

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



TEAM ARMY

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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

21 March 2018

Wednesday

Army Core Purpose: Serving the people. Securing the land.

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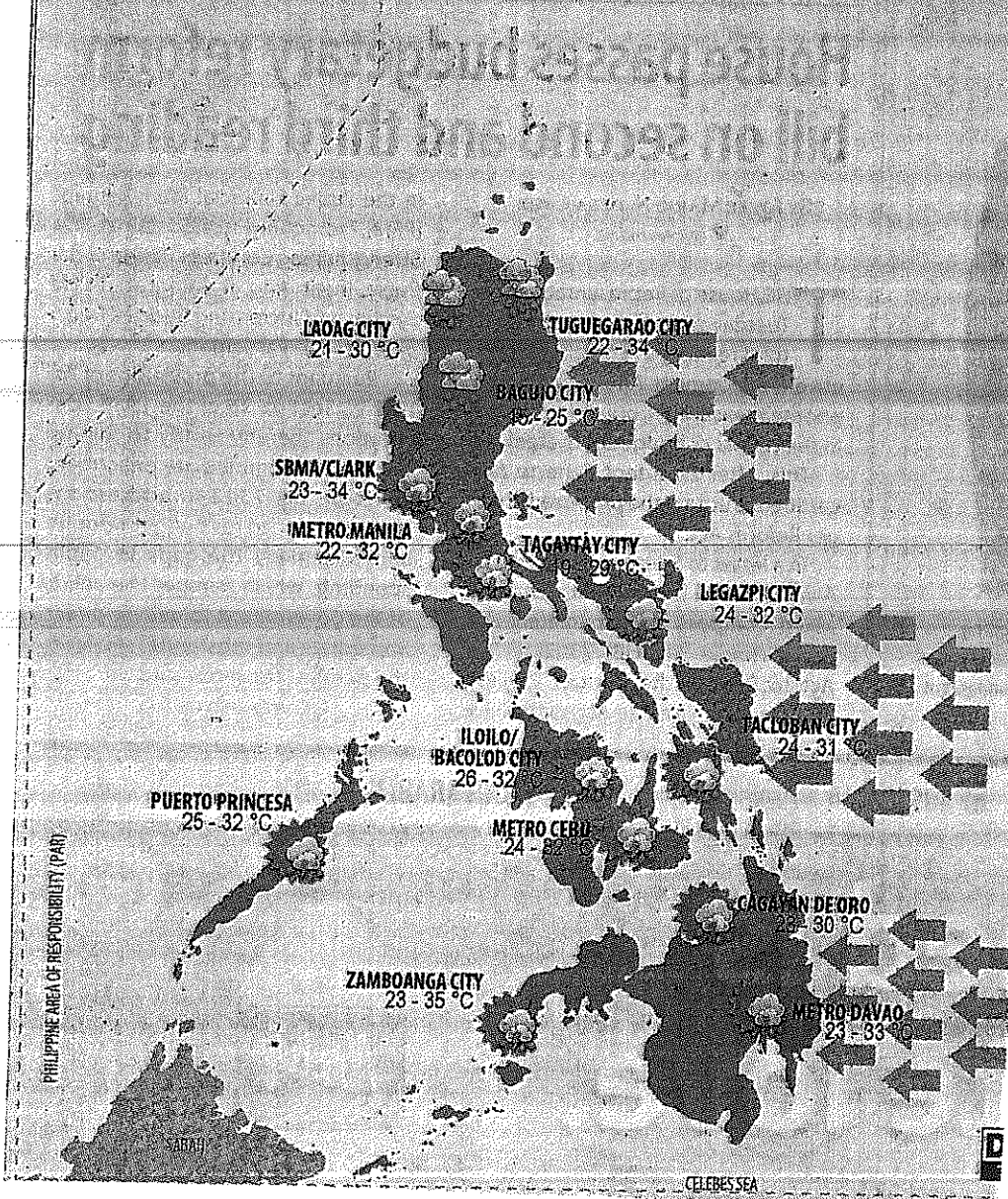
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TODAY'S WEATHER

MARCH 21, 2018 | WEDNESDAY

EASTER LIES
AFFECTING EASTERN SECTION
OF THE COUNTRY
as of 5:00 pm - March 20, 2018



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3-DAY EXTENDED FORECAST				3-DAY EXTENDED FORECAST			
	MAR 22 Thursday	MAR 23 Friday	MAR 24 Saturday		MAR 22 Thursday	MAR 23 Friday	MAR 24 Saturday
METRO MANILA	21-31°C	21-31°C	22-32°C	METRO GEBU	24-31°C	23-31°C	28-31°C
TUGUEGARAO	21-32°C	21-33°C	22-33°C	TACLOBAN	24-30°C	24-30°C	24-30°C
LAOAG	20-30°C	20-30°C	21-31°C	GAGAYAN DEORO	23-30°C	23-31°C	23-31°C
BAGUIO	14-24°C	14-24°C	15-24°C	METRO DAVAO	23-33°C	23-33°C	28-34°C
SBMA/ CLARK	22-32°C	22-32°C	22-32°C	ZAMBOANGA	23-35°C	23-35°C	24-35°C
TAGAYTAY	18-28°C	18-28°C	19-29°C	SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOONRISE	MOONSET
LEGAZPI	24-31°C	23-30°C	24-30°C	6:00 AM	6:07 PM	8:41 AM	9:32 PM
PUERTO PRINCESA	25-33°C	25-33°C	25-33°C	NEW MOON	FIRST QUARTER	LOW TIDE	HIGH TIDE
ILOILO/ BACOLOD	26-33°C	26-33°C	26-33°C	MAR 17 9:12 PM	MAR 24 11:35 PM	7:12 PM 0.09 Meter	12:31 PM 0.68 Meter
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Palace denies hand in Napoles 'pork' case

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

A mere exchange of ideas was how Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II yesterday described a meeting at Malacañang with a lawyer of alleged pork barrel scam mastermind Janet Lim-Napoles together with Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea.

For his part, Medialdea also denied advising Napoles' lawyer Stephen David to seek transfer of custody for the so-called pork barrel queen as she seeks to turn state witness in the scam.

"Why would I give legal advice to a lawyer for his client? If I were his client I would fire him," Medialdea said.

David, who disclosed the meeting, declined to comment on the denials.

In a briefing at Malacañang yesterday, Aguirre confirmed the meeting with David but stressed they only discussed legal options to facilitate Napoles' inclusion in the Witness Protection Program (WPP).

Medialdea did not give any legal advice but had to act when David sought his intervention to overrule the DOJ chief,

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Aguirre explained.

He said there was no attempt to pressure Napoles into spilling the beans on other government officials and lawmakers suspected of involvement in the pork barrel fund scam.

Justifying Napoles' possible inclusion in the WPP, Aguirre explained that the plunder charges filed against her – being a private person – were "defective."

Under provisional coverage, Aguirre said a witness can ask for security and transportation allowances from the government. Full coverage will not be extended until the supposed witness had executed an affidavit and a memorandum of agreement.

Napoles had already executed an affidavit in relation to "some violation of law of some government officials," Aguirre said.

"Once we put Janet Napoles under the WPP, we have to rely on her. In other words, *bumilib na kami sa kanya, bago naming siya inilagay sa programa* (she impressed us before we put her in the program)," he said.

"Once, she is put under the full coverage or protection of the WPP, that act of putting her as state witness will be binding upon our courts, including Sandiganbayan," Aguirre said.

Contrary to public opinion, Aguirre emphasized Napoles does not appear to

be the most guilty in the pork barrel scam.

"As to the statement of Janet, that would be a matter of credibility and we cannot say it yet for now," Aguirre added.

"To be clear, before you are admitted to the WPP, the basic is that you should not appear to be the most guilty. In other words, Janet Lim-Napoles will not become state witness if she appears to be the most guilty," he said.

"As between co-conspirators both almost equally guilty. One is guilty of inducement, and the other guilty of direct participation or indispensable cooperation – both principal (accused). The rule of the court is that a principal by inducement is considered more guilty," Aguirre pointed out.

He noted that the Supreme Court has given weight to a co-conspirator who induced the commission of a crime. He said a person who paid a gunman to kill somebody is more guilty than the one who pulled the trigger.

"As between two or three equally guilty, who is more guilty? The public officer or a private person, who just finished high school. So *dito lang ha parang may depektibo na ang charges ng Sandiganbayan sa kanya eh* (So even here there's already a defect in the charges before the Sandiganbayan)," Aguirre said.

"The charge is plunder, and plunder is a charge

against government official. Thus, I believe that under the circumstances, the public official is more guilty. In both instances Janet Napoles could be put under the coverage of the WPP, because she does not appear to be most guilty," Aguirre said.

On pitting former whistleblower Benhur Luy against Napoles, Aguirre said the appreciation of the circumstances would be left to the courts.

No suspicious meeting

Aguirre also urged the media not to give any meaning to the meeting with Napoles' lawyer.

David had sought Medialdea's advice regarding Napoles' move to spill the beans on individuals in the pork barrel scam.

"Actually, it's not even a meeting. He just went ... appealing to ES (executive secretary) to reverse my decision," Aguirre said.

He also revealed meeting with Napoles some two months ago, but declined to provide details.

David earlier revealed before the Sandiganbayan that he met with Medialdea and other Cabinet officials purportedly to discuss the inclusion of Napoles in the WPP.

Aguirre also revealed that David went straight to Medialdea to urge him to convince Aguirre to overrule his decision – but to no avail. "It was not a legal advice. Actually, he talked to ES Medialdea to appeal my opinion that we at the DOJ (Department of Justice) could not order her transfer," Aguirre said.

Aguirre and Medialdea shared the same view that permission should be asked from the Sandiganbayan before the WPP can start eyeing Napoles as state witness or even cause her transfer from detention to the WPP safehouse.

"It was not a consultation. He wants that I am overruled by a seeming representative of the Office of the President because I do not want to

agree that I will just spring Janet Napoles out of the jail, and bring her to WPP. I said that cannot be done," Aguirre added.

He said he and Medialdea urged the lawyer to file a motion with the Sandiganbayan.

"They were the ones who approached us and I believe that justice will be done if Janet Napoles will be allowed to speak and tell the whole truth about this. Because so much time had passed," Aguirre said.

Aguirre's stand that she should go to the Sandiganbayan to determine if they could be covered by the DOJ.

"He is just giving his opinion," Aguirre said.

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No authority

For opposition Rep. Edcel Lagman of Albay, Aguirre simply has no authority to recruit Napoles as a state witness.

He told a news conference that the ombudsman's special prosecutor and the Sandiganbayan are the ones "vested with the authority to convert Napoles from an accused to a state witness."

He cited the Rules of Court on criminal procedure, which provide that "upon motion of the prosecution before resting its case, the court may direct one or more of the accused to be discharged with their consent so that they may be witnesses for the state."

He said the rules also prescribe that a state witness must "not appear to be the most guilty."

"Verily, it is the special prosecutor of the Office of the Ombudsman who shall initially determine the qualification of Napoles to become a state witness. Upon motion of the prosecutor, the Sandiganbayan has the jurisdiction to decide whether or not to discharge Napoles as state witness," Lagman said.

"Under any standard, one who is accused as the mastermind for plotting and executing the crime, like Napoles, cannot pretend not to be the most guilty," he said.

