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NEWS CLIPPINGS

15 May 2018

Tuesday



Honor. Patriotism. Duty

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CHINA SHIPS, PLANES AT PH REEFS SINCE 2017

STORY BY FRANCES G. MANGOSING

Two maritime security experts say Beijing's steady capability buildup in the Spratlys indicates development toward full operation of its military bases in the hotly contested region.

AG

FROM A1

By Frances G. Mangosing
@FMangosingINQ

Chinese warships and aircraft have been frequenting Philippine territory in the Spratly archipelago since 2017, indicating a steady pace of development toward "operational status" of Beijing's military bases in the hotly contested South China Sea.

Missile-equipped vessels were seen last year near Philippine reefs in the Spratlys, which China had turned into artificial islands.

Surveillance images obtained by Inquirer.net showed a Luoyang Jiangwei II-class frigate (Hull No. 527) at Zamora Reef, known internationally as Subi Reef, last Nov. 15. This vessel is said to be armed with short-range surface-to-air missiles and antiship cruise missiles.

Last June 16, a Type 056 Jiangdao-class missile frigate, the Luzhou 592, was spotted at Panganiban (Mischief) Reef.

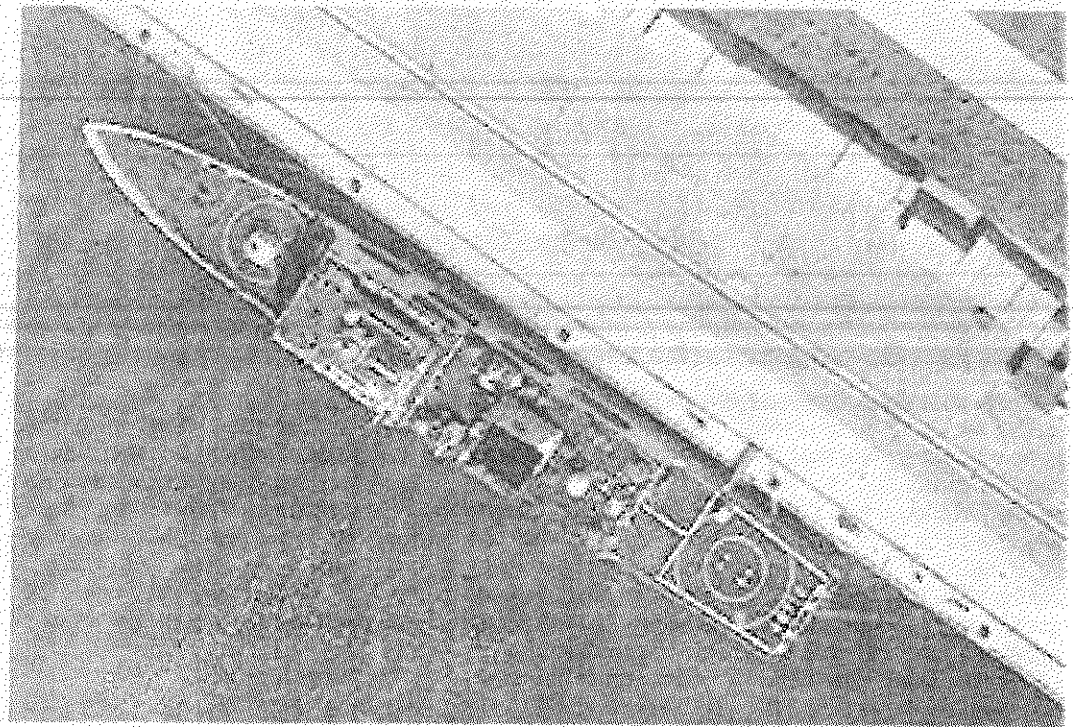
Last Jan. 14, a Jiangkai II-class missile frigate and a Louyang III-class guided-missile destroyer were seen at Panganiban.

A Type 056 Jiangdao-class guided-missile corvette was spotted at Zamora on Jan. 14 this year.

Chinese Coast Guard ships, amphibious and sea transport vessels had also been spotted by air patrols in the region.

Security patrol

"Some of the ships were probably meant to provide security to the continued development of the island and its facilities, to try to discourage any curious ships and aircraft from coming too close, and even prevent any unwanted visitors from landing on the artificial islands," said Jay Batongbacal, director of the



ZAMORA REEF PRESENCE A Zhongyang-class China Coast Guard patrol ship is docked at Philippine-claimed Zamora Reef in this photo taken on April 28 and released by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative.

University of the Philippines Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea.

"Other ships were probably using the artificial islands as re-supply bases for long voyages and patrols," Batongbacal said.

Last week, satellite images released by the Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AmTI) showed a Shaanxi Y-8 military transport aircraft on Zamora. The photos were taken on April 28.

Earlier in April, the Inquirer reported the presence of two Xi'an Y-7 aircraft on Panganiban, shown in surveillance image taken on Jan. 6.

A closeup examination of the image showed the insignia of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, confirming the aircraft were military planes.

AmTI also published satellite photos of combat ships regularly patrolling the artificial islands,

along with logistics vessels.

But what really worried Southeast Asian claimants to territory in the South China Sea were the April 9 report of The Wall Street Journal that China had installed military jamming equipment on Panganiban and Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) reefs and CNBC's May 2 report that Beijing had deployed antiship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems on Kagitingan, Zamora and Panganiban.

Full operation of bases

"All these are incremental steps toward full operational status of these military bases," Batongbacal said.

Most alarming was the deployment of Chinese high-tech weapons on Philippine territory, but Malacañang said last week that it was still trying to verify the report.

The Department of Foreign

Affairs said it was taking the report seriously, but the DFA had not stated what it intended to do.

Batongbacal described the Duterte administration's response as an "incredibly weak excuse" to justify its position of not protesting the developments "out of fear that it might elicit an adverse reaction from China."

President Duterte has put aside a 2016 ruling in favor of the Philippines of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that invalidated China's claim to 90 percent of the South China Sea in exchange for aid, loans and investments from Beijing.

Insulting to military

"The [military] is not so lacking in competence that it cannot even analyze reconnaissance photographs from ship, [airplane] or satellite, nor is it with-

out other resources of information from allies and friends. It is actually insulting to think that the [military] cannot even verify such matters." Batongbacal said.

He said there was nothing more to verify after China had admitted the missile deployments.

"Its answers to two pointed questions separately made and recorded in separate [Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs] briefings do not deny them, and even refer to them as 'the relevant deployment,'" he added.

The Philippine military, however, said on Monday that it was still verifying the missile deployments.

"We are coordinating with our counterparts and we are still validating the issue," said Gen. Carlito Galvez, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Galvez gave assurance that the military was doing its best to protect Philippine territory but he would not give specifics.

The Senate opens an inquiry into the missile deployments when it resumes sessions on Tuesday.

Collin Koh, a research fellow at Rajaratnam School of International Studies' Maritime Security Program, told the Inquirer that the capability deployment pattern should have been long expected.

"This is a gradual, creeping addition of increasingly high-powered capabilities to those Chinese-occupied features. It'll appear that Beijing is ready to up the ante by beefing up its defenses [on] those artificial islands," Koh said.

Long-range weapons

"When Beijing built such high-value installations as enormous airstrips replete with shelters and possibly bunkers, as well as sizable ports with huge ship berthing

spaces, it's a matter of time it will beef up the preexisting short-range defenses such as close-in weapons systems with [long-range] ones," he said.

Koh said the "defensive preparations" may be part of China's measures to assert sovereignty over the contested region, including sea patrols and aerial surveillance using fighter jets and bombers.

In time, China may use its capabilities for offensive operations, he said.

"These long-range systems would allow China to actively challenge foreign military activities within their engagement envelopes, deterring against any undesired moves by the latter," he added.

Koh viewed the Duterte administration's usual response as "a purposeful attempt to [play down] the issue" in order not to "rock the boat" with China.

Both Koh and Batongbacal criticized the Duterte administration's statement that it was "confident" that China's missiles were "not directed" toward the Philippines because of the improved relations between the two countries.

"Manila may say that when ties are rosy. But when ties turn sour, which can [happen] overnight without warning, those missiles would still remain there to threaten Philippine interests in the South China Sea," Koh said.

"Moreover, the missile deployments and the very characteristics of these systems pose a direct challenge [to] Manila's ability to resupply or reinforce [its] outposts in the Spratlys such as Thitu [Pag-asa] Island," he said. "Any plane [flying] out of Palawan [to] that very outpost can be easily interdicted by those Chinese missiles deployed [on] those artificial islands." —WITH A REPORT FROM JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE INQ

Electioneering: 1,100 local execs, reps tagged

Over 100 vote buying cases to be probed

By CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE

Around 1,000 local executives and 100 members of the House of Representatives reportedly intervened in the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections by trying to influence their constituents to vote for their bets, an official of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said yesterday.

DILG Undersecretary Martin Diño said that about 1,000 elected barangay captains are facing suspension and disqualification from office for violating laws and Commission on Elections (Comelec) rules, including vote-buying.

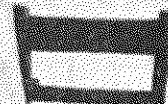
Diño said they are also building cases against the 100 lawmakers, who

he said made a mockery of the electoral process.

He said the 100 congressmen, who come from different districts nationwide, would be accorded due process.

"I will speak to them

Turn to Page 12



Electioneering From Page 1

to get their side and discover the truth," he said in Filipino.

"We received reports that some of the congressmen gave money, while others invited candidates. One candidate had withdrawn, then he or she was convinced to run. These reports are coming from all over the country," Diño said.

The stories are being verified by the DILG.

"Let's admit it, these congressmen really supported candidates, but it shouldn't be obvious as the process is supposed to be apolitical," said Diño.

He pointed out that lawmakers, mayors and other politicians were overeager to provide support to barangay captains in their areas of jurisdiction to help their reelection bid next year.

"This is in support of their reelection bid in 2019. They need the support of barangay captains for their re-election," he noted.

Diño said such practice should be stopped and that once information is verified and affidavits are sworn to, the DILG will closely coordinate with the Comelec for the perpetual disqualification from public office of these people.

He cited the first cases of Batangas Rep. Raneo Abu, who released letters instructing his constituents to vote for certain candidates or he would stop supporting their scholarship programs. He said the case against Abu has been filed.

"Two barangay chairmen have filed the complaint

against him," Diño said.

Abu could not be reached for comment.

At the same time, Diño said 1,000 elected barangay chairmen are facing suspension and disqualification from office for alleged violation of Comelec rules.

"If the 1,000 will win they will not be proclaimed as winners because of their violations and the complaint against them. We have their names, unless they can clear these and answer the accusation against them," he added.

In one case, Diño said an Australian ran in the barangay elections despite the law providing that only Filipino citizens can run for public office in the Philippines.

"Some are not Filipino citizens, while others had served three terms but insisted to run again. They fooled the government and the Filipino people," he noted.

He vowed to work hard to put these people behind bars for violating the law, as he called on the public to submit to the DILG evidence against them.

As this developed, arrests have been made, following more than 100 reported cases of vote-buying.

Citizens' arrests was made on seven persons, who were allegedly buying votes in Lucena City on the eve of the elections.

Police found the suspects, who will be charged with illegal possession of unlawful election paraphernalia, in pos-

session of envelopes each with sample ballots and P200 cash.

The Southern Tagalog Police identified the suspects as Pepito Carbonel, Virginia Sta. Ana, Dory Repollo, Romeo Bersabe, Arsenio Lagrason Jr., Fernando Casino and Wilma Anthony.

In Calamba City, barangay health worker Corazon del Rosario was arrested when councilor Saturniño Lajara and electrician Loreto Gareza, sought the help of authorities, claiming that they saw Del Rosario giving money to Antonio Latumbo in Barangay Milagrosa last Sunday.

