, Francis J. delera, Noel Tiang, Samuel Martin Andres Reyes Jr. and Alexander Gesmundo — held that Sereno failed to raise new arguments in her 205-page motion for reconsideration filed on May 30.

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It's final From Page 1

The court stood firm in its finding that Sereno's appointment in 2012 was invalid because she was not qualified for lack of proven integrity due to her failure to file all her statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs) when she was still teaching law in the University of the Philippines.

"In sum, respondent has not presented any convincing ground that would merit a modification or reversal of our May 11, 2018 decision. At the risk of being repetitive, respondent, at the time of her application, lacked proof of integrity on account of her failure to file a substantial number of SALNs and also, her failure to submit the required SALNs to the JBC during her application to the position," read the 25-page resolution.

The SC rejected the argument of the ousted chief justice in her appeal that failure to file SALN cannot be considered a gauge of her integrity.

"Respondent's argument dangerously disregards that the filing of SALN is not only a requirement under the law, but a positive duty required from every public officer or employee, first and foremost by the Constitution. The SALN laws were passed in aid of the

enforcement of the Constitutional duty to submit a declaration under oath of one's assets, liabilities and net worth," it stressed.

"This positive Constitutional duty of filing one's SALN is so sensitive and important that it even shares the same category as the Constitutional duty imposed upon public officers and employees to owe allegiance to the State and Constitution," the SC added.

"As such, offenses against the SALN laws are not ordinary offenses but violations of a duty which every public officer and employee owes to the State and the Constitution. In other words, violation of SALN laws, by itself, defeats any claim of integrity as it is inherently immoral to violate the will of the legislature and to violate the Constitution," the Court pointed out.

Admin case likely

The high tribunal also reiterated its ruling that Sereno may be removed via quo warranto since it is "separate and distinct from impeachment."

Apart from ordering Sereno to vacate her post, the SC is also expected to initiate an administrative case against her for alleged violations of the

Code of Professional Responsibility and Code of Judicial Conduct "for transgressing the sub judice rule and for casting aspersions and ill motives to the members of the Supreme Court."

Apparently not satisfied with her answers as to why she attacked the justices in her media and public appearances, the Court is expected to initiate administrative proceedings that could possibly lead to her disbarment.

The six magistrates in the minority maintained their dissent and voted to grant the MR of Sereno. They were acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio and Associate Justices Presbitero Velasco Jr., Mariano del Castillo, Estela Bernabe, Marvic Leonen and Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa.

Solicitor General Jose Calida immediately welcomed the final ruling of the court on his quo warranto case against Sereno.

"This is a triumph of justice. It shows no one is above the law. I've been vindicated by the Supreme Court in this ruling," he told reporters in an ambush interview.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said the court has spoken and everybody should bow to the decision.

"What the President is asking now is for the Filipino

people to be united. I think the decision of the Supreme Court is clear," Roque said in a press briefing in Cotabato City yesterday.

"The Palace knows that there are many who are against or do not agree with decision, but in our democracy, the Supreme Court is the final arbiter in terms of controversial legal (decisions)," the spokesman said.

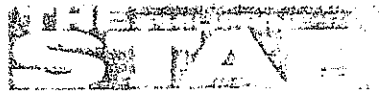
"So like it or hate it, we have to succumb to the decision of the Supreme Court that is now final and executory. The time of Meilou Sereno as chief justice is over," Roque added, referring to the former chief magistrate by her nickname.

"The President respects the decision, and he will enforce the decision. Because that is the job of the President as implementor of the law and the decision of the Supreme Court," he said.

Roque advised Sereno to just accept the decision and return to private life. "We wish her good luck in her everyday life as a private citizen," he said.

Although he belied singling out Sereno, Duterte had publicly expressed his displeasure with the ousted chief justice, who was appointed in 2012 by the previous Aquino administration to replace the impeached Renato Corona.

- With Christina Mendez



'Drive out *tambay* in SCS, not those in the streets'

By PAOLO ROMERO

Sen. Risa Hontiveros yesterday challenged President Duterte to drive out Chinese occupants in Panatag or Scarborough Shoal before apprehending the *tambays* in the streets.

"That's the problem with President Duterte - he's only tough on the poor, the jobless, and

defenseless bystanders, but he crumples under China who have been forever loitering in Panatag Shoal," Hontiveros said.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said the Chinese and Filipinos share privileges over Panatag as they "co-control" the area.

"I believe, at this point in time,

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Drive

From Page 1

we have 'co-control' with them (Chinese) because we can't drive them out," Cayetano told reporters on Monday during the anniversary celebration of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Duterte wants China out of the Philippine-claimed areas in the West Philippine Sea, but reiterated he would not declare war over the maritime row as Beijing is not a push-over that can be scared easily.

"Definitely, when President Duterte came in, it (some of the islands) was controlled by the Chinese. Now, we can use semantics, we could debate with them: how much control do we have, how much we do not control?" Cayetano said.

"All I can say is this: our situation now is much, much better than two years ago," he added.

Although the Philippines definitely wants "total control" of Panatag, Cayetano said this would take lengthy negotiations.

"China does not expect us to change our position, so why would we expect them to already change their position right away?" Cayetano said.

"The best thing to do is to find a protocol that is acceptable to both Philippines and China, but not to politicize the issue," he said.

Hontiveros, for her part, issued the statement in rela-

tion to reports of Chinese coast guard harassing Filipino fishermen seizing their haul off Panatag (Scarborough Shoal) in Zambales.

The report also showed Chinese coast guard personnel boarding the ships of Filipino fishermen and seizing their best catch in exchange for items like cigarettes, food and bottled water as "barter."

Malacañang said the "unfair barter trade" between the Chinese coast guard and Filipino fishermen in Panatag is unacceptable.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the terms of a barter trade should be acceptable to the parties involved and should not favor just one side.

"What the President said is assuming it was indeed barter, the parties should agree on the valuation. It won't be acceptable if the Chinese are the only ones dictating the value of the items they are giving in exchange for the fish they are getting," Roque said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson warned Duterte's order to apprehend loiterers could be questioned before the Supreme Court since vagrancy has been decriminalized in 2012 with the passage of Republic Act 10158, which amended the anti-vagrancy provisions of the Revised Penal Code. - With Pia Lee-Brago, Alexis Romero, Rhodina Villanueva

AFP to procure P2.6-B ammo after campaign vs Maute

By JAIME LAUDE

Having used loads of ammunition in the campaign against Maute militants in Marawi for five months last year, the Philippine Army is putting up a P2.6-billion fund to procure mortar and artillery rounds.

Lt. Col. Louie Villanueva, Army spokesman, said the procurement would replenish their stockpile of 60mm, 81mm and 105 Howitzer rounds.

"We used a considerable quantity of 60mm and 81mm mortar and 105 high-explosive rounds during the campaign (in Marawi)... We have programmed the procurement of... ammunition... to include bullets for small arms," Villanueva said.

However, he clarified that their stockpile has not been depleted because of the campaign against Maute militants.

Villanueva gave assurance that soldiers from division to squad levels have adequate supply of ammunition.

Based on initial estimates, the military spent P3 billion in the fighting in Marawi.

A total of 22 battalions were deployed in the city at the height of the offensive.

Military operations against the remaining Maute militants led by Owayda Benito Marohombsar, alias Abu Dar, is ongoing in Lanao del Sur.

At least five militants were killed in air strikes and artillery fire at the border of Tubaran and Pagayaman towns on Sunday.

As of yesterday, the provincial government said 1,391 families were displaced in the fighting. At least 464 of these families are staying in evacuation centers in Tubaran and Binidayan. 12

- With Roel Pareño

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JUNE 2015

The Manila Times

A2

Military destroys Maute camp in Lanao

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) destroyed an encampment of the Islamic State (IS)-inspired Maute group in Tubaran, Lanao del Sur.

Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., Joint Task Force Ranao spokesman, said on Tuesday that soldiers found the encampment on Monday night as the military continued its operations against the Maute group.

Brawner said the group led by Owayta Benito Marohombsar alias Abu Dar fled to the forested area of Tubaran town, making it hard

to track them.

The fighting between state troopers and Maute terrorists started on Sunday morning. Five members of the Maute group have been killed.

Brawner said Marohombsar was not among those killed.

At least 1,300 families were displaced by the fighting.

Gov. Bedjoria Soraya Alonto Adiong of Lanao del Sur said 464 families sought shelter in evacuation centers.

[Signature] DEMPSEY REYES

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AFP assures residents' safety in Lanao del Norte

By **BONITA L. ERMAC**

ILIGAN CITY - The Second Mechanized Infantry Brigade (2nd MIB) of the Philippine Army assured the residents of this city and the province of Lanao del Norte of their security and safety after the military engaged remnants of the Maute-Islamic State (IS) in fierce armed encounter in Tubaran, Lanao del Sur last Sunday.

Brigade Commander Robert C. Dauz said the military was always on-alert, and, with the help of the Philippine National Police (PNP), will watch over the security of its

area of responsibility.

He pointed out that security measures were already in place, with all entry and exit points to and from the site of the encounter now under heavy guard to contain the violence.

Dauz also commended the public for its concern for what was happening in Lanao del Norte, especially on the issue of peace and security.

"The public's vigilance to report any suspicious activities or individuals will help them much more with the armed forces' efforts to secure their area, and so that what happened in Marawi last May 23 last year will be prevented," explained

Dauz.

At least five members of the Maute-IS group, led by Owayda Benito Marohambar, also known as Abu Dar, were slain in a firefight with soldiers.

This was disclosed by Task Force Ranao Deputy Commander Col. Romeo Brawner Jr. who said that the encounter happened on June 17 in Tubaran.

Dar was earlier reported to have been appointed the new emir of IS in southeast Asia, replacing Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon who was killed in the five-month war in Marawi.

109 Maguindanao brgys declared drug-free by PDEA

By ALI G. MACABALANG

BULUAN, Maguindanao - At least 109 barangays in this province have been cleared of narcotics in what Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) officials deemed as a breakthrough in the government drive for multi-sector cohesion against illegal drug activities in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

This was announced on Monday by PDEA-ARMM Regional Director Juvenal Azurin in a press conference following a meeting here of the anti-narcotics municipal oversight committee (MOC) where he also officially declared Pandag town in

Maguindanao as "drug free."

Maguindanao has 36 towns with 508 barangays where campaign against illegal drugs remained a challenge largely due to dismal local cooperation and lack of logistics in some municipal governments, according to authorities.

But the feat of Pandag one of eight towns in Maguindanao subsisting without internal revenue allotments (IRAs) due to discrepancies in its creation years ago, can stimulate other towns to follow suit, Azurin said.

Azurin awarded Pandag Mayor Zihan M. Mangudadatu a PDEA-ARMM certification naming her turf "drug free."

Monday's meeting was third attempt of the multi-sector MOC to evaluate and recommend Barangay Kabuling, one of eight villages in Pandag, for its "drug free" tag required for the whole town. The first two attempts failed due to rumors that a drug personality named "Kumander Grasseutter" was operating a shabu laboratory in Kabuling.

But Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, head of the Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion and an MOC member, clarified in Monday's meeting that "Kumander Grasseutter" has been residing and operating in Barangay Lipao, a village in adjacent town of Datu Paglas.

Joma: Du30 causing confusion in talks

Exiled communist leader Jose Maria "Joma" Sison opposed a proposal to seek a review by Congress of draft agreements between rebels and the government as a condition for formal talks to start, saying this was one of President Duterte's tactics to sabotage the talks.

Sison, in an online interview, said "confusing the steps" could be Mr. Duterte's "way of paralyzing and killing the peace negotiations."

Sison made the remark after Silvestre Bello III, the government's chief negotiator, was quoted as saying the government would not sign the interim peace agreement with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) without consulting lawmakers and other stakeholders first.

Bello was quoted as saying this was one of the reasons Mr. Duterte canceled the resumption of talks originally set for June 28 in Oslo, Norway.

Norway hosts the talks and plays the role of third-party facilitator, which presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said need not be a foreign country.

Roque, at a press conference in Cotabato City, sought to correct what he said were erroneous reports that quoted him as saying there was no need for a third party in talks



INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

FIGHT IN EXILE Communist leader Jose Maria Sison raises a clenched fist at a meeting with other rebel negotiators in Norway on Aug. 22, 2016.

with the NDFP anymore and that Norway was being removed from that role.

"The report that quoted him saying that was a "fabrication," Roque said.

"The point of the President was he could not understand why the talks needed to be held in other countries," Roque said.

"Any party who wants to help and who's been involved in the process can help," he added.

—REPORTS FROM DELFIN T. MALLARI JR. AND ALLAN NAWAL INQ

Joma returning in August for peace talks

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

Self-exiled Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison has agreed to return to the country for the peace talks in August.

Quoting National Democratic Front (NDF) consultant Rey Casambre, *ABS-CBN News* reported yesterday that Sison will come home despite the cancellation of the scheduled peace talks on June 28.

Sison can still technically return to the country in the second week of August, Casambre said.

However, Casambre was quick to add that holding the peace talks in the country could be perilous as NDF peace negotiators and consultants could be arrested.

The date of return of Sison to the country, according to *ABS-CBN* reports, was proposed by the government peace panel during the back channel talks in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Casambre said the scheduled return of Sison in the second week of August "would have been unprecedented," but might be "too early."

Sison earlier expressed optimism that he might be able to return to the country within the year depending on the development of peace negotiations.

He said the content of the document signed by the government and the NDF includes necessary political, legal, security and technical requirements. ABS-CBN earlier reported that the government and NDF were supposed to sign a draft interim peace agreement during the formal talks on June 28-30 that will create a bilateral committee to facilitate Sison's return. President Duterte earlier cancelled the scheduled peace talks on June 28, citing the need for public consultation to study the components of the interim peace agreement.

Norway still 3rd party facilitator

Norway can remain as third party facilitator of the talks between the government and the communists even if the government wants the negotiations to be held in the Philippines, Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said all parties who have been involved in the talks in the past may continue to do so if they wish.

"I would like to clarify that Norway can still have a role in the ongoing peace talks

with the CPP-NPA (New People's Army)," Roque said in a press briefing in Cotabato City.

"I would like to emphasize the desire of our President to pursue the talks; but a third party facilitator does not have to be abroad to facilitate the peace talks," he added.

On Monday, Roque replied in the negative when asked if a third party facilitator is still needed for the talks.

"Perhaps there is no need for it. We are here in the Philippines," Roque replied.

"But you know, any party who wants to help and who's been involved in the process can help. The point of the President is he does not understand why we have to talk in another country."

Hours after the press briefing, Roque released a statement saying he was referring to the venue of the talks when he made the remark.

"We hope this sets the record straight that what I said is any peace negotiation that would be entered into by the Philippine government and communist rebels should be held inside the country," Roque's statement read.

Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza said Norway could still take part in the peace talks as "facilitator."

In his Facebook post, Dureza said he is now in Oslo, Norway to attend an International Forum on Conflict Mediation and "to express our country's gratitude for Norway's significant and continuing support for the long drawn peace negotiations with the Left."

"I am also here to explain to them the reason why the planned resumption of the peace talks discussed during back channel meetings was reset," Dureza said.

He also described as a "total fabrication" and "irresponsible journalism" reports stating Norway is no longer a facilitator in the peace negotiations.

Some members of the media sent copies of the transcript of the press briefing to Dureza's office.

Dureza said Norway has remained "patient, resilient and steadfast" in helping the Filipino people despite the challenges that came with the long negotiations with the communists.

Some lawmakers urged the government to consider the well-meaning offers by other countries like Norway to give assistance to peace negotiations with the rebels.

Senators also supported Duterte's preference to hold peace talks with communist rebels in the country.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon and Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the armed insurgency waged by the CPP-NPA was an internal problem.

"I support the position of the President that the peace talks should be held in our country -- we're all Filipinos and this is a problem of our country," Drilon told reporters.

Drilon said the administration should consider the offer of other countries to act as facilitator in the peace talks.

Lacson also expressed support for the holding of the negotiations in country, but without the involvement of any third-party facilitator.

"For the longest time, I can't understand for the life of me why we should need a third country facilitator, even a third-country venue for an all-Filipino conflict, whether political, ideological or otherwise, to be negotiated and resolved through peace talks," Lacson said.

He said the government should simply issue safe conduct passes to members of the CPP-NPA-NDF officials involved in the talks to ensure their safety and security.

"There is a lot of sense in (Duterte's) suggestion to hold the peace talks here and by ourselves. I therefore fully support such decision," he said. — With Alexis Romero, Paolo Romero, Artemio Dum-lao, Jaime Laude

Duterte killing peace talks – Joma

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte is "killing" peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) by ruling out a third-party facilitator for the negotiations, exiled Communist Party of the Phil-

ippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria "Joma" Sison said on Tuesday.
"The political swindler and butcher Duterte is willfully and maliciously killing the peace negotiations by breaking the standing CRP

[Government of the Republic of the Philippines] NDFP agreement on foreign neutral venue and dismissing the third-party facilitator," Sison added in a statement.

Talks A8

Duterte killing peace talks

The CPP was reacting to pronouncements of Malacañang on Monday that Duterte wants to hold the stalled peace talks in the Philippines, a move opposed by the communist rebels.

"He [Duterte] knows very well that the NDFP will never submit itself to surveillance, control and duress by his bloody regime and his military and police butchers and death squads," Sison said.

He slammed Duterte by "justifying" methods of the "fake surrenders and mass murders" of members of the New People's Army (NPA), the CPP's armed wing.

"He really does not want to have the peace negotiations," Sison said.

Peace Process Adviser Jesus Dureza announced last week that the peace talks with the communist rebels would be delayed, saying they would first consult the public regarding the resumption of the talks.

The NDFP also on Tuesday said formal peace talks should be held in a foreign neutral country, citing agreements signed in 1995 and 2004 under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig).

Rachel Pastores, NDFP legal consultant, hit back at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for saying that the communists were "insincere" while the peace talks were ongoing.

She was responding to a statement of Col. Edgard Arevalo, AFP spokesman, who called on the NDFP to have political consultants who had been released to surrender to authorities.

Pastores said the consultants of the NDFP were granted bail by the government for their participation in the formal peace talks.

She explained that the 19 NDFP consultants' bails are effective and valid while the peace negotiations with the government are still ongoing, pending a new schedule for the formal peace talks.

"[The consultants'] liberty should not be based on the whimsical decision to have the formal talks canceled," she said.

Pastores cited the situation of Rafael Baylosis, who was arrested earlier this year in Quezon City for illegal possession of firearms and explosive devices in his house.

She said Baylosis had been granted bail but was arrested by police on "trumped-up" charges of illegally possessing firearms.

"Can you imagine if the peace talks would be held in the Philippines? What kind of emotional

torture... may happen to the NDFP consultants if the negotiations would be held in the Philippines?" she asked.

Meanwhile, the NDFP admitted that recruitment of fighters for the NPA, the CPP's armed wing, is ongoing, saying past ceasefires had not mentioned that the recruitment should stop.

Rey Casambre, NDFP consultant and executive director of the Philippine Peace Center, said the communist armed group was continuing its recruitment even during the past ceasefires.

He said the AFP should also stop its recruitments of soldiers if it wants the NPA to stop its own recruitment.

Norway still in

Also on Tuesday, Dureza said Norway will remain as the third-party facilitator in the peace talks.

Dureza described as "total fabrication" and "irresponsible journalism" reports quoting Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. that a third-party facilitator was no longer needed. He said he was in Oslo to attend the International Forum on Conflict Mediation and "to express our country's gratitude for Norway's significant and continuing support to the long-drawn peace negotiations with the Left."

"Norway, in spite of the challenges we face in the long negotiations, has remained patient, resilient and steadfast in its help to the Filipino people," Dureza added.

Roque on Monday said Malacañang no longer saw the need to have a third-party facilitator in the resumption of the peace talks. But in a separate statement, he downplayed his earlier statements.

"Norway can continue to help the Philippines as a third-party facilitator of the peace talks, as I mentioned during this morning's press briefing," Roque said.

Norway has been the third party facilitator of the talks since 2001.

Some senators backed the suggestion of President Duterte to hold the peace talks in the Philippines.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon agreed that having the talks in the country is a good move since the problem involves Filipinos.

Lacson said a safe conduct pass issued by the government is all that is needed to ensure the safety and security of the rebel side.

**DEMPSEY REYES,
CATHERINE S. VALENTE AND
J. JEFFERSON ANTIPORDA**

Joma: Duterte killing peace talks

BY VICTOR REYES
AND RAYMOND AFRICA

COMMUNIST leader Jose Maria "Joma" Sison lashed out at President Duterte for his stand that peace negotiations should be held in the Philippines.

Sison, founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines and chief political consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, said in a statement late Monday that Duterte is "willfully and maliciously killing the peace negotiations by breaking the standing GRP-NDFP agreement on foreign neutral venue and dismissing

the third party facilitator."

Duterte yesterday reiterated his stand.

In a speech at the 81st anniversary of the Government Service and Insurance System in Pasay City, Duterte said he sees no reason for the negotiations to be held outside the country because the conflict is in the country.

"I'm talking to Sison, but he is now not here. Why should I talk outside? I'm talking about our country, my country, their country and they want to take over, overthrow the government. And why do we have to talk the ... thing outside?" he said.

The Duterte administration has held four rounds of formal talks with the CPP-NDFP-New People's Army, with the first two in Norway, the third in Rome, and the fourth in the Netherlands where Sison has been on self-exile since the late 80s. Duterte cancelled the peace talks in November last year because of continued NPA attacks while the talks were ongoing.

Norway has been acting as third-party facilitator of the talks.

Duterte reiterated that he not only assured Sison and other communist negotiators of their

See JOMA > Page 17

JOMA

safety if the talks are held here but also promised to shoulder all their expenses.

"If after two months the talks will fail, then I see to it that you go out of the Philippines safely. But I will tell you this: Do not ever, ever come back to this country, ever again," he also said.

Sison, in his statement, implied the

communists would not agree to holding the talks in the Philippines.

"He (Duterte) knows very well that the NDFP will never submit itself to surveillance, control and duress by his bloody regime and his military and police butchers and death squads," Sison said.

Sison's latest attacks came after he announced that the two sides have agreed to resume the talks on June 28 and to

implement a stand-down agreement a week before that. Duterte later said the talks may resume in July, prompting Sison to criticize Duterte for allegedly canceling the resumption. Malacanang has said it has not announced any resumption this month.

Senate minority leader Franklin Drilon and Sen. Pantilo Lacson expressed support for the holding of talks in the

Philippines.

Lacson said he could not fathom the need for a third-country facilitator.

"For the longest time, I can't understand for the life of me why we should need a third-country facilitator, even a third-country venue for an all-Filipino conflict, whether political, ideological or otherwise, to be negotiated and resolved through peace talks," Lacson said. — *With JP Lopez*

Reds using lull to recruit, regroup—AFP

COMMUNIST rebels, who believe holding the peace talks in the Philippines, is a "recipe for destruction," are using the lull in the negotiations to regroup, recruit new members and acquire new weapons for their offensive against the government, the military said.

Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson Col. Edgard Arevalo said the information was culled from documents recovered during past encounters with the New People's Army.

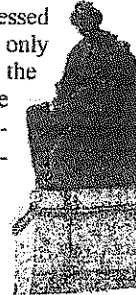
"Based on records we seized from the CPP-NPA Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army, these docu-

ments indicate they are taking advantage of the peace negotiations to recruit new members, to regroup and to refurbish themselves," he added.

Arevalo stressed these findings only confirmed what the CPP-NPAs' true motive in demanding for peace negotiations was.

"And I quote, they resort to

Next page



Reds...

From A1

peace negotiations as another form of legal struggle, which is possible to be used to advance their revolutionary mass movement," he added.

Elsewhere, Rey Casambre, identified as a consultant for the negotiating panel of the rebels, referred to what he called potential harm on fellow consultants and members of the National Democratic Front such as arrests and military surveillance.

He said holding the peace negotiations in the Philippines would be a "recipe for destruction."

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque, meanwhile, said Norway could still have a role in the peace talks, but stressed third parties need not be abroad to facilitate the talks.

Arevalo said, in short, while the rebels were negotiating for peace they were using this as an opportunity to strengthen their combat forces, the AFP spokesperson said.

Arevalo said the strong desire of the CPP-NPA to talk peace could be the offshoot of the mass surrenders of their guerrilla fighters and supporters, along with their weapons and equipment, in the past months.

Meanwhile, the public deserves to know various provisions contained in any peace agreement done with the rebels.

This is the reason why the AFP supports the decision of President Rodrigo Duterte to postpone the resumption of the peace talks with the CPP which was scheduled for June 28. PNA /

Sison coming home

By Elmer Navarro Manuel
and Mario J. Mallari

Exiled Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria Sison has agreed to return to the Philippines as early as mid-August this year, peace panel consultant Rey Casambre said yesterday.

The report on Sison's possi-

ble return came just days after President Rodrigo Duterte postponed the peace talks between the government and communist rebels originally scheduled for June 28-30.

The postponement is to give the government more time to study the components of an interim peace agreement, including a "stand-down" or-

der on combatants from both sides, preparatory to actual peace talks.

But while Sison may be willing to visit Manila, Casambre said the position of the CPP-New People's Army-National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NPA-NDFP) to hold peace talks outside the Philippines may be "non-negotiable."

But Reds firm on peace talks outside PH

Fears arrest

Casambre said the leadership of the CPP-NPA-NDFP fears the possible arrest of their peace negotiators and consultants if peace talks are held in the Philippines.

In Norway, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza expressed the Duterte administration

gratitude to Oslo for continuing to support peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the CPP-NPA-NDFP.

At the same time, Dureza, in a statement issued Monday night, clarified that Norway remains a "facilitator" of the GPH-NDFP peace negotiations.

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Sison coming home

From page 1

"I am now in Oslo, Norway to attend an International Forum on Conflict Mediation and to express our country's gratitude for Norway's significant and continuing support to the long drawn peace negotiations with the left," Dureza said.

Dureza added he would explain to the government of Norway the reason behind the postponement of the scheduled resumption of the formal peace negotiations on June 28 as previously agreed upon by the panels.

Norway still a partner

"I am also here to explain to them the reason why the planned resumption of the peace talks discussed during backchannel meetings, was reset," Dureza said.

The peace adviser stressed that Norway remains a significant partner in the government efforts to achieve lasting peace with the Reds.

"Norway, in spite of the challenges we face in the long negotiations has remained patient, resilient and steadfast in its help to the Filipino people," said Dureza.

Reports said Malacañang sees no more need for a third-party facilitator in the peace talks since the President wants to hold the negotiations in Manila.

Public consultations

Last Friday, President Duterte cancelled the resumption of the formal talks to give way to further public consultations.

For its part, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) admitted it recommended the three-month postponement of the formal negotiations to review the "stand down" agreement reached by the GPH and NDRP peace panels.

CPP-NPA claimed Mr. Duterte's cancellation of the talks was prompted by the planned all-out war by the military.

But Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana dismissed CPP's claim as a lie — stressing the President decided to postpone the talks prior

to hearing the security briefing and recommendation of AFP last Wednesday night.

'High expectations'

Lorenzana said the President's decision came immediately after Dureza's briefing and subsequent open forum among those present in the command conference.

During the briefing, Casambre said the date of Sison's return was proposed by the government peace panel during backchannel negotiations in Utrecht, The Netherlands where Sison has been on self-exile since the late 1980s.

"It would have been unprecedented," and would generate "high expectations," Casambre said of Sison coming home although the August date may be "too early."

Sison earlier had said he was optimistic he would be back in Manila within the year, depending on the outcome of negotiations on substantive portions of the peace talks.

But Sison said his return would depend on the "necessary political, legal, security and technical requirements" contained in a document signed by the two negotiating panels last June 9.

Interim agreement

The same conditions — including the creation of a bilateral committee to facilitate Sison's return — were included in the draft interim peace agreement supposed to be signed during formal talks.

Part of the proposed agreement was a face-to-face meeting between Sison and President Rodrigo Duterte to "discuss the peace process and other matters."

Mr. Duterte had repeatedly invited Sison to return home to continue negotiations in the Philippines. But the President days back postponed the planned resumption of peace talks to have more time to study the components of the interim peace agreement.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza said Duterte had instructed the government peace panel to engage "the bigger peace table, the general public, as we work to negotiate peace with communist rebels."

Casambre said it was still "technically" possible for Sison to return to the country by the second week of August despite the postponement.

But he said holding peace talks here was "non-negotiable," citing the possible arrest of peace negotiators and consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon sided with President Duterte in insisting on holding peace talks in the country.

This, even if Sison, already warned that any change in the venue that was already agreed upon during the informal peace negotiations in The Netherlands could spell doom for the peace efforts of the Duterte administration.

"Dapat dito sa ating bansa ang pag uusap tungkol sa kapayapaan. Tayo nanan po ay Pilipino lahat at ito'y problema natin sa ating bansa, kaya siguro dito na lang ang venue sa atin (The peacetalks should be held in our country because we are all Filipinos and this is our problem)," said Drilon.

"Ngayon kung may ibig tumulong, eh di sa akin nanan dapat langgapin natin, bakas ang ating pintuan para sa tulong ng sinoman (Now, if there are those who want to help then let's accept and open our doors to them)," he added.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III along with Senators Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III and Panfilo Lacson, likewise, agreed with the idea broached by Duterte.

"(It's a) good idea. Let's try to solve our internal problems by ourselves first," Pimentel, president of PDP where Duterte is the party chair, said to the Tribune.

"For the longest time, I can't understand for the life of me why we should need a third country facilitator, even a third country venue for an all-Filipino conflict, whether political, ideological or otherwise, to be negotiated and resolved through peace talks," Lacson said.

A safe conduct pass issued by the government is all it takes to ensure the safety and security of the panel of the CPP-NDRP-New People's Army (NPA) panel, Lacson, chair of the Senate committee on public order and dangerous drugs, said.

"Having said that, there is a lot of sense in PRRD's suggestion to hold the peace talks here and by ourselves. I therefore fully support such decision," he added.

With a report by Angie Rosales

Army overruns NPA camp in Apayao; 9 fall

By FRANCO G. RESALA

CAMPAQUINO, Tarlac City— Army soldiers overran an encampment of the New People's Army (NPA) in Kabugao, Apayao, following two encounters with about 15 armed guerrillas last Monday.

Lt. Col. Isagani Nato, Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) spokesman, said that the NPA encampment was discovered by troopers from the army's 50th Infantry Battalion (50IB) late in the afternoon in Sitio Sibayan, Barangay Paco Valley in Kabugao.

Nato said the camp could accommodate up to 40 guerrillas.

It was discovered by the troopers under Joint Task Force (JTF) Tala who were pursuing the 15 NPA rebels that engaged them earlier in the day.

The first encounter lasted about 30 minutes while the second exchange of gunfire between the rebels and pursuing army soldiers happened near the vicinity and lasted about 20 minutes.

9 surrender

Meanwhile in Nueva Ecija, nine former members of the NPA surrendered to the Army's 7th Infantry Division (7ID) in Palayan City yesterday.

They turned over 12 firearms during their surrender and will receive livelihood assistance from the 7ID, said Maj. Gen. Felimon T. Santos, Jr., 7ID commander. (With a report from Francis T. Wakefield)

Troops overrun NPA camp in Apayao

By Mario J. Mallari

A few days after the postponement of the formal peace talks, government forces clashed with New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Apayao on Monday afternoon — resulting in the seizure of a communist camp in Kabugao town.

Lt. Col. Isagani Nato, spokesman of the military's Northern Luzon Command (Nolecom), said the firefight erupted at around 3 p.m. along Sitio Sibayan in Barangay Paco Valley.

Nato said that elements of the Army's 50th Infantry Battalion (IB) chanced upon the NPA band while on a security patrol in the area.

"A meeting engagement initially ensued against more or less 15 CNTs (communist terrorists), which lasted for about 30 minutes," Nato said.

He added that engaged troops immediately conducted pursuit operations while fresh troops were sent in the same area as augmentation.

"Another 10-minute encounter transpired between the reinforcing unit against eight withdrawing NPA rebels," Nato said, adding the second firefight lasted for about 20 minutes.

During clearing and pursuit operations, the Army troops seized an NPA encampment in the area composed of two guard posts. It can accommodate 40 people.

Nato said the Army troops recovered equipment and personal belongings from the camp with high intelligence value, including some parts of customized handoleets.

No casualty was reported on the government side.

On the other hand, Nato said that undetermined number of casualties were reported on the NPA side.

"Nolecom will continue to conduct focused military operations, with the support of the locals in the area, to prevent the NPA terrorists from doing hostile plans against our people and hampering the development in the community," Nato said.

Red encampment seized

By ZAIDA DELOS REYES-PALANCA

GOVERNMENT forces recovered an encampment of the New Peoples Army (NPA) after a series of encounters the other day in Kabuyao, Apayao.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) spokesman Col. Isagani Nato said the NPA encampment, which can accommodate 40 persons, was discovered in Sitio Sibayan, Bgy. Paco Valley, Kabugao.

NOLCOM troops, particularly from the 50th Infantry Battalion (50IB), under the Joint Task Force (JTF) "TALA", encountered a group of rebels at 3 p.m. in Sitio Sibayan, triggering a 30-minute firefight.

No casualties were reported.

After 20 minutes, another 10-minute clash transpired between the reinforcing unit and eight withdrawing rebels.

Late afternoon that day, troops conducting pursuit operation discovered the NPA encampment with two guard posts.

Recovered at the camp were equipment and personal belongings of the rebels with high intelligence value, and customized bandoleers.

In line with this, Nato said NOLCOM will continue to conduct focused military operations with the support of the locals in the area, to prevent the NPA terrorists from harming the people and hampering the development in the community.

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9 NPA rebs surrender

By ZAIDA DE LOS REYES-BALANCA

NINE New Peoples' Army (NPA) rebels returned to the folds of the law yesterday morning in Nueva Ecija.

This was confirmed by LTC Eugenio Julio C. Osias, assistant Chief of Staff for Civil-Military Operations (C'MO) of the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division.

Osias said the surrenderers were members of the Militiang Bayan, Bayan Muna and the Communist Terrorist Groups (CTGs). They were received by Major General Felimon T. Santos Jr., commander of 7th ID, in a simple ceremony. Their identities were not revealed as of press time.

The nine returnees were given livelihood assistance by the 7ID. Their benefits from the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP) are being processed.

They will be initially given a pair of sheep from the Army division as part of their start-up livelihood venture.

The 7th Civil-Military Operations (C'MO) Battalion and 84th Infantry (Victorious) Battalion were responsible for the surrender of the former rebels.

The surrenderers also turned over 12 firearms including two US Springfield M1903 cal .30 bolt action

rifles, two cal .38 Smith and Wesson, three improvised 12 gauge shotguns, one improvised 20 gauge shotgun and two cal .22 converted Armscor Air Rifle and one Springfield 5.56mm improvised.

All firearms are loaded with ammunitions.

The returnees said that they were enticed by the benefits and privileges that awaited with their surrender. They also expressed their longing to live normal lives with their respective families.

Each former rebel will receive 60,000 once enrolled in the ECLIP.

They will also receive additional financial aid for the firearms they surrendered depending on the valuation of weapons.

The amount ranges from 2,000.00 to 2,000,000.00.

Santos assured the surrenderers that 7ID will keep them safe with their families.

He also said that the distribution of the start-up livelihood assistance is a form of the division's appreciation to the trust and confidence of the surrenderers.

He gave an order to the battalions to assist the former rebels to complete their requirements for the application for ECLIP.

9 NPA rebels surrender in N. Ecija

NINE members of the New Peoples' Army yesterday returned to the fold of the law in Nueva Ecija.

Lt. Eugenio Julio Osias, assistant chief-of-staff for Civil-Military Operations of the 7th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, said the returnees were members of the Militiang Bayan, Bayan Muna and the Communist Terrorist Groups.

The former rebels were received by Maj. General Felimon Santos Jr., commander of 7th ID.

The identities of those who surrendered were not yet available.

The nine returnees were given livelihood assistance from the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program. They will be given a pair of sheep by the Army Division as start up for their livelihood.

The 7th Civil-Military Operations (GWAPO) Battalion and 84th Infantry (Victorious) Battalion helped in the surrender of the former rebels.

The rebel returnees also turned over 12 firearms, including two US Springfield M1903 cal. 30 bolt action

rifles, two cal .38 Smith and Wesson guns, three improvised 12-gauge shotguns, one improvised 20-gauge shotgun, two cal .22 converted Armscor air rifle and one improvised Springfield 5.56mm gun.

All firearms were loaded with ammunition.

The former rebels said the main reason for their laying down of arms was to live a normal life with their family.

They also decided to surrender after they were enticed by the benefits and privileges they will get from the ECLIP.

Each former rebel will receive a total amount of 65,000 once enrolled in the ECLIP, 15,000 as immediate financial assistance while processing their application and 50,000 as livelihood assistance.

Aside from the amount mentioned, they will also receive an additional financial aid for the firearms they surrendered depending on the value of the weapons.

The amount ranges from 2,000 to 2,000,000.

Santos assured the returnees of their safety with their families.

Zaida delos Reyes

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Maute gunmen abandon camp as soldiers advance

ILIGAN CITY—The military on Tuesday said it stumbled upon a deserted camp of remnants of the Maute group as government troops continued pursuing Islamic State (IS)-inspired gunmen in Tubaran town, Lanao del Sur province.

"Our troops found several ammunition boxes. There are foxholes inside the camp," said Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., deputy commander of Joint Task Force Lanao, describing the abandoned camp in Barangay Wago, about 42 kilometers from Marawi City.

Brawner said the group was led by Owayda Benito Marohombasar, also known as Abu Dar, who escaped the five-month war in Marawi last year.

'No body count'

"Reports said five Maute gunmen were killed but we could not say [these reports are] true. There is no body count," he said.

In Calanogas town, soldiers held several people fleeing the military operations. "We held them for questioning. They said they were [evacuees]. We are verifying if they are indeed [evacuees]," Brawner said.

More than 1,500 families fled their homes in Tubaran and surrounding towns in Lanao del Sur as the military intensified its manhunt against Abu Dar's group.

The provincial government has distributed food aid to evacuees who sought refuge at

WAITING FOR AID Residents who fled their villages in Tubaran, Lanao del Sur, following military operations against the Maute group wait for food and other supplies at the town center.

the town center of Tubaran. Most of the families who fled their homes came from remote villages in the towns of Tubaran, Pagayawan and Binidayan, although some residents of Calanogas, Marogong and other areas near these towns were also leaving for fear of being caught in the crossfire.

Salma Jayne Tamano, Lanao del Sur information officer, said they were reaching out to other families after the military allowed the local government

to conduct relief operations on Monday afternoon.

"There is no official report on the number of displaced families in Marogong yet but some of the more than 700 families who sought refuge in Binidayan are from that town while 49 families are in Bayang," said Zia Adiong, spokesperson for the Lanao del Sur crisis management council.

He said Gov. Soraya Adiong had directed all provincial government agencies, espe-

cially the health and social welfare and development offices, to check on the needs of affected families.

"(We are looking for all available) accommodations for the displaced families," Adiong said. "The Provincial Peace and Order Council has reconvened to assess the situation and avoid any spillover of the clashes to other towns," he added.

Military operations, which started Friday last week, were focused on Tubaran on Tues-

day. Air and ground assaults were aimed at "neutralizing" Marohomsar who, the military said, appeared to have assumed the post of new IS leader in Southeast Asia.

Adiong said the military had established checkpoints along entry and exit points of Tubaran. "But the hills served as the natural defense system of the terrorists," he said.

Primary concern

Adiong said the primary concern of the provincial government was the safety of civilians.

"As much as possible we don't want civilians affected because it would be devastating," Adiong said, adding that the people of Lanao del Sur were still reeling from the impact of the five-month campaign against the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups in Marawi from May to October last year.

"But it's the only way for the military to stop the spread of violent extremism, we will understand," he added.

A P3-million reward had been offered by authorities for the arrest of Abu Dar, a native of Pagayawan, Lanao del Sur. Also known as Humam, Abu Dar was reported to be related to Faizal Marohomsar, a leader of the Moro National Liberation Front who was linked to the kidnapping of five Chinese engineers in Carmen town, North Cotabato province, in 2001. —RICHEL UMEI AND DIVINA SUSON INQ

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AM

EX-MILF MEMBER, UNCLE CAUGHT WITH P125K WORTH OF 'SHABU'

By Jodee A. Agoncillo
@jagoncilloINQ

An alleged former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) member and his uncle were arrested in a buy-bust operation in Quezon City on Monday afternoon.

Quezon City Police District director, Chief Supt Josefito Esquivel, told reporters on Tuesday that Kastle Manap, 28 and his uncle Ibrahim Usman, 37, both residents of Luzon Avenue at Barangay Old Balara, yielded P125,000 worth of illegal drugs.

Manap was identified as an MILF member through an ID card but he said he was no longer with the group.

A police report said mem-

bers of the Batasan police station had been monitoring Manap who was identified as the source of drugs in his barangay.

Surprise discovery

"At the time of the operation, it was not known yet one of the subjects was a member of the MILF," Esquivel said.

The pair was arrested after they sold an undercover police man P50,000 worth of drugs at a supermarket on Luzon Avenue.

Seized from the suspects were several sachets of "shabu" with a street value of P125,000.

Esquivel said both men were also tagged in the proliferation of drugs at Barangay Caltat.

INQ

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EX-MILF member, 26 others nabbed for P2-M shabu

An alleged former Islamia Liberation front (MILF) member and 26 others were arrested and at least P2.04 million worth of shabu were seized in stings in Metro Manila on Monday.

Kasle Manap, 28, who was carrying an identification card from the MILF, and his uncle Ibrahim Usman, 37, reportedly sold 25 grams of shabu for P40,000 to a police officer who posed as a buyer in front of a supermarket in Barangay Old Balara, Quezon City last month.

Quezon City police District Director Florante Esquivel said the suspects were reported to undergo police weapons training and was part of the MILF's armed unit.

Chief Superintendent Guillermo Pleszar, director of the National Capital Region Police Office, said 500 grams of shabu and two pistols were confiscated from Jayson Lagumbay, 31, of Quezon City; Lamelao Jainto, 30, of Quezon City; Cruz in a sting in Barangay Pambalayan in Quezon City at around 7:45 p.m.

Records show Lagumbay was arrested in 2016 on drug charges in Mandaluyong and is still on trial; Golfo was tagged in a 2017 shooting in Mandaluyong wherein two women were killed; and Jainto is a suspect in a murder in Calooran last month.

Esquivel said the suspects are also reportedly involved in robberies in Quezon City.

Anti-narcotics police also reported arresting 17 persons in Quezon City and four in Marikina.

Emmanuel Tupas, Non-Aliquifran

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Ex-MILF member nabbed in QC drug bust operation

A FORMER Moro Islamic Liberation Front member was arrested by operatives from the Quezon City Police District in a buy-bust operation Monday.

In his report to National Capital Region Police Office head Chief Supt. Guillermo Lorenzo Eleazar, QCPD Director Chief Supt. Joselito Esquivel Jr. said suspects Kalse Manap, a.k.a. Castro, 28, and his uncle Ibrahim Usman, a.k.a. Ebs, 37, were arrested by authorities at 5 pm Monday at the Puregold supermarket along Luzon Avenue in Barangay Old Balara.

Seized from the suspects were approximately 25 grams of shabu worth P125,000, and the P50,000 buy-bust money.

Esquivel said the suspects were

newly-identified drug personalities and were responsible for the proliferation of shabu in Barangays Culiati and Old Balara.

Police records showed that Usman eluded arrest by operatives of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the Cotabato City police in Barangay Lamontaka 1, Cotabato City last Aug. 2, 2016.

Two of his companions were arrested.

Confiscated during the operation were one canister containing eight sachets of shabu, several drug paraphernalia, one cal. 45 pistol, one cal. 45 magazine assembly, six ammunition for cal. 45, several bank deposits and passbooks believed to be used in their illegal drug transactions. PNA

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PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

Ex-MILF member,
uncle nabbed
in buy-bust

A FORMER member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and his uncle were among those arrested by the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) in its latest drug stings which netted 17 others, QC top cop Chief Supt. Joselito Esquivel said yesterday.

In his report to National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) director Chief Supt. Guillermo Lorenzo T. Eleazar, Esquivel identified the ex-MILF man as Kasle Manap alias Castro, 28, and his uncle Ibrahim Usman, alias Ebs, 37, both of Luzon Avenue, Area A, Old Balara, QC.

The suspects yielded 25 grams of shabu worth P125,000 to an undercover operative who posed as buyer.

Officers from the Batasan Police Station (PS-6) conducted a buy-bust around 5 p.m. Monday at a Puregold store in Luzon Avenue after validating the illegal peddling by the suspects.

Esquivel said that the suspects are newly identified drug personalities responsible for the proliferation of shabu in Barangays Culiati and Old Balara.

Joel dela Torre

ABU SAYYAF FIGHTER YIELDS IN BASILAN

ZAMBOANGA CITY: An Abu Sayyaf Group rebel has surrendered to the police in the restive province of Basilan in southern Philippines where government efforts continue to lure militants to return to the fold of the law.

Lukman Bukdaman Ladjanan, 28, also surrendered his M79 and M1205 grenade launcher and rifle to the police and vowed to help in the government's peace advocacy campaign in Basilan, one of the five provinces under the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or ARMM.

Ladjanan and he was under Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Radzimer Latamatul.

His surrender came after ARMM Governor Hataman Latamatul called on militants to lay down arms and return to the fold of the law and live a peaceful life with their loved ones.

"We are extending peace to the Abu Sayyaf. We want you to rejoin society and live peacefully with your families. There is no reason to wage war, there is no reason to fight the government because we are doing everything for the sake of peace of our children and our future," Hataman said.

Last week, the governor along with security officials, led the distribution in Isabela City of food packs, rice and non-food items to nearly 200 mostly former Abu Sayyaf members who surrendered to the military in Basilan.

Those who received the aid were beneficiaries of the Program Against Violent Extremism or PAVE, the regional government's first model program--launched in April this year--in providing various interventions to former Abu Sayyaf members who surrendered to the government and their families.

It also caters to returnees from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters or BIFF.

Hataman spoke to the former rebels and reminded them of their commitment to helping promote peace and development in Basilan, just

several nautical miles off Zamboanga.

"We are happy to say that these former Abu Sayyaf members are now supportive of our peace advocacy and have become partners of government in this endeavor, and we shall continue this [PAVE] program in other parts of the ARMM in partnership with various stakeholders until we finally achieve peace in the region," he said.

The governor also led celebration of the Eid al-Fitr with the Muslim community in Zamboanga. He also distributed food packs and money to the indigent.

Hataman said the government will continue to support the integration programs dubbed as the Program Against Violent Extremism (PAVE) aimed at a holistic rehabilitation and personal development of militant combatants who have joined armed conflict with their groups.

He added that the national government is committed to take all the necessary measures to address violent extremism.

The program seeks to help peace to bridge sector gaps between the military and non-military initiatives and attain justice.

Hataman said after processing procedures by local governments and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the surrendering Abu Sayyaf members will be endorsed to the ARMM government for psychosocial, economic, educational and spiritual interventions.

"And we will allow them to live as normal and productive citizens in their communities, and they will be the advocates for peace against violent extremism," he added.

The program also seeks to prevent returnees from going back provide an opportunity to start again, encourage them to help in promoting peace and development in Basilan, just

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AL JACINTO

Airstrikes target Maute lair; villagers flee

By Nash B. Maulana

MALABANG, Lanao del Sur --Government airstrikes and ground offensives on lairs of extremists have triggered mass evacuations in 25 Lanao del Sur villages.

Exchanges of gunfire continued Tuesday as the military placed three towns under its control to guard against diversionary attacks by the extremists on civilians.

Lanao Sur Gov. Bedjoria Soraya Alonto-Adiong said field reports indicated that 5,450 people from 1,090 families have fled 25 barangays in Tubaran, Bunkayan, and Pagayawan.

Alonto-Adiong ordered the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office to provide all necessary humanitarian assistance to those displaced by the fighting. She also directed the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office to prepare relief for distribution to the affected families.

As of Tuesday, the military had cleared only Tubaran and Bimidayau for entry by

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Airstrikes...

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volunteers for distribution of food and relief goods. Pagayawan remained under close military watch for possible diversionary offensives by extremists, field military commanders told locals and village officials.

Salma Jennie Alonto Tamano, provincial information office head, said civilians who had evacuated to town centers were

mostly housed in school grounds, including Tubaran Elementary School; Tubaran National High School; Tangcal Madrasa and Tangcal Multi-Purpose Hall.

Col. Romeo Brawner, deputy commander of Joint-Task Force Lanao, said remnants of the Maute terrorist group had apparently recruited new followers by using money and social media to get young people to believe they would be trained to become policemen.

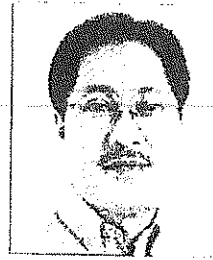
He said five more original members

of the ISIS-(Islamic State) inspired Maute group were slain in Sunday's airstrikes and in follow-up ground forces offensives on Monday.

Brawner said the Maute group had generated plenty of money when they looted Marawi, and from ransom money in Abu Sayyaf kidnapping activities, and from vast financial resources of ISIS. Reports have also indicated that the Daesh, as the ISIS is also called, have oil fields under its control in war-torn Iraq and Syria.

GOTCHA

JARIUS BONDOC



Is new Philippine isle in Chinese hands?

Is the new Philippine island called Sandy Cay now held by China? Rep. Gary Alejano says yes; Foreign Sec. Alan Peter Cayetano says no. Only one way to find out, they dare each other. Go see for yourself.

Sandy Cay is a newly formed isle from sandbars three nautical miles off Pag-Asa, the main part of Palawan's Kalayaan town. A word war rages between Alejano and Cayetano over China's reported grab of the isle under the Duterte presidency. Cayetano says he will resign if anybody can prove that the admin has lost territory to China. Alejano, an ex-Marine captain, cites Sandy Cay as example of territorial surrender.

Alejano wants Cayetano to join him in expedition with reporters. Saying his presence could spark diplomatic complications, Cayetano offers to have Alejano escorted there.

Neither of them mentions risks to security and safety. If China indeed is in control, they could be harassed or forcibly evicted. The rainy season has set in, and waters around Pag-Asa are choppy.

One can get to Sandy Cay by boat from Pag-Asa. The latter is home to about 200 civilians, under a mayor and a barangay chairman. There's also a detachment of sailors and Marines. Pag-Asa is an hour's flight or eight hours' sail across the West Philippine Sea from Puerto Princesa. (I've visited twice, in 1982 and 2003, on invitation of the Armed Forces. Sandy Cay was then what its name is, a cay or low bank of sand and corals.)

Being within 12 miles of Pag-Asa, Sandy Cay is part of Philippine territory under the Baselines Act. The

arbitral tribunal at The Hague noted that it was under or above high tide parts of the year within the Philippine territorial boundary. During China's dredging of Subi Reef 16 miles away into an artificial island, pulverized corals drifted to Sandy Cay. The latter became permanently above sea level. Under international law it is part of Philippine territory since it arose over high tide within territorial waters. Under the Constitution, government is duty-bound to defend it.

In August the Asia Maritime Transparency Institute published aerial photos of nine Chinese naval, coast guard, and maritime militia vessels operating one to three miles off Pag-Asa. They reportedly prevented a craft of the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources from beaching on Sandy Cay to investigate.

Alejano quotes military sources as disclosing that President Rodrigo Duterte froze naval patrols. The AMTI reported that, amid Chinese protests, Manila refrained from erecting anything on Sandy Cay in respect of a non-binding 2002 Declaration of Conduct among disputants in the Spratlys.

MRT-3's private builder-franchisee hails any rehiring of Japanese giant Sumitomo Corp. to fix and service the rotted commuter railway. It also affirmed that Sumitomo gave the \$150-million work cost relayed to transport officials in 2014 and 2016.

The Dept. of Transport denies any \$150-million (P7.5-billion) offer from Sumitomo. And that it only got a five-page letter from chairman Robert Sobrepena of Metro Rail Transit Corp. (MRTC). That was in reply to this column asking why DOTr is borrowing

P17 billion – nearly P10 billion more – to rehabilitate and maintain MRT-3. Both DOTr and lender Japan International Cooperation Agency prefer Sumitomo to do the job.

“Sobrepeña supports any move to bring back Sumitomo to MRT-3,” MRTC said last weekend. “Sumitomo is the right company to rehab and maintain it. They built the train and maintained it for 12 years. They have the expertise.”

“The cost of \$150 million for rehabilitation was based on estimates Sumitomo submitted to MRTC in 2014,” Sobrepeña clarified. “The MRTC proposal is still available should DOTr want to consider it. Our proposal was actually made by Sumitomo as our contractor. The MRTC proposal with Sumitomo is most beneficial, most cost-effective, and can be implemented fastest for convenience and safety of the riding public.”

Sumitomo had erected MRT-3 in 1998-1999, then maintained it in 2000-2012 under MRTC's build-lease-transfer deal with the government. In 2012 DOTr replaced the Japanese with a series of three inept outfits. MRT-3 trains, tracks, signaling, power supply, and stations deteriorated. Calling in old service provider Sumitomo, MRTC proposed to DOTr in Dec. 2014 a 26-month restoration and upkeep of MRT-3 to previous safety and reliability.

MRTC said: “The return of Sumitomo was in fact in the proposal that Sobrepeña submitted as far back as 2014 and again in 2016 directly to DOTr Sec. Arthur Tugade. The Sobrepeña-MRTC proposal was for the complete rehab of MRT3 for \$150 million that would be paid directly by DOTr to Sumitomo, without any profit to MRTC, on pass-

through basis, as was the practice when MRTC maintained MRT-3 from 2000 to 2012.”

DOTr did not entertain MRTC's Sumitomo-based P7.5-billion plan. Last month it announced a P17 billion JICA loan for rehab and upkeep. Although the scope of work is the same as in 2014, there is no itemization of the P17 billion to explain the nearly P10-billion jump.

One more thing DOTr needs to disclose is its plan for the 48 inoperable new Chinese coaches. Japanese and German engineers separately have found the trains defective. Fifteen safety and reliability tests, involving 94 components, were left undone at the Dalian Corp. factory or the MRT-3. Design and weight flaws hinder maintenance. The Japanese advise returning the trains to China for retrofit. The Germans, whom DOTr paid P53 million, want quick action.

About to be finished is MRT-3's power supply and depot upgrade to four-coach train sets from the present three. Not only that P827-million work but also the rehab would be wasted in the indecision.

DOTr had purchased the trains in 2013 for P3.8 billion. There was a five-percent or P190-million kickback, ex-MRT-3 general manager Al Vitangcol swears. Remnants of the past DOTr involved in that deal oversee MRT-3 at present.

Catch Sapul radio show, Saturdays, 8-10 a.m., DWIZ (882-AM).

Gotcha archives on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Jurius-Bondoc/1376602159218459>, or The STAR website <https://beta.philstar.com/columns/134276/gotcha>

★

Norway may still have role in peace talks – Roque

By ANTONIO L. COLINA IV

DAVAO CITY – Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque clarified on Tuesday that the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) may still serve as third-party facilitator in the peace talks between the Philippine government (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

In a press briefing in Cotabato City on Tuesday, Roque said all third parties who have been involved in the previous peace talks and who would want to continue to be involved may still participate.

But he reiterated that President Rodrigo R. Duterte wanted that the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations resume in the Philippines.

It was earlier reported that the two parties will be resuming the talks in Oslo, Norway on June 28 to 31, after backchannel talks in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

"Ang ini-emphasize ko lang ay yung pagnanais ng ating presidente na sa Pilipinas gawin po ang usapin (What I was emphasizing yesterday was the desire of the President to hold it here) but a third party facili-

tator does not have to be abroad to facilitate the peace talks," he said.

Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (PAPP) Jesus Dureza said the Norwegian government has remained patient, resilient and steadfast in its help to the Filipino people despite the challenges in the peace process with the communists.

"I am now in Oslo, Norway to attend an International Forum on Conflict Mediation and to express our country's gratitude for Norway's significant and continuing support to the long drawn peace negotiations with the Left. I am also here to explain to them the reason why the planned resumption of the peace talks, discussed during backchannel meetings, was reset," he said.

But in a statement, Rey Claro Casambre, a consultant of NDFP who is also executive director of the Philippine Peace Center, said insisting on holding the talks in the Philippines would be tantamount to calling off the negotiations.

"The clear and simple reason is that there is no way peace talks held in the Philippines can be protected and spared from sabotage by the spoilers and enemies of a genuine peace process – those who

oppose meaningful reforms that would alter the status quo in favor of the greater majority of the population," he said.

Casambre added NDFP would never agree to hold the peace talks in the Philippines and the previously signed agreements between both parties, which have been followed for 26 years, state the peace talks must be held at a foreign neutral venue.

He said government throws the "entire peace negotiation into a darker cloud of uncertainty threatening even to derail the talks permanently" when it postponed the supposed resumption of the negotiations.

Casambre also said that it was unlikely that Duterte had not been apprised of the development of the backchannel talks that resulted in the signing of an initial set of documents, including the interim peace agreement and standdown order.

"These documents, after all, have been at least three months in the making, with the GRP negotiating panel constantly requesting breaks to check and countercheck with their principals if they are still in line with their marching orders," Casambre added.

Aquino, Trillanes blamed Del Rosario for Panatag loss

BY RIGOBERTO TIGLAO
Columnist

Second of a 4-part series

BOTH President Benigno Aquino 3rd and Sen. Antonio Trillanes 4th blamed then Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto del Rosario for the country's losing Panatag (Scarborough or Bajo de Masinloc) Shoal in 2012 to China.

► **Magellan A6**



Trillanes with Aquino (left); Del Rosario (right) in a photo from the 2017 annual report of Hong Kong-based First Pacific, of which he is a director. Controlled by an Indonesian, some 30 percent of First Pacific's shares are held by US investors.

Aquino, Trillanes blamed Del Rosario for Panatag loss

Yet del Rosario has to gall to call President Duterte's Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana a propaganda tool of China for saying in an interview that Aquino mismanaged the sea dispute.

The truth is that if there is anybody who is a propaganda tool, it is the US-educated del Rosario, who by his actions and statements, especially since he was our ambassador to the US, has indisputably proven to be the very reliable mouthpiece of the US' deep state. This has been crucial for the US since, as it does not have any claim in the disputed seas, it desperately required proxies in the area, roles which Aquino and del Rosario very ably assumed.

It was the reckless deployment by Aquino, del Rosario's boss, of our biggest warship, the *BRP Gregorio del Pilar*, to Panatag Shoal on April 12, 2012 that triggered a stand-off between Chinese and Philippine vessels that lasted for six weeks. According to Aquino and Trillanes, it was del Rosario's order directing our vessels to withdraw from the area that effectively handed over the shoal to China.

Aquino had blustered that the frigate would defend against the Chinese Maritime Surveillance (CMS) the vessels of our Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and Coast Guard which had arrested a number of Chinese fishermen for "illegal fishing" in the shoal. Aquino, told of his mistake, immediately ordered the frigate to leave the area. It was a boo-boo that couldn't be "deleted," and China exploited it to claim that the Philippines militarized the disputed shoal.

Rather than sending its own warships though, China deployed several CMS vessels to escort more than 90 Chinese fishing boats to the shoal in, ironically for us, a seaborne "People Power"-of-sorts tactic against our ships. For seven weeks, there was a standoff, with both Chinese and Philippine vessels refusing to leave the area.

Colossal mistake

However, on June 3, del Rosario ordered our BFAR and Coast Guard vessels to leave the shoal. This was a colossal mistake as it left the Chinese in complete



RIGOBERTO TIGLAO

control of the shoal, and they have never left the area. That's how we completely lost Panatag, the first territory ever that we have lost.

Among the many similar accounts on the Philippine blunder is a November 2014 report of the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA)—a think-tank for the US military—that concluded:

"China resolved the sovereignty dispute with the Philippines over Scarborough Shoal in 2012 when it established control over the shoal. Again, it is unlikely to relinquish it. The government of the Philippines is in no position to even begin to contemplate the use of force to recover Scarborough, and the United States is not going to become involved in any attempt to expel the Chinese."

Both in an interview with Trillanes with me in 2015, and in his aide memoire "Backchannel Talks" that he gave me, the senator claimed it was del Rosario who was responsible for the boo-boo, with Aquino himself blaming his foreign secretary. He was so angry at del Rosario that in my talk with him and with a television network, he said what del Rosario did was treason.

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

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

Trillanes continued: "This time I asked PNoy, 'If the agreement was simultaneous withdrawal, why did we leave first?' PNoy responded to this effect: 'Kaya nga sinabihan ko si Albert kung bakit niya pinalabas yung

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BFAR na hindi ko nalalaman." ("That's why I asked Albert [del Rosario] why he ordered the BFAR vessels to leave without my permission.")

Fu Ying meet

According to my government and diplomatic sources as well as to the report of Ellen Tordesillas, who was the most knowledgeable diplomatic reporter at the time, what transpired was as follows:

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

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

The gullible del Rosario immediately ordered, in the middle of the night, the BFAR and Coast Guard vessels to pull out, leaving the Chinese in complete control of the shoal. Aquino would only find out about the pull-out when he woke up—a bit late—the fol-

lowing morning.

That this was what happened is bolstered by a DFA statement released in July 2012 to explain why the Philippines failed to convince the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to condemn China's takeover of the shoal:

"On the reference to 'duplicity and intimidation,' the Philippines forged an agreement with China for the simultaneous pullout of all vessels inside the shoal, which we undertook in good faith on June 4. Furthermore, China agreed to remove its barrier at the entrance of

the shoal.

"Yet to this day, China has not fulfilled its obligations under the agreement and has maintained its ships inside and outside the shoal, as well as its barrier, in its aim to establish effective control and jurisdiction in the shoal and surrounding waters."

Neither US nor China

Neither the US nor China, of course, have confirmed that there was such an agreement. If there was, and it was the US that mediated the pact, wouldn't it have condemned China for violating it?

Among the questions raised by this account:

1. Did Campbell really tell their Ambassador Thomas, to tell del Rosario that the Chinese had agreed to withdraw from the shoal? Or did Thomas misinterpret his superior's communication? Or worse, did the 73-year old del Rosario hear what he wanted to hear, as the standoff had lasted for seven weeks, and he was crumbling under the tension?

2. Or, as Trillanes alleged, was del Rosario's real intention was to worsen the rift between China and the Philippines, which he claimed was the agenda of the foreign secretary's business boss, Manuel V. Pangilinan, so the US itself would eventually protect one of his firm's oil-drilling projects in the Reed Bank, also claimed by China?

3. How could del Rosario go over the head of Aquino that he could order the BFAR and Coast Guard ships to leave Panatag?

Del Rosario should give his side on these questions in the planned Senate investigation on our territorial dispute with China.

Or he could ask the *Philippine Star*, which his boss Pangilinan (whose boss in turn is the Indonesian tycoon Anthoni Salim) controls, to devote a whole page to explain his side on how we lost Panatag.

On Wednesday: How Aquino and the Yellow Media hid the loss of Panatag from the nation

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Anti-IS solution

The two-day Lanao del Sur skirmish proved President Rody Duterte's foresight that the Islamic State (IS) threat is far from over eight months after the Marawi City siege.

Rody, shortly after the liberation of Marawi City from pro-IS Maute group fighters, said the extremists remain active in other parts of Mindanao and that another attack may happen which he cited as his reason to maintain martial law in the region.

Regional experts believe IS-aligned militants are still capable of regrouping and potentially join forces.

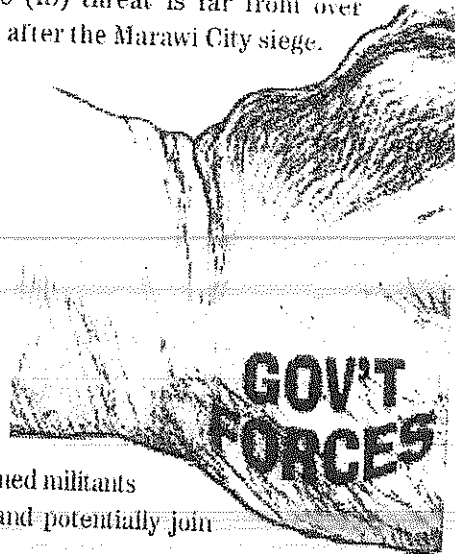
Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) intelligence reports also cite at least 23 armed groups in Mindanao still pledge allegiance to IS, but the reports do not state how many receive direct support from the terror group.

A major source of worry are foreign IS fighters from Asia such as Indonesia, Malaysia and even China, who are unable to return home after the defeat of the terror group in Syria and Iraq.

Experts say they are likely to seek refuge in Mindanao. Thinktank Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) indicated more than 30 Malaysian militants were believed involved in the Marawi City siege.

Aside from Asian countries, foreign fighters from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Chechnya and Singapore were reported to have been part of the pro-IS groups in Marawi City.

Chinese Uighurs and Africans were also reported to have been possibly involved in the five-month war, a TRAC report stated.



According to the TRAC report, foreign fighter remnants of the Marawi City siege have also stayed on in different parts of Mindanao.

The entry of foreign ideologues, in turn, may influence other Muslim groups in the bailiwick of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which the government is seeking to strike a peace deal with.

The current situation makes the immediate passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law which will give autonomy to the Muslim regions an imperative.

The IS is banking on discontent as a result of the delayed implementation of the bill to make inroads and win sympathies in the MILF territories.

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), which is among the Muslim groups that pledged allegiance to IS, is also a source of worry.

The BIFF is a splinter group of the MILF formed after the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain, signed under former President Gloria Arroyo, was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2008.

MILF and BIFF members are mostly linked to each other either by blood or through intermarriages.

The main camps of both groups are in Maguindanao, where the tragic Mamasapano encounter that transpired. That Oplan Exodus in 2015 saw 44 Special Action Force (SAF) commandos and Malaysian terrorist and bomb-making expert Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan killed.

Rody had repeatedly sought apology for imposing martial law, but said it should be the best way to address the existing threats from the IS.

The BBL, with its promise of autonomy, is a deterrent to the IS promise of emancipation through a rigid Islamic society.

The move of Rody to enlist the help of both the Moro National Liberation Front and the MILF in drafting the revised law was crucial to make it more encompassing.

While the help of allies like the United States, Australia and China is instrumental in containing the IS threat, the permanent solution remains the granting of autonomy to the Muslim regions through the BBL.

Rody had said autonomy, which is the proposed solution then and now, would be a step towards righting the historic wrong done on Filipino Muslims.

Failure of the BBL, it seems, will put to waste efforts for lasting peace.

Uncertain peace talks

Is it a mere postponement, or already a cancellation of the peace talks between the government and the communist-led National Democratic Front?

We ask this question in light of mixed signals coming from both sides of the stalled peace negotiations.

Last week, Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria Sison confirmed that a stand-down, or a preliminary ceasefire agreement, had been reached by the peace panels during back-channel talks in The Netherlands.

Sison added the informal talks between the government and communist rebels were successful and formal peace negotiations were scheduled to resume on June 28 in Oslo, Norway.

But a few days later, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza told reporters that the resumption of talks had been put on hold, apparently for an indefinite period, so the government can conduct more public consultations.

This provoked an angry reply from Sison, who described the reason for the reset/postponement/cancellation of the talks as "bullshit." The NDF panel then produced a signed document on the stand-down agreement and accused the government of lack of sincerity.

While Sison is miffed over the government's cancellation of the fifth round of peace talks, he's likely to go even more ballistic over the latest development in this long-drawn saga.

News from Malacañang is that Duterte no longer wants a third party facilitator in the peace talks. He now wants the peace talks to be held in the Philippines - instead of Norway, the third party



AROUND TOWN Ernesto M. Hilario

facilitator between the government and the communist movement.

Sison claims that moving the talks brokered by the Norwegian government to the Philippines would violate a 1995 agreement on security and immunity guarantees forged during the Ramos administration to negotiate in a neutral country.

Duterte's plan to hold the peace talks in the country instead of in Oslo has gained the support of Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, who said that the peace talks had been held in foreign shores, but it did not accelerate discussion. "Let the real peace talks begin in a local arena," he said, adding that holding the talks in the country would show the government's sincerity in ending the nearly half-century-old insurgency.

Despite his frustration over the cancellation of the formal negotiations, Sison believes the talks could still be salvaged, but insisted they be held in another country. "There is still hope for the peace negotiations to push through if only the postponement of one or two months is true."

Duterte's decision on the continuation of the peace talks will also have to consider inputs from the defense and military establishments.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has expressed skepticism over the sincerity of the CPP-NPA-NDF in forging a temporary ceasefire as he fears the rebels might use the lull in fighting for recruitment and expansion of their areas.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines, through its spokesman, has vowed to "support the peace efforts of our government and we believe that this will pave the way toward a peaceful resolution of the decades-old challenge that peace-loving Filipinos has been longing for."

Nevertheless, the many twists and turns in the negotiations leave us wondering whether a peaceful settlement of the 50-year-old communist insurgency is possible at all.

We recall that as early as the 1970s, the CPP in a policy paper said that it was willing to enter into peace negotiations with the government for as long as it advanced the ultimate goal of seizure of state power through armed struggle.

Hence, peace talks are considered as a tactic to win political concessions and score propaganda mileage while, at the same time, the NPA tries to weaken the will of the military to fight through increasingly bold tactical offensives.

This explains why the NDF has spurned any suggestion for them to agree to a bilateral ceasefire which they claim should come only after agreements on social and economic issues, as well as political and electoral reforms, have been ironed out; and the administration accedes to the establishment of a coalition government where they would share power to ensure that the agreed reforms are carried out.

Duterte has thumbed down the idea of a coalition government with the communists. If the NPA is down to 3,000 fighters nationwide as the military says, how can it demand that it be given a share of political power?

Elusive, still

Not hidden, but not given emphasis among the statements made by government in calling for the now suspended peace talks with the Maoist communist umbrella, was President Rodrigo Duterte's declaration to give peace "another last chance."

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza was specific in quoting the President's order, saying: "Let's give this another last chance," when he gave instructions to drag the Maoist rebels to the table anew after he scrapped the earlier talks in November last year.

A **LAST CHANCE** and probably no more. And now, we are left hanging with another presidential declaration to postpone the talks for several days more.

That the President would soon declare itself ready to resume the talks is for us to guess, but for the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front, being projected as a fragmented umbrella that could not decide as a single, united voice, and with a leader whom Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenza claimed is "out of touch of reality and a spoiled brat," no longer point to a successful conference, if there would be another.

Joma Sison, The Netherlands-based founding chairman of the CPP, expressed disappointment over the cancellation of the stand-down ceasefire and the resumption of talks.

The ceasefire was scheduled for Thursday while the formal talks were earlier set in Oslo, Norway on June 28.

Sison said it is "both disappointing and frustrating" that "Duterte has unilaterally cancelled" the schedules, further stating government is not interested in serious peace negotiations.

Then Sison declared: "...the revolutionary forces and the people have no choice but to single-mindedly wage the people's war to achieve the national and social liberation of the Filipino people," putting back his chips on the protracted people's war he started in 1969 since he broke away from the old Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (formed in 1930).

The CPP-NPA grew in strength in the late 1970s and the early 1980s at the height of martial law, but EDSA once showed promise and chipped away from its leadership. An internal cleansing in the 1980s to the early 1990s resulted in the murder of many of their cadres, further breaking the groups into many splinters. This is very obvious now during street rallies and demonstrations that no longer match the numbers seen marching during the 1980s.

In the last presidential elections, groups under Maoist influence were also divided. Those in Luzon, including their party-list groups, supported defeated



Aldrin Cardona

presidential candidate Grace Poe while those in Mindanao have thrown their support to Duterte.

Lorenzana knows where he could pounce in belittling the Maoist umbrella's leadership and capabilities.

He said: "Your (Sison) so-called army no longer listens to you, they are sick and tired of your lies and rhetoric."

Sources claim Mindanao Maoist rebels are governed independently from the Sison line.

In an earlier interview, former chief government negotiator Alex Padilla had said he thought none of the communist leaders participating in the talks had control over the CPP and the NPA.

"They don't represent the right party," he claimed.

Padilla also set the conditions set by Duterte are bound to fail. Duterte wants any bilateral ceasefire pact to have clear parameters or terms of reference, non-recognition of any territorial

claims of the rebel group, a halt to extortion or collection of revolutionary taxes and the release of all prisoners held by the rebels.

Stopping the NPA's collection of revolutionary taxes is a sore point in the negotiations.

Duterte also wants to hold the talks in the Philippines.

Sison wants a neutral venue and nominated Oslo, Norway and Vietnam as possible venues for the talks.

Duterte wants the peace talks deferred to a later date. Sison wants it to proceed as scheduled.

Padilla also said there are no prominent communist leaders on the ground other than those who are in The Netherlands for the talks, and that would make it difficult to implement agreements if there would be some.

Government, he said, does not know or has any of the second echelon of leaders it could proceed to talk to, in case those in The Netherlands would fail to commit

There also seems a lack of sincerity from both parties to resolve the issues that would lead to real peace.

It starts there. Always there.

Peace tosh!



Dinah S. Ventura

How can government and the leftist groups reach a peace agreement when each party appears to have low to zero confidence in the other's trustworthiness?

Five presidents since the start of the peace negotiations under the presidency of Corazon Aquino, the air remains as hazy as ever around this on-again, off-again relationship.

Negotiations that transpired under the different administrations had yielded few developments toward achieving a truce, but not enough to give us something to hold on to.

The problem runs deep — so deep that those of us who have other problems to consider possibly dismiss the entire issue as drama, one of those perennial headaches that can never be treated...a cancer sore made worse by cantankerous people.

Most people in the Philippines, I bet, have no idea how important it is to work this thing out.

It's like a marriage gone sour, where each party believes it is right, and where neither one is willing to give an inch to reach a compromise.

Consider that under President Rody Duterte, the communist party had been quite positive about these talks compared with its diffident stance under Noyoy Aquino.

Mong Palatino, an activist and former legislator, in 2016 wrote in bulatlat.com: "There is high optimism that the peace talks will prosper under the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte who has maintained close links with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and New People's Army (NPA) in his capacity as mayor of Davao City. Duterte is also openly identifying himself as a socialist and Leftist. He has vowed to release political prisoners and resume the peace talks. He also guaranteed a safe pass to Joma Sison, his political science professor in college, so that the rebel leader can go home and pursue the implementation of the peace process in the Philippines."

Duterte is also praised for appointing Leftist personalities in his Cabinet. That the Communist Party has nominees working in the Cabinet is unprecedented in Philippine history."

That sentiment cleared the air somewhat to make the Oslo talks happen.

But, as usual, some snags and a few bullets made the talks go a little sour again, and here we are, watching the pingpong game between government and the left as they decide where to hold the resumption of peace talks.

President Duterte canceled the formal talks in Oslo, Norway, which is scheduled for June 25. This was the date agreed upon by government and NDFP negotiators in a series of back channel talks, news reports say.

Joma Sison, NDFP chief political consultant, had immediately expressed his doubts on the suggestion that the talks be held in the Philippines, calling it "the end of peace negotiations."

He said if Duterte will dictate the venue, it does not assure them that they will not be at risk from what he called Duterte's "military brutes."

A particularly stinging comment Joma also made was that they do not negotiate under the terms and conditions "of an emergent fascist dictatorship and in a place where mass murders are occurring with impunity," said Sison, chief political consultant

to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the CPP's political arm that is

negotiating with the government.

A neutral venue, he added, would work, as agreed upon by both parties in the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig) they signed in 1995.

The Jasig assures consultants and staff of the NDFP who are part of the negotiating team of immunity from arrest and detention as well as other safety guarantees.

Past experiences since 1986 such as broken ceasefires contribute to this wall of doubt that exists between government and rebels.

That, and the wasted time in between, riddled with violence and animosity, has made this whole mess too difficult to negotiate.

It's too bad, though, because what the rebs want — end to poverty, land ownership and all that lofty shebang — the government also wants. What is the problem then, you ask.

Well...

Hashtag "It's complicated" does not begin to describe it.

"It's like a marriage gone sour, where each party believes it is right, and where neither one is willing to give an inch to reach a compromise."

Fears, but also hope for peace in Mindanao

IN observance of Eid'l Fitr making the end of the holy month of Ramadan last Thursday, Gov. Mujiv Hataman of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu of Maguindanao called for peace in Mindanao where most of the country's Muslims live today.

"Our (Ramadan) fast embodies the many choices we are faced with in this world. We are taught, at every moment, to submit to the will of Allah, to side with what is kind, just, and good..." said Hataman, whose ARMM will soon become the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. Governor Mangudadatu also urged: "Let us sustain throughout our lifetime the teachings of Islam we learn in Ramadam -- ideal virtues like patience, piety, conciliatory, utmost concern for fellow mankind, and strong faith in God."

For years, Mindanao has been riven by violence, with many of its Muslim people joining a succession of rebellious organizations seeking separation from the national government. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) fought the government for years, followed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). There were also smaller groups like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Abu Sayyaf, and the Maute Group, in their respective enclaves.

President Duterte has gone all out for the establishment of a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region to correct, he said, a historical injustice. There is great hope for peace in Mindanao because of the Bangsamoro region which President Duterte further seeks to strengthen as one of the auto-

nous regions planned under a federal system of government.

Mindanao, however, along with certain other parts of the country, has another movement that continues to pose a problem for the government. This is the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military arm, the New People's Army.

President Duterte sought peace with the CPP-NPA from the start of his administration, holding talks that succeeded in drawing up preliminary agreements on Social and Economic Reforms, Political and Constitutional Reforms, and End of Hostilities and Disposition of Forces. After a break in the talks last November, 2017, the peace talks were scheduled to resume on June 28. But the government has cancelled the scheduled talks in Norway, with President Duterte saying he wished to hear out the general public on the talks with the CPP and NPA. Last Thursday, CPP Founding Chairman Jose Ma. Sison lashed out at the new government decision.

So we have these two developments in Mindanao -- impending peace with the Muslims and what may become a new round of violence and conflict with the Communists. Last Friday, the Philippine Army also announced it is now launching an aggressive campaign to recruit at least 6,000 new officers and men to bolster government forces in Mindanao.

We continue to follow developments in Mindanao with a great deal of trepidation but also with hope that men of goodwill will find a way to settle seemingly irreconcilable differences and succeed in bringing peace to Mindanao.

ONLINE NEWS

20 JUNE 2018

www.dwdd.com.ph

NEW LIFE | Former CNTs with Firearms surrenders to 7ID, receive Livelihood Assistance

Posted by Alvin Santiago on June 19, 2018 at 2:57 PM

FORT RAMON MAGSAYSAY, Nueva Ecija (DWDD) – Nine (9) former members of the CPP-NPA Terrorists (CNTs) surrendered to the 7th Infantry “Kaugnay” Division, today, June 19, 2018.

The surrenderees who were members of Militiang Bayan, Bayan Muna and the Communist Terrorist Groups (CTGs) returned to the folds of the government were formally received by Major General Felimon T Santos Jr AFP, Commander, 7ID in a formal ceremony. All of the nine (9) returnees will first be receiving livelihood assistance from 7ID while their benefits from the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP) is being processed. They will be initially given a pair of sheep from the Army division as part of their start-up.

The 7th Civil-Military Operations (GWAPO) Battalion and 84th Infantry “Victorious” Battalion were responsible to the surrender of the former rebels.

A total of 12 firearms were returned by the surrenderees. Said firearms are composed of one shotgun, two US Springfield M1903 cal .30 bolt action rifles, two cal .38 Smith and Wesson, three improvised 12-gauge shotguns, one improvised 20-gauge shotgun and two cal .22 converted Armscor Air Rifle and one Springfield 5.56mm improvised. All firearms are loaded with ammunitions.

The surrenderees said that they were enticed by the benefits and privileges that they will get from ECLIP if they will surrender to the government. They also expressed their longing to live a normal life with their family which is the main reason for their laying down of arms.

Each former rebel will receive a total amount of ₱ 65,000.00 once enrolled in the ECLIP. ₱ 15,000.00 is an immediate financial assistance while processing their application while ₱ 50,000.00 will be given as a livelihood assistance. Aside from the amount mentioned, they will also receive an additional financial aid for the firearms they surrendered depending on the valuation of weapons. The amount ranges from ₱ 2,000.00 to ₱ 2,000,000.00.

Major General Felimon T Santos Jr AFP, Commander, 7ID assured the surrenderees that 7ID will keep them safe with their families. He also said that the distribution of the start-up livelihood assistance is a form of the division’s appreciation to the trust and confidence of the surrenderees. He gave an order to the battalions to assist the former rebels to complete their requirements for the application for ECLIP. **7DPAO / MCAG**

SUSTAINED OPERATIONS | AFP offensive versus IS-Maute remnants intensifies

Posted by Alvin Santiago on June 19, 2018 at 1:04 PM

LANAO DEL SUR (DWDD) – The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has intensified its military operations against the remnants of the IS-inspired Maute Group.

Col. Romeo Brawner, Jr., deputy commander of the Joint Task Force Lanao, said the operation started Friday when government troops positioned to run after the group of Owayda Benito Marohomsar alias Abu Dar.

He has been in the terror wanted list of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, has a P3,000,000 bounty on his head. He is said to be the appointed emir (leader) of the Islamic State in Southeast Asia replacing Abu Sayaff leader Isnilon Hapilon who was killed in the five-month war in Marawi.

Abu Dar, who hails from Pagayawan town, was one of the ten leaders who planned the attack in Marawi last year. The video footage of their group planning the attack was recovered by the military from the laptop the militants left at Hapilon's apartment in Barangay Bask Malutlut in Marawi at the start of the firefight.

Brawner said, Abu Dar escaped from the main battle-ground during the early weeks of Marawi siege purposely to get additional troops as reinforcement from outside but did not go back to the battle-field due to heightened checkpoints. Abu Dar has continued recruiting members, targeting young ones whose family members died during Marawi siege. They are being trained in the mountainous parts of Lanao del Sur and he has been sighted frequently in Tubaran.

*"Na-determine kahapon (Sunday) ang location ng grupo (Abu Dar) kaya ginamitan na ng airtsike. Ngayon, on-going ang hot pursuit operation to get him and his group. Wala na munang airstrike kasi nag-disperse sila, hindi kasi magamit ang airstrike kung isa o dalawang tao lang ang target. However, naka-standby ang mga air assets natin at ang ground assault natin ay continue,"*Brawner said.

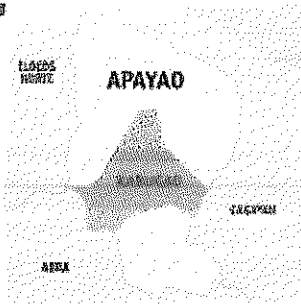
"Ito ang ipinangako ng AFP to get Abu Dar na nasa Tubaran with around 40 recruit-members all armed," he added.

The AFP assured that no civilians will be caught in a cross-fire because the aerial bombings was concentrated in the mountainous parts of Lanao del Sur where the terrorists are hiding and there are no residents. **MCAG / FB page of Provincial Government of Lanao del Su**

SECURITY OPERATIONS | 50IB clash with NPA terrorist, seizes camp in Apayao

Posted by Alvin Santiago on June 19, 2018 at 1:58 PM

CAMP GEN SERVILLANO AQUINO, Tarlac City (DWDD) – Army troops under the Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM) encountered with the Communist NPA Terrorist Group (CNTG) in the province of Apayao yesterday, June 18, 2018.



Troops from the 50th Infantry Battalion (50IB), under the Joint Task Force (JTF) "TALA", chanced on a group of New People's Army (NPA) while conducting security operation at Sitio Sibayan, Barangay. Paco Valley, Kabugao, Apayao

A meeting engagement initially ensued against more or less fifteen (15) CNTs, which lasted for about thirty (30) minutes. Engaged troops immediately conducted pursuit operations while fresh troops were sent in the same area as augmentation.

Another ten (10) minute encounter transpired between the reinforcing unit against eight (8) withdrawing NPAs twenty (20) minutes after the initial gunfight.

In the late afternoon of the same day, while conducting pursuit operation, troops have also discovered an NPA encampment having two (guard posts) at the same area in Sitio Sibayan, Brgy Paco Valley, Kabugao, Apayao, which can accommodate about forty (40) terrorist members.

The Army troops recovered equipment and personal belongings from the terrorist group having high intelligence value during the encounter, including some parts of customized bandoleers inside the enemy camp.

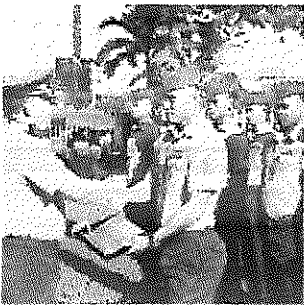
Moreover, no casualty was incurred by the government troops, while an undetermined number of casualties on the enemy side as manifested by the bloodstains along their route of withdrawal.

NOLCOM will continue to conduct Focused Military Operations (FMO), with the support of the locals in the area, to prevent the NPA terrorists from doing hostile plans against our people and hampering the development in the community. **NOLCOM / MCAG**

BRINGING GLORY | PA recognizes World-class Army Athletes

Posted by [Alvin Santiago](#) on June 18, 2018 at 12:32 PM

FORT ANDRES BONIFACIO, Taguig City (DWDD) – The Philippine Army awarded a plaque of recognition to its outstanding athletes composed of the Philippine Army Athletics Team and Army Mountain Bike Team during the flag raising ceremony here on Monday, June 18, 2018.



A plaque of recognition was given to Col Antonio John B Divinagracia, Director, Special Service Center for being adjudged as the Senior Champion during the National Invitational Open Athletics Championship held last 31 May 2018 to 04 June 2018 at Ilagan City, Isabela. The Philippine Army Athletics Team participated the competition and won a total of 26 Gold Medals, 13 Silver Medals and 15 Bronze Medals in the different track and field events competing against forty (40) other local and foreign teams.

Another plaque of recognition was also conferred to Pfc Richard Salaño for finishing 2nd among the more than 2,000 international high caliber runners in the 21-kilometer Jeju International Marathon in Jeju, South Korea on 27 May 2018. Pfc Solano also won the 2016 Marathon in Phuket, Thailand while finishing 3rd last year in Dannang, Vietnam.

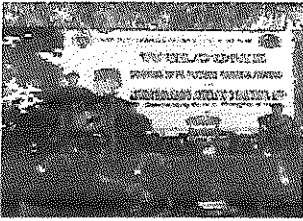
On the other hand, the Philippine Army Cycling Team also received a plaque of recognition for dominating the historical race “1st Tour de Basilan” dubbed as 120- kilometer Bike for HOPE (Honest, Orderly and Peaceful Election) last 12 May 2018 at the Basilan Circumferential Road, Basilan Province. The Army bikers dominated the race as Pfc Cris Joven finished first among the participants and declared winner of the 25-34 years old category while Sgt Alvin Benosa, Sgt Reynaldo Navarro and Sgt Alfie Catalan won 1st, 2nd and 3rd place respectively in the 35-44 years old category.

“The victories of the Philippine Army Athletics and Army Cycling Team in the National Invitational Open Athletics Championship, 21-kilometer Jeju International Marathon and the 120-kilometer “Tour de Basilan” proved that the capabilities of our organization This success is just an affirmation that our soldiers are indeed dependable not only in protecting the people but also in preserving the pride of our nation,” Major Gen Robert M Arevalo, Vice Commander, Philippine Army, said in his message.

The Philippine Army recognizes the contributions of its athletes in uplifting the image of the Army as a source of national pride and in pursuit of its vision of becoming a world-class Army by 2028. OACPA / MCAG

OFFICIAL VISIT | CGPA visits the home of the rangers

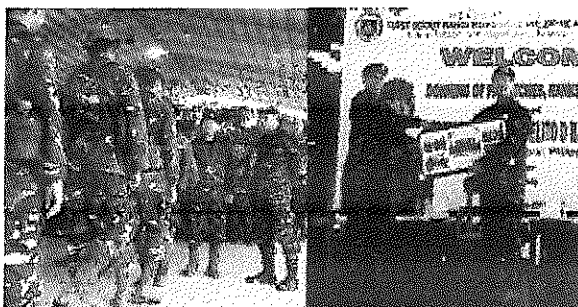
Posted by Alvin Santiago on June 15, 2018 at 12:17 PM



FORT ANDRES BONIFACIO, Metro Manila— Army Commanding General, Lieutenant General Rolando Joselito D. Bautista visited the Army troopers from the First Scout Ranger Regiment based at Camp Tecson, San Miguel, Bulacan on June 14,



Lt Gen Bautista was apprised by the Regiment Commander, Colonel William N. Gonzales about the unit significant accomplishments and activities and subsequently, led the donning of ranks, patches and awards to the personnel involved in the liberation of Marawi.

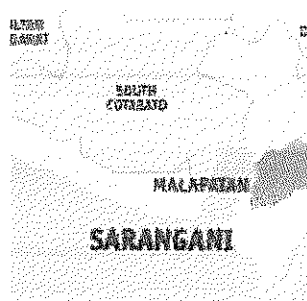
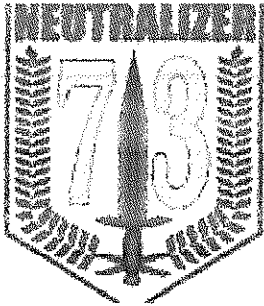


The activity was also capped by a fun-shoot participated by the shooters from the Headquarters Philippine Army (HPA) and the First Scout Ranger Regiment (FSRR).

NEW LIFE | 4 NPAs surrender to 73IB

Posted by Alvin Santiago on June 19, 2018 at 11:27 AM

MALAPATAN, Sarangani Province (DWDD) – Four (4) Communist-Terrorist under South Front, SRC TALA, FSMR (WPSR) all residents of Sitio Akfutan, Barangay Kinam, Malapatan, Sarangani Province voluntarily surrendered to CSP Team 6 of 73rd Infantry Battalion led by Corporal Recher L Mirasol PA at Sitio Akfutan, Barangay Kinam, Malapatan, Sarangani Province bringing along with them 3 High-Powered Firearms and other war materials.



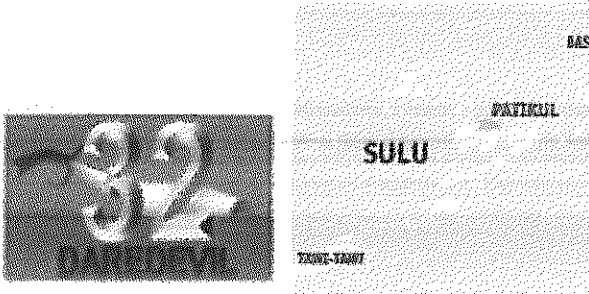
The surrenderees, identified only as alias Pantat, alias Duterte, alias Bayabas, and alias Lubi surrendered two (2) M16 assault rifle; one (1) Garand rifle; one (1) Improvised Explosive Device (landmine); and two (2) Handheld Versa Radio.

The surrenderees and war materiel are now under the custody of the 73IB for proper disposition and documentation. **73IB / MCAG**

SECURITY OPERATIONS | 32IB encounters ASG remnants in Patikul Sulu

Posted by Alvin Santiago on June 19, 2018 at 11:21 AM

PATIKUL, Sulu (DWDD) – An encounter occurred between operating troops of the 32nd Infantry “Daredevil” Battalion led by Lieutenant Colonel Ronaldo Mateo, Battalion Commander and members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) yesterday, June 18, 2018 at Barangay Panglayahan, Patikul, Sulu



According to reports, troops of the 32IB encountered the group of ASG Sub-leader Hajan Sawadjaan, and while in pursuit of the enemy, they again were able to engage the same group at Sitio Sailih which resulted in a ten (10) minute firefight

During the clearing operations, soldiers discovered that Improvised Explosive Device (IED) were emplaced around the enemy position.

The encounter resulted in one (1) killed on the enemy side and the recovery of one (1) backpack and one (1) mobile phone.

Troops are continuously conducting security patrol operations to neutralize the remaining terrorist in the area. **AES / MCAG**

4 more NPA rebels yield in Sarangani

June 19, 2018, 10:11 pm

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Four more New People’s Army (NPA) rebels surrendered along with their firearms on Monday to government troops in Sarangani Province, a military official said.

Lt. Col Marion Angcao, commanding officer of the Army’s 73rd Infantry Battalion (1B), said Tuesday the rebels voluntarily yielded in Barangay Kinam, Malapatan town following negotiations with their troops.

Angcao identified the returnees as Dante Lumayas, alias “Pantat,” 24; Dang Lumayas, 45; Degoh Lumayas alias “Bayabas,” 30; and Malkuni Lumayas alias “Lawin,” 30, all residents of Sitio Akfutan in Barangay Kinam.

The four were reportedly assigned with the NPA’s Front 71, which operates in parts of Sarangani and Davao Occidental provinces.

Angcao said they surrendered two M16 Armalite rifles, a Garand rifle, an improvised explosive device and two Versa handheld radios.

He said the rebels decided to return to the fold of the law because of their difficult situation in the mountains, as well as for fear of being killed in any encounter with government troops.

“This is also the result of our continuing intensified operations against their unit,” Angcao said in a statement.

Troops from the 73IB clashed with the NPA unit on June 8 in Barangay Culaman, Jose Abad Santos town in Davao Occidental, resulting to the death of a rebel and the recovery of an M653 rifle.

On Sunday, the troops launched another operation in Sitio Kalgang, Barangay Kinam following reports on the presence of NPA rebels.

Angcao said no encounter had occurred but troops recovered two M16 rifles from the fleeing rebels.

He said they are set to present the returnees to the provincial government of Sarangani for the provision of initial assistance and facilitate their enrolment into the Comprehensive Local Integration Program.

Through the program, he said the former rebels will receive livelihood assistance and incentives for the surrendered firearms.

“They will be provided with various support services that will help them start new and peaceful lives with their families,” he added. *(PNA)*

Thousands of government housing units deteriorate as they remain unoccupied Published

June 19, 2018 9:21pm

A huge chunk of the government's housing units set aside for soldiers and the police are slowly deteriorating as they remain unoccupied, despite having already been awarded to beneficiaries.

A report by Jun Veneracion in 24 Oras said that informal settlers from Metro Manila who have been transferred to Balagtas Heights in Bulacan fear that their new units will fall apart.

Water and electricity are available in the village, but cracks in the walls are visible. The substandard quality of the housing units is one of the reasons why beneficiaries refuse to move in in the first place, the National Housing Authority (NHA) admitted.

A total of 55,000 units set aside for members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police are still vacant, the report said.

More than a thousand housing units in Hermosa, Bataan remain unoccupied, while another thousand units are sitting idle in Ibaan, Batangas, as residents complain that there are no facilities and utilities such as water.

Around 1,400 units in Bukidnon and 1,200 in Guardian Hills in General Santos City are unoccupied, but were barricaded.

Meanwhile, 700 units meant for AFP and PNP personnel in San Benito Plains in Aringay, La Union, have been accepted. However, 200 remain unclaimed.

Many of these have to be occupied as they have already started to deteriorate, the report said.

Other qualified beneficiaries are next in line to be awarded these units, the report said. "Akmang-akma din ito para sa ibang lowest 30 percent ng population natin or the underprivileged and homeless at the same time," NHA spokesperson Elsie Trinidad said. Trinidad said that they have ended their contracts with 20 developers due to substandard output, and that they are investigating 33 others. She added that they are working to prevent them from contracting with NHA in the future. "Susunod 'yun, 'yung legal action. That would mean di na siya pwede kumuha ng kontrata sa NHA," she said. —

Jessica Bartolome/BM, GMA News

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Duterte is 'killing the peace talks' — Joma Sison

By: Nestor Corrales - Reporter / @NCorralesINQ
INQUIRER.net / 09:29 PM June 19, 2018

President Rodrigo Duterte is killing the peace talks, exiled Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria "Joma" Sison said on Tuesday after the chief executive insisted that the resumption of the peace negotiations is held in Manila.

"Duterte is killing the peace negotiations. He knows very well that the NDFP (National Democratic Front of the Philippines) will never submit itself to negotiating in a venue under his control and manipulation," Sison said in a statement.

Sison questioned the sincerity of the Philippine government, saying its end goal is to "destroy" the New People's Army (NPA).

He said the desperate and futile strategy of the Duterte administration and the Armed Forces of the Philippines consists of a "campaign plan to destroy the NPA before the end of 2018 by launching offensives and using 'tokhang' methods in communities."

Duterte, he said, was trying to dictate to the NDFP, the political arm of the communist movement, "to negotiate in Manila and come under the control, manipulation, and intimidation of Duterte and [the] military."

"If [the] NDFP refuses, the CPP and [the] NPA become targets of anti-terrorist campaign and proclamation of martial law or state of emergency nationwide," he said.

But if the NDFP accepts the proposal to hold the talks in Manila, the negotiations, as well as persons including himself, will "become hostages for compelling NDFP capitulation as [a] result of [a] campaign plan to destroy the NPA before the end of 2018.

It was clear that the government is "determined to destroy the NPA, even if impossible, and to use and kill the peace negotiations one way or the other."

"There is no choice for the revolutionary forces and people represented by the NDFP but to intensify [the] people's war and carry out extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare, without any distraction from peace negotiations and any kind of ceasefire," he said. In a speech on Tuesday, Duterte insisted that the resumption of peace talks should be held in the

Lanao del Norte mayor yields for slay of political rival

By: Divina Suson - @inquirerdotnet

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:52 PM June 19, 2018



FIREARMS CACHE Soldiers inspect high-powered firearms and bullets recovered after a raid on a satellite office of Mayor Jabar Tago of Pantar, Lanao del Norte province.—RICHEL V. UMEL / FILE PHOTO

ILIGAN CITY – Mayor Jabar Tago of Pantar, Lanao del Norte province on Tuesday surrendered to the court, which issued a warrant for his arrest over the killing of his political rival in 2016.

Tago and his brother, Jameloding, showed up at the sala of Judge Silvestre Orejana in connection with the murder case filed against them for the ambush-slay of former Pantar mayor Exchan Limbona.

They were now under custody of the Iligan City Police Office, according to Senior Superintendent Leony Roy Ga, the city police chief.