Napoles, former senators

Juan Ponce Enrile, Jinggoy Estrada and Ramon Revilla Jr. and their senior aides are facing plunder and graft charges in connection with the alleged misuse of billions in pork barrel funds of the three senators.

Enrile and Estrada are out on bail, while Revilla is still under detention.

According to the Commission on Audit, the senators' funds ended up in bogus foundations associated with Napoles.

Revilla said, however, the inclusion of Napoles in the WFP would be good and might even exonerate him. He said none of the accusations against him had been proven and that he did not even know Napoles personally.

He said being the only one remaining in detention in relation to the pork barrel scam is unfair.

Special treatment

Sen. Grace Poe slammed the DOJ for giving special treatment to Napoles.

"How can Janet Lim Napoles not appear as most guilty when she has been identified as the 'pork-barrel queen'? The pieces of evidence against her even led to the indictment and detention of several high profile public officials," Poe said in a statement.

"The government's witness protection program is

there to protect and secure qualified witnesses, so we can conclude the case. Why do we need to provide special treatment to a particular person?" Poe said.

The Liberal Party (LP) said that recent events have made it clear that the government is working with the camp of Napoles to provide her protection under the WFP.

"The cat is out of the bag on who's behind the bold moves of pork barrel scam queen Janet Lim Napoles in securing protection from the Department of Justice," the LP said.

"What prompted these top officials to reach out to an alleged mastermind of a multibillion-peso scam? Who sanctioned this? Malacañang's statement that the President is taking a hands-off stance on this appears not to jibe with the actions of his top executives," it added.

Sen. Paolo Benigno Aquino IV, an LP member, said that Napoles is clearly being used by the administration to harass the opposition.

"I think at this point if she will identify some people, it may be dependent on what was promised to her. I think we had very fair hearings here and she was asked point blank to name all the names of people she had dealings with and so now it's very suspect," Aquino said.

– With Jess Diaz, Marvin Sy, Michael Punongbayan

21 March 2018

Malaya

The National Newspaper

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9 Army battalions activated in campaign vs terrorists

BY VICTOR REYES

ARMY chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Bautista yesterday said nine Army battalions have been activated this year amid the intensified military campaign against terrorist and communist forces.

During the celebration of the Army's 121st foundation anniversary at the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Bautista said the newly-activated units include seven infantry battalions which are part of the 10 infantry battalions the

Army is forming this year.

A battalion is composed of around 500 officers and men.

"To beef up our ground operations, seven out of the additional 10 infantry battalions have been activated. The remaining three shall be activated in the second quarter of this year," said Bautista.

Bautista said the two other battalions have been activated -- 5th Scout Ranger Battalion and the 500th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Government forces have stepped up operations against the

terrorist groups Abu Sayyaf and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in the aftermath of the bloody Marawi City siege waged by the ISI-inspired Maute Group last year.

Military operations have been also intensified against the New People's Army after President Duterte issued a proclamation terminating the peace talks with the communists in November last year. A month later, he issued an-

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other proclamation, declaring the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines as terrorist organizations.

"The threat of terrorism is omnipresent and unavoidable in this day and age. It is a reality that the free world must now confront," said Bautista, who commanded the Joint Task Force Marawi that led the operations in Marawi.

"The siege of the city of Marawi opened the eyes of countries in our part of the world to the realities of terrorism and subsequently resulted in the second declaration of martial law in the Philippines," added Bautista.

On the NPA, Bautista said the Army has been successful so far in the campaign against the group.

"When the President declared the CPP-NPA as terrorists in December 2017, we intensified our campaign against them. This resulted in the significant decline in their manpower and

firearms," said Bautista adding some 4,000 NPA members and supporters have surrendered to government.

During the anniversary celebration, President Duterte conferred medals and awards on 41 Army personnel, including AFP Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez who received the Order of Lapu-Lapu (Kamagi medal).

Galvez supervised the operations in Marawi City.

Maj. Gen. Joselito Reyes, commander of the Army Support Command, received the Distinguished Service Medal, a non-combat medal.

Duterte thanked the soldiers for their "selflessness, heroism and faithful service to the Republic."

"There are no shortcuts to success. We will continue to face challenges as we trudge the noble path of building a stronger and safer nation. However, because of your contributions, these goals are now within reach," he said.

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Pahina. 7

208 pang sundalo dineploy sa Visayas vs NPA terrorists

Aabot sa mahigit dalawang batalyon o 208 pang karagdang mga sundalo ang dineploy ng Philippine Army (PA) upang mas palakas ang kanilang anti-terrorism at anti-insurgency campaign sa Western at Central Visayas Region.

Sinabi ni Captain Eduardo Precioso, spokesman ng 3rd Infantry Division (ID) ng PA na ito ay upang matugunan ang mga karahasang inihahasik ng mga teroristang NPA sa gitna at kanlurang bahagi ng Visayas Region.

Sa nasabing bilang, 54 sundalo ay mula sa 4th ID, 131 mula sa 6th ID at 23 naman sa 7th ID. Ang 131 sundalo mula sa 6th ID ay dumating sa himpilan ng 3rd ID kamakalawa at agad namang itinalaga kahapon sa iba't-ibang

units ng 3rd ID.

"We are determined to wipe out the CPP-NPA terrorists in the area who are continuously propagating terror and criminal activities against the people. Hence, we strongly believe that these additional enlisted personnel will surely boost our fervent desire to end the bloody insurgency and terrorism being waged by these terrorists," ahang opisyal.

Samantala, tutulong din ang nasabing tropa ng mga sundalo sa mga local government units (LGUs) sa rehiyon sa pagbibigay ng serbisyo sa komunidad. Kanilang makakatuwang sa security operations ang PA-25th IB na nagbalik na sa Negros mula sa pagtupad ng misyon sa Mindanao. (Joy Cantos)

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POLICE FILES

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97 NPA sabay-sabay na sumuko sa Maguindanao

KORONADAL CITY – Makasaysayan ang sabay-sabay na pagsuko ng 97 miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) sa bayan ng Ampatuan sa Maguindanao.

Ayon kay Lt. Col. Mauro Oliveros, battalion commander ng 1st Mechanized Battalion, ang 97 rebelde ay kinabibilangan ng dalawang kumander, apat na recruiter, walong amazona, tinatayang 21 child warriors at iba pa. Isinuko rin nila ang kanilang mga armas, bala, mga pampasabog at iba pang mga dokumento ng rebelde at komunistang grupo.

Napag-alaman na nagmula sila sa Platoon MyPhone ng Guerilla Front 73 na kumikilos sa Barangay Samag at Barangay Tumikor sa Ampatuan, Maguindanao.

Sa ngayon nakatakdang isalitim sa Comprehensive Livelihood Program ng gobyerno ang mga sumukong rebelde at makakatanggap ng pormal na edukasyon ang mga sumukong kabataang mandirigma ng NBA.

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Stories of Marawi Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence Go (5th from right) graces the book launching of *Marawi and Beyond: The Joint Task Force Marawi Story* together with Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea (6th from right), Dona Isabel Suntay (2nd from left), Tarlac Heritage Foundation co-founder Dra. Isa Suntay (5th from left), Commanding General Philippine Army chief Lt. Gen. Rolando Joselito Bautista (4th from right), Lt. Col. Jo-Ar Herrera and other military officers do the signature pose of President Duterte held at the Ricarte Hall in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City yesterday.

PNA

fb

March 2018

Mataya

The National Newspaper

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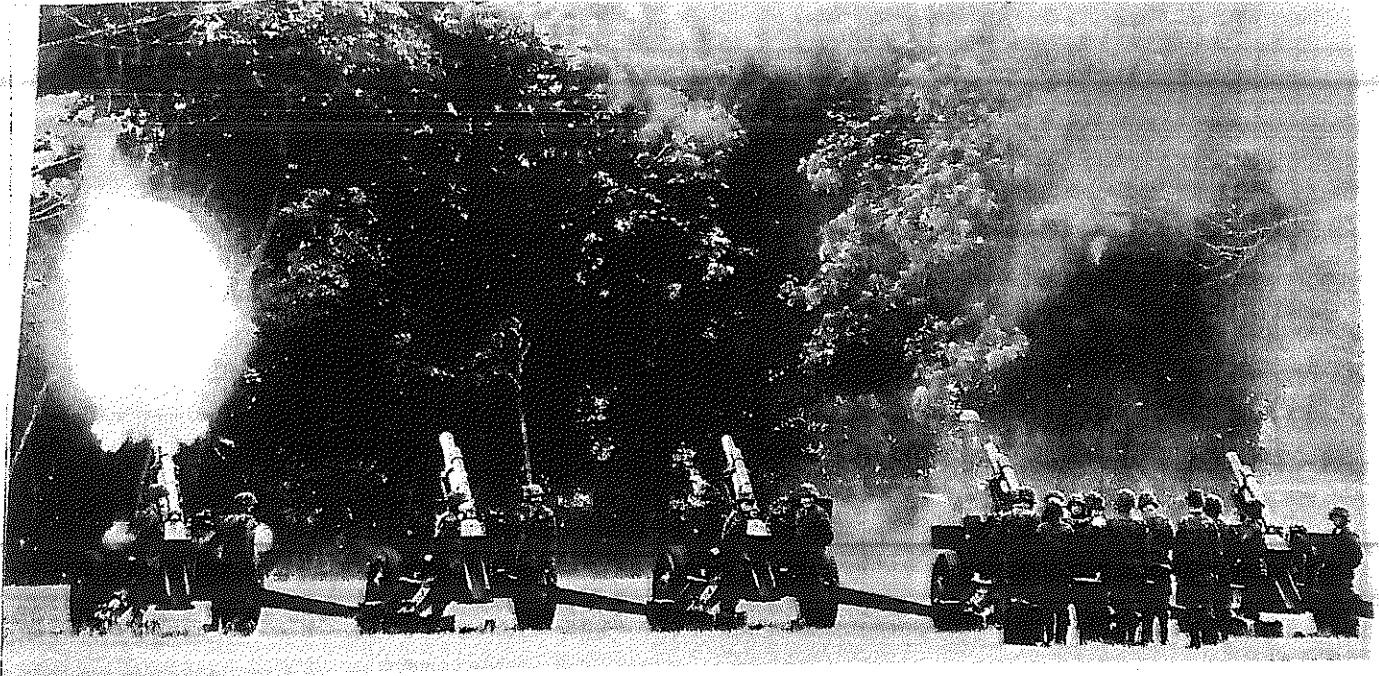


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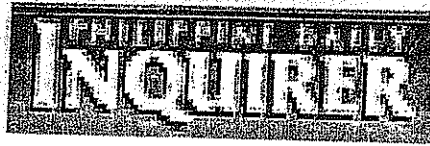
POLICE FILES

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SINAKSIHAN ni Pangulong Rody Duterte ang 121st Anniversary ng Philippine Army na may temang 'Serving the People, Securing the Land' sa Army Headquarters sa Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City kahapon. Dumalo rin si Vice Pres. Leni Robredo.
- JACK BURGOS

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AFP on alert for NPA anniversary

Nikko Dizon
@NikkoDizonINQ

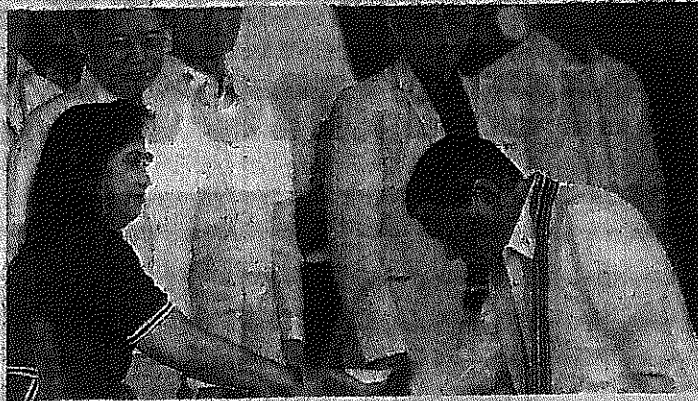
The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will not let its guard down as the 49th founding anniversary of New People's Army (NPA) drew near.

Rebels traditionally launch attacks on government targets to celebrate the founding of NPA, the armed wing of Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

"Our forces will continue to be on a proactive stance," said Brig. Gen. Bienvenido Datuin Jr., in a statement.

'Spoilers'

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana again called on communist rebels to lay down their arms after nearly 50 years of fighting.



REUNION AT FORT BONIFACIO President Duterte and Vice President Leni Robredo meet again at ceremonies marking the 121st founding anniversary of the Philippine Army, which continued to be in the front line of the war on communist rebels. --JOAN BONDOC

Lorenzana said the NPA's "cause has become irrelevant."

"Do not be the spoilers of peace, progress and development," said the defense chief,

addressing himself to rebels.

He said if the rebels failed to win in 49 years of armed struggle, "what makes you think you could salvage victory

in the next 50?"

"Let us join hands to build a better Philippines," said Lorenzana.

Peace talks between the Duterte administration and National Democratic Front of the Philippines collapsed after President Duterte raged at the continued attack by NPA on government soldiers.

Duterte's dream

NPA accused the military, on the other hand, of continued operations against rebels.

Upon his election into office in May 2016, Mr. Duterte vowed to work closely with the CPP to achieve peace.

He appointed members of leftist organizations to Cabinet positions and freed several political detainees as a gesture of goodwill. INQ

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The Manila Times

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Malacañang condemns aircraft shooting by NPA

MALACAÑANG, on Tuesday strongly denounced the weekend attack by the New People's Army (NPA) on a civilian aircraft in Tagbina, Surigao del Sur that killed its pilot.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms the shooting of a civilian aircraft and this is the incident where the CPP-NPA apparently shot at an agricultural plane in Surigao," Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said in a media briefing.

Captain Lynbert Laguda Sr. managed to safely land his aircraft and was rushed to the hospital, but later died from gunshot wounds.

The plane, a single-engine bi-plane Grumman G-164 Ag Cat ag-

ricultural, bore three bullet holes.

Laguda's son - Lynbert 2nd - also an agricultural pilot, had asked resigned Davao City Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte, to bring the matter to the attention of his father, President Rodrigo Duterte.

"The plane was engaged in a normal, low-flying craft-dusting mission and was fired upon. Under the laws and customs of war, fighters should not be targeting civilians and civilian objects, and this is the latest instance of a war crime perpetrated by the CPP [Communist Party of the Philippines]-NPA," Roque added.

RALPH EDWIN U. VILLANUEVA

21 March 2018

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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AFP files charges vs 6 alleged NPAs in Mabinay

BY MINERVA BC NEWMAN

CEBU CITY - Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Central Command has filed charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives against six armed persons they arrested on March 3 in an operation in Mabinay. The six are allegedly members of the New Peoples' Army.

AFP-Centcom Information Officer Medel Aguilar said the Central Command is happy to see that the wheels of justice is moving forward to clarify the issues surrounding the arrest of the alleged NPA members, one of them Myles Albaracin, a UP-Masscom student.

The AFP personnel involved in the operations have already submitted their sworn statements to the prosecutor during the preliminary investigation conducted Monday, Medel told Manila Bulletin.

Medel explained that the military operations are guided by its DSSP-Kapayapaan. "While we see the armed group as the immediate threat to peace, we also look at the root causes of dissent which the party is using against the government to recruit bright and young individuals for its legal and armed struggle," he added.

According to Medel, the military is partnering with local government units and other stakeholders to bring government's basic services to the people at the local communities, specifically in isolated and disadvantaged areas.

"It is our hope that the Communist NPA terrorists will find value in what we do to help our people," the AFP spokesperson added.

On its preparation for the upcoming NPA anniversary on March 29, Medel said the troops are already on red alert. The NPA in the Visayas is no longer a threat to the troops but a distraction in communities' peace, he said.

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DND to NPA: Lay down your arms

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday asked leaders and members of the New People's Army (NPA) to lay down their arms and rejoin society.

Lorenzana made the call ahead of the NPA's 49th founding anniversary on March 29.

"On the NPA 49th anniversary, I ask them to lay down their arms and rejoin society. Your cause has become irrelevant," Lorenzana said in a statement.

"Do not be the spoilers of peace, progress and development. If you could not win 49 years what made you think you could salvage victory in the next 50? Come down, you owe your families and children a life of peace and stability. Let us join hands to build a better Philippines," he added.

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BusinessMirror

A broader face in today's business

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Duterte: Revoke license of mining firms providing explosives to Reds

By BERNADETTE D. NICOLAS [@BNicolasBM](#)

PRESIDENT Duterte has ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to revoke the licenses of mining companies providing explosives to New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

During his regular briefing with Palace reporters in Malacañang, Presidential Spokesman Harry L. Roque Jr. said the President has directed the DENR to revoke the licenses and permits of mining companies violating explosive handling rules or reported to have been supplying explosives to communist groups.

Military and police also found violating laws on explosives will face automatic expulsion, Roque added.

He also said that the directive was issued by the President during the special meeting of the National Security Council Executive Committee he presided that ended at 3 a.m. on Tuesday.

Last November Duterte threatened to shut down mining companies financing the NPA through the payment of revolutionary taxes to the rebels.

“That’s their extortion [targets, the] big companies. All mining companies are paying taxes to the NPA. That’s without exception. Their mining won’t thrive if they’re not giving money,” the President said in his previous speech in Taguig last year.

“We have to decide once and for all. If I go against the NPA, the communists, everybody has to reconfigure their relationship with the NPA

because if you continue to support [them] financially, I will close you down,” he added.

Roque said that President Duterte also directed the creation of task force for Mindanao IP (indigenous people) convergence to address the plight of indigenous peoples of Mindanao.

Security measures against threats of violence by terrorists, particularly at ports and terminals, and efforts to secure and develop the Philippine Rise were also discussed during the meeting.

“All mining companies are paying taxes to the NPA. That’s without exception. Their mining won’t thrive if they’re not giving money.”—DUTERTE

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Jikiri eyed to replace Misuari as MNLF leader

INDANAN, Sulu - Senior leaders and field commanders of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) are pushing Yusop Jikiri, chair of the MNLF Central Committee, to succeed MNLF founding chair Nur Misuari as leader of the group.

Abuambri Taddik, director general of the MNLF national intelligence bureau said majority of the members of the MNLF central committee want Jikiri to head the organization founded by Misuari.

Misuari, during the MNLF's 50th founding anniversary on Sunday, admitted: "Maybe it's about time I take some rest and let the second liners among our leadership to take over."

Jikiri, 64, is a son of a poor farmer in Indanan, Sulu and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree at the Philippine Muslim College in Jolo, Sulu. He joined the MNLF at the age of 20 and became one of its top commanders, eventually rising to become Chief of Staff under Nur Misuari.

The 65 members of the MNLF central committee voted unanimously in February 2017 favoring Jikiri to lead them due to his performance and dedication.

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Military intensifies moves against NPA anniv attacks

By Mario J. Mallari

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has intensified security operations throughout the country to thwart any attempt by the communist New People's Army (NPA) to conduct atrocities marking its founding anniversary on March 29.

Brig. Gen. Bienvenido Datuin Jr., AFP spokesman, cited previous atrocities launched by the NPA against government troops and even innocent civilians.

"The AFP is intensifying efforts to thwart possible attacks and atrocities by the NPA in line with their upcoming anniversary. The occasion is usually marked by their attacks against our people and vulnerable communities," Datuin said.

In the past, Datuin noted that the NPAs have staged hostilities such as raids, ambushes and sabotage against government troops, on public establishments and vital installations that severely affected innocent civilians.

"These attacks against our people are terroristic in nature and clear reflection of their true color

as a criminal and terrorist organization," Datuin said.

The AFP spokesman also blamed the communist for causing so much disturbances in the National Capital Region (NCR) by staging protest rallies.

"In the NCR they have staged rallies and protest actions that caused massive traffic that affected motorists and commuters. They have repeatedly done such actions that disturbed the peace of the place and pestered law-abiding citizens," he said.

While there are no identified NPA members participating in anti-government rallies in Metro Manila, rallyists mostly belong to militant groups allied with the Left such as Bayan Muna, Bayan, Karapatan, Piston, among others.

Datuin did not particularly identify those he blamed for the disturbances.

The AFP spokesman stressed that the 125,000-strong military will remain steadfast in protecting peace-loving people against NPA atrocities anywhere in the country, as he urged the public to closely coordinate with government authorities.

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Ahead of its at today's business

AFP braces for intensified attacks ahead of NPA's 40th anniversary

BY RENE AGOSTA
@reneacostaBM

THE military has intensified its operations around the country in its effort to prevent any attempt by the New People's Army to conduct "traditional" attacks aimed at marking the rebel group's 40th foundation anniversary next Thursday, March 29.

"The AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippine] is intensifying [its] efforts to thwart possible attacks and atrocities by the NPA in line with their upcoming anniversary. The occasion is usually marked by their attacks against our people and vulnerable communities," military spokesman Brig. Gen. Bienvenido Datuin Jr. said.

He noted that, in the past, the rebels carried out hostilities, such as raids, ambushes and sabotage against government troops, on public establishments and vital installations that had severely affected innocent civilians.

"These attacks against our people are terroristic in nature and clear reflection of their true color as a criminal and terrorist organization," Datuin said.

The AFP spokesman also blamed the communists for causing so much disturbance in the National Capital Region (NCR) by staging protest rallies.

"In the NCR, they have staged rallies and protest actions that caused massive traffic that affected motorists and commuters. They have repeatedly done such actions that disturbed the peace of the place and pestered law-abiding citizens," he said.

While there are no identified NPA members participating in anti-government rallies in Metro Manila, rally participants belong to groups cozy with the Left.

On Tuesday Malacañang was forced to cancel classes in all levels in Metro Manila as a preemptive action against the protest of jeepney drivers allied with public transport group Piston.

"Our forces will continue to be on a proactive stance against all threats of violence and will exert every effort to preserve the peace in every locality," Datuin said.

"The fight against terrorism and the preservation of peace is a shared responsibility of everyone," he added.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of the Philippines doubted whether slain Bicol revolutionary leader Joey Fajardo really engaged security forces in a firefight.

The military said Fajardo, alias *Ka Owen*, 55, engaged government forces in a shootout on March 16 in Naga City wherein he was killed, along with Liza Beriso Ocampo, a longtime migrant worker from Dubai.

Ocampo, according to a statement of the central committee of the CPP, owned the house where Fajardo was temporarily staying in.

"He was in Naga City to seek medical attention after suffering what medics believe was a mild stroke a little more than a week ago," the CPP said. "It is highly doubtful that Fajardo, in his condition, could engage in any sort of firefight with a combined military and police force."

"Based on our own information, Fajardo was unarmed while he went on medical leave. Ocampo, on the other hand, was a mere good samaritan who provided shelter to Fajardo through the intercession of common friends," the CPP added.

The military has identified *Ka Owen* as the head of the CPP's Bicol regional committee.

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218 displaced as military launches drive vs NPA

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines is now intensifying efforts to thwart possible attacks and atrocities by the New People's Army in the run up to the latter's 49th anniversary on March 29.

"The occasion is usually marked by their attacks against our people and vulnerable communities," AFP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Bievenido Datum said Tuesday.

In related developments:

- At least 218 people have been displaced as the military launched an offensive against the NPA in Aloran, Misamis Occidental.

The Misamis Occidental Police Provincial Office said 218 people or 54 families had evacuated to the town's gymnasium following an armed encounter between the military and the NPA at 3:15 p.m. on Monday.

It said that aside from the ground assault by the Philippine Army, the rebels' position in Barangay Sinampungan was also bombarded with artillery fire. The military also used a Philippine Air Force helicopter.

All police units in the province have been placed on full alert. Checkpoints have also been set up around Aloran and its outskirts, the Misamis Occidental PPO added.

- A top defense official on Tuesday enticed the NPA to lay down their arms and rejoin the mainstream society, saying their cause had become irrelevant even as the military was ready to thwart potential attacks during the communist

forthcoming anniversary.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told the NPA not to spoil peace, progress and development unfolding in the country which the communist has attempted to derail in their 49 years of revolutionary struggle.

"I ask them: To lay down their arms and rejoin the society. Your cause has become irrelevant. If you could not win 49 years, what made you think you could salvage victory in the next 50?" Lorenzana urged.

"Come down, you owe your families and children a life of peace and stability. Let us join hands to build a better Philippines," Lorenzana said.

Hostilities include raids, ambushes, and sabotage against government troops, on public establishments and vital installations that severely affected innocent civilians. **PNA with Francisco Tuyay**

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'Revoke licenses of pro-Red mining firms'

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the revocation of licenses and permits of mining firms that are found to be "supplying explosives" to communist insurgents, according to Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque.

He said that the President gave the directive during his meeting with the Executive Committee of the National Security Council held at Malacañang last Monday.

"The President directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to revoke the licenses, permits of mining companies violating explosive handling rules or reported to be supplying explosives to communist-terrorist groups," Roque said.

Duterte believes that some mining companies finance the activities of the New People's Army.

Roque also said that the "military and police who would be found violating laws on explosives will face automatic expulsion." **Vito Barcelo**

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NPA urged to surrender

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday asked leaders and members of the New People's Army (NPA) to lay down their arms and rejoin society.

Lorenzana made the call ahead of the Reds' 49th founding anniversary on March 29.

"On the NPA 49th anniversary, I ask them: to lay down their arms and rejoin society. Your cause has become irrelevant," Lorenzana said in a statement.

"Do not be the spoilers of peace, progress and development. If you could not win 49 years what made you think you could salvage victory in the next 50? Come down, you owe your families and children a life of peace and stability. Let us join hands to build a better Philippines,"

he added.

The Armed Forces (AFP) said that it is intensifying efforts to thwart possible attacks and atrocities by the NPA in time with their anniversary.

AFP spokesman and concurrent Civil Relations Service (CRS) chief Brig. Gen. Bienvenido Datuin Jr., said the occasion is usually marked by their attacks against the people and vulnerable communities. **(Francis Wakefield)**

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PUNCHLINE

Duterte urges PMA grads: Be 'protectors,' 'instruments of change'

By FRED M. LOBO

SERVE as "protectors of our nation" and "instruments of meaningful change," President Duterte has urged new graduates of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA).

Serve God, country, and people, not drug lords, vice lords, or political warlords.

Speaking at the PMA 2018 commencement rites in Baguio City, the President said the new military officers should embody the traditional values required of true soldiers.

Have "courage, integrity, and loyalty," the Commander-in-chief stressed.

Duterte said that consistent with service to God, country, and people, young soldiers should "stay with the Constitution, stay in the chain of command, love the Filipino people that you serve."

Translation: Don't think of coup or collections.

"To the 'Alab Tala' Class of 2018, this achievement is only the beginning of the many future successes. May you continue to become a source

of strength and inspiration to your fellow soldiers and instruments of meaningful change in our society," Duterte said.

Be role models and agents of change.

"The Filipino people look up to you as the protectors of our nation and the next leaders of tomorrow," the President reminded the 282-strong PMA graduating class that included 75 female cadets.

Translation: Be protectors, not oppressors of the people.

Brace also for "complex" and "bigger challenges" ahead as you start to serve in your chosen military branch of service, Duterte said.

Be ready to combat terrorism and illegal drug trade, he added.

The President said mistakes would always be "inevitable" but PMA graduates should have confidence in knowing they were honed by the academy for bigger responsibilities.

"(Have) discipline, determination, and faith," Duterte said.

"Remember always the three words that have been ingrained deeply in your hearts — courage, integrity,

and loyalty," the President said.

"Embody these words and use them to guide your actions throughout your careers," he stressed.

Duterte acknowledged that the PMA graduates' courage and bravery were tested many times while under training.

"You have emerged victorious and ready to take on bigger challenges ahead," he said.

The President has assured the government's support for the military, from increasing salary and allowance to upgrading their equipment and improving their benefits. "The Armed Forces of the Philippines has the government's full support," he said.

Chorus: Thank you, Godfather DU30.

Duterte added that the Second Horizon of the Revised AFP Modernization Program is now being implemented "to ensure that our men and women in uniform are provided the benefits and armed with the equipment to perform their duties effectively."

Here come guns, bullets, and perks — and a better deal for the country's soldiers.

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www.mb.com.ph

Army hosts 11th Senior Leaders' Conference

From the Manila Bulletin (Mar 20): Army hosts 11th Senior Leaders' Conference

The Philippine Army is currently hosting the 11th Senior Leader's Conference (SLC) at the Philippine Army Officers Clubhouse, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, from March 20 to 21, 2018.



(Manila Bulletin file photo)

The holding of the SLC is in connection to with the Army's celebration of its 121st founding anniversary with the theme: "Serving the People, Securing the Land".

Army Spokesman Lt. Col. Louie D. Villanueva, said Army senior leaders from all over the Philippines will gather in the two-day conference which will focus on the issues of violent extremism and terrorism as part of the Army's sincere commitment to counter-terrorism.

Villanueva said the 11th SLC aims to keep senior leaders of the Philippine Army informed on the current programs, issues and relevant developments affecting the organization.

"It is also a platform where the participants may introduce and discuss new concepts and ideas that could contribute in addressing the various security issues besetting the country," Villanueva said.

With the theme "Defeating Terrorism, Responding to a Global Challenge," the Army invited guest speakers who will provide knowledge and perspectives concerning terrorism, its implications as well as possible solutions to counter it.

Some of the prominent personalities invited are Professor Julkipli M. Wadi of the Institute of Islamic Studies of the University of the Philippines, Assistant Secretary Allan S. Cabanlong of the Department of Information and Communication Technology, Robert Francis B. Garcia of the Peace Advocates for Truth, Healing and Justice Organization, Senator Gregorio B. Honasan II of the Senate Committee on National Defense and Security, Dr. Jolene Jerard of the Nanyang University – Rajaratnam School of International Studies and Director General Alex Paul I. Monteagudo, Ph.D. of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA).

Villanueva said the Philippine Army, under the stewardship of Lt. Gen. Bautista aims continue its mission of developing a modern Army that is responsive and capable of addressing threats against its people and the sovereignty of the country.

“Part of this effort is strengthening of the Army’s campaign to counter violent extremism,” he said.

www.mb.com.ph

Terrorists battle soldiers in Misamis; hundreds of residents leave homes

From the Manila Bulletin (Mar 20): **Terrorists battle soldiers in Misamis; hundreds of residents leave homes**

Hundreds of residents of Aloran town in Misamis Occidental were forced to flee their homes after an intense gun battle erupted between soldiers and suspected communist rebels, police said Tuesday.



(Google Maps / MANILA BULLETIN)

A report reaching Camp Crame in Quezon City said that the military had to send an attack helicopter against the rebels at the height of the gunfight on Monday afternoon.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines also provided artillery in Barangay Sinampungan, the statement read, adding that the rebels are believed to be under the Section Committee Sendong operating in the northern part of Mindanao.

There were no reported casualties on both sides but the local police said the firefight resulted in the evacuation of residents.

The latest report was that the number of evacuees at the Aloran Gymnasium was at 54 families composed of 218 people.

Police and military forces have intensified the operations against the communist rebels after the peace talks bogged down last year.

The government also sought for the declaration of the communist rebels, and their political wing Communist Party of the Philippines as terrorists.

Security forces are now bracing for intensified attacks from the communist rebels who are set to celebrate the 49th founding anniversary of the New People's Army.

www.philstar.com.ph

Lorenzana: Reports of ISIS in Manila inaccurate

From the Philippine Star (Mar 20): Lorenzana: Reports of ISIS in Manila inaccurate

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Monday dispelled reports that ISIS-inspired terror groups have gained a foothold in Metro Manila.

"I don't think they are already here in Manila although we believe that some of the Mautes who escaped from Marawi may have come here to Manila and hide. I don't think they are here to commit trouble," Lorenzana told ANC's "The Source" Tuesday morning.

Lorenzana made the statement in response to a leaked police memo that ISIS-inspired groups are targeting areas such as Metro Manila, Zamboanga, Davao, Iloilo and Cebu.

The Defense chief said that the supposed leaked memo was a communication between local police units and he has informed Interior officer-in-charge Eduardo Año about this.

"Although the communication is authentic, I think the purpose of that [memo] ISIS in Manila is inaccurate," the Defense secretary said.

Lorenzana said he is confident that remnants of the Maute group who are hiding in Manila would not cause harm in the country's capital.

"Nobody can prevent them from travelling but the support that they get here, especially the Muslim communities in Taguig and Quiapo – I don't think that Muslims would like something to happen in their area," he said.

Asked why the government cannot track the remnants of the Maute group in Metro Manila, Lorenzana said that the population in the metropolis is making it hard to find the local terrorists.

The crowded cities in Metro Manila make it easy for the militants to hide, the Defense chief said. Security forces have been upgrading urban combat capabilities since Maute and Abu Sayyaf terrorists took over parts of Marawi City in May 2017, sparking five months of street-to-street fighting.

"The 'jungle' here is more formidable, composed of people... Bahay at tao (houses and people), very easy to hide here for as long as you don't get attention to yourself, you can hide here in Metro Manila," Lorenzana said.

Just last month, a foreigner with alleged links to ISIS was arrested in Manila. The police said they recovered homemade bombs, firearms, ammunition, an ISIS flag and documents detailing an alleged plot to attack the Philippines in the foreigner's apartment.

The suspect, identified as an Egyptian carrying a Tunisian passport entered the country in July 2016 using different passports and aliases such as Haytham Abdulhamid Yusof and John Rasheed Lassoued.

Director Oscar Albayalde, National Capitol Region Police Office chief, said that the suspect had been recruiting followers since 2016.

Albayalde earlier warned that members of ISIS have found "safe havens" in Manila.

The Department of Justice later dropped the charges against the suspect and his Filipino girlfriend because of lapses in police procedure. Police reports on the arrests were not supported by evidence, the DOJ said.