Barangay captain Christian Maraña, of Poblacion in Calauag, Quezon was accused by Franklin Maravilla and Franklin Pulgar, a candidate for barangay captain, of vote buying.

Police nabbed Teofilo Banares Jr. for alleged vote-buying on behalf of a candidate for barangay councilor in Taguig City yesterday.

A complainant had approached the police and claimed that Banares offered him P1,000.

Banares will be charged with violation of the Omnibus Election Code.

For their part, police are investigating an alleged vote-buying incident in Mandaluyong.

Senior Supt. Moises Villaceran, Mandaluyong City police chief, said they are gathering evidence to pin down the suspects behind the incident reported by Mharlee Mae Albaciente, a poll watcher.

According to Villaceran, Albaciente brought to his office Genesis Magsino and Herminia dela Cruz, who claimed

somebody paid them P100 and P300, respectively, to vote for the ticket of a candidate for barangay chairman.

Magsino and Dela Cruz brought with them the money but failed to present supporting documents like the sample ballots showing the candidates they are supposed to vote for.

In Aklan, Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said a suspected vote buyer was caught in the act of distributing envelopes containing cash and sample ballots on the eve of elections.

Jimenez added that the suspect faces an election offense, which is punishable with up to six years imprisonment, perpetual disqualification of the right to vote and to hold public office.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde added that they are validating reports of vote buying.

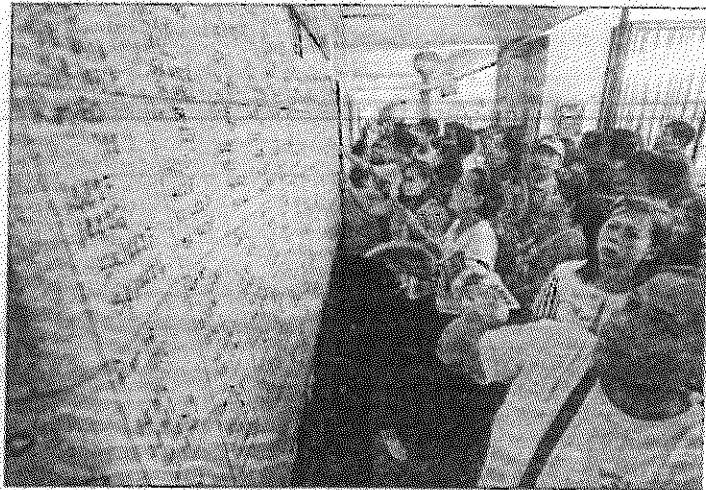
Senior Supt. Rodolfo Castil, provincial police director of Negros Occidental, yesterday confirmed reports of vote buying in La Castellana. This is now being investigated by the Comelec.

P3,000 each for voters

Although there was no violence this time, alleged vote-buying was reported in some Abra towns ahead of yesterday's polls.

Voters in at least three towns were reportedly given P3,000 each to favor barangay and SK bets supported by political kingpins.

DILG officer-in-charge Eduardo Año said they have ordered several mayors to explain after they were reported to be involved



Voters check their names in the lists before casting their vote at the Corazon Aquino Elementary School in Batasan, Quezon City yesterday.

BOY SANTOS

in the whittling down of barangay candidates to a single slate.

Earlier, Diño acknowledged that they were verifying reports of vote buying and harassment in Abra, San Rafael in Bulacan, Antipolo City and 17 cities in Metro Manila, including Quezon City and Marikina.

The DILG official also said they received video footage of some municipal mayors, congressmen and governors "harassing" those running against their candidates.

Diño vowed that once these complaints are verified, the DILG will file administrative charges against the officials, which could lead to their perpetual disqualification from holding public office.

For its part, when the Comelec received reports about missing precincts and missing names, these were immediately addressed with the help of its accredited

citizen's arm, Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, Commissioner Al Parreño said.

For his part, Albayalde reported that a total of 1,100 policemen have replaced teachers as Board of Election Tellers (BETs) in Sulu, Basilan, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Cotabato city.

Meanwhile, the Comelec barred more than 3,000 residents of Maguindanao province from voting yesterday for having multiple voters' registration.

The intense summer heat affected at least 365 voters in different polling centers in Quezon City.

- With Non Alquitran, Ed Amoroso, Gilbert Bayoran, Romina Cabrera, Sheila Crisostomo, Artemio Dum-lao, Rey Galupo, Gerry Lee Gorit, Ramon Lazaro, Ghio Ong, Roel Pareño, Jennifer Rendon, Ben Serrano, John Unson, Eva Visperas

China to deploy fighter jets to SCS — think tank

By PAOLO ROMERO

In a matter of time, China will deploy fighter jets to its artificial islands in the South China Sea, which is expected to significantly expand Beijing's capability to project power in its outposts, a private think tank has reported.

The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) recently said that developments at Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef, Zamora (Subi) Reef and Panganiban (Mischief) Reef — known as the "Big Three" — followed similar military deployments in the China-occupied portions of the disputed Paracel Islands.

From harbor dredging and runway improvements to hangar and radar construction, up-

grades on Woody Island in the Paracels "served as a blueprint for things to come on China's Spratly holdings to the south," the AMTI said.

The think tank said China deployed J-10 and J-11 fighter jets to Woody Island. In October last year, the Chinese military released images and video of J-11Bs on Woody for exercises.

The report said that like on Woody Island, Chinese anti-ship cruise missiles, military transport aircraft, surface-to-air missile systems and jamming equipment are on Kagitingan, Zamora and Panganiban Reefs.

"With similar platforms now seen on the Big Three, it is reasonable to look at other recent Woody Island deployments as signs of things to come at Fiery Cross, Mischief

and Subi Reefs," the AMTI said.

"Considering that China has built identical hangars for combat aircraft on Woody and on each of the Big Three, it is likely that J-10s or J-11s will soon find their way south to the Spratly Islands," it said.

"The current and expected deployments of air and missile platforms in the Paracels and Spratlys are steadily expanding Chinese power projection capabilities from its outposts," the report said.

The AMTI said the Big Three host both air and naval bases and support an ever-growing People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) and fishing fleet presence across the southern portion of the West Philippine Sea.

Tracking surface ships in the

West Philippine Sea, the AMTI monitored around 15 Chinese warships and coast guard vessels of various types anchored on its man-made islands on the three reefs.

The AMTI identified several PLAN and CCG vessels in the Spratlys, which include Type 053, Type 053H1, Type 053H1G and Type 053H3 frigates.

AFP doing its best

Meanwhile, Armed Forces chief Gen. Carlito Galvez yesterday assured Filipinos that the military is doing its best to secure and protect the country's maritime territory and territorial integrity.

Galvez issued this statement in the wake of China's sustained militarization in the Kalayaan Group of Islands in the Spratlys.

"We still maintain the nine

islands and also in the western portion, we are protecting seven islands along the Sulu and Celebes seas," Galvez said.

He was referring to the AFP's nine military outposts in the Kalayaan currently being guarded by the Marines.

These military outposts include the islets Pag-asa, Likas, Parola, Lawak, Kota, Patag and Panatag as well as Ayungin Shoal and Rizal Reef.

Under direct threat from China's militarization in the Kalayaan Group of Islands are Pag-asa Island and Ayungin Shoal.

Kalayaan town on Pag-asa, a fifth class municipality of Palawan, is located just 12 nautical miles from China's man-made island on Zamora Reef.

Ayungin Shoal is 23 nautical miles from the Chinese

military base at Panganiban Reef, which is only 129 nautical miles from mainland Palawan.

As reported by the think tank, China has been assembling around 15 warships and coast guard vessels in the disputed region since last year.

"For now we are coordinating with our counterparts and we are still validating the report," Galvez said.

He declined to discuss the issue, saying any official statement on the West Philippine Sea is no longer within the domain of the military but of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

On the northern frontier, Galvez said the AFP has deployed a battalion of Marines to help secure and protect the country's territory.

— With Jaime Laude

COUNTRY'S FIRST SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN VAST UNDERSEA PLATEAU

DUTERTE TO SEND OFF FILIPINO TEAM OF SCIENTISTS TO PHILIPPINE RISE

By Christine O. Avendaño and Tonette Orejas
@Team_Inquirer

President Duterte is sending off an all-Filipino team of scientists to Philippine Rise on Tuesday to begin the country's first scien-

tific research in the vast undersea plateau off Aurora province. The send-off program commemorates the 2012 United Nations declaration that the submerged plateau, then known as Benham Rise, is part of the Philippines' exclusive economic zone and extended continental shelf. Mr. Duterte's trip is also symbolic, as it falls on the eve of the first anniversary of his renaming the 13-million-hectare seamount Philippine Rise. Accompanying the Presi-

dent in sending off the 50-strong scientific team are Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and some members of Congress, including Sen. Win Gatchalian. National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon said on Monday.

Esperon said the government had stopped processing foreign applications for scientific research in Philippine Rise, and was encouraging Filipino scientists to carry out studies of the resource-rich seamount. On June 12 last year, the mili-

tary's Northern Luzon Command planted a metallic Philippine flag on the seamount. The command also placed a marker 21 meters below the surface to assert that the plateau is part of the Philippines' territory. INQ Pg 6

Rody leads rites renaming Benham as Philippine Rise

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte will lead today the commemoration of the renaming of Benham Rise to Philippine Rise to emphasize the Philippines' sovereignty over the resource-rich underwater plateau.

Activities commemorating the awarding of Benham Rise to the Philippines and its renaming to Philippine Rise will be held in Aurora province today until tomorrow, according to Malacañang and military officials.

These will include the send-

ing off of a team of about 50 Filipino scientists who will conduct research in Philippine Rise, casting of buoy made by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources as floating marker, laying of a marker at the shallowest point in Benham Plateau and fly-by of air assets.

of different agencies conducting maritime air patrol in the area.

Lt. Col. Isagani Nato, public information chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Northern Luzon Command, said this week's commemoration is the second since the awarding of Philip-

pine Rise to the country.

The Philippines has sovereign rights over the undersea region, a 13-million-hectare submerged continental shelf off the province of Aurora. This means that the country has the exclusive right to explore and exploit the natural and non-

living resources found in it.

The United Nations declared the underwater plateau as part of the Philippines' continental shelf in 2012. Duterte renamed the undersea landmass from Benham Rise to Philippine Rise through Executive Order No. 25 issued in May last year.

Duterte to grace Philippine Rise rites

By ARCYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS
and FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

President Duterte is heading to the Philippine Rise (formerly Benham Rise) this week to assert the country's ownership and sovereignty over the resource-rich underwater plateau and lead the commemoration of the awarding of the region to the country.

Duterte is also going to the Philippine Rise also to commemorate its renaming from Benham Rise.

It was renamed to Philippine Rise after Duterte signed Executive Order (EO) No. 25 on May 16, 2017.

Expected to join Duterte in Aurora are Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and other dignitaries from national government agencies, local government units, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other stakeholders.

The Philippine Rise is a natural submarine prolongation / undersea region of the Luzon Island located 135 miles from the coast of Aurora and 160 miles from the northern coastline of Dinapigue, Isabela.

PH Rise rites

AFP - Northern Luzon Command Spokesman and Public Information Office chief Lt. Col. Isagani Nato said scheduled activities include the send-off of some 50 Filipino scientists who will conduct maritime / scientific research in the Philippine Rise, the casting of buoy made by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) as floating marker, laying of another marker at the shallowest point in the Benham plateau and fly-by of aircrafts of different agencies conducting maritime air patrol in the area.

Philippine territory

Last month, Duterte said he would visit Philippine Rise to make a bold statement that the Philippines "owns this place."

"I'm going to set sail to Benham Rise and I will make a statement there that nobody but nobody owns this place, including the continental shelf," Duterte said last month.

UNCLOS ruling and resources

Under the United Nations Conven-

tion on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Philippines has sole rights to explore and exploit the mineral resources in the Philippine Rise.

It is said that its seabed may also contain highly valuable minerals.

It is home to a rich marine biodiversity with reefscape containing corals, algae, and halimeda, sustaining a variety of fish.

With its fishery resources, the region is crucial to fisherman from Quezon, Aurora, Catanduanes, and adjacent provinces.

It is said to have the highest catch rate of tuna species compared to other areas in the country.

Rody's warning

In March this year, President Duterte said he is ready to go to war against any country which will conduct research or experiments in the Philippine Rise without the government's permission.

"If any country would say that they want to try and experiment there [Philippine Rise] without our permission, hindi talaga ako papayag (I will not

allow it) and it will mean war," Duterte said in a speech in Davao City two months ago.

"Nandoon na ang mga marines. Wag kayong matakot, kasama ako doon (The marines are already there. Do not be afraid, I will be there with you)," he added.

Duterte earlier said that he will not allow foreign researchers to explore the Philippine Rise without his permission and recommendation from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) following reports that the government admitted that Chinese survey ships have a record of illegal entry in the Philippine Rise.

"Sinabi ko talaga walang mag-experiment na diyan hangga't wala sila permiso galing sa akin (I said that no one will be allowed to experiment there until I give my permission). But the armed forces will have to recommend it," Duterte said.

China

Duterte's pronouncement about the Philippine Rise stemmed from reports that China has given name to five of



PRESIDENT DUTERTE

the underwater features in the Philippine Rise.

However, the Philippine government said that it will proceed with giving them Filipino names.

Malacañang earlier expressed that there is no reason for the public to be alarmed by China's move since the Asian giant recognizes that it is the Philippines which has sovereign rights over the 13-million hectare underwater plateau. (with a report from Mar T. Supnad)

Duterte leads visit to Philippine Rise

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte will lead the commemoration of the first year anniversary of the renaming of the intercontinental shelf that will be highlighted by a "solidarity visit" and send-off rites for an all-Filipino scientific team that would conduct maritime research in the area.

The commemoration will be held May 15 to 16.

The activities include the casting of a buoy made by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources as floating marker; laying of another marker at the shallowest point in Benham Plateau; and fly-by of aircrafts of different agencies conducting Maritime Air Patrol.

The President on May 16, 2017, through Executive Order 25, renamed then Benham Rise as Philippine Rise after some Chinese research vessels were seen in the area. It was awarded by the United Nations to the Philippines in April 2012.

Duterte had repeatedly said that only Filipinos have the right to explore and exploit the resources in the Philippine Rise and even ordered a Marine battalion to patrol and safeguard the country's sovereign interests in the area.

He said that he wants to personally visit the Philippine Rise to make a statement that the Philippines has sovereign rights

See DUTERTE > Page B6

DUTERTE

over the area.

The United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLOS) on April 12, 2012 declared that the 13-million hectare undersea plateau off Aurora province, which is believed

to be rich in gas, minerals and marine life, is within the Philippines' 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone.

A marker, with the Philippine flag, was also laid at the underwater plateau about 70 feet below sea level symbolizing our ownership to that part of the Philippine Rise Region.

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May 2019

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Send-off events mark PH Rise research

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte will grace a series of commemorative activities, including a send-off ceremony on Tuesday that will formally start the marine science research or MSR to be performed by the country's premier scientists in Philippine Rise.

Meanwhile, Efren Carandang, deputy administrator of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority or NAMRIA, described the successful validation of

the country's claim to Philippine Rise to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf as "a perpetual legacy."

"[Philippine Rise's recognition by the UNCLCS] will enrich the national patrimony, aside from demonstrating to the international community of nations the country's strong determination, capability and political will to assert its rights under international law," Carandang said.

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Send-off...

From A1

The MSR is the first nationally-coordinated research to be conducted in the undersea region off the provinces of Isabela and Aurora since Duterte signed Executive Order 25 renaming Benham Rise to Philippine Rise on May 16, 2017.

It is part of the Coordinated National MSR Initiatives and Related Activities or CONMIRA that the national government agencies and research institutions are conducting in the Philippine waters

from April to November this year.

CONMIRA comprises the Bureau of Food and Aquatic Resources, Marine and Geosciences Bureau and Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, National Mapping and Resource and Information Authority, Philippine Navy and University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute.

Duterte had earlier ordered to stop all the marine explorations by foreign entities in Philippine Rise and to give priority to Filipino scientists.

Last week, Presidential Spokesman

Harry Roque announced that around 50 Filipino scientists will conduct the MSR.

In a March forum last year, Cesar Villanoy of the UP-MSI said there was a need for more scientific exploration to determine the economic potential of Philippine Rise.

Villanoy said the government should also develop a sustainable management framework for the development and protection of the area believed to be rich in marine resources, natural gas, oil and minerals.

He suggested a practical cooperation, possibly with other countries, for

technological capability since research expeditions in Philippine Rise require the use of modern equipment such as remotely-operated vehicles and Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems.

Villanoy said the MSR was a step towards creating a more comprehensive understanding of the area.

"This is just the beginning to know what is at the rise and understanding processes," Villanoy said.

Mario Aurelio, director of the UP National Institute of Geological Sciences, said the Filipinos had the expertise to conduct MSR in Philippine Rise. PNA

Phil Rise claim, 'perpetual legacy' for next generation – NAMRIA

"A perpetual legacy" bestowed by the present generation to all future Filipinos.

This was how the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) Deputy Administrator Efren Carandang described the successful validation of the country's claim to the Philippine Rise to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).

"(Philippine Rise recognition by the UN CLCS) will enrich the national patrimony, aside from demonstrating to the international community of nations the country's strong determination, capability and political will to assert its rights under international law," Carandang said.

The territory measures 13 million hectares.

He also called the validation of

the Philippine Rise claim as the country's first successful validation of a claim in accord with the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS).

"It is a perpetual legacy that this generation has bestowed upon the future generations of Filipinos," the NAMRIA official added.

The Philippine Rise, comprised of the 200-nautical-mile continental shelf from the baselines of Luzon, extends 118 nautical miles beyond the legal continental shelf limits.

Its main body is like a plateau with its broad crest and steep slopes toward the deep ocean floor of the West Philippine Basin.

Meanwhile, it is comprised of the NAMRIA-discovered Palanan Saddle and the Bicol Saddle.

It has also two prominent spurs: the Narra Spur in the northeast

and the Molave Spur in the southeast.

On May 16, 2017, Duterte signed Executive Order 25 changing the name of the undersea feature to Philippine Rise.

"The Benham Rise Region is subject to sovereign rights and jurisdiction of the Philippines pursuant to relevant provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, national legislation, and the UNCLOS and applicable international law," EO 25 stated.

In 2012, the United Nations, through recommendations of the CLCS, approved the Philippines' claim that the Philippine Rise is within the country's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone.

The Philippines first sought recognition for its claims to the Philippine Rise on April 8, 2009.

3

PNA

Elections generally peaceful - AFP, PNP

By JAIME LAUDE

Except for seven confirmed violent incidents, the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections across the country yesterday were generally peaceful, according to police and military officials.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said polling precincts from the farthest

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villages, including those in Barangay Pag-asa on Kalayaan Island in the Spratlys, Turtle Island in the Sulu Sea and northern Batanes, simultaneously opened at 7:30 a.m. without any major incident.

"We have reports of 42 violent incidents but the Commission on Elections (Comelec) confirmed only seven. Of the seven cases, 13 were killed," Galvez said.

Philippine National Po-

lice (PNP) spokesman Chief Supt. John Bulalacao said the National Election Monitoring Action Center (NEMAC) at Camp Crame in Quezon City received reports of isolated violent incidents before and during election day that left 35 persons dead and 27 hurt.

The PNP, however, recorded 47 violent cases and also validated seven, with 13 persons dead. Investigations were being

conducted on 40 cases, Bulalacao said. "Intensified police operations through police response, check point, gun check and service of search warrants, resulted in the arrest of 1,350 persons for various violations, including vote buying, liquor ban, illegal possession of firearms and explosives and bladed weapons," he said. Police also seized 1,157 firearms, 79 grenades, 350 explosives and 7,926 ammunition. Galvez said all of the 174,000 precincts in the country opened for the first time between 7:30 a.m. and 11:30

a.m. with the help of Comelec police and military officials.

About 30,000 soldiers and militiamen were deputized by the Comelec for election duty, especially in critical areas in the country, to support the PNP and ensure smooth and peaceful polls, he said.

Elections, however, were suspended in Marawi City while the opening of precincts in Lanao del Norte were delayed, he said.

Aside from the slaying of former representative Eufra-

nio Eriguel and his two bodyguards in Agoo, La Union and the killing of four persons in Basilan two days before elections, political exercises were peaceful, he added.

33 killed

At least 33 people were killed in 42 incidents believed to have been triggered by intense political rivalry during the month-long election period for barangay and SK polls, the PNP said. Of the incidents, seven were validated

to be violent while 35 other cases were being investigated.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde is hoping that the number of violent incidents will no longer increase.

He directed all police units to beef up security in their respective localities. The PNP NEMAC reported that from April 14 to May 14, total dead comprised 18 elected government officials, four candidates, three former officials, two supporters and six civilians.

-With Cecille Suerte Felipe

35 KILLED, 27 WOUNDED IN 'PEACEFUL' ELECTIONS

By the Inquirer Staff
@Team_Inquirer

Despite incidents of violence before and during the May 14 barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections, officials said voting was relatively peaceful.

As of Monday afternoon, the Philippine National Police had received reports of 47 violent incidents since the election period began on April 14. Thirty-five persons were killed and 27 wounded.

In Sultan Kudarat province, a reelectionist village chair in the coastal town of Palimbang was shot dead on Sunday.

Mustre Aguib, 51, of Barangay Mina, was driving his motorbike on his way home when gunmen flagged him down and shot him dead, according to Senior Insp. Carl Jayson Baynosa, police chief of Palimbang.

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35 killed, 27 hurt in 'peaceful' polls

FROM A1

In Opol town, Misamis Oriental province, the husband of a village chair candidate at Barangay Malanang was shot dead on Sunday night. Two suspects were arrested for the death of Eliezer Zafra, 41.

Dumagat candidate

In Donya Remedios Trinidad town, Bulacan province, a Dumagat woman, who was running for village councilor at Barangay Kabayunan, survived a gun attack.

Emilita de la Merced, 45, was on a truck with 20 Dumagat people at about 10 p.m. on Sunday when two men on a motorcycle fired at her at Sitio Johnson.

On Monday, a businessman, whose son was a reelectionist barangay captain, was shot at Barangay Poblacion in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu province, around 2:30 a.m. He was in critical condition.

SPO3 Candido Barinque identified the victim as Eduardo Godornez. He said Godornez was about to step out of his Toyota Fortuner when a gun-

man repeatedly fired shots at him, hitting him in the abdomen, shoulder and leg.

While residents cast their votes in Pio Duran town, Albay province, an alleged supporter of the opponent of the reelectionist barangay captain of Cuyaoyao was injured in a shooting incident.

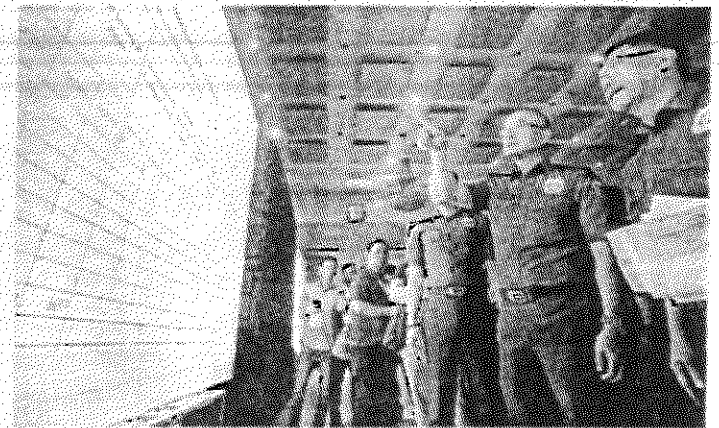
Heated argument

While inside Cuyaoyao Elementary School, village chief Nilo Soria had a heated argument with his opponent, said Senior Insp. Darwin Sevilla, deputy chief of Pio Duran police.

Soria seized a handgun from his opponent's supporter Norly Madela, 53. He, then, used the gun to shoot Madela in the back when he noticed that the latter was about to get another firearm.

In Taguig City, voting at a polling place briefly stopped after a poll watcher was mauled allegedly by employees of the City Hall.

Voters and board of election inspectors ran out of Maharlika Elementary School on Mindanao Avenue at Barangay Ma-



PNP MONITORING Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Albayaalde checks the poll information sent to the National Election Monitoring Center at Camp Crame in Quezon City. —JAM STA. ROSA

harlika about 2:30 p.m., crying for help after a group of men started a fist fight at one of the precincts.

Minutes after police and military escorted out a man whose face was severely beaten up, Maharlika village chair Baisittee Pangandaman identified the victim as Ybrahim Ismael, one of his poll watchers.

Ismael's wife, Rajah Bai, was also hurt in the scuffle.

Policemen later arrested four suspects.

Volunteers

In Isabela City, Basilan province, Jograd Infanter and his daughter Roselle were manning a precinct as volunteers of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting when supporters of a candidate slapped them.

The father and daughter

were accused of being biased for still unknown reasons.

At Barangay Campo Uno in Lamitan town, Basilan province, Raffy Ismael complained he was mauled by two men while he was queuing for his ballot.

Soldiers manning the precinct at Campo Uno had to fire warning shots as some voters and supporters started to become unruly.

At Barangay Lanote, also in Isabela City, supporters of some candidates were also involved in a melee.

In Jolo town, Sulu province, fist fights involving supporters of candidates took place in the Walled City and Chinese Pier, according to Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, the commander of the Joint Task Force Sulu.

Gun ban violation

In Sulop town, Davao del Sur province, police said they had arrested a man for violation of the gun ban on election day.

At Barangay Alegria in San Francisco town, Agusan del Sur province, a 33-year old man was also arrested for bringing a handgun.

Two explosions were heard

near Barangay Dungos in Tulu-nan town, North Cotabato province, on Monday.

"There was no reported casualty but the blasts caused panic among voters (in Dungos)," said Supt. Bernard Tayong.

Eight hours before balloting took place in Datu Unsay town, Maguindanao province, an explosion also took place outside its town hall.

A police report said the blast might have been caused by a rifle grenade. —REPORTS FROM JULIE

ALIPALA, DIVINA SUSON, EDDIE AGUIRRE, EDWIN FERNANDEZ, CHRIS PANGANIBAN, JIGGER J. JERUSALEM, MA. APRIL MIER, MADONNA T. VIROLA, STEPHANIE FLORIDA, GERNIE DELGADO, DALE JAN DINO, MARK FRANCIS BANAY, ROMA JOY PADRE, ELYSSA KRISTINE ELLA, MAITE DENISE BOBIS, MA. TERESA MORTEL, DORIS C. BONGCAC, ADR VINCENT S. MAYOL, NORMAN MENDOZA, NESTOR P. BURGOS JR., JENNIFER ALLEGADO, JOEY A. GABIETA, FUTCH INSO, HAZEL VILLA, TONETTE OREJAS, ALLAN MACATUNO, CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE, VILLAMOR VISAYA JR., LEILANIE ADRIANO AND YOLANDA SOTELO IN THE PROVINCES; AND DEXTER CABALZA AND JAYMEE T. GAMIL IN METRO MANILA INQ

Barangay, SK polls generally peaceful

Election victory won't spare candidates on drug watch list from investigation, Albayalde warns

By DENALYN D. KABILING and MARTIN A. SARDONEDONG

The conduct of the 2018 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Elections was generally peaceful based on the reports from the police and military, a Palace official said Monday.

The military and police reports about this year's village and youth elections were sent to the Office of the President for regular updates, accord-

ing to Special Assistant to the President Christopher "Bong" Go.

"As of now naman mayroong mga ilang insidente, pero generally peaceful naman po [As of now, there are a few incidents but the elections were generally peaceful]," he said in an interview with DZRH.

He said the President had earlier directed the police and

▶3

Barangay, SK polls...

military to "stay neutral" and keep peace and order during the Barangay and SK elections.

Go, however, acknowledged that some cases of violence and allegations of vote-buying have marred the elections.

In Davao region, Go said the elections were also generally peaceful although there was a reported shooting of an incumbent chairman of Barangay Pangyan, Calinan, Davao City. He was referring to Antonio Guatno who was shot by authorities after allegedly resisting an implementation of a search warrant for illegal possession of firearms.

33 election period deaths

The Philippine National Police (PNP) said that at least 33 persons have been reported killed since the start of the election period last April 14 up to Monday's elections.

Citing data from the National Election Monitoring and Action Center (NEMAC), PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said 18 of the victims were elected government officials, four were running candidates, three were former government officials, two were supporters, and six were civilians. The data were recorded from 6 a.m. of April 14 to May 14.

Albayalde noted that the 33 were victims of the 42 violent incidents recorded.

Aside from the 33 deaths, 26 persons were wounded while 24 others were left unharmed in the recorded violent incidents, he said. He, however, clarified, that the data were significantly lower compared to the 109 victims recorded in 57 violent incidents in the 2013 elections.

Vote-buying

Go said they also received reports of alleged vote-buying in some places.

He noted that vote-buying allegations hurled by rival political parties against each other cannot be avoided especially in bitterly contested polls. He, however, pointed out that poverty was not a valid reason for a person to sell his ballot during elections.

Go, who voted in his hometown, instead encouraged the public to "go out and vote wisely," saying the future of their community is at stake. He said barangay leaders provide the frontline services to the constituents especially in times of disasters and other emergencies.

Suspected vote-buying in Calamba, Laguna, as well as in Lucena and Calauag, Quezon. There were also cases of arrest for illegal possession of unlawful election paraphernalia in Lucena.

Among the arrests for alleged vote-buying incidents include one Corazon Del Rosario, 63, a barangay health worker.

She was accosted by policemen after allegedly giving money to one Antonio Latumbo, a registered voter in Barangay Milagrosa, Calamba, as reported by city Councilor Saturnino Lajara and electrician Loreto Gareta.

Police said they found two ₱500 bills individually placed inside a small brown envelope. She will be charged with violation of Omnibus Election Code Section 261 (a) for vote-buying, police said.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) admitted receiving many reports of alleged vote-buying but it only verified a few cases.

"As far as we are concerned, what we need are the verified reports, but as far as verified reports, dalawa or tatlo palang na lugar ang meron (only two to three reports were verified)," said Comelec spokesman James Jimenez.

No immunity for winners

As this developed, Albayalde likewise warned winners in Monday's electoral exercise who are on the government's drug watch list that their victory will not spare them from investigation and punishment should they be proven to be involved in illegal drugs or any unlawful activity.

"What we can do is to further validate the allegations against them and conduct a case build-up if they are really in the [drugs watch list]," Albayalde said.

"If there is basis, then we can file a case or apply for a search warrant. It [winning from the elections] is not an excuse. Winning does not absolve them from their involvement in illegal drugs," he said.

Last month, PDEA released a "validated" drug watch list which includes the names of at least 216 village officials. The PDEA said the information was based on military and police intelligence information.

But Albayalde clarified that until the allegations are proven, the winning candidates on the drugs watch list will have to perform their duties as duly elected village officials.

"The [Commission on Election] will proclaim the winners. The PNP's part is for intelligence and case build-up only if they are really involved. Remember, these are mere allegations [being included in drugs watch list] and it is also not a reason for them to be deprived of exercising their powers once they get elected," he said.

Albayaide assured the winning officials on the drug watch list that they will be accorded due process while investigation is being conducted.

"It's a watch list, not a warrant of arrest," he said.

The PNP had previously advised the public not to vote candidates whom they know are involved in illegal drugs.

"You know who they are because it is your barangay, so do not vote for them or else you will suffer the consequences," said then PNP chief, Director General Ronald dela Rosa.

Intelligence monitoring

The PNP chief also warned that policemen who abandoned their duties or intervened in favor of relative candidates will face sanctions.

Albayaide vowed to run after policemen who either did not show up or abandoned polling precincts which they were assigned.

"This is the reason why we created the Red Teams. They were instructed to account discreetly if the policemen assigned to man polling precincts were really there," said Albayaide.

The Red Teams, he said, were complemented with counter-intelligence operatives in the provinces and in the regions," he added.

Aside from the reports of the Red Teams, he said they are also monitoring if the 2,875 policemen whose relatives are running for any barangay posts have intervened.

Those policemen were reassigned to other places long before the barangay elections so as not to influence the barangay polls.

"We will investigate if any of them intervened but as of this time there is none," said Albayaide.

"If we would find out that they intervened even if they were already reassigned, they will be charged accordingly," he added.

Police as BEIs

Meanwhile, Albayaide said there were areas, particularly in Mindanao, where policemen acted as Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs) because the teachers who were supposed to be BEIs pulled out from the duty out of fear.

He said 872 cops deployed in Maguindanao, Sulu, Basilan and Lanao del Sur have acted as BEIs, and more than 100 were on reserve status.

"Remember, before they were tasked to be BEIs, the Comelec has given them a one-day seminar. Those men are territorial police, they were trained and they are prepared for that duty," he assured.

But the Department of Education (DepEd) reported that the conduct of the 2018 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections was "generally peaceful" as far as public school teachers who fulfilled their poll duties are concerned.

In a press briefing at the Election Taskforce Operation (ETF) and Monitoring Center currently set up in the Buiwagan ng Karunungan of DepEd Central Office

in Pasig City, key officials said the opening of poll earlier was "generally peaceful" with "no reports of violence to schoolteachers who serve as volunteers for the elections."

The military likewise reported that the conduct of elections in Northern Luzon was also generally peaceful.

Northern Luzon Command spokesman and current Public Information Office (PIO) chief Lt. Col. Isagani Nato said that as of Monday afternoon they have not yet received any reports of untoward incidents. (With reports from Aaron B. Recuenco, Leslie G. Aquino, Francis T. Wakefield, and Ina H. Malipot)

Massive vote buying mar Monday polls

BY RHAYDS B. BARCIA

A SHOOTING incident involving a barangay (village) chairman in Albay, massive vote buying and confusion in the voters' list were the most common complaints in various parts of the country even as the Commission on Elections (Comelec) declared the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) polls on Monday generally peaceful.

Maria Luisa Calubaquib, Philippine National Police (PNP)-Bicol spokesman, said re-electionist village chairman Nilo Soria, 55, of Barangay Cuyaoyao, Pioduran town is now in police custody after he shot Norly Madela during an altercation.

Early on Monday, Soria reportedly confronted a certain "Ambo" but Madela, 53, of Barangay Nablang Bulod in Pioduran intervened and punched him in the face. A commotion ensued and when Madela tried to pull out a firearm Soria quickly drew his gun and fired at him.

Although both were wounded, Soria and Madela were detained at Libon police station.

Meanwhile, Comelec-Bicol regional director Jean Valeza said vote buying was reported in the

provinces of Albay and Catanduanes with voters being given from P300 to P500 each.

In Laguna, Corazon del Rosario, 63, a village health officer was charged with violation of the Omnibus Election Code for alleged vote-buying in Purok 5, Barangay Milagrosa, Calamba City.

Chief Supt Guillermo Eleazar, PNP-Calabarzon chief, said Del Rosario was arrested after Calamba City Councilor Saturnino Lajara and Loreta Gareza reported they saw the suspect in the act of giving money to Antonio Latumbo.

Police recovered from Del Rosario two small envelopes with P500 bills each.

Calabarzon is comprised of the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon.

In Quezon province, Christian Maraña, chairman of Barangay Poblacion 2 in Calauag escaped before police could arrest him after complaints of vote-buying.

Witnesses Franklin Maravilla and Franklin Fulgar reported that Maraña went to their house and gave them two small envelopes containing P200 each with a sample ballot indicating Maraña's name and his seven councilmen.

In Lucena City, police arrested Pepito Carbonnel in Purok IV, Dulong Buhangin, Barangay Dalahican, as well as his companions - Virginia Sta Ana, Dory Repollo, Romeo Bersabe, Arsenio Lagrason, Fernando Casiño and Wilma Anthony.

Police recovered a shoulder bag from the suspects with several envelopes containing sample ballots and cash.

The Calabarzon police have arrested 205 persons for various election-related violations since the election period started last April 14.

In Nueva Ecija, Edmund Abesamis, national president of the Liga ng mga Barangay sa Pilipinas said the village and SK elections is one of the most expensive local polls in the country.

Rampant vote buying was reported in Barangay Baluarte, Gapan City where voters were given from P2,000 each to as much as

P15,000 per family depending on the number of members.

In Barangay La Torre, Talavera town, the Comelec asked soldiers of the Army's 61st Infantry Battalion to close the gates of an elementary school for various election violations.

In Tarlac, Senior Supt. Ritchie Medardo Posadas, police provincial director, said except for the arrest of four persons in Anao town for violation of the liquor ban, no other major concerns were recorded.

A resident of Barangay Maligaya in Tarlac City almost lost failed to vote after another person inadvertently voted and signed for her name. But the board and election tellers later allowed her to cast her vote after investigation.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said voting started smoothly in most parts of the country except for some telecommunications problems in some parts of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Jimenez identified the problematic areas as Bacolod, Kalawi, Benedayan and Maseu towns in Lanao del Sur, as well as Turtle Island in Tawi-Tawi.

"We had a hard time communicating with some areas in the ARMM because of poor signal. But

generally, voting started smoothly, including in the provinces of Basilan and Sulu as well as in Regions 1, 4-A, 4-B, 5, 7, 8 and the Cordillera Autonomous Region," Jimenez said.

Cotabato City Mayor Gulani-Sayadi in her Facebook Page vowed to prosecute the candidates involved in vote buying. The candidates reportedly gave a

minimum of P500 each to voters which will be used as evidence in filing the cases.

In the 37 villages in Cotabato, 19 candidates for barangay chairmen ran unopposed. *AZ*

**WITH REPORTS FROM
ROSELLE R. AQUINO, CELSO
CAJUCOM, JERRY HERNANDEZ,
WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL AND
JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL**

4,000 BARANGAY, SK CANDIDATES FACE RAPS

No proclamation for thousands of bets

BY WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL

UP to 4,000 candidates for the *barangay* (village) and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK or youth council) polls face raps for lack of qualification, such as non-residency or non-registration and exceeding the age limit in the case of youth bets, the Commission on Elections said on Monday.

In case these bets won, their proclamation would be suspended, acting Comelec chairman Al Parreno told reporters.

"We will not allow them to assume office. We will sign today their disqualification," he said.

Parreno said some 3,000 to 4,000 candidates were facing charges before the Comelec law department for violation of the age limit or for being non-residents of the area where they were running.

Many bets ran for the SK elections even if they were more than the maximum 24 years of age, he said.

Commissioner Lute Tito Guia said the

► Bets A2

■ BETS FROM A1

No proclamation

Comelec would resolve all cases by June 30 so the succession rule would be clearly defined.

'Successful, peaceful'

The Comelec declared that the synchronized barangay and SK elections were successful and generally peaceful, with all precincts nationwide able to open for voting.

Parreño said the only reported delays in the opening of precincts were recorded in three municipalities in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao: Bacolod, Benedayan and Masu, all in Lanao del Norte.

Based on a report from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the polling centers were able to proceed with voting at 10:30 a.m.

"The report this time is 100 percent of precincts opened today. All 177,574 precincts were able to successfully open and were able to start their elections," Parreño said in a news briefing at the

Comelec Command Center.

The cause of the delay, according to military spokesman Edgard Arevalo, had yet to be established.

Marcelo Bragado Jr., Department of Education Election Task Force operations and legal support chief, also said: "We are happy that the opening of election is generally peaceful."

"In fact, we haven't yet received any reported incidence of violence during the opening of the election at 7 a.m. There are no reported incidence of injuries, casualties, and election-related harassment," he added.

Parreño said voting in areas where there were delays in the opening of precincts were to be extended by the Comelec en banc, depending on the reason and other circumstances.

"We look on the cause of the delay, its effect and accordingly decide how long we will extend the voting. We need specific facts and specific scenario," he added.

Barangay candidates on the so-

called narco-list but were qualified to run would not be disqualified, officials said, as they needed to be convicted by the court first.

No major incidents

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said the police national headquarters did not receive reports of major election-related violence at polling centers.

According to Albayalde, 73,562 PNP personnel or two uniformed police personnel per polling center were deployed all over the country, aside from another 89,529 personnel who were deployed as quick reaction teams, particularly in hotspot areas.

The PNP chief also confirmed that 1,100 policemen took over as members of the barangay board of tellers in Sulu (150), Basilan (45), Maguindanao (177), Lanao del Sur (400), Cotabato City (119) and North Cotabato (109).

"Remember, the Comelec has trained 1,000 police officers per region as election officers as a contingency measure," Albayalde added.

Election-related violent inci-

dents in 2018 stood at 13, compared with 33 in 2013.

The military spokesman, Arevalo, said 19,444 military personnel were deployed to secure the polls, or 15 percent of the total number of enlisted personnel, aside from reserve and auxiliary forces.

The Department of Education, for its part, said 87 percent of cash allowance cards were delivered to the teachers serving as members of barangay board of tellers.

There were 78,004,600 registered voters, both for barangay and SK, in this year's elections. Of that number, 57,378,380 were registered for the barangay level, while 78,004,600 were registered for the SK level.

More than 36,000 classrooms or schools nationwide served as voting centers.

There were 336,328 contested positions in the barangay elections. Of that number, 12,041 were for barangay chairmen, while 294,287 were for barangay *kagawad* (village councilors).

The SK elections had the same number of contested posts.

WITH NEILA ALCOBER AND ROY D.R. NARRA

Killings mar elections

*Voters recite litany of problems;
Comelec claims success*

By Francisco Tuyay
and Sara Susanne D. Fabunan

THIRTY-FIVE people have been killed and 27 others were wounded in 47 separate election-related incidents, police said Monday.

In a press conference in Camp Crame as polls opened for the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections, Philippine National Police chief Oscar Albayalde said since the start of the election period on April 14, 18 elected government officials, six civilians, four candidates, three former elected officials and two supporters of poll bets have been killed.

Albayalde said, however, that only 13 of these deaths have been validated so far as being election-related.

During the same period, police reported 47 suspected election-related incidents.

Of the 126 suspects in the incidents, 29 were

identified, 82 were unidentified, six were arrested and nine were released from detention.

Among the cases under investigation were the shootings involving Daanbantayan Mayor Vicente Loot in Cebu, who survived an ambush, and former La Union Rep. Eufrazio Eriguel of La Union, who was killed.

Albayalde said that 181,212 personnel assumed election duty as the entire PNP went on nationwide full alert.

"As 36,781 polling centers across the country opened at 7 a.m. today, 73,562 PNP personnel manned their respective posts to provide

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Killings...

From A1

security to these voting centers," the PNP chief said.

He said on alert at the Police Regional Offices were 13,267 troops comprising the Reactionary Standby Support Force and 2,854 RSSF at the National Headquarters.

The 89,529 personnel comprising the Quick Reaction Teams were also placed on the highest alert condition and readiness to respond to any contingency, he noted.

Albayalde added that the deployment of PNP personnel was backed by troops from the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Commission on Elections acting chairman Al Parreño said the elections were successful, though marred by the usual problems of vote buying, threats, and missing poll precincts.

Parreño said that 177,574 clustered precincts or 100 percent were open Monday for voters to cast their votes.

"We are able to open all precincts, 100 percent. All 177,574 precincts were able to successfully open and they were able to start their elections," said Parreño.

In a press conference, Parreño acknowledged that polling precincts in provinces such as Manalay, Mindoro, Tagoloan, Lanao del Norte, Turtle Island, Tawi-Tawi, Bacolod-Kalawi, Masiu, and Binidayan, Lanao del Sur were able to open a little later than 7 a.m.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said, however, that this was not considered a failure of election.

Comelec Commissioner Rowena Guanzon, meanwhile, urged members of the media to act as witnesses if they recorded any poll irregularities.

"Those reporting on such matters can even stand as witnesses... those who captured them on video," she said.

Albayalde said the PNP received fewer election-related violence reports than in the 2013 barangay elections.

In Lanao del Norte, Mayor Jabar Tago, his two brothers and five others were arrested Sunday for illegal possession of firearms, one day ahead of the elections.

Weapons seized included a sniper rifle, an AK-47, an M16 and a grenade launcher, Col. Robert Daus, commander of the Army's 2nd Mechanized Brigade, said.

Also on Monday, the Comelec said qualified teachers who served during the polls would be able to get the 5-per-

cent tax deducted from their honoraria and allowances.

Based on Comelec Resolution No. 10332, public school teachers will be able to process the refund of their taxes withheld as provided for by the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law.

"Those serving in the Electoral Boards, DESOs, and support staff, who are exempted from withholding tax on compensation, shall be able to execute the prescribed Sworn Declaration, and to submit the same to the Commission on Elections for the processing and refund of the tax previously withheld," the poll body said.

It noted that the refund was included in the provision of the TRAIN law, wherein those with an annual taxable income of P250,000 are exempted from income tax payment.

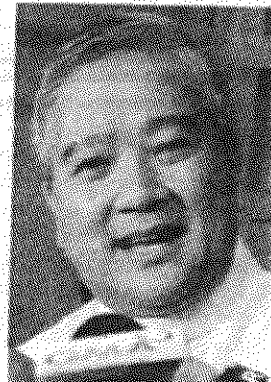
Covered by the provision are those serving in the elections, whose net taxable compensation for the year will not exceed P250,000, will now be deemed as "tax-exempt poll-workers."

"Only those persons, who rendered election services and submitted the required sworn declaration, are entitled to the tax refund under this resolution," the poll body said. **With PNA**

Military doing its best on sea row – AFP chief



GALVEZ



VILLEGAS

By Mario J. Mallari

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday assured that it is doing its best to protect the country's sovereignty in the disputed South China Sea amid recent reports of the installation of Chinese missile systems and jammers.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., however, refused to divulge details of what is being done by the 135,000-strong military in protecting the country's territory.

"We cannot say what we're doing, it's already operational matters but rest assured that the Armed Forces is doing its best to really assure that territory that are ours are being protected," said Galvez.

Galvez stressed that the AFP is maintaining nine islets

and reefs in the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) or the Spratlys and seven more in the Sulu and Celebes Seas.

Of the nine areas occupied by the Philippines, only Pagasa Island, which serves as the sit of government of Kalayaan town, has civilian populace. Others are being manned by government troops.

"We still maintain the nine islands (of KIG), and also western portion, we are also protecting the seven islands along the Sulu and Celebes seas," said Galvez.

Latest reports from the United States showed images of alleged Chinese jammers in its occupied areas in the West Philippine Sea.

Galvez said the AFP is validating the report.

"We are coordinating

Turn to page 2

Military doing its best on sea row — AFP chief

From page 1

with our counterparts and we are still validating the issue," said Galvez.

Earlier reports also said that China has already installed cruise missile on man-made islands it is occupying.

The AFP chief said that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is the proper authority to discuss matters pertaining to the West Philippine Sea.

Church assails Chinese moves

The Church, meanwhile, again went overboard in a pastoral letter authored by Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Socrates Villegas which was read in Sunday masses as it slammed the expansion activities of China while berating "quietly tolerant" officials.

The Church enjoined voters to choose leaders that will "defend the Philippines' territorial sovereignty."

Villegas said China's expansionism is only a few miles away from Pangasinan and that the province is now getting Chinese radio programs.

"Our barangay leaders who are quietly tolerant are harming our nation," the pastoral letter read.

"The principle of solidarity also mandates us to demand from our government to preserve our territorial sovereignty," the Church said.

The letter also urged voters to choose village officials that will fight "crimes against the poor."

"We must fight the crimes against the poor like the killing of the poor in the name of the drug war and the unabated rise in basic food commodities," it added.

"When they offer you money, they are putting a price tag on you. Get mad!" the Church said.

The letter also appealed for elected officials to "respect the non-partisan nature of our barangays and to desist from using our barangay leaders as political wards."

RP position pathetic — Leila

Detained Sen. Leila de Lima, meanwhile, scoffed at the government's alleged inaction and indecisiveness on the issue of China's domination of the Spratlys which was further highlighted when Vietnam issued a strong statement against it.

"In the face of Vietnam's impressive statement that the deployment of Chinese missiles is a direct threat to its national security and sovereignty, the Philippine position comes across as nothing short of a pathetic and shameful excuse for Malacañang's lack of response," she said.

It betrays, the senator said, the complete absence of a comprehensive foreign and defense policy vis-a-vis China, except one of simple mendicancy, appeasement and collaboration.

"While the Philippines adopts the anemic position that it is still verifying the presence of Chinese missiles in the Spratly Islands, a fact that China has already admitted, Vietnam categorically demands China to withdraw its missiles from day one," she pointed out.

De Lima also added that no less than President Duterte himself even proclaimed that China is the protector of the Philippines.

"He added that the Philippines will stay 'neutral' in the regional power play between the US and China, forgetting that the Spratly Islands threatened by China are Philippine-occupied areas, not US territory," she said.

The senator also did not let come to pass the pronouncements made by Palace Spokesman Harry Roque who even claimed that if ever there are Chinese missiles in the Spratlys, these are not directed at the Philippines "because China is already our friend."

"He, however, does not explain how China can be a friend while it installs missiles less than 300 kilometers from our shores," she further pointed out.

De Lima also compared Vietnam's response, which she claimed as impressive, as it asked China to withdraw its military equipment in the South China Sea saying that its deployment is a direct threat to its national security and sovereignty.

Compared to Vietnam's strong statement, De Lima said Malacañang's inaction and indecisiveness on the issue of China's domination of the Spratlys, also shows how far the government has regressed in the defense of the country's territorial claims.

"It reflects a broken down foreign and defense policy that amounts to nothing more than the present government's absolute and total abdication of its West Philippine Sea interests," she said.

Angie M. Rosales

32

Spike-ER MX to help secure PH territories

ONCE installed and fully operational, the Israeli-made Spike-ER surface-to-surface missiles will be useful in protecting the country's vast maritime territories and sealanes of communications.

This was disclosed by Philippine Navy flag-officer-in-command Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad in an interview Sunday.

The weapons, are now undergoing integration on three of the Navy's multi-purpose attack craft, will greatly deter shipborne intruders trying to violate the country's waters.

"The [Spike-ER] missiles are very accurate and I'm sure [that once it is up and running] it can threaten intruders aside from securing the choke points [of our] sealanes of our maritime nation," Empedrad added.

The Spike-ER missiles, along with its launchers, arrived on the third week of April.

It is the first missile system to be acquired by the PN.

These missiles are capable of penetrating 1,000 mm (39 inches) of rolled homogeneous armor and has a range of eight kilometers.

As of this posting, the Navy has nine MPACs in inventory with another three units planned.

Three of the above-mentioned craft are now being fitted with the Spike-ER missiles and its launchers.

These naval craft were activated on May 22, 2017 and were manufactured by Subic-based Propmech Corp. for P270 million. PNA AK

Lanao del Norte mayor, six aides nabbed

THE mayor of Pantar town in Lanao del Norte and six others were arrested following a firefight with government forces in the town on Sunday morning.

Troops led by the Army's 2nd Mechanized Battalion raided a compound of Mayor Jabar Tago in Barangay Sundiga Punod around 6 a.m. for violation of the comprehensive law on firearms and ammunition and election gun ban.

Col. Romeo Brawner, spokesman of the military's Joint Task Force Ranao, said Tago and his companions fought it out with the soldiers, who were backed up by PNP town policemen.

Brawner said soldiers and policemen recovered at the raided compound nine high-powered firearms, five pistols and a shotgun. — *Victor Reyes*

Vendor wearing AFP uniform nabbed

THE Manila Police District (MPD) has warned the public against the unauthorized wearing of the uniform or insignia of the Philippine National Police (PNP) or the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The warning came after charges for violation of Article 176 of the Revised Penal Code were filed against Hakin Paramata Marohom, 26, a vendor, of No. 396 Bautista St., Quiapo, Manila, who was arrested Sunday night on Juan Luna Street in Binondo, Manila, for wearing a pair of pants similar to the uniform used by soldiers. Such violation carries a penalty of prison correccional or up to six years imprisonment and a penalty of not more than P10,000.

Manila Police District Station 11 commander Supt. Julius Caesar said his men were patrolling the area when they spotted Marohom. When accosted, Marohom failed to produce any identification card to prove that he is a member of the AFP.

✓ **Richie Cabayan**

Man apprehended for illegal wearing of military uniform

THE Manila Police District (MPD) has warned the public against the unauthorized wearing of the uniform or insignia of the Philippine National Police (PNP) or the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The warning came after charges for violation of Article 176 of the Revised Penal Code were filed against a vendor who the other night, was arrested for wearing a pair of pants which is the same as that being used by our soldiers.

Said violation carries a penalty of prison correccional and a penalty of not over P10,000.

Manila Police District-Station 11 commander Supt. Julius Caesar said his men nabbed one Hakim Faranata Marohom, 26, of 396 Bautista St., Quapo, Manila, for wearing lower military garments at around 6 p.m. on Juan Luna Street in Binondo, Manila.

It was learned that a police team was patrolling the area when they spotted Marohom who was wearing military pants. When accosted, Marohom reportedly failed to produce any identification card to prove that he is with the AFP so he was brought to the precinct.

Itchie G. Calayan

NPA declares 5-day ceasefire in Caraga

The New People's Army-North Eastern Mindanao Region (NPA-NEMR) has suspended its tactical offensives from May 14 to 18.

"In deference to the people's right to vote freely during the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections, the regional operational command of the NPA-NEMR directs all units of the NPA and the People's Militia under its command to temporarily suspend the launching of tactical offensives against the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police and CAGU (Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit)," Ariel Montero, NPA-NEMR spokesman said in a statement.

However, Montero said NPA fighters should remain on alert against "deceptive attacks" of the military.

He also urged the police and military to stop harassing civilians or interfering in the

elections.

"They must refrain from exerting influence and pressure on voters. They must not launch military operations during this time," Montero said.

2 soldiers killed

Meanwhile, two soldiers were killed in an encounter with NPA rebels in Ragay, Camarines Sur on Sunday.

Personnel of the 96th Infantry Battalion were checking the reported presence of communist guerrillas in Barangay Salvacion when they clashed with an undetermined number of rebels.

"We received a report that NPA rebels were urging villagers to vote for their candidates," Col. Ferosaido Paul Regencia, 9th Infantry Division spokesman, said.

- Jose Rodol Clapano, Ben Serrano, Celso Amo, Jaime Laude

Army suffers major casualties in encounter with NPA in Negros Occ

By MARK L. GARCIA

BACOLOD CITY - Two soldiers were killed, while eight others were wounded in an hour-long encounter between Army troops and suspected New People's Army (NPA) terrorists, Saturday, in a hinterland village of Kabanakalan City in Negros Occidental.

More than 230 local residents also left their homes and fled for their safety in the deadly clash that broke out in Barangay Tan-awan, just two days before the village and youth elections.

Killed were Sgt. Sandy Arevalo and PFC Vicente Marcon, while those wounded were Sgt. Sandy Arevalo, and PFCs Michael Besana, Voltair Catamin, Angelito Bariga, Kenneth Cerbo, Ryan Las Pinas, Joven Taghap and John Daryle Delgado.

Government forces are still pursuing the NPA rebels, even as the City Social Welfare and Development Office is now attending to the basic needs of the displaced families from seven hinterland sitios of Barangay Tan-awan as ordered by Mayor Isidro Zayco, Kabanakalan police chief Supt. Rhca Santos said.

Capt. Ruel Llanes, 303rd Infantry Brigade Civil Military Operations officer, said that the wounded soldiers are now in stable condition, and are being treated at a military hospital in Jamindan, Capiz.

He reported that the 62nd Infantry Battalion soldiers were conducting clearing and combat operations, when they figured in a chance engagement with about 60 NPA rebels, that led to an hour-long gunbattle.

The Communists encountered by 62IB troopers were also responsible for the burning of heavy equipment and construction materials belonging to a private firm, which has a project with the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to construct a dam in Sitio Badian, also in Barangay Tan-awan, according to Llanes.

The NPA had earlier claimed responsibility for torching of the equipment which resulted in an estimated P6.8 million-damage, according to the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP).

2 soldiers killed; gun ban violators nabbed

BY RAYMOND AFRICA AND VICTOR REYES

POLICE and military officials yesterday said the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections were generally peaceful except for the arrest of scores of people for election-related offenses, including carrying of firearms and violation of the liquor ban.

Two soldiers on election duty, however, were killed in an ambush staged by New People's Army rebels in Camarines Sur, according to AFP chief Gen. Carlito Galvez.

"We have an incident where our troops going to an election precinct to secure it were ambushed by the NPA. We have two dead," Galvez said.

Capt. Joash Pramis, spokesman of the Army's 9th Infantry Division, said the ambush occurred around 8:30 a.m. yesterday Barangay Salvacion in Ragay town. Pramis said one of the two slain soldiers held the rank of second lieutenant.

Southern Police District spokeswoman Supt. Jenny Tecson said 69 people were nabbed for carrying deadly weapons, 29 for carrying firearms, 28 for violating the liquor ban, three for carrying explosives, and two for carrying explosives.

A 62-year-old candidate for barangay councilor in Quiapo, Manila died of heart attack shortly before the elections. Hernando Francisco, chairman of Barangay 390, said Felino Baligod Jr. died at around 6:22 a.m.

Manila Police District chief Joel Napoleon Coronel said Baligod was rushed to a nearby hospital but was declared dead on arrival.

There were several incidents of altercations between poll watchers and candidates but cops deployed in voting centers

2 SOLDIERS

pacified them.

PNP spokesman Chief Supt. John Bulalacao said the National Election Monitoring Action Center in Camp Crame received 47 incidents related to the elections but only seven were verified to be election-related.

Bulalacao said intensified police operations resulted in the arrest of 1,350 persons for various election-related offenses such as vote-buying, violation of the liquor ban, possession of firearms, explosives, and bladed weapons.

As of yesterday afternoon, a total of 1,157 firearms have been confiscated along with 7,926 assorted live bullets, 79 grenades, and 350 explosives.

PNP chief Oscar Albayalde, who arrived aboard a motorcycle at the Corazon Aquino Elementary School in Batasan, Quezon City to monitor the polls in the area, said 33 people have been killed since the start of the election period on April 14 up to 6 a.m. of May 14.

During the 2013 barangay and SK elections, the PNP recorded 57 election-related violent incidents, of which 53 persons were killed and 55 others were wounded. A total of 3,905 were arrested for violation of the gun ban, liquor ban, and other election-related offenses.

Albayalde said the PNP fielded 181,212 police officers nationwide, with 73,562 manning 36,781 polling centers; 13,267 making up the Reactionary Standby Support Forces and 2,854 from the Na-

tional Headquarters on standby. The PNP went on full alert status at 6 p.m. Sunday.

Albayalde also said a total of 2,875 police officers were temporarily reassigned outside of their mother units since they have relatives running for posts.

NORMAL, PEACEFUL

"Based on our assessment, it's very normal and peaceful," Galvez told a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo.

Galvez said more than 174,000 precincts nationwide opened "and it's a very good report, encouraging report," crediting the feat to security measures adopted by the AFP, PNP and the Commission on Elections.

Galvez said the military deployed 30,000 soldiers and Cagfus throughout the country to help secure the elections.

Galvez said the military recorded 42 election-related violent incidents during the election period, though AFP-PNP-Comelec validation only confirmed seven of these as indeed tied to the election.

"Thirteen were killed out of the seven confirmed incidents," said Galvez.

Galvez said the number of casualties was low. Citing experiences in past elections in the Lanao province, Galvez said casualties run by the dozens in these provinces.

Galvez said two soldiers died while performing election-related duties in the Bicol region.

— *With Evan Orias, JP Lopez and Christian Oinez*

Solon hopeful peace talks will lead to Caser signing

By Maricel V. Cruz

A MILITANT lawmaker on Monday expressed hope the government peace efforts with the communist rebels would push through next month.

"The Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms [Caser] is a make or break stage of the negotiations as the issues being discussed like the prevalence of landlessness, the lack of national industrialization and extreme economic exploitation of majority of Filipinos are among the main reasons of the almost five-decade-old armed conflict," Bayan Muna Party-list Rep. Carlos Zarate said.

"Hopefully, it can be signed this year so that the panels can move on the remaining agenda of the talks," he added.

Zarate, chairman of the House committee on peace, unity and reconciliation, made the remarks after Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, who also serves as government peace panel chairman, said formal peace talks between the government and the communist National Democratic Front were expected to resume early next month following an interim peace agreement by both parties.

"More than the bilateral ceasefire, the signing of the CASER and its thorough implementation, which would pave the way for giving lands to landless peasants and industrialize our lagging nation, would be a safeguard against armed hostilities," Zarate said.

Zarate said it would be best, too, that the talks be conducted still in a neutral venue to ensure that no undue pressure or interference could be exerted on either party, and the negotiations could go as smoothly and unhampered as possible.

"We laud and thank the Royal Norwegian Government for the perseverance and the continuing facilitation of the negotiations," Zarate said.

Miyembro ng 'Concepcion Gang' todas sa NPA

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay - Isang miyembro ng kinatatatungang "Concepcion Criminal Gang" ang napaslang matapos magkaalubong at magkabarilan ang mga hinihinalang rebeldeng New People's Army at grupo ng mga kriminal sa kabundukang lugar ng Brgy. Tambo sa bayan ng Libon, Albay ka-makatawa ng umaga.

Kiniiala ang nasawi na si Enrique Armillo, 60-anyos, residente ng Purok Manga, Brgy. Hangua.

Sa police report na nakarating sa Camp Gen. Simeon Ola, dakong alas-6:00 ng umaga, parehong nag- kabulagaan ang mga NPA at Concepcion Criminal Gang babang parehong naglalakad sa kabundukang bahagi ng

barangay.

Ilang minutong nag- kaputukan ang magka- bilang pangit at nang matapos ang barilan, naiwang nakabulagte na may lama ng bala sa ibat-ibat bahagi ng katawan ang suspek.

Agad na nunesponde sa lugar ang mga pulis at nakarekober sila ng mga basyo ng bala ng M16 armalite rifle at M14 rifle. *(Jorge Haltare)*

14 Abus, soldiers slain in rescue operations

By ROEL PAREÑO and JAIME LAUDE

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Eleven Abu Sayyaf bandits and three soldiers were killed in encounters in Patikul, Sulu in the past two days as the military continued its operations to rescue the remaining hostages.

At least 17 soldiers and two bandits were also wounded in the gunfights.

Four of the 10 bandits slain in the encounter on Sunday were identified as Amah Talah, Taha Sawdjaan, a brother of Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, the second in command of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu, a certain Red and Long Abraham.

The identities of the slain soldiers were withheld pending

notification of their respective families. The remains of the two killed in the clash on Sunday were airlifted to this city.

The wounded soldiers were brought for treatment to a hospital at Camp Teodulfo Bautista in Jolo and at the Camp Navarro General Hospital here.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Joint Task Force Sulu commander, said the encounters

between personnel of the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion and the group of Abu Sayyaf sub-leaders Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Idang Susukan, Injam Yadah and Ben Tottoh occurred in Sitio Kan Alas, Barangay Tanum and Bud Kaha, Maligay.

Sobejana said guns, several rounds of ammunition and bomb materials were among those recovered from the bandits.

Foreign terrorist?

The remains of three bandits, one of them foreign-looking, were recovered yesterday.

"There is an ongoing encounter... We believe one of

(the fatalities) is the son of Sawdjaan. There is also a suspicious-looking foreign terrorist," Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. told a press briefing yesterday.

Sobejana said search and rescue operations for the remaining captives would continue.

"We will sustain our efforts until the last kidnap victim is rescued and the Abu Sayyaf is neutralized," he said.

A Dutch man, a Vietnamese, three Indonesians and seven Filipinos, including two police-women, remain in the hands of the bandits.

11 Abus, 3 soldiers killed in Sulu clashes

Firefights erupt as gov't troops pursue bandits holding hostages; 20 others wounded

By Julie Alipala
@alipalajulieINQ

ZAMBOANGA CITY—At least 14, three of them soldiers, were killed when government security forces on a mission to rescue about a dozen people held by the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu province clashed with the bandit group on Sunday and Monday, a military commander said.

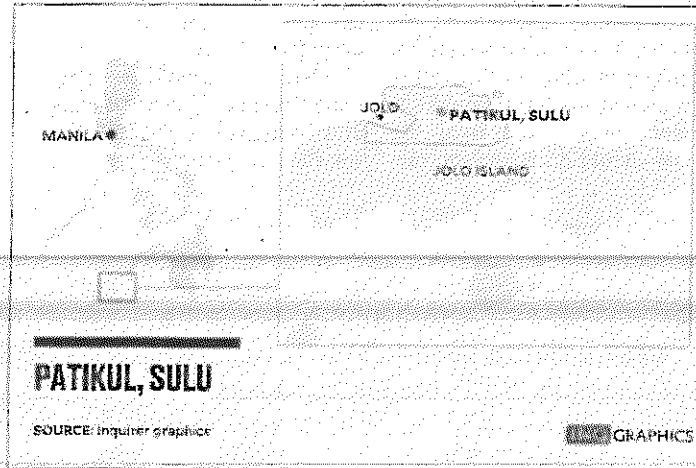
Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu, said 10 Abu Sayyaf bandits were killed while 15 others—12 soldiers and three bandits—were wounded in the clash that erupted at Barangay Tanum in Patikul town on Sunday.

He said soldiers were conducting an operation at Sitio Kan Alas when they clashed with the bandits at 6:15 a.m.

'Foreign-looking'

On Monday, a bandit was also killed during a clash at Sitio Bud Kaha in Barangay Maligay at noon.

But in a press briefing at Camp Aguinaldo, Armed Forces chief of staff, Gen. Carlito



Galvez, said three bandits, including a "foreign-looking" man, were killed in the encounter.

"Our troops were continuously doing security search and rescue [to ensure the] freedom of the kidnap victims, resulting in an encounter with an undetermined number of Abu Sayyaf members," Sobejana said.

One soldier was killed while five more were wounded during Monday's clash, he added.

Among those being res-

cued were PO3 Bennie Rose Alvarez and PO1 Dinah Gumahad, who were assigned in the Western Mindanao police office here. They were being held since April 29.

Sobejana said Abu Sayyaf subleaders Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, Idang Susukan, Injam Yadah and Ben Tattoh were with the group that engaged the soldiers in the gunfight on Sunday that lasted for about an hour.

Four of the slain bandits

were identified as Amah Talah, Taha Sawadjaan (younger brother of Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan), Long Abraham and one known only as Red.

Sobejana said soldiers recovered a baby Armalite, bullets, bomb components, mobile phones and batteries from the clash site.

Shallow grave

Shortly before Monday's clash, soldiers pursuing the bandits discovered a shallow grave where three men, believed to be Abu Sayyaf members slain on Sunday, were buried.

"We will sustain our efforts until the last kidnap victim is rescued and the Abu is neutralized," Sobejana said.

On May 7, a clash also erupted in Patikul while soldiers were searching for the two police officers and other victims held by the Abu Sayyaf.

Seven soldiers were wounded while three bandits were killed in that clash.

—WITH A REPORT FROM JEANNETTE L. AN-GRAGE INQ

10 Abus, 2 gov't troops killed in Sulu encounter

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

Ten members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), including the brother of its second-in-command leader Haib Sawadjaan, and two government soldiers were killed in an encounter in Patikul, Sulu on Sunday.

The fierce one-hour clash also injured 12 government troops and two ASG members.

Armed Forces of the Philippines-Joint **▶6**

10 Abus, 2 gov't...

Task Force (AFP-JTF) Sulu Commander Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, identified four of the 10 ASG members killed as Taha Sawadjaan, the younger brother of Sawadjaan; Amah Talah, and the two only as "alias Red" and "Long Abraham."

Sobejana identified the wounded ASG members as Ben Quirino, alias Ben Tattoo, and Adzren Sawadjaan.

Other ASG leaders who were identified as present during the encounter were Jajan Sawadjaan, Idang Susukan and Injam Yadah.

Unfortunately, the fierce clash resulted in the death of two government soldiers while 12 troops were injured. Their names are still being withheld by the authorities.

Sobejana said the bodies were already transported to Zamboanga

through the Philippine Air Force (PAF) planes and helicopters while the wounded were brought to hospitals for treatment.

Sobejana said soldiers of the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Mariou Jomalesa were on rescue operations for kidnap-for-ransom victims of the ASG when they encountered the terrorist group believed to be under ASG sub-leaders Hajan Sawadjaan, Injam Yadah and Ben Quirino at Sitio Kan Alas, Brgy. Tanum, Patikul, Sulu, at about 6:15 a.m.

Sobejana said soldiers are still pursuing the fleeing bandits believed to have with them an undetermined number of kidnap victims.

"We delivered artillery and mortar fire to pin-pointed enemy locations.

◀1

Our actions are, however, very limited and calculated since we do not want to harm the kidnap victims," he added.

Sobejana said the bodies of the soldiers killed in action were brought to the headquarters of Joint Task Force Sulu and immediately airlifted to Zamboanga prior to sending them to their respective next-of-kin.

"We are sad to report that two of our soldiers gave the ultimate sacrifice today in an attempt to rescue the remaining KVs," said Maj. Gen. Arnel Delavega, the General Officer in Charge of the AFP's Western Mindanao Command.

The Chief of Staff Armed Forces of the Philippines, General Carlito G. Galvez, Jr. has already given instructions to extend all the necessary assistance to the family of our heroes, and to ensure that a heroes burial be accorded to them," he said.

2 soldiers, 10 Abu Sayyaf members killed in Sulu clash

BY DEMPSEY REYES

TWO soldiers and 10 members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) were killed while rescuing kidnap victims on Sunday in Patikul, Sulu, according to the military.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Sulu, said on Monday the encounter between the Philippine Army's 5th Scout Ranger Battalion and the ASG members happened

at 6:15 a.m. on Sunday at Sitio (sub-village) Kan Alas, Barangay Tanum, Patikul.

The Army troopers were on their way to rescue Police Officer (PO) 2 Benierose Alvarez

and PO1 Dinah Gumahad who were abducted in April, along with civilians Faizal Ahidji and Iacosalem Bas Amahad.

Military forces rescued Amahad last week. Sobejana said the terrorists were under the supervision of Abu Sayyaf sub-leaders Hajan Sawadjaan, Idang Susukan, Injam Yadah and Ben Tattoh.

The encounter lasted for about an hour, resulting in the deaths of 10 ASG members and the wounding of two others, accord-

ing to Sobejana.

Four of the 10 Abu Sayyaf fatalities were identified as Amah Talah; Taha Sawdjaan, younger brother of Haub and second of command in the ASG leadership; a certain Red; and Long Abraham.

The two wounded terrorists were identified as Ben Quirino alias Ben Tattoh and Adzren Sawadjaan. 12

Sobejana said that the clashes also led to the killings of two soldiers and injuries to 12 troopers.

Foreigner, 2 ASG cadavers found

THE military recovered three cadavers from the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) before an encounter on Monday with the terrorists in Patikul, Sulu, according to Armed Forces chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr.

Galvez said in a media conference in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City that he was told by the Joint Task Force Sulu of the encounter in Patikul wherein they were able to recover the ASG cadavers, two of whom he identified.

One is believed to be the son of ASG sub-leader Hajan Sawadjaan and one a "foreign-looking" terrorist, Galvez said.

"The report [on their identities] is still in the process of validation," Galvez added, citing the report sent by JTF Sulu chief Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana.

Galvez said the encounter followed the clashes on Sunday morning wherein two Scout Rangers and 10 Abu Sayyaf members were killed in a village of Tanum in Patikul.

He explained that the clashes in the past two days were part of the military's efforts in rescuing the two policewomen abducted along with two civilians late last month.

They are Police Officer (PO) 2 Benierose Alvarez and PO1 Dinah Gumahad while the civilians are Faizal Ahidji and Jacosalem Bas Amahad.

Last week, authorities rescued Amahad after Ahudji was released by the bandits.

But Sobejana explained that the bodies of the three Abu Sayyaf men were retrieved before the encounter on Monday.

In a separate report, he confirmed that another clash happened at 11:45 a.m. in Barangay Maligay also in Patikul.

A7 **DEMPSEY REYES**

11 Sayyaf bandits, 3 soldiers killed in Sulu

BY VICTOR REYES

ELEVEN Abu Sayyaf members and three government soldiers were killed and 17 other soldiers were wounded in clashes in Patikul town in Sulu on Sunday and Monday.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the military's Joint Task Force Sulu, said the troops assaulted a lair of the Abu Sayyaf in Sitio Kan Alas in Barangay Tanum where the bandits were said to be keeping several kidnap victims.

Sobejana said the kidnap victims kept in the lair included the two policewomen, PO2 Benierose Alvarez and PO1 Dinah Gumahad, who were abducted by the group on April 29, along with two companions who are now free.

Sobejana said forces of the Army's 5th Scout Ranger Battalion attacked the ASG lair around 6:15 a.m., leading to a one-hour firefight with the bandits led by sub-leaders Hajan Sawadjaan, Idang Susukan, Injam Yadah and Ben Tatroh.

Sobejana said the fighting was so intense that he ordered support from 105 mm and 155 mm artillery assets and MG-520 attack

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11 SAYYAF

helicopters.

Sobejana said the lair used to be a camp for Marine soldiers but this was abandoned a few years ago "as part of our assessment because we believe we no longer need it." He said the bandits then occupied the camp.

"It (firefight) resulted to 10 ASG members killed but only four were positively identified," said Sobejana. He said reports about the death of the 10 Abu Sayyaf men were based on information provided by "reliable sources."

The Army general named

four of the 10 slain Abu Sayyaf members as Taha Sawadjaan, a brother of Abu Sayyaf's No. 2 man Hatib Sawadjaan; Amah Talah; one Long Abraham; and one alias Red.

Sobejana said they received reports that many other Abu Sayyaf men were wounded in the firefight, including Ben Quirino alias Ben Taroo; and Adzren Sawadjaan.

Sobejana said two soldiers were injured in the clash and 12 others were wounded.

During pursuit operation yesterday, Sobejana said Scout Ranger soldiers clashed with

the fleeing bandits in Barangay Maligay, also in Patikul town, at around 11:45 a.m. Sobejana said the clash was still ongoing as of 4:30 p.m. yesterday.

Sobejana said yesterday's fighting resulted in the death of one soldier and wounding of five others and recovery of two high-powered firearms and supplies. On the Abu Sayyaf side, he said one was confirmed killed.

Before the encounter, Sobejana said soldiers exhumed three bodies of Abu Sayyaf men about a kilometer away from last Sunday's encounter site. He said they believe the three are part of those

killed in the Sunday clash.

"Prior to the encounter, the troops discovered three hastily-buried cadavers believed to be the ASG fatalities in Sunday's encounter. We are now in the process of checking the identity of those cadavers," said Sobejana.

"They look like foreigners. We are still establishing their identities..We want to make sure (if they are really foreigners)," said Sobejana.

The Abu Sayyaf has known links with foreign terrorists, including those from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

Intense Sulu clash leaves 2 troops, 10 Abus dead

By Mario J. Mallari

Two soldiers and 10 Abu Sayyaf terrorists were killed while 12 other government troops were wounded during an intense clash in the outskirts of Sulu province where the military is conducting rescue operation for the remaining hostages on Sunday.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Sulu, yesterday said that the encountered Abu Sayyaf band was led by sub-leaders Hajan Sawadjaan, Injam Yadah and Ben Quirino, alias Ben Tattoh.

Sobejana said that elements of the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion, under Lt. Col. Marlou Jomalesa, were on search and rescue operations along Sitio Kan Alas, Barangay Tanum in Patikul town at around 6:15 a.m. when the clash erupted.

The firefight reportedly lasted for about an hour, resulting in two soldiers dead and an estimated 10 unidentified Abu Sayyaf members killed.

Out of the 10 slain terrorists, four were identified as Amah Talah, Taha Sawadjaan — younger brother of Hatib Sawadjaan who is now second in command of the ASG leadership; Long Abraham and a certain "Red."

Recovered from the scene were an M653 Baby ArmaLite rifle, several

rounds of ammunition, explosive components including canisters of ammonium nitrate, cellular phones, batteries and electronic mechanism.

Twelve soldiers were also wounded while undetermined number of terrorists were also believed to have been hurt.

The JTF-Sulu commander said that there were indicators that there were hostages with the encountered Abu Sayyaf band.

Sobejana said the artillery and close air support were provided to the Rangers.

"We delivered artillery and mortar fires to pin-pointed enemy locations," said Sobejana.

"Our actions are however very limited and calculated since we do not want to harm the kidnap victims," he added.

As of press time yesterday, Sobejana said that government troops are still conducting clearing and pursuit operations against the fleeing terrorists.

"We will sustain our efforts until the last kidnap victim is rescued and the ASG is neutralized," vowed Sobejana.

Currently, the Abu Sayyaf group is still holding 12 hostages, including PO3 Benierose Alvarez and PO1 Dinah Gumahad who were abducted last April 29, in Sulu.

10 Abus, 2 soldiers die in Sulu clash

By Zaida delos Reyes

TEN members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and two soldiers were killed while two Abus and 12 Army troopers were injured in an encounter in Patikul, Sulu on Sunday.

Armed Forces of the Philippines-Joint Task Force (AFP-JTF) Sulu commander Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana identified four of the ASG fatalities as Amah Talah, Taba Sawdjaan, younger brother of ASG's second in command Hatib Sawajaan, an alias Red, and a certain Long Abraham.

The two wounded bandits were identified as Ben Quirino, alias Ben tattoo, and Adzren Sawadjaan.

However, Sobejana said the clash also resulted in the death of two soldiers and wounding of 12 others, whose names were withheld.

Sobejana said members of the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion under Lt. Col. Marlou Jomalesa were on pursuit and rescue operations for two policewomen abducted by the ASG when they encountered the

bandit group believed to be under ASG sub-leaders Hajan Sawadjaan at Sitio Kan Alas, Barangay Tanum, Patikul, Sulu around 6:15 a.m.

The gunbattle lasted for over an hour that left two soldiers dead and an estimated 10 unidentified Abu Sayyaf members killed.

Sobejana said the troops failed to rescue the kidnap victims but vowed to do their best to rescue them and neutralize the remaining bandits.

Recovered from the encounter site were one M653 baby amalite, rounds of ammunition, IED components including canisters of ammonium nitrate, cell-phones, batteries and electronic mechanism.

"We are sad to report that two of our soldiers gave the ultimate sacrifice in an attempt to rescue the remaining KVs," said Maj. Gen. Arnel Delavega, general officer in charge of the AFP's Western Mindanao Command.

"We will continue to conduct pursuit operations in order to get the remaining Abus and rescue the kidnap victims," Delavega said.



10 ASG bandits, 2 soldiers killed, 12 hurt in Sulu clash

By ZAIDA DELOS REYES-PALANCA

TWELVE persons, including 10 members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), were killed while 12 government troopers were wounded in an encounter the other day in Patikul, Sulu.

Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu commander B/Gen. Cirilito Sobejana identified four of the fatalities for ASG as Amah Talah, Tuha Sawajaan, younger brother of Hatib Sawajaan, second in command of the ASG leadership, one alias "Red" and Long Abraham.

Two of the wounded bandits were identified as Ben Quirino, alias Ben Tattoh and Adzren Sawajaan.

The wounded soldiers were immediately taken to the nearest hospital.

Reports reaching Camp Aguinaldo said the incident occurred at 6:15 a.m. at Sitio Kan Alas, Bgy. Tanun, Patikul.

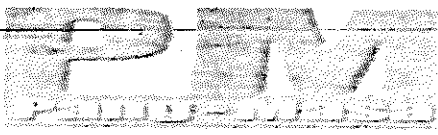
Sobejana said elements of the 5th Scout Ranger Battalion led by LTC Jomalesa were on security search and rescue operation to recover two abducted policewomen in the area when they encountered the bandits.

He said government forces encountered the group of ASG sub-leaders Hajan Sawajaan, Idang Susukan, Injam Yadah and Ben Tattoh.

The firefight lasted for about an hour that resulted in the killing of 12 persons and wounding of several others.

Recovered from the encounter site were an M653 Baby Armalite, rounds of ammunition, IED components, including canisters of ammonium nitrate, cellphones, batteries and electronic mechanism.

Sobejana said troops failed to rescue the victims but they vowed to do their best to rescue the last kidnap victim and neutralize the remaining bandits.



SULU RESCUE MISSION: 11 ABU, 3 SUNDALO NASAWI

Napatay ang 11 miyembro ng bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group at tatlong sundalo habang 12 pa sa tropa ng gobyerno ang nasugatan sa naganap na rescue mission sa mga hostages sa lalawigan ng Sulu.

Sa ulat, dakong alasas 6:15 ng umaga nang makasagupa ng tropa ng Army's 5th Scout Ranger Battalion (SRB) sa ilