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'Phil does not need call from 38 states on HR'

BY CHRISTINA MENDEZ
and JANVIC MATEO

The country does not have to be told of its human rights obligations as it is already faithfully fulfilling them, Malacañang said yesterday amid calls from 38 countries for the Duterte administration to address concerns over thousands of deaths and other abuses in the conduct of its war on drugs.

In a joint statement issued at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session in Geneva last week, the 38 countries said the Philippines – as a member of the council – is obliged to fulfill its duty to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The 47-member UNHRC said it might take action if the government fails to fulfill its international human rights obligations. It did not elaborate.

In response, presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the administration has never shirked its responsibility to protect and uphold human rights while carrying out its campaign against illegal drugs.

“Even if there is no such call, we enforce the law. As I said, we have an

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Phil does From Page 1

inventory of those killed in the war on drugs so that we can easily determine if the processes are followed or not," Roque said in Filipino.

"This means we don't need to be told by foreigners," he said.

In their statement, the 38 countries maintained that "states which are elected to join the council should lead by example and are expected to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights during their time as members." Iceland's representative delivered the message.

"If needed, the council may take further steps, including a more formal council initiative to try and ensure that member-states meet their human rights obligations," it added.

The council reiterated its call for the government to investigate killings and protect human rights defenders.

"We urge the government of the Philippines to take all necessary measures to bring killings associated with the campaign against illegal drugs to an end and cooperate with the international community to investigate all related deaths and hold perpetrators accountable," the statement read.

The call by the 38 countries came in the wake of the US announcement of its withdrawal from the council to protest its alleged bias against Israel.

President Duterte had vowed not to let himself or his officials be investigated by any foreign group for human rights abuses.

The 38 countries are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Macedonia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the US.

The group said any action aimed at drug offenders must be carried out in full respect of the rule of law and in compliance with international human rights obligations.

Concern for CHR

It also raised concern over reports of harassment of persons exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, including human rights defenders and journalists.

"We are also concerned about the harassment of members of the Commission

on Human Rights (CHR). We call upon the Philippines to provide and guarantee a safe and secure environment for all, including journalists and human rights defenders," it added.

In their statement, the 38 countries said they were encouraged nonetheless "by reports that the government of the Philippines has indicated a willingness to cooperate with the UN to allow an objective assessment of the human rights situation in the country."

"We urge the government of the Philippines to cooperate with the United Nations system—including the Human Rights Council and its special procedure mandate holders—without preconditions or limitations," they said.

Last year, Iceland also led a group of 32 countries in asking the Philippines to allow UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions Agnes Callamard to visit the country without preconditions or limitations.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano has repeatedly denied claims of human rights abuses in the country, and accused administration critics of destabilizing the government.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has yet to comment on the joint statement of the 38 countries.

The joint statement was issued as the CHR urged the Philippine government to push through with its re-election bid to the UNHRC.

CHR chairman Chito Gascon said the Philippines should seek a second term despite the decision of the US to leave the human rights body.

"Personally, I would hope that they still would do so as human rights are important in and of themselves as universal values despite whatever short-term strategic interests a government might have with regards to its foreign policy," he said.

The Philippines, which currently sits as vice president of the HRC, will end its three-year term at the UNHRC this year. It has the option to seek re-election.

Gascon stressed that all UN member-states, regardless of whether or not it is a member of the UNHRC, are obliged to behave in accordance with the highest standards of human rights.

He said it would be difficult to speculate on the impact of the US decision to pull out of the council, but said it signaled the retreat of the superpower from its leadership role in protecting and promoting human rights globally.

"(The move) is not unexpected under the Trump leadership. It may encourage

other tyrants to be more bold," he said.

Established in 2006, the HRC seeks to promote and protect human rights around the world. Its 47 membership is divided among regions, with each country allowed to serve two consecutive terms.

Not following US

Roque also made it clear the Philippines shares the sentiments of the US in the latter's decision to leave the UNHRC but sees no need to follow the US.

Roque stressed that Duterte is keeping its policy of not meddling in the affairs or decisions of other sovereign nations.

The Philippines had earlier withdrawn its signature from the Rome Statute that created the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Meanwhile, the Philippine National Police (PNP) vowed to cooperate in any investigation on alleged human rights abuses in the implementation of the government's war on drugs.

"It's always our desire to be transparent in our work processes, including our cooperation with any investigation by domestic or international bodies, but only through the Office of the Solicitor General which can best represent any government agency like the PNP," said PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Berugno Durana Jr. in a text message.

The government said at least 4,279 suspected drug pushers and users have been killed in alleged legitimate armed encounters with law enforcers since President Duterte launched his crackdown on illegal drugs in July 2016.

Durana insisted it is never the policy of the PNP to kill drug suspects outright in anti-illegal drugs operations, contrary to allegations from critics that security forces are killing drug pushers and users in cold blood.

"Our policy firmly lies on the principle that we can be tougher on crimes, particularly illegal drugs, while upholding human rights and the rule of the law," he said.

He added institutional reforms within the police organization are in place to ensure that human rights standards and principles are upheld. But he stressed casualties cannot be avoided.

"Anti-drug enforcers have the right to defend themselves while in the performance of their duty, including use of appropriate amount of force to effect arrest of usually armed and drug-crazed suspects," the police official said.

— With Emmanuel Tupas

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DU30: PH ECONOMY IN DOLDRUMS

STORY BY ALLAN NAWAL AND BEN O. DE VERA

Despite the auspicious numbers the country's economy posted in the first quarter of the year—thanks to additional revenues from the first tax reform package—President Duterte is worried that economic activity is stagnating in the provinces. He says projects are barely moving due to high interest rates.

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FROM A1

DAVAO CITY—Economic activity is stagnating in the provinces and no less than President Duterte himself is worried that the rising prices of goods could prolong the period of gloom.

"Now, the economy is in the doldrums, actually [it is] now," Mr. Duterte said on Friday night, less than a week after the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) raised interest rates for the second time since September last year to counter inflation.

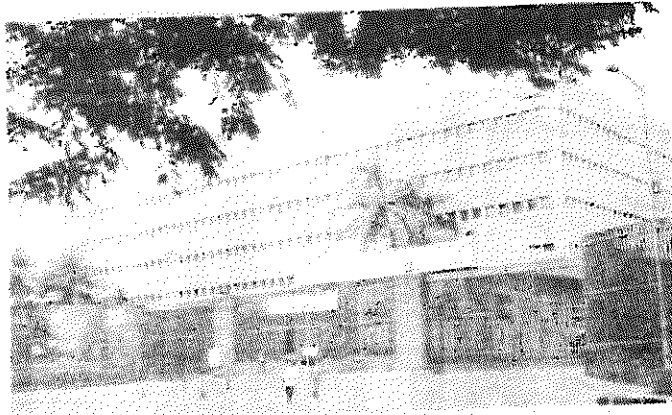
The President admitted that the situation in the provinces had become a problem for his administration because projects were barely progressing.

"Interest rates are picking up, are getting high so it destroys the existing [economic gains] ... You raise your [interest rate], our [peso value] goes down, theoretically," Duterte said in a speech at the National Information and Communications 2018 Summit at SMX Convention Center here.

"I said in Manila, they're starting the megaprojects well. I supposed that they would be doing it on time. But in the provinces, it's a doldrums thing," he added.

The BSP raised interest rates anew last Wednesday to 3.5 percent from May's 3.25 percent due to inflation concerns. Until the central bank moved to counter rising prices a month ago, the interest rate had stood at 2.75 since September last year.

The BSP said it decided to



Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas



President Duterte

raise interest rates anew as inflation surged to a five-year high of 4.6 percent.

Actual figures

The Philippine economy actually grew by 6.8 percent in the first quarter of 2018—among the fastest in the region and faster than the rate recorded in the same period last year—with manufacturing, trade and other services as the main drivers of growth, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Thanks to additional revenues from the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Act, the share of taxes collected by the government also increased to a record high of P567.1 billion in the first quarter.

In an economic bulletin, Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said the first-quarter expenditure effort, or share of government spending in the gross domestic product (GDP), reached a 15-year high of 20 percent.

Beltran attributed this to the rollout of the Duterte administration's ambitious "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure program.

Citing Department of Finance data, he said expenditures on public goods and services climbed 27.1 percent year-on-year to P782 billion as of end-March, "outstripping the 9.7 percent nominal GDP growth due to the estimated 40-percent increase in capital outlays."

But as inflation rose, the peso weakened to a 12-year low of P53.23 against the US dollar on June 13.

'Jueteng' as stimulant?

Mr. Duterte said the government was seeking more funds to finance big-ticket projects in the provinces to induce economic growth.

"I'm just ... brainstorming with everybody in the Cabinet how to come up with a system that would guarantee income

to the government," he said.

The President said the campaign to stop "jueteng" nationwide was well under way but he was considering a strong replacement for the numbers game to stimulate economic activity in the provinces.

"Now if I don't have a replacement for jueteng, what can I do? It's easy. If there's another form of gambling that takes over, I'll say, 'You get out of there' and arrest them all. Then what is the activity—economic activity? None. Now if there's jueteng ... at least money goes around. Some people will get hungry, others will be able to eat, [but] there's commercial activity," he said.

To finance some of the big infrastructure projects, as well as the pending rehabilitation of Marawi City, the government is borrowing money from such countries as China and Japan.

—REPORTS FROM ALLAN NAWAL, BEN O. DE VERA, INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ

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Chinese aircraft lands in Davao anew

By JANVIC MATEO

Another Chinese aircraft yesterday reportedly landed at the Davao City international airport.

Citing information from the Tactical Operations Group of the Philippine Air Force in Region XI, ABS-CBN last night reported that the aircraft landed at 12:18 p.m. and left at 12:59 p.m.

The plane refueled at the airport before flying to China, the report said.

In a separate post on Twitter, Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano questioned the landing of the Chinese plane.

"We have no formal military agreements with China which

makes landings like that unusual, especially if high defense officials were not aware of it," he wrote.

"On one hand, we have existing visiting forces agreements with Australia and the United States," he added, apparently reacting to critics who called him out for not questioning the recent landing of an Australian plane in the country.

Earlier this month, a Chinese military transport plane also landed in Davao City to refuel.

Malacañang said there was clearance from the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines for the said plane to land in the country. S

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**Chinese military plane
lands again in Davao**

The Chinese military plane that stirred controversy and rumors of creeping Chinese invasion for landing at the Davao City airport is back. The IL-76 plane of the Chinese People's Liberation Army landed again at the Francisco Bangoy International Airport on Saturday. Airport sources said the military transport plane made a quick stop to refuel after taking part in military exercises in New Zealand. On Friday, a Royal Australian Air Force C-17 military transport plane also landed in Davao City.—KARLOS MANLUPIG 

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Chinese military plane returns to refuel at Davao airport

By KEITH BACONGCO

DAVAO CITY – A Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) Ilyushin Il-76 made another refueling stopover at the Davao International Airport on Saturday noon.

The Soviet-made military cargo plane, with tail number 21407, was en route back to China after participating in a two-week military exercise known as Skytrain 2018 in Auckland, New Zealand.

It was the same plane that had a refueling stop here last June 8 on its way to New Zealand.

Manila Bulletin sources disclosed that the plane was carrying at least 20 crew members.

During its first refueling stop on June 8, sources disclosed that the crew members had a quick lunch at a cafeteria inside the airport terminal.

On Saturday, the four-engine

military cargo plane touched down on Runway 05 at around 12:20 p.m. and took off at around 2 p.m.

As the plane taxied to the east side of the tarmac, two fuel tankers made their way to the right side of the aircraft.

Residents living near the runway in Doña Pilar Village were stunned by the noise and the size of the plane.

"Mao diay saba kaayo, tingala kami lahi man ang tingog kay naanad man kami sa mga eroplano na sige landing dire (That's why it was so noisy. We were surprised because the sound was different from what we normally hear when planes land)," a resident told Manila Bulletin.

The IL-76 is a known heavy-transport plane designed to carry tanks, guns, and other military equipment. It has a wingspan of about 50 meters and has a payload of at least 40 tons. 22



RETURN TRIP – A Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) Ilyushin Il-76 takes off from the Davao International Airport after a refueling stopover yesterday noon. (Keith Bacongco)

Chinese military plane refuels in Davao again

THE controversial Chinese military plane that landed at the Davao International Airport on June 8 was back on Saturday.

Sources said the People's Liberation Army Air Force's IL-76 strategic airlifter made a quick pitstop to refuel after participating in a military exercise in New Zealand.

The same explanation was issued by the Chinese

Embassy in Manila and local authorities after the plane was sighted in the same airport earlier this month.

Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua was quoted in reports asserting that there are no reasons for Filipinos to be worried over the landings of their air assets in the country, saying that China has no intention of waging war with a "good neighbor".

The Palace shared that the plane's refueling went through proper processing and was cleared by government agencies.

The plane left Davao on Saturday afternoon and is reportedly on its way back to mainland China.

On Friday, a Royal Australian Air Force C17 military transport aircraft also landed in Davao City. ☺

Efren Montano

Chinese plane in Davao again

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Reports said that the purpose of the rare visit from the giant aircraft is still unclear.

The presence of foreign military air assets in the country sparked controversies and debates especially with the present territorial row with China in the West Philippine Sea. **EMontano**

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'CHURCH OF RODRIGO'

DUTERTE ON GOD, CATHOLICS AND ADAM'S APPLE

There was, apparently, no love lost between President Duterte and the Catholic Church. Even during his campaign, the President minced no words lambasting the church for the sexual molestation he allegedly suffered from a priest when he was in high school.

Almost two years into his six-year term, Mr. Duterte continues with his attacks. Below are excerpts, edited for brevity.

"So God was lonely, so he created paradise and that's planet Earth. And God said, 'I will create man,' so there was Adam. God found that Adam was lonely, so he took one of his ribs and created woman. But God doubted his creation so he tested it. He called a snake and told it to give an apple to Eve. Eve ate it and gave it to Adam. And so malice was born.

"Who is this stupid God? You created something perfect and then you think of an event that would destroy the quality of your work. How can you rationalize that God? How can you believe him? So now we're all born with an original sin. Even in the womb, we already have sin. What kind of religion is that?"

—June 22, 2018, opening of the 2018 National ICT Summit in Davao City

"And I assure you, you can walk around at night and nobody would really bother you. (I will target) drugs, I said, after corruption. I'm a simple man. I have run roughshod against almost everybody—priests, human rights (activists). I don't give a shit. Those priests and bishops, they didn't elect me to office. Those (idiots), they're with the other side."

—June 14, 2018. Oath-taking of newly elected barangay officials of Region 4A, Sta. Rosa City, Laguna

Baloney!

"So don't believe those Catholics, or Adam and Eve. The god of the Catholics. He's an idiot. Look for a better God. Look, it says in catechism that God created the world. It was a paradise. Then he made man, Adam, and he was lonely so God created woman. It would have been fine but God called the snake and gave it an apple, asked it to give it to Eve. Then Eve tempted Adam to eat the apple and malice became malice. We all sinned. We are all born sinners, son of a whore. What did we have to do with Adam and Eve who were the ones who did the deed? What kind of God was that? Things were perfect then he decides to ruin them. So don't believe those priests. During my campaign, I felt like peeing, but son of a whore. It took three hours from Robinsons to the airport. I was late. So I said, son of a whore, Pope, you better leave now. I cursed him. Why did he come and cause such a traffic jam? So the God of the Catholics? Baloney! We have a new religion when we get out of here: the church of Rodrigo (applause). No limit. You have an

obligation to make yourself happy. (applause)"

—June 3, 2018, Meeting with the Filipino community in South Korea, Grand Hilton Hotel and Convention Center, Seoul

"It angers me. I was mayor for 23 years and people would come to me crying, saying, 'We have to bury our dead, but the church refused to open its doors. The priest got angry because it's a Sunday. The corpse smells really bad now.' I said, son of a whore, take the corpse out from the coffin and throw it there by the altar..."

"And why are you blaming me? Your parish priest married an NPA [New People's Army] member in Cordillera. So the NPAs were not the ones who killed him. In fact, the NPAs protested his death. But if you have an adulterous relationship with the wife of a soldier, a police, or a vice mayor, then you will really die. So that's why you should change your religion. A new religion has been founded. Our patron is St. Rodrigo."

—May 20, 2018, Annual town fiesta, Tabogon, Cebu

Are tomboys normal?

"Are you normal? Yes. Are tomboys abnormal? No, of course, not. Why? Because we are all creations of God (applause). It was God who made a mistake."

—Dec. 7, 2017, 7th LGBT Davao's year-end gathering, Azuela Cove, Davao City

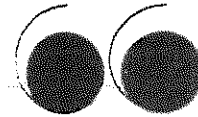
"You know if you are God, you are perfect. There ought not to be imperfections. Your creation must be good. Why create a snake? Better give that to China, which might cook it tomorrow (laughter)."

—Nov. 28, 2017, Birthday celebration of Atty. Alfredo Lim in Dasmariñas, Cavite

"It's not our fault. It's the fault of God. Why did he have to create woman. If we were all men, we'd just have a free-for-all."

DUTERTE ON GOD, CATHOLICS AND ADAM'S APPLE

FROM A2



**So don't believe those Catholics,
or Adam and Eve. The god of the
Catholics, He's an idiot. Look
for a better God**

—Nov. 23, 2017, Birthday celebration of Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco, Malago Clubhouse, PSG Compound

"I once encountered some bishops, that son of a whore CBCP [Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines], and I said, you act so high and mighty. We're just the same. You have so many women. So if you want to go to hell, believe in those priests. It's hot down there but all the beautiful women are there. Only the ugly ones go to heaven (laughter)."

—July 14, 2017, 11th Ambassadors' tour Philippine reception, SMX Convention Center, Davao City **A2**

"Priests do nothing but rant. They live in palaces. You should sell those and use the money to buy rice for the poor. And stop collecting money. If you don't, I will have you arrested for extortion ... I do not need martial law. I do not need to declare a suspension of the writ of habeas corpus. You destroy my **AG** country, you destroy the

youth. I don't give a shit if all the priests kneel and pray and beg. I have a country to preserve and that is the Filipino nation. It has nothing to do with religion."

—May 2017, Ground-breaking ceremony for the third bridge that would connect Cebu Island and Mactan Island

"If you tell me you're still Catholic tomorrow, I will be impressed with you. That religion will become passé in the next 30 years."

—March 30, 2017, Go Negosyo event, Malacañang

"I challenge you now. I challenge the Catholic Church. You are full of shit. You all smell bad, corruption and all ... (On the bishops' Pajeros given by former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo): Shouldn't you be ashamed of yourselves? That's so expensive and so many people have nothing to eat. Son of a whore, you accepted it. That was pure graft and corruption."

—Jan. 24, 2017, Speech before a meeting with families of slain Special Action Force commandos, Malacañang

(Speaking of priests from his childhood): "When we were young, we were making confessions to you, we were being molested ... What is your moral ascendancy? ... You are not helping. You just keep on talking."

—Jan. 19, 2017, Oath-taking of PNP officials, Malacañang

(Alleging that the Catholic Church never helped in solving the drug problem): "You're only good in collection."

—Dec. 27, 2016, Davao City

(On the death penalty): "Every President along the way didn't impose it only because the Catholic Church and all the bleeding hearts would say that only God can kill. But what if there is no God?"

—Sept. 26, 2016, Oath-taking ceremony of Malacañang Press Corps officials

"When you fondle us when we were young (and) holding confession while holding our prick and asking us what are our sins, and while you're fondling us while we are pouring out our sins, then you pretend to be the righteous institutions of this society, and now you criticize [others]]? ... The priest (who raped me) is in hell a long time ago, he paid P25 million to all the parties, and you still insist on hypocrisy? ... I can sit the whole six years of the presidency exposing you and attacking you."

—June 2, 2016, press conference at the presidential guesthouse, Davao City

"If I start (naming) the bishops who got married and have women in their lives, the Catholic Church will explode. (Referring to bishops who received SUVs from the Arroyo administration): People have

no food, no medicine, while you're enjoying the money of the goddamn people of the Philippines. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

—May 22, 2016, late-night news conference, Davao City

(Duterte names the late Fr. Paul Falvey, S.J., one of the Jesuit priests at Ateneo de Davao University as the priest who took his and other boys' innocence during high school): "It happened during our generation, two years ahead of us and two years following us ... It cost him some P25 million because other victims filed a case, it was a case of fondling during confession, that's how we lost our innocence early ... It was a sort of sexual awakening for each of us. We realized quite early that life was like that. How can we complain? We were afraid."

—Dec. 3, 2015, Davao City

"So I said, why is the road closed? Who's coming and they said the Pope. I wanted to tell him, 'Pope, you son of a whore, go home. Don't visit us anymore.'"

—Nov. 30, 2015, Proclamation as PDP-Laban's standard-bearer —INQUIRER RESEARCH

Sources: Inquirer.net, Inquirer Archives, PCOO website

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2013

Duterte awards 10 soldiers hurt in battling terror

By **FREDDIE G. LAZARO**

CAMP DELA CRUZ, Isabela — President Duterte awarded medals under the "Order of Lapu-Lapu" to 10 wounded soldiers of the Philippine Army in the battle against terrorists on Thursday, it was learned yesterday.

President Duterte was assisted by Lieutenant General Emmanuel B. Salamat, commander of the military's Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM); Major Gen. Perfecto M. Rimando Jr., 5th Infantry Division (5ID) commander; and Lt. Colonel Ignacio P. Timbol, chief of hospital of the 5ID, in pinning the "Rank of Kampilan Medal" to the soldiers who had been wounded in action.

They were identified by the NOLCOM as Sergeant Michael A. Armadang of army's 17th Infantry Battalion (5IB); Sgt. Frezer H. May-anao; Corporals Randy M. Puyao, Maurin Paul B. Garan, Melvin A. Ginez, and Jeronimo S. Tongdo; Privates First Class (PFCs) Eliezer P. Obiasea and Jone D. Dungan, all of the army's 86th Infantry Battalion (86IB); and PFCs Michael C. Valdez and Renny Boy S. Humiwat, both of the army's 21st Infantry Battalion (21IB).

Aside from the award, each of them also received a Glock certificate, check amounting to ₱100,000, cash assistance of ₱10,000, a cellphone, and an Office of the President Action Center Card.

Two of them were wounded in action in fighting the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Sulu; while the rest were wounded in the battle against Communist New People's Army (NPA) Terrorists in Isabela and Cagayan provinces.

The Order of Lapu-Lapu, Rank of Kampilan is awarded to those who were seriously wounded or injured or suffered great loss of property as a direct result of their participation in an activity pursuant to a campaign or advocacy of the President.

Internal threats hobble AFP modernization

By Joram Henry Dudson and Einar Navarro Manuel

With six soldiers hurt in an attack Thursday in North Cotabato, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday said the military must focus on strengthening the Philippines' external defenses while fighting internal terrorism.

The six soldiers, belonging to the 87 Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, were hurt by improvised explosive devices (IED) set off at Barangay Dolera.

The soldiers were returning from a medical mission with a group from the Integrated Provincial Health Office when hit by the back-to-back IED explosions and a volley of gunfire.

The military said it suspects New People's Army partisans to be behind the North Cotabato attack as a reaction to the Philippine

government postponing peace talks with its political arms, the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NDF).

The attack on the soldiers ignited the spotlight on Lorenzana's statement over the weekend that the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is being affected by its ongoing operations against internal threats.

"Of course, because money that could have been used for modernizing our troops are used to fight terror," said Lorenzana in answering the question whether the military's modernization is

The AFP is overhauling the weapons mix in its shopping list to take into account internal and external threats.

being affected by its campaign against rebels and bandits.

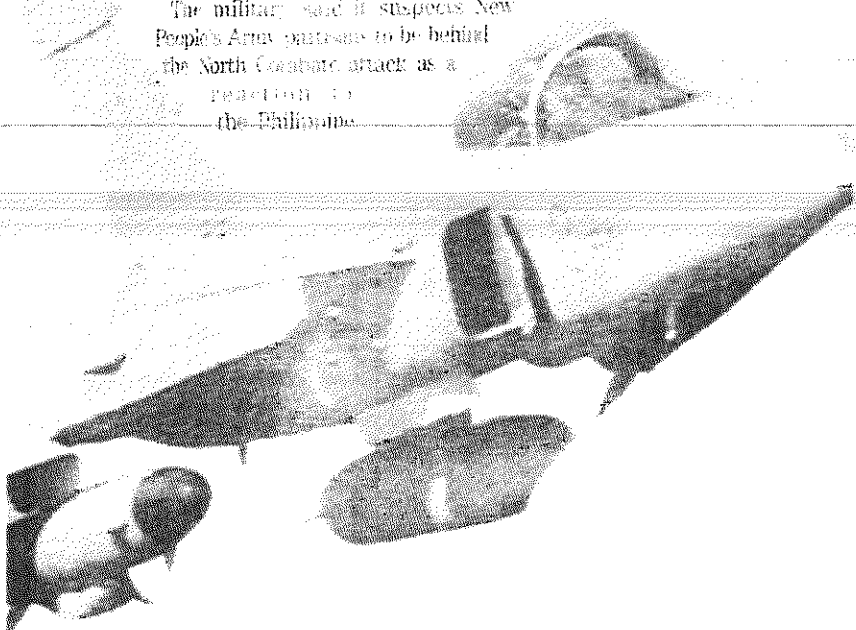
For instance, during the three-month Marawi siege, the AFP spent almost P2 billion to fight and defeat the Maute group terrorists, excluding the amount to care for the IDPs (internally displaced persons) by other agencies that ran into billions as well," Lorenzana said.

The AFP needed five months to neutralize some 1,000 militants who held the city of Marawi City starting on May 23 last year.

The Maute attack in Marawi City and the expected resurgences of NPA offensive amid peace talks being stalled are making the military reassess its equipment purchase plan under the Horizon Three program.

A few months back, the Philippine Navy showcased the capabilities of missile frigates on its wish list that, if acquired, would give the AFP better sea and air interdictions.

The hand-me-down vessels that the PN had



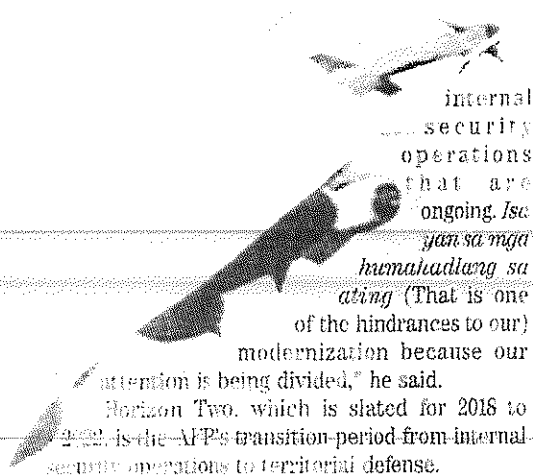
received from such countries as the United States and have stepped up their missile capabilities before our eyes, thus the PN is pushing the acquisition of brand-new frigates from South Korea.

Defense department spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said Horizon Three will have to be studied and discussed "kasi nagbago na 'yung mix natin (because we have a new mix)."

"*May* movement, *na kasi* (There has been movement), so that will allow us to now plan for what (equipment and platforms) we need," Andolong said PNA.

"It now supposes that we have already reached the level of credible defense posture, so we will now be concentrating on territorial defense already," he added.

"But, of course, we still have our



internal security operations that are ongoing. *Ise yan sa mga hamakadwang sa ating* (That is one of the hindrances to our modernization because our attention is being divided," he said.

Horizon Two, which is slated for 2018 to 2022, is the AFP's transition period from internal security operations to territorial defense.

However, due to the conflicts, the progress of the AFP in this acquisition phase is "somewhere in between" as the defense department is acquiring equipment for internal and external defense usage, Andolong said.

Horizon One lasted from 2013 to 2017 and resulted in the acquisition of the three Del Piñon-class frigates, 12 PA-50PH light-lift interim frigates, and two strategic sealift vessels, to name a few.

Under Horizon Two, the AFP plans to acquire

towed and self-propelled howitzers, multiple launch rocket systems, armored recovery vehicles, fire support vehicles, tactical radios, ground mobility equipment, individual weapons, crew-served weapons, and night-fighting equipment for the Army. For the Air Force, the AFP is pushing the purchase under Horizon Two of multi-role fighters, radar systems, light and medium lift aircraft, heavy lift helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, attack and combat utility helicopters, special mission and long-range patrol aircraft.

Horizon Two

The frigates, corvettes, submarines, amphibious assault vehicles, anti-submarine helicopters, attack craft, medium lift helicopters, and multi-role vessels are on the shopping list of the Navy under Horizon Two.

Also being eyed are combat engineer, force protection, explosive ordnance disposal, as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and medical equipment.

In the North Cotabato attack, two of the six soldiers who suffered serious injuries were rushed to the Camp Panacan Station Hospital in Davao City for intensive medical care.

With PNA

PA cadet nalunod sa training

Hindi na matapag-patuloy pa ng isang kadete ng Philippine Army (PA) ang kanyang pangarap na makapaglingkod sa bayan bilang isang sundalo matapos malunod habang sumusailalim sa practical exercises sa combat swimming sa Daraitan River sa Tanay, Rizal lamakalawa ng umaga.

Nagsasanay sa pagka-sundalo sa Camp Capinpin ngunit minalat na malunod ang biktimang kinilalang si Kheyen Roy Yson Penales, 26-anyos, binata, tubong Kidapawan.

Sa imbestigasyon ni POC Joe Sevilla, ng Tanay Municipal Police Station, dakong 11:00 ng umaga kamakalawa ay sumusailalim sa practical exercises sa combat swimming sa Daraitan River, Barangay Daraitan, Tanay, si Penales, bilang bahagi ng kaniyang pagsasanay sa pagiging ganap na sundalo, nang mapansin ng kanyang mga superior na tila nalulunod ito.

Kaugad namang rumesponde ang mga rescuer at inihapon ang biktima upang malapatan ng paunang lunas bago isinugod sa ospital sa loob ng Camp Capinpin.

Gayunman, idineklara na nila itong dead-on-arrival ng attending physician dahil sa secondary drowning.

Gayunman, nagsasagawa pa rin ang imbestigasyon ang pulisya para mabatid kung may foul play sa pagkamatay ng biktima. *Mer Layson*

Kadete ng PA nalunod sa training

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Duterte's tyranny shorter than Marcos — Joma

By JAIME LAUDE

Having been rebuffed by the military over his predictions that President Duterte would be ousted soon, Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison continued to rant against the current administration.

Sison, in his Twitter post, said the hubris and power mania of the tyrant can go on until he discovers that he, with his violence and lies, is fully counter-encircled by the broad masses of the people.

Sison was referring to Duterte, who he slammed for his decision to suspend the agreed resumption of the stalled peace negotiations in Oslo, Norway late this month.

"The tyranny of Duterte will run much shorter than that of Marcos for reasons that are now obvious to the people," Sison said.

Sison, in an earlier post on social media, predicted the downfall of Duterte and his administration "sooner than later."

He said Duterte's decision to suspend peace negotiations only triggered a "people's war to advance, causing his removal from Malacañang."

The military dismissed Sison's warning, describing it as "old hat," considering he has been raising the same threats every time the peace talks fail, but the communist rebels never got close to unseating the duly-constituted authorities.

"We don't know where Mr. Sison derives his temerity to make such threat when members of the New People's Army (NPA) continue surrender in droves in the face of the AFP's tactical, intelligence and civil-military operations that enjoy the support of the Fili-

pino people," Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said earlier.

Joaquin Jacinto, spokesman of the National Democratic Front in Mindanao, said Duterte's decision to cancel the June 28 peace talks showed his partiality to militarism and his deceit over the pursuit of just and lasting peace.

Jacinto said Duterte cannot just dictate and impose his will on the process.

Jacinto rejected the latest attempt of the government "to once again sabotage and derail the peace process" by arbitrarily cancelling the resumption of the formal peace negotiations set on June 28.

Jacinto said the talk of peace from Duterte is "apparently nothing but a subterfuge to veil its fascism."

He said Duterte is using consultations as an excuse for calling off the talks. "It even went as

far as inviting individuals from the revolutionary movement as resource persons to these so-called consultations."

Jacinto said this is also to lay the ground for Duterte and the military's insistence to hold the peace talks in the Philippines and conduct "localized peace talks."

"Apart from the demand for the venue of the talks to be transferred to the Philippines, which is a glaring violation of the The Hague Joint Declarations, Duterte has also demanded the return of Prof. Jose Maria Sison to the country as a pre-condition, one which exposes Prof. Sison to mortal danger," Jacinto said.

He branded the peace consultations as "dubious."

"If the government is truly serious about consulting the people, it should hold them during and within the terms of the formal peace negotiations," he said.

Presidential adviser on the peace process Jesus Dureza dismissed earlier reports that the military is behind the cancellation of the peace talks with the rebels.

Dureza said Duterte cancelled the resumption of formal peace talks in Osio after government peace panel chairman Silvestre Belle III briefed the President on the status of the back-channel talks.

Duterte has suspended all back-channel talks, citing the need to study for three months all the agreements previously signed by the government and the NDF.

Communist rebels, on the other hand, continued their attacks while the military is closely monitoring the NPA's infiltration activities in areas close to urban centers.

NPA spokesman John Malaya justified the burning of heavy equipment in Mabinay, Negros

Oriental last month, citing the failure of the construction firm to comply with the order to cease construction of a road.

The NPA also owned up to burning another heavy equipment used in the construction of a water dam in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental.

Officials said the construction firms failed to pay "revolutionary taxes."

Government troops, meanwhile, foiled a planned attack of the NPA on a village peace rally last Thursday in Davao del Norte.

Maj. Gen. Noel Clement, 10th Infantry Division commander, said a soldier was wounded in the incident.

Clement said the troops managed to frustrate the planned attack of some 20 rebels at a gathering in Barangay Sto. Nino, Talaingod.

- With Jose Rodel Clapano, Gilbert Bayoran

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MANILA, PHILIPPINES
THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

AFP scuttles NPA attempt to sow terror in peace rally

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

CAMP BANCASI, Butuan City - Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) troops prevented an alleged plan by the New People's Army (NPA) to stage attacks on a peace rally and security forces on Thursday, military official reported Saturday.

In a statement sent to The Manila Bulletin on Saturday, Brig. Gen. Ernesto C Torres Jr., commanding general of the AFP's 1003rd Infantry Brigade, said soldiers of the 56th Infantry Battalion engaged an undetermined number of heavily armed NPA terrorists in Tibucag area, Barangay Palma Gil, Talaingod, Davao del Norte, near the border of Compostela Valley (ComVal) and Agusan del Sur provinces.

"The (NPAs) plan to conduct atrocities during the peace rally in Sto. Nino, also of Talaingod town, and a site where another CAFGU Active Auxiliary (CAA) detachment is set to be established by the 56th IB," the 1003rd Brigade commander said.

He said a soldier was wounded while a still undetermined number of terrorists were either killed or wounded during the 30-minute gun battle.

"A platoon of soldiers under 56th IB was conducting security patrol at Tibucag area in support of the peace rally to be held at Sto. Nino, also of Talaingod town and as a prelude to the establishment of CAA Patrol Base in the area," Torres said.

"When they were informed of the presence of (NPAs), 56th IB troops immediately responded, but were fired upon by the terrorists, from a location at about 50 meters from Tibucag Elementary School of that same town," he said.

Dureza: Peace process still on

By Elmer Navarro Manuel

Despite the suspended restart of negotiations between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza expressed optimism the peace talks will still materialize.

Dureza, in an online interview, said he remains optimistic and has high hopes the momentary suspension of peace negotiations will not be a hindrance to the government's quest for lasting peace with communist rebels.

Dureza also belied reports the military was behind the cancellation and resetting of the fourth round of formal talks with the NDFP previously set on June 28 in Oslo, Norway.

"President Duterte would like to bring a sustainable and just peace in the land," Dureza said.

The suspension of talks was decided by President Rodrigo Duterte himself after he was briefed by chief

government negotiator Silvestre Bello III on the status of the backchannel talks at the recent Cabinet meeting, Dureza said.

3-month review set

Backchannel negotiations were suspended after the government sought a three-month review of all agreements with communist rebels.

The suspension of talks, however, "does not preclude communications between the two parties if deemed necessary," government peace negotiator Hernani Braganza said after a three-day meeting with his counterparts in the NDFP.

The NDFP, on the other hand, said both sides had "mutually determined to overcome obstacles and impediments to the peace negotiations" and added that both parties will conduct consultations on the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) during

the three-month review.

The suspension of the peace and back-channel talks was met with fierce criticism and as Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria Sison put it, the government has "turned against written agreements" signed during backchannel talks in The Netherlands from June 5 to 10.

Will he or won't he?

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

For its part, the Duterte administration wants to hold public consultations, which it hopes would galvanize support for the peace efforts.

Malacañang earlier had announced it preferred the peace talks with communist rebels to be held in the Philippines than in a neutral country, but it was quickly downplayed by some peace panel consultants, saying it will "practically kill" the peace talks because it is a "recipe for destruction."

Duterte vows to complete land reform before he steps down from presidency

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte on Friday said he will make good on his vow to pursue land reform whether or not peace talks with communist rebels continue.

"With or without the talks with the communist, I will go ahead and forge a good land reform until the end of my term. 'Wala akong ano diyan. Ubusin ko 'yan,'" he said in a speech in Davao City for the opening of the 2018 National ICT Summit.

In April, Duterte said his government will continue to implement "genuine" land reform amid canceled peace negotiations with the communist rebels.

During the fourth round of peace talks held in The Netherlands in April last year, both the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) agreed to conclude the unfinished distribution of land and do this for free for the landless and poor farmers, farm workers, and fishfolk, with just compensation to owners.

Duterte has also recently reiterated that he plans to place Boracay Island under a land reform.

Formal resumption of negotiations between the government and the National Democratic Front was supposed to take place on June 26 in Oslo, Norway, but Duterte called off the talks earlier in June to give way to

public consultations.

The government's land reform program started during the term of then-President Corazon Aquino when the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was signed into law. It was initially set for 10 years with an aim to distribute about 7.8 million hectares of land to reduce inequality and help alleviate poverty. CARP was extended for another 10 years in 1998.

Then came CARPER—the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms during the term of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. CARPER had a deadline of 2014.

Of a total area of 34 million hectares that fall under CARP's scope, the government has distributed 4.8 million hectares as of December 2017, according to a spokesman for the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Activists say officials accepted thousands of fraudulent claims, and that about 44 percent of land distributed is public, requiring farmers pay an amortization fee they say is excessive.

Peasant farmers and leaders said they want genuine reform, as the government's agrarian reform program, known as CARP and enacted in 1988, has failed.

EMontano

BTC commissioner optimistic MILF will accept bicam's BBL version

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – A commissioner of the Bangsamoro Transition Committee (BTC) yesterday expressed optimism that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will accept the final draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

The measure is up for approval by the bicameral committee (bicam) of Congress next month.

BTC commissioner Jose Lorena said he is positive the bicam will pass a BBL version which will address not only the gaps in the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao law but also be consistent with the peace agreements forged with the government during years of negotiation.

There were apprehensions that the MILF might not accept the final version, citing that what was ap-

proved recently by the House of Representatives and the Senate was a "diluted" version of the BBL draft submitted by the BTC.

"I think the MILF is pragmatic enough to understand that legislation requires that. It means I am optimistic because the President is so committed that the legislation will not only answer the gap but will answer the historical injustices," Lorena said.

He said he would not want to prejudge the actions of the bicam but believed the committee will pass a BBL law that is better than what the ARMM had and a law that will be good for the Bangsamoro region.

The bicam is scheduled to meet and pass the BBL measure by July 8 to 15 or even extend the discussion before it will be submitted to President Duterte in time for his

State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 23.

Undersecretary Nabil Tan, deputy Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), said it is within the authority of the BTC to propose a partly constitutional provision and wait for the constitutional revisor.

"But in the meantime BBL can already proceed," he said.

At least 11 MILF nominees in the BTC, of whom seven are senior leaders, were aware when President Duterte launched the BTC that they have powers and functions to draft the BBL. They were also tasked to look at provisions that could be perceived as unconstitutional.

Since majority of the MILF leadership are members of the BTC, they will work on those provisions to make it constitutional by submitting it during the constitutional amendment part of the process. <

3 BIFF men surrender

MAGUINDANAO - Three members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) surrendered in this province on Friday.

The BIFF men also turned over five rifles to Gen. Cirilito Sobejana of the Army's 6th Infantry Division.

One of the surrenderees identified only as Mangcala said they decided to return to the fold of the law amid intensified military operations against militants.

Nine militants, including three foreigners, were killed in air strikes and ground offensives which targeted a supposed bomb-making facility of the BIFF along Liguasan marsh last week.

Eighteen BIFF members have surrendered to the 6th ID since April.

- John Unson

3 BIFF in Liguasan marsh surrender to Army

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: Three members of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) operating in Liguasan marsh surrendered with their firearms to the Philippine Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade (602IB).

Capt. Arvin Encinas, 6th Infantry Division spokesman told *The Manila Times* that the BIFF rebels, who first surrendered to Col. Alfredo Rosario Jr., 602IB commander, also turned over their high-powered firearms, including a caliber 7.62mm, M14 rifle, caliber 5.56 rifle, M653 carbine rifle and two homemade sniper rifles.

He said Junior Dia Kaul, Roy Saidali Maningkala and Bin Tato Sulaiman, told the authorities they decided to surrender because of the effects of the ongoing military operations for the past two weeks

that have killed several rebels through the series of aerial bombardments in the Liguasan marsh.

Kaul said he was frightened of the air and ground operations of the military that detected their location even if they were in hiding.

The rebels confessed they joined the BIFF group more than two years ago expecting a P6, 000 monthly cash incentive to support their families but this was not given in the long run.

They were the third batch of BIFF rebels who surrendered to the authorities since April. The first group was composed of four rebels who yielded to the 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion on April 10 while the second batch of 11 surrendered on May 10 to the 33rd Infantry Battalion.

A7 JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

PNP steps up monitoring vs Indonesian terrorists

By ANTONIO L. COLINA IV

GENERAL SANTOS CITY - Police authorities have stepped up intelligence monitoring in search of suspected Indonesian terrorists who have reportedly disguised themselves as smugglers to gain entry through the country's backdoor in the coastal towns of Sarangani and Sultan Kudarat.

Chief Supt. Marcelo Morales, Police Regional Office-12 director, said police

intelligence units in the region are closely monitoring the entry of undocumented Indonesian nationals who were reportedly able to sneak into the coastal areas of General Santos City, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

Morales said the heightened monitoring came amid reports that more than a dozen Indonesians have joined the Islamic State (IS)-linked Maute terror group.

He said the suspected Indonesian terrorists disguised themselves as

smugglers of imported cigarettes from Indonesia.

The presence of Indonesian terrorists in Mindanao was bolstered by the arrest last March of Mushalah Somina Rasim, alias Abu Omar, 32, an Indonesian terrorist who was nabbed by security forces in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat.

Rasim was tagged as key leader of Jemaah Islamiyah terror group responsible for the twin bomb attacks in Bali, Indonesia in 2002 which killed more

than 200 people.

Rashim was arrested after he was reported recruiting local Moro rebels in Palimbang town, a known stronghold of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to join the IS.

Morales said police authorities are closely coordinating with the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation (BID) since the suspected terrorists were also reported to be using fake passports and travel documents. 22

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Abu Dar

AS

Abu Dar bounty raised to P6M

THE bounty on the head of Abu Dar, the leader of the Islamic State (IS)-inspired Maute terror group, has been raised to P6 million by local government units in Lanao del Sur.

Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., Joint Task Force Lanao spokesman, said local executives in Lanao del Sur doubled the previous P3 million reward offered for Dar's capture.

"The official bounty which will be given by the government is P3 million. However, we cannot prevent the local executives from raising the bounty to double the original amount," he told reporters on Saturday.

Last week, five members of the Maute group were killed in clashes with government troops in the towns of Pagayawan and Tubaran, Lanao del Sur.

Abu Dar was said to be among the Maute leaders who took part in planning the attack on Marawi City last year.

Maute leaders Isnilon Hapilon and Omar Maute were killed during the war.

ROY D.R. NARRA

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Warriors of peace aid Marawi

When we got there, it was heartbreaking

By Dinah S. Ventura

When war broke out in Marawi, a teeming city of religious and cultural convergence in Mindanao, many Filipinos could not believe violence from the Islamic State (IS) terror group was actually happening in the country.

The situation in Mindanao, while hogging many headlines in the past, did not betray a single clue that war could be imminent.

As each day seemed to worsen, concerns grew about the situation of the displaced families, the widows and orphaned children. But who was going to do anything about it?

"At that time, plans of going to Marawi were not in anybody's brains here because we were shocked at the situation," relates business mogul Joaquin "Jack" C. Rodriguez, Honorary Philippine Consul to Serbia.

"They were pissed off and angry that this was

happening in our country. Basically there was a lot of anger and hate. We were saying that we don't believe that people there didn't know it, that they didn't know what was going on. That was the attitude," he said.

Then Rafael M. Alunan III, a fellow Rotarian, called him up about the situation. "Raffy Alunan has always been a very patriotic person. He's very, very upright. I never saw a more honest

Turn to page 2

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From page 1

man. He was secretary of Tourism and also Local Government. I never saw anybody...I mean, I had some dealings with local government supplying some boats, and he was always upright, everything aboveboard, everything on the table... I always had a high respect for him," Rodriguez said.

"I hadn't seen him in many years because we were in Rotary together. He told me, you know we have to do something about Marawi. Let's go there," Rodriguez recalled.

Rotary connections

"Without the imprimatur of Rotary yet, we went on our own and to see whether there's room for us to participate. With his connections among the top brass of Rotary, we made arrangements to go there. And when we got there, it was heartbreaking," Rodriguez reveals.

"I mean, I shed not a thousand...millions of tears when I saw it. You know, we're all Filipinos, whether we're yellow, black, brown, white...Seeing this thing, whatever religion, you'll ask, what's going on here? Raffy,

I said, we have to do something," Rodriguez said.

"Definitely, at our age, we're not going to raise arms and be at the back of a weapon that will kill a fellow Filipino. Those were his exact words," he added.

Rehab campaign begins

So, they found other ways to help. "Government agencies were not doing anything yet, concentrating on the war, war, war. Nobody was thinking of rehabilitation. When we saw what we saw, I decided, Raffy, we have to dedicate our life over the next few weeks to this project," Rodriguez said.

When it came to their Rotary Club of Marile (RCM), he said, reaction was mixed because it was deemed "too big." Yet what this one club, albeit the biggest in the country, started has been instrumental in bringing more aid to the victims of Marawi.

"Philippine Airlines, right away, no questions asked, offered help. We'll handle the transport - medicines, vitamins, doctors, nurses, everything. They came all out and so did other companies. Pascual Laboratories, people in Rotary, so many people," Rodriguez said.

As for himself, Rodriguez confessed, "Whatever I spent is really worth it because when I saw the eyes of the children who had lost their fathers and mothers, I cried within me. To me, what's important is what was done. It's not about a bugle playing in my behalf, but more a lesson that we should learn so that it shouldn't happen again. That's what it's about."

No cake walk

It was in July 2017 when Alunan and Rodriguez went on a fact-finding to determine the humanitarian

"Whatever I saw when I saw children whose fathers a I cried

assistance gaps in Marawi. "We went to Cagayan de Oro from Davao where we met with Rotary District 3870 Governor Linda Deleste and its Secretary Bong Bout to discuss it and how to mobilize local Rotary clubs. "We began our preparation. It was not easy - some of the doctors didn't want to risk their lives. At the time, it was daily bombing and killing. We prepared. In fairness, all our work was totally coordinated with our local assets - meaning the Muslim leaders who were there

and the Muslim leaders who were in Manila. The coordination was good. We developed strong ties - I now have friends there that I never had before. I consider friendship as the most beautiful gift that God has given us. That blending of emotions, that blending of hearts and ideas was fulfilled in us," Rodriguez said.

Danger all around

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...within me."

Although they were escorted, Alunan and Rodriguez were risking their lives to see for themselves what

was needed to be done. "Air Force jets and helicopters were flying overhead to bomb the enemy about 2 kilometers away," wrote Alunan.

"When we would go, there wasn't a moment that we could say that we were going on a joyride. We worked to kind of appease the problem and the situation. We went to centers where they were keeping people - there must have been 40 centers, some had 800, some had 2,000. Some would only have two or three toi-

lets! You can put yourself in that situation and imagine how hard it is for the people. There were moments when you were just wondering what was happening to the world," Rodriguez recalled, showing some photographs in his laptop.

In one compelling shot, a Catholic nun and a Muslim woman are shown treating a wounded person. It showed how war could destroy and how war could bring together disparate beliefs when the worst of it happens to everyone.

The nun is Sr. Eva Fidela Maa-mo, a Ramon Magsaysay award-ee. In the Marawi effort for RCM, she and Philippine Army captain Dr. Sharon Reyes are given credit for their contributions.

Legacy project

After reporting their findings to the RCM Board, they were appointed chair and vice-chair of the "One Rotary, One Philippines, One for Marawi" committee. It was adopted as a legacy and centennial project to commemorate RCM's 100th year next year.

"All in all, we have helped 6,000 people, more or less," Alunan tells *Daily Tribune* in a phone interview.

The biggest drawback, he added, has been lack of donations for medicines and manpower. "It's hard to accumulate medicines, and if we buy them, we spend about P300,000 for 2,000 people. The team was able to identify four areas where humanitarian assistance fell short due to the lack of human and/or technical resources: Post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD; water and sanitation; prosthesis, and medical missions," Alunan said. "That's the big picture."

As fighting in Lanao resumes, thousands of families have been affected anew. "It's an endless job. There is a lot more to be done. We will continue with what we have to do. What we need is good governance and for government and society to work together," Alunan said.

One of the wounded soldiers they visited in the AFP Hospital said, "I felt so alone, I felt I got hurt for no reason at all. Now, today, I realized that my country appreciates what I've done."

And it is because of warriors like them - those working behind the scenes and exerting every effort to help Filipinos caught in armed conflict and natural disasters - that the country continues to hope for peace.

THREATS SLOW DOWN BID TO UPGRADE AFP

THE government's ongoing campaign against various threat groups are definitely slowing down efforts to modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Saturday.

"Of course, because money that could have been used for modernizing our troops are used to fight terror," Lorenzana said.

"For instance, in the five-month Marawi siege, the AFP spent almost P4 billion [to fight and defeat the Maute Group terrorists], excluding the amount to care for the IDPs [internally displaced persons] by other agencies that ran into billions as well," he added in response to que-

ries on whether ongoing internal security operations have an effect on the AFP's modernization.

Fighting in Marawi City began on May 23, 2017 when elements of the Islamic State-inspired Maute Group attacked the city.

That triggered a battle that ended five months later in October, when military units neutralized Abu Sayyaf leader and Islamic State Southeast Asia "emir," Isnilon Hapilon, along with 1,000 militants.

Defense department spokesperson Arsenio Andolong previewed Lorenzana's comments last Wednesday, when asked what the public could expect for Horizon

Three of the Revised AFP Modernization Program, which is expected to run from 2023 to 2028.

"Horizon Three [still] has to be studied and discussed because we have a new mix. There has been movement, so that will allow us to now plan for what [equipment and platforms] we need," Andolong said.

"It pre-supposes that we have already reached the level of credible defense posture, so we will now be concentrating on territorial defense already," the spokesman added.

"But of course, we still have our internal security operations that are ongoing. That is one of the hindrances to our modernization because our

attention is being divided," he said.

Horizon Two, which is slated for 2018 to 2022, is the AFP's transition period from internal security operations to territorial defense.

However, due to the conflicts, the progress of the AFP in this acquisition phase is "somewhere in between" as the Defense department is acquiring equipment for internal and external defense usage, Andolong said.

Horizon One lasted from 2013 to 2017 and resulted in the acquisition of the three Del Pilar-class frigates, 12 FA-50PH light-lift interim fighters, and two strategic seallift vessels, to name a few. PNA A 2

Oil, blood and fire mix well in Liguasan Marsh

BY KENE ACOSTA

TWO weeks ago the military carried out a frenzy of air strikes and artillery bombardment on the reported positions of a breakaway group of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Liguasan Marsh before ground troops moved in to capture what was described as a bomb-making facility of the terrorists.

The primary objective was to seize the primary source of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for Central Mindanao, neutralize the bomb experts of the group tagged as a believer of the international terrorist group Islamic State (IS), and degrade its capability to carry out terrorism. This was subsequently transformed into one of the most difficult battles for soldiers, the terrain being suited only for those with specialized war-fighting skills and training.

Elusive targets

AS in past operations in the area, some of the identified targets of

the battle made good their escape from the pursuing soldiers by negotiating the marshy terrain of Liguasan, of which, they are very well familiar with, before losing themselves in the company of innocent villagers who lived in the adjacent and surrounding villages.

For the longest time, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been working to rid Liguasan of teeming Moro fighters, some of whom are alternately called secessionists, fundamentalists and terrorists.

What makes the marshland different from the other objects of operations by the military in Min-

danao is it hosts a combination of groups from the BIFF, the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and yes, civilians.

The terrain

LIGUASAN Marsh, a large swathe made up of mud, water, sandbars and lands, covers an area of 220,000 hectares that straddle the territories of South Cotabato, Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

According to military public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato, the marshland is very fertile for planting crops, which makes it "very inviting" for civilian habitation.

Detoyato said the rich patches of lands of Liguasan grow one of the best varieties of corn and rice in the country, with the villagers cultivating what is locally called as *tapul* or *denorado* for avid staple consumers.

"The grains of *tapul* are colored red," he said.

Detoyato, who spent his younger years in the military operating against Moro bandits in the area and in the whole of Central Mindanao—apart from being born and raised in South Cotabato—said the terrain of Liguasan is a very difficult, even a hostile,

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course for operating troops.

"The water in the marshy areas sometimes goes up to knee-deep or even rises up to the chest or even higher, depending on the season," he said.

Sometimes, its expanse of sandbars, and even lands, disappears and reappears.

'Filthy' rich marshland

DETOYATO said that occupants of the marshland, including its settled villages, have already mastered its routes: and they use bancas as a means of primary transportation and in moving from one area to another to another.

"They don't walk, they use boats. They are very familiar with the rivers in going to municipalities," he said.

Detoyato said the Liguasan Marsh, especially the Rio de Grande River, which cuts through it, was even used by the Spaniards centuries ago in going into the heartland of Mindanao.

The muddy terrain of Liguasan helped the creation of the Riverine Unit of the Army Special Forces, whose first sets of watercraft were donated by Australia several years ago under the country's Status of Visiting Forces Agreement with Canberra.

Liguasan is literally a "filthy" rich marshland that some even called it the "Arab heartland" of the Moros in Mindanao, compar-

ing it to the oil-rich territories that were snatched by the IS in its rampage in Iraq and Syria.

Blood-drenched

THE marshland has the same tale as those of the areas taken and lost by the IS: it is drenched in blood, it is the hotbed of extremism, and it reportedly contains a combination of oil and natural gas.

However, Detoyato said it is not the deposits that sit beneath Liguasan that drives the military operations against the lawless elements in the area. It is the desire of the government to get rid of terrorism and end threat groups that continue to challenge the government, he said.

Oil, natgas deposits

DETOYATO said that, while there may be reports of oil and natural gas in Liguasan, the amount of deposits is "inconclusive."

"The oil there is young, and as to how big the deposit is, it is inconclusive," he said.

Reports about the presence of natural gas in the marshland were buoyed by information that some residents who lived in the surrounding municipalities have their water pipes spew with fire when lighted.

"In Kabuntalan, Maguindanao, there's a water pipe where natural gas comes out. If lighted, it creates fire," Detoyato said.

Similar discoveries were also reported in Sultan sa Barongis in

the same province, and even in Tantangang, South Cotabato.

The presence of gas deposits in Maguindanao was confirmed by the Tukanakuden Oil Exploration project by the Philippine National Oil Co. in 1997, and whose drilling equipment were secured by Detoyato and his team then.

However, Detoyato could not give the results of the explorations.

Reports said the drilling operations, held in the barangay of Tukanakuden in Maguindanao, unearthed a composition of 99 percent of methane gas with small traces of ethane gas.

The same composition of gas was also discovered at Barangay Kulambog, also in Maguindanao.

"Liguasan Marsh will benefit the Moros and all the residents that live within and even in the surrounding areas and provinces if it really has oil deposits. It will be put into good use," said Detoyato.

In the years since the first comprehensive peace agreement was forged with Moro rebels in 1996 during the Ramos administration, various research teams from several countries that supported the post-agreement development program were reported to have been deployed to Liguasan, sparking speculation that, indeed, the marsh may be holding a lot of resources.

But if Detoyato's report is to be taken as basis, the recent military operations are purely for peace and order, nothing more.

PEACE MAKER

Accident in Cambodia: Possible peace with the NPA in a genuine unity government



BY MISS CORINA ABLAN, ICAPP SPEAKER

A GOOD friend of the Filipino people, former Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh of Cambodia, son of the late King Norodom Sihanouk, and elder half-brother of the current King Norodom Sihamoni, met a terrible car accident on the Cambodia highway where his wife, Ouk Palla, a classical dancer, perished, and he was brought to a hospital in Bangkok where doctors believe he will pull through.

My wife Gina, Vicky Ablan, widow of the late Rep. Roque Ablan, Marides Rodriguez, wife of Rep. Jun Rodriguez of Rizal, and designers Ivy and Cynthia Almario, Elizabeth Nakpil, Chona Arpil, Bibi Ma, and Felipe Cruz III, who were attending a meeting in Bangkok visited the Prince, who was a former co-prime minister with Premier Hun Sen in 1993-1997. After 30 years, Hun Sen is still ruling Cambodia today as premier.

Prince Ranariddh, a co-founder of our International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) which we founded in Manila in 2000, has returned to politics. He must be at least 73 or 74, was president of the National Assembly for several years and was a professor in France. We talked over the phone with Princess Marie and daughter Princess Rattana, who is married to a Frenchman, and they said Prince Ranariddh will likely recover. We are praying that when Prince Ranariddh returns to health, he and Princess Marie could remarry and the Cambodian people would no doubt be cheering the reunion.

Premier Hun Sen is running for reelection and will certainly win and the National Election Committee of Cambodia invited us last week as chairman of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) and of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), to head the team of International election observers for the July 27-31 election and counting period, and we are inclined to accept.

There are valid criticisms of the government but it is also obvious that in the economic realm, the country has gained a lot of ground. With the economy spurred by the muscular performance of the construction, tourism, and garment sectors, and a growing diversification into electronics and auto parts, the Asian Development Bank has estimated growth at 7.1%.

ICAPP just founded a subsidiary, the Asian Cultural Council (ACC), with active Cambodian parliamentarian Souy Vanna as secretary general, with its aim to promote and preserve cultural heritage in Asia, exemplified by Cambodia's meticulous preservation of the popular tourist at-

traction Angkor Wat, a temple complex and the largest religious monument in the world, declared as a world heritage site by UNESCO.

The UNESCO and ACC, to be based in Phnom Penh, will shortly sign an MOU to jointly promote culture as an auxiliary activity of political parties and governments. In this regard, with Deputy Premier Hor Namhong ailing, he gave up his seat as one of the vice chairman in ICAPP in favor of the active Cambodian woman leader Khvon Sudary.

It is admirable that US President Donald Trump, as a businessman, a well-known deal maker, has achieved a breakthrough in fast-moving the peace talks with the young North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who was in his first foray in international peace negotiations held successfully in Singapore. Although just a few weeks earlier, the young Kim, a little less than half Trump's age, had two rapid fruitful talks with South Korean President Moon Jae-In in Korea's Demilitarized Zone at the Sun Paradise.

The negotiations between the US, North Korea, and South Korea will now move into more detailed discussions in the coming weeks and months, encouraged by the high achievement of their principals. But among those who understand the complexities of geopolitics, the negotiations could run for several years but piecemeal or partial agreements could be arrived at and could already be implemented if willed by both sides.

Which brings us to the long anticipated resumption of the peace talks between the Philippine Government (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDFP) following back channel talks in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and with the support of the Norwegian government as third party facilitator.

We are reminded that in 1987, a year after Cory Aquino became president, she boldly declared a 60-day ceasefire which was well received at home and abroad as a prelude to peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDFP although little progress was made until her chosen successor, President Fidel Ramos, established an amnesty and negotiation process in 1992, which we helped put together at the time.

Over the years, as speaker of the House, we journeyed to The Netherlands to confer with our friend Jose Ma. Sison and our classmate in La Salle High School Luis Jalardoni. Able negotiators like then Justice Secretary now Labor Secretary Bebot Belle, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jess Dureza, both still in the forefront of peace-making today, the

late Ambassador to the Holy See Howard Dee, the late Rep. Apeng Yap, and notable others have worked tirelessly, leading to the last five basic agreements, excluding the supplementals, signed between the government and the NDF.

The Norwegian government has admirably served over the years as facilitator and provided the venue for the talks in Oslo. For 26 years, on NDF request, the peace talks have been held in a foreign neutral venue, although there is increasing clamor today for the talks to be also tried at home.

In ICAPP we visited Nepal a couple of times over the years to help encourage the long drawn-out peace talks in Kathmandu, Nepal, in the foothills of Mount Everest and the Himalayas. The two organizations of the Communist bloc there, the Marxist Party and the Maoist Party, have lately reunited, and the rival Congress Party, which has ties with India, have propelled the country forward and the country is largely at peace today and even as a relatively small nation tucked in between two giants, India and China, has successfully updated its government into a federal state.

We are visiting Kathmandu in the third week of July to meet with the reelected popular Premier K.P. Sharma Oli of the recently combined CPN-UML (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Maoist-Leninist Party) to prepare the agenda for the joint Asia-Pacific meeting on November 21-23 of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) led by Dr. Thomas Waisli and the founder's active and far-sighted widow, Madame Hak Ja Han Moon of South Korea, and the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) with the conference theme "Addressing the Critical Challenges of our Time: Inter-dependence, Mutual Prosperity, and Cultural Values." We have the privilege to co-chair IAPP with the 30-year veteran, former senior US Congressman Dan Burton. Its last successful meeting was in Washington DC, partly held in the premises of the US Senate building.

We hope as in Nepal, whose Communist leaders, by the way, remember our friend Joma Sison, our brother Filipino Communists could now move to finalize a peace pact with the Duterte government, secure at least two seats in the Cabinet, demobilize the New People's Army, and integrate some of their members in the Armed Forces, secure jobs and farmland for their cadres, and to the applause of the Filipino people bring peace, and truly participate in a long-awaited Philippine Government of National Unity.

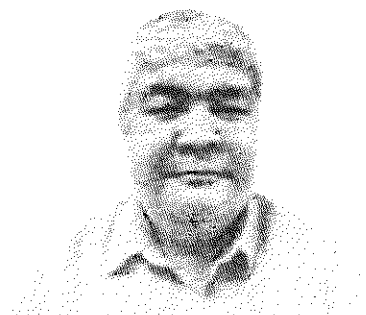
This is "consummation devoutly to be wished," long awaited by our anxious people.

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Gordon is correct

Senator Richard Gordon, who heads the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee, is correct. There is a pressing need to upgrade the fighting capacity of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). To state the obvious, the Philippines has the weakest military force among the numerous countries staking territorial claims in the South China Sea. It is so weak that the Philippines is unable to kick out the Red Chinese



THE SCRUTINIZER
Victor AVECILLA

troops currently occupying Panatag Shoal and other islets in a maritime area which, under International Law, and as decided recently by the International Court of Arbitration, lawfully belong to the Philippines.

which has the military might and arsenal to resist any external aggression. George Washington, the first president of the United States and the commander of the continental army that fought for independence against Great Britain, emphasized that one's preparedness to go to war is the best way to ensure peace with one's neighbors.

It is precisely because the Philippines is unable

"Despite its military muscle, the communist government in Beijing respects only those countries that are able to put up a fight."

to defend its interests in the waters between Luzon and mainland China that Manila now has problems with Panatag Shoal and its environs.

The military bases left by the Americans towards the end of the administration of then President Corazon Aquino were supposed to be disposed of by the government to finance the upgrade of the AFP's military arsenal. That task was left to Aquino's successor, President Fidel Ramos.

During the Ramos administration, prime real estate in what was once the expansive Fort Bonifacio was sold off supposedly to add to the budget for the AFP arsenal upgrade.

Today, the AFP remains ill-equipped, with only a miserable assembly of ships and planes in use to give the public impression that it is capable of defending the territorial integrity of the country. What is saddening is that Fort Bonifacio, which used to provide inexpensive housing for the nation's rank and

file

file military defenders, was sold off during the administration of an ex-soldier.

During the last Gulf War when Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Kuwait, Saudi Arabia sought pilots from Asia who could fly jets to bomb Baghdad into submission. Leaders of countries in South Asia sent their pilots to the war. President Aquino refused to do so but sent a token delegation of physicians. After the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia and its victorious allies donated jets to countries which sent pilots to the war. The Philippines ended up with nothing.

Under ideal circumstances, upgrading the military arsenal of the AFP must be given top priority by the government. The Constitution, however, provides that the bulk of the annual budget of the country must be spent on education.

That does not mean, however, the military establishment cannot upgrade its hardware. The billions of pesos in pork barrel funds used by abusive members of Congress for so-called projects that end up in corruption should be rechanneled to the military upgrade effort. Money used on needless projects like the "carindera" program of the Department of Tourism and government-sponsored out-of-town seminars for government officials and employees should also be diverted, even in part, to the military fund.

Public funds wasted by local government officials, like Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista on self-serving roadside decorations which promote their names, are a possible source of funds, but will require legislation by Congress. Smuggled luxury vehicles

impounded by the Bureau of Customs should be traded for military equipment through the intercession of friendly nations like South Korea, Japan and Australia.

Japan has an interest in keeping the maritime lanes in South East Asia open to international trade. Since Japan has undoubtedly proven itself to be a friend of the Philippines since the end of World War II, Manila should court Japanese generosity and cobble up a military deal.

Considering that warships and aircraft are very expensive, the AFP can opt for a fleet of submarines to defend against enemy sea vessels. It should likewise acquire sufficient surface-to-air missiles, like the Patriot missiles used by Israel during the Gulf War, to defend against air attacks.

The AFP should also create a cyber division to neutralize the military computer systems of any country that threatens the territorial integrity of the Philippines. This should not prove too difficult to do since Filipinos are reputed to be the best hackers in the world.

Because corruption may lead to the acquisition of substandard military hardware, steps should be taken to see to it that no middlemen are involved in the acquisition of military equipment. That is the only way to minimize, if not eliminate, corruption in the acquisition process.

While Sen. Gordon is correct when he said the AFP needs to beef up its military muscle, perhaps the only feasible solution to the problem in Panatag Shoal lies in Filipino ingenuity and creativity. Details of that, of course, cannot be discussed in this column lest potential enemies of the Philippines learn about the same. J

Editorial

Walang mangyayari sa peace talks

ANG minimithing kapayapaan sa pagitan ng pamahalaan at Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) ay mahirap makamitan. Malabong matuloy ang peace talks. Sa umpisa pa lamang, nagkakagulo na kung saan gagawin ang usapang pangkapayapaan. Ang ganitong senaryo ay nagpapahiwatig na hindi magkakasundo ang dalawang panig. Wala na namang mangyayari sa peace talks (kuno) na ito.

Ipinaggigiitan ni Pres. Rodrigo Duterte na rito sa bansa idaos ang usapang pangkapayapaan at hindi sa ibang bansa. "Bakit sa ibang bansa mag-uusap? Ang pag-uusapan dito ay tungkol sa ating bansa kaya bakit sa ibang bansa gagawin? Kailangang dito ito idaos," maring sabi ni Duterte.

Sinabi ito ng Presidente isang araw makaraang magbanta si CPP chairman Jose Maria Sison na



hindi matutuloy ang peace talks kapag dito sa bansa ginawa. Mas gusto umano ni Sison na sa Oslo, Norway idaos ang pag-uusap.

Pero sinabi naman ng isang National Democratic Front (NDF) consultant, uuwi raw sa Agosto rito sa bansa si Sison para sa pagdaraos ng peace talks. Darating daw ito sa ikalawang linggo ng Agosto. Ganunman, nagpahayag ng pagkabahala ang consultant na maaaring arestuhin ang mga negotiators kapag dito idinaos ang peace talks. Itinanggi naman ni Sison ang report na uuwi siya sa Agosto.

Sinabi ng Malacañang na puwede ring sa Oslo idaos ang peace talks. Puwede raw maging third party facilitator ang Norway sa pagkat sa mga nakaraang pag-uusap ay sa bansang ito ginagawa. Ayon sa Malacañang, ang mahalaga raw ay malaki ang pagnanais ni President Duterte na matuloy ang pag-unsap.

Sino ba ang ayaw magkaroon ng kapayapaan? Lahat ay naghahangad nito. Dapat matapos na ang paglalaban ng pamahalaan at CPP-NDF-NPA. Pero sa takbo ng pag-uusap ng magkabilang panig, tila may patigasan kung saan gagawin ang peace talks. Mayroong ipinipilit ang dalawang pinuno. 3

Hangga't may nagpapatigasan, walang mararating ang pag-uusap. Hangga't may nagmamataas, malabong matuloy ang usapang pangkapayapaan. Kailangang may pagkumbaba at tiwala sa isa't isa.



Babala ni Joma Sison, balewala sa AFP

BINALEWALA lang ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) ang babala ni Jose Ma. Sison, founding chairman ng Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), na umuusad ngayon

ang "people's war" para patalsikin si Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte sanhi ng desisyon niyang suspindehin ang usapang pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng gobyerno at ng kilusang komunista.

Sinabi ni Col. Edgard Arevalo, AFP spokesman, na tuwing mauunsiyami ang peace talks sa nakalipas na mga panahon, ganito rin ang banta at pahayag ni Joma Sison laban sa pamahalaan ngunit kailanman ay hindi nagtagumpay ang communist rebels na mapatalsik ang sinumang pangulo na nakaupo sa puwesto.

Maanghang ang parunggil ni Arevalo laban kay Sison na naka-exile sa The Netherlands habang naghilirap ang mga NPA sa kabundukan: "We do not know where Mr. Sison derives his temerity

to make such threat when members of the New People's Army continue to surrender in droves in the face of the AFP's special tactical, intelligence and civil-military operations that enjoy the support of the Filipino people."

Baray sa ulat, may 2,263 regular NPA members at ang kanilang mass base supporters. ang sumuko sa gobyerno sapul nang ilunsad ang pinaigting na military operations sa unang bahagi nitong 2018. Karamihan sa nagsisuko ay mula sa Mindanao, lalo na sa Caraga at Davao regions.

Sa kanyang social media post, binatikos ni Joma ang isinusulong na modernisasyon ng AFP. Ito raw ay pagsasavang lang ng salapi ng bayan. Binira rin niya si Pres. Duterte sa pagsasabing nananaginip

ang Pangulo sa pagkakaroon ng maraming salapi na magagamit sa military equipment at operasyon. Ito ay ang tungkol sa multi-billion peso fund na gagamitin para sa AFP's Horizon II Modernization Program.

Alam ba ninyong nagtungo si DFA Sec. Alan Peter Cayetano sa Washington para makipag-usap kay US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tungkol sa usapin sa South China Sea? Ayon sa ulat, pinag-usapan nina Cayetano at Pompeo ang hinggil sa counter-terrorism, North Korea, bilateral trade, security cooperation at muling pagpapalakas ng relasyon ng PH at US. Marahil ay tinalakay rin sa pulong ng dalawa ang tungkol sa isyu ng West Philippine Sea na ngayon ay dinodomina ng China.

Hindi pa nakapagpapasiya si ex-Supreme Court Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno kung siya'y papalaot sa pulitika matapos mapatalsik sa puwesto sa bisa ng quo warranto petition ni Solicitor General Jose Calida. Apat na buwan mula ngayon magsisimula na ang paghahain ng certificate of candidacy para sa 2019 mid-term elections.

Iniiisip daw ng pinatalsik na Punong Mahistrado kung siya ay kakandidato bilang senador o magiging bahagi na lang ng civil society na magbantay sa mga ginagawa ng Duterte administration. Ayon kay Sereno, maraming tao at grupo ang humihikayat sa kanyang tumakbo subalit kailangan niya muna itong pag-isipan at alamin kung ano ang makabubuti sa bayan.

Online News 23 June 2018

<https://www.philstar.com/>



His foul-mouthed leader, who is also a self-confessed womanizer, has been blasted for his sexist and objectifying remarks about women. But he remains hugely popular despite the criticisms.

Duterte on why he prefers to appoint men: Mapagawa ko ba 'yan sa babae?

[[Jan Nicolas Cigaral](#) ([philstar.com](#)) - June 23, 2018 - 9:24am]

MANILA, Philippines — President Rodrigo Duterte on Friday sought to explain his refusal to give women certain roles in the government, amid blistering criticisms from feminists who have labelled the firebrand leader a misogynist.

"I said I really don't want to appoint women; I really don't prefer women to do some jobs. I want male appointees because I have a lot of orders," Duterte said in a freestyle speech.

Duterte then stressed he thinks women are fit for certain positions like heading the Tourism department, for instance.

"Suddenly, I would just tell you, 'You go to Marawi [City] because nobody is supervising there.' Can I order a woman to do that?" he said, referring to the provincial capital of Lanao del Sur where female troops fought shoulder to shoulder with men to liberate the city from terrorists.

"Even if you say women are bright, all of those in the political horizon – you're better off with young people," he added.

The foul-mouthed leader, who is also a self-confessed womanizer, has been blasted for his sexist and objectifying remarks about women. But he remains hugely popular despite the criticisms.

Last May, Duterte sparked outrage for saying he would not pick a woman to be the next ombudsman and Supreme Court chief justice. He later explained that he is a believer in the abilities of women but some jobs are not for them because they get easily cowed by threats.

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The three BIFF members who surrendered to the Philippine military in Maguindanao are seen in a photograph by Gen. Cirilito Sobejana of the 6th Infantry Division in Camp Siongco in Maguindanao on Friday night.

3 BIFF members surrender to military in Maguindanao

John Unson (philstar.com) - June 23, 2018 - 2:56am

MAGUINDANAO, Philippines — Three more members of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters surrendered on Friday and pledged allegiance to the Philippine flag.

One of them told reporters they decided to surrender and turn over their firearms to Gen. Cirilito Sobejana of the Army's 6th Infantry Division after realizing that their group, based in central Mindanao's Liguasan Delta, could be 6th ID's next target following an airstrike there two weeks ago that destroyed their makeshift bomb-making facility and killed nine, three of them foreign terrorists. "Kami na sigurado ang isusunod at naisip naming kawawa ang aming mga anak kung mamatay kami," said one of the BIFF bandits, who asked to be identified only as Mangcala for his safety. He said the squabbles of their commanders for the leadership of BIFF, which has three factions now, one of them led by an Islamic State-inspired cleric, Imam Abu Toraife, are getting worst. The surrender of the three men, who also turned over four assault rifles and a .50 caliber Barrett sniping rifle, brought to 18 the number of BIFF members who surrendered to the 6th ID since April this year. The first to yield were four bandits trained in fabrication of improvised explosive devices by the slain Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, most known as Marwan, while Gen. Arnel Dela Vega, commander of the Western Mindanao Command, was at 6th ID's helm yet. Eleven more surrendered three weeks later to Maguindanao Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu through the intercession of the Army's 33rd Infantry Battalion, the 1st Mechanized Battalion and local officials in Paglat and General Pendatun towns in the province. The office of Mangudadatu is now helping reintegrate the new reforming BIFF men, two of them commanders, through socio-economic interventions and religious formation by moderate Muslim theologians helping address misguided Islamic militancy plaguing isolated areas in Maguindanao and North Cotabato. Mangudadatu earlier said President Rodrigo Duterte has also promised to provide them core shelters to hasten their return to mainstream society. The local government unit of General Pendatun has offered lots where to construct the houses. "These three men first signified their desire to surrender to a local executive and officials of the 602nd Brigade and the 7th IB," said Sobejana, who assumed as 6th ID commander only last May 25. Both units are under 6th ID, whose coverage spans through the neighboring Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat provinces, and several towns in Lanao Del Sur. Sobejana said there were actually five of them who were to bolt out, but the two failed to leave their enclave at the marshy border of Mlang, North Cotabato and General Pendatun, Maguindanao on agreed time. "The duo assured they will proceed with their surrender once they can leave. There were some security considerations. We are giving them enough time to plan their safe exit from their lair," Sobejana said. The three BIFF men, two of them named Taul and Solaiman, are to undergo tactical debriefing meanwhile in Camp Siongco, the command center of 6th ID, while its units are to relocate their families to areas far from reach by their hardcore companions. "Surely they will become subject of reprisals," Sobejana said. Reports have circulated early on purporting that more than 20 BIFF members had been executed by companions from April to May alone on mere suspicion they were in backchannel talks with groups interceding for their surrender. Two of those reportedly killed by companions gangland style, Akong Sumaei and Khalid Tangan, were accused of providing the military information on their movements in the Liguasan Delta, located at the tri-boundary of Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2018/06/23/1827211/3-biff-members-surrender-military-maguindanao#EiCdaZZ5oz4ZWmcQ.99>

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6 BIFF members, soldier killed in Maguindanao clashes

John Unson photo.com - June 12, 2018 - 2:59pm

MAGUINDANAO, Philippines — Six members of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and a soldier were killed in separate clashes in Maguindanao on Monday.

The Army fatality, Private 1st Class Qitor of the 33rd IB, died from bullet wounds sustained in a gunfight with BIFF bandits in the Liguasan Delta, near the group's bomb-making facility destroyed by an airstrike before dawn Monday.

Gen. Cirilito Sobejana of the Army's 6th Infantry Division said Tuesday Qitor and his companions were trying to locate at least six BIFF bandits injured in the airstrike when gunmen attacked them from one side of their route, sparking a gunfight.

Local executives and barangay leaders in towns along the Liguasan Delta have confirmed that four Asian foreigners were inside the BIFF's makeshift storage for improvised explosives devices helicopter gunships flattened with rockets early Sunday.

Barangay officials, among them Moro datus supporting the government's campaign against the BIFF, said three of the more than 50 militants who traded shots with Qitor and his companions, identified only as Bundas, Kamid and Oruk, and also got killed.

The incident preceded the foiled attempt, at past 8:00 p.m. Monday, by another group to surround a detachment of the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion in Barangay Meta in Datu Unsay, Maguindanao.

Soldiers engaged the bandits, led by BIFF Commander Metin, in a running gunfight, killing three of them and wounding two more.

The slain followers of Metin were identified by local officials as Turman Aber, Mansur Mohammad and Kusid Laguiab, also known as Mamalu.

The attack was pulled off by Metin and his men less than a day after local officials warned of retaliations by the BIFF for losses it suffered in Monday's Army operation in the Liguasan Delta.

The BIFF, who uses the Islamic State flag as revolutionary banner, is feared for its practice of venting ire on civilians to avenge deaths of members in encounters with government forces.

The group, which emerged in 2010, is blamed for all of the bombings in central Mindanao since, perpetrated by members trained in fabrication of IEDs by the slain Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, most known as Marwan. It has also been trying to sabotage the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2018/06/12/1823971/6-biff-members-soldier-killed-maguindanao-clashes#69g0440xdpICylww.99>

Military dismisses Joma Sison's oust Duterte threat

Jaime Lauge *The Philippine Star* - June 23, 2018 - 12:15a

MANILA, Philippines — The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has dismissed as "old hat" the warning of Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison that a people's war is now advancing for President Duterte's ouster following his decision to suspend the resumption of peace talks.

Col. Edgard Arevalo, AFP spokesman, pointed out that in the past failed peace talks, Sison also raised the same ouster warning against the government, but the communist rebels never got close to unseating the duly constituted authorities.

"We do not know where Mr. Sison derives his temerity to make such threat when members of the New People's Army (NPA) continue to surrender in droves in the face of the AFP's tactical, intelligence and civil-military operations that enjoy the support of the Filipino people," Arevalo said.

At least 2,263 regular NPA members and their mass base supporters have surrendered to government authorities nationwide since the launch of intensified military operations early this year, the military claimed.

Most of these rebels and sympathizers were from Mindanao, especially in the Caraga and Davao regions.

Arevalo said that while the military will continue to perform its mandated duties, it will also actively pursue and support all the efforts to attain a just and lasting peace in the country.

Sison, in his social media post yesterday, criticized the AFP's ongoing modernization program, saying this is just a waste of taxpayers' money.

He added that Duterte now imagines he has all the money to spend for military equipment and operations, referring to an approved multibillion-peso fund to bankroll the AFP's Horizon II Modernization Program.

"He is just wasting tax money and borrowed funds for counterproductive purposes," Sison said.

Col. Noel Detoyato, AFP public affairs office chief, laughed off Sison's claim, saying the military's acquisition of latest equipment is now making the self-exiled communist leader sleepless.

He added that the military doesn't expect any good word from Sison.

"The AFP modernization is his worst nightmare," Detoyato said, apparently in reference to acquired modern air, sea and land-based military equipment by AFP and which are now used against known enemies and threat groups.

When before ground troops have to battle with communist rebels without close air support, the military fixed this frontline concern with its acquisition of brand-new AW-109 attack helicopters.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/06/23/1827146/military-dismisses-joma-sisons-oust-duterte-threat#tkR3Pdmv6VBe56Dw.99>

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Joma Sison: Fighting to continue during review of peace agreements

Jose Roger Ciapano The Philippine Star - June 23, 2018 12:01am

MANILA, Philippines — Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison yesterday warned fighting would continue in the next three months while the government is reviewing all agreements related to the peace negotiations with the rebels.

In a statement, Sison said the National Democratic Front (NDF), the umbrella organization representing the CPP and the New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas, maintained its position to hold the formal talks in a neutral foreign venue, such as Oslo, Norway.

Sison said this was the agreement – to hold the talks in a neutral venue – but the government “is inconsistent and self-contradictory.”

“It seems to wish that the gains and agreements made in the backchannel talks be preserved but it has informed the NDF that (President) Duterte will review everything (process and agreements) since decades ago in three months,” Sison said.

Sison said there is the possibility that Duterte would come up with more demands which would be unacceptable “or he would out rightly continue his unrevoked termination of the peace negotiations.”

“In fact, in the next three months, his military, police and paramilitary forces will intensify their offensives and of course the revolutionary forces have to defend themselves and launch their own offensives,” Sison warned.

Sison pointed out there is no ceasefire prevailing in the next three months during the review.

“Because Duterte wants to launch his military offensives first and find out the results,” he added.

For his part, NDF peace panel chairman Fidel Agcaoili said he does not see the need for Duterte to conduct a review for three months of decades-old agreements signed by the government and the rebel group.

Among them is the holding of the peace talks abroad as provided for in the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantee (JASIG).

“We have to stand by the agreements, the JASIG The decision to bring the talks abroad. Hold the talks abroad as provided for in the JASIG. It was not a decision that was just out of nowhere,” Agcaoili said.

“Holding the peace talks abroad is not just a matter of caprices. If you will look at the experience of other countries faced with the same problems that we have right now, they are also holding talks abroad like the Palestine, Oslo, Colombia, and Cuba. It’s not that we are demagogue. We are all Filipinos, let’s talk here...the President has to abide by the agreements.” Agcaoili said. –

With Artemio Dumlao, Miriam Desacada

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/06/23/1827120/joma-sison-fighting-continue-during-review-peace-agreements#56dHj6ikRTpMRGUb.99>

AFP, MILF, MNLF, and LGU to jointly work for peace

CARMEN, NORTH COTABATO – Officials of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Moro National Liberation (MNLF) and local government unit (LGU) expressed their commitment to jointly work for peace in the recently held peace dialogue here.

In the Peace Dialogue held Thursday in Barangay Lahoon, Colonel Alfredo Rosario Jr., Commander of the Philippine Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade based in Camp Luterio, Barangay Nasapian met with Datu King Inalang, Chairman of the Kapaiawan Provincial Committee of the MILF to discuss mechanisms on how to live in peace and harmony.

Colonel Rosario during the meeting assured Inalang and his followers that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is in full support to the peace process between the government and the MILF.

The military official said he wanted to know from Inalang whatever his concerns are that he could possibly relay to the government, saying his command adopts an open door policy. "Meaning everybody is welcome in the camp including leaders of the MILF, MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and the Indigenous People (IP)."

In responding to the pronouncement of Rosario, Inalang told Rosario, they want the AFP to coordinate properly with the various peace mechanisms of the government and the MILF if there is a need to enter the area under the jurisdiction of the Kapaiawan Provincial Committee.

The Kapaiawan Provincial Committee covers Carmen and certain portions of the municipalities of Kabacan, Matalam, Banisilan, Arakan, President Roxas and Antipas, all of North Cotabato.

Carmen Municipal Mayor Rogelio Talinc, for his part, called upon his constituents to maintain the existing good relationship among the residents of Carmen even as he urged them to report to the concerned authorities any presence of lawless groups that they could monitor.



Habib Gulabar, Chairman of the Local Monitoring Team (LMT) in North Cotabato, said the MILF and MNLF in North Cotabato are now united in pushing for the passage of Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) that is compliant with the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), in the interest of peace not only for the Bangsamoro but also for the whole country. Also present during the meeting were Datu Fernandez Aliudin, Chairman of the MNLF Upper Sebangon Revolutionary Committee; Abu Saima of the MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH); Lt. Colonel Ciriaco Lomas-e Jr., Commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Battalion and Police Chief Inspector April Lou Monserate Palma, the newly installed chief of police of Carmen municipality.

Military scoffs at Sison threat, says NPA can't topple Duterte

By: Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Jeymee T. Gamil - @inquirerdotnet
Enquirer Daily Inquirer / 07:00 AM June 23, 2018

The military on Friday belittled a statement made by Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chair Jose Maria "Joma" Sison that the insurgents could topple President Duterte if he canceled the peace talks altogether. Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesperson for the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said on Friday that the insurgents had failed in the past to oust the [country's sitting] President and would again come to grief this time. "There have been peace talks after another that have failed in the past. And each time, they were trying to oust the President but never came close enough to at least unsettle a commander-in-chief," Arevalo said.

He slammed Sison's "temerity to make such a threat," claiming that members of the New People's Army, the CPP's armed wing, had been surrendering "in droves" to the military.

More bloodshed

Sison predicted more bloodshed following the President's decision to again cancel the resumption of formal peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). "The broad united front of patriotic and progressive forces ... are advancing and can oust the Duterte regime in due time," he said on Thursday.

Three-month lull

The government and NDFP announced on Thursday a three-month lull in peace negotiations with Malacañang saying the postponement would allow the President to personally review all the agreements both panels had forged in the past. In an online interview from Utrecht, the Netherlands, Sison said there would be "no ceasefire in the next three months" because the President wanted "to launch his military offensives first and find out the results." Clashes between government troops and the rebels flared up anew on Thursday.

An Army soldier was wounded and classes were disrupted following a firefight with the rebels near a school in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. In Kidapawan City, six soldiers were wounded in a roadside explosion at Barangay Doles in Magpet, Cotabato, according to Gov. Emmylou Taliño-Mendoza. —*With reports from Frinston Lim, Williamor Magbanua, Edwin Fernandez and Jigger Jerusalem*

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Read more: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1003405/military-scoffs-at-sison-threat-says-mpa-cant-topple-duterte#ixzz5JKgsJSvI>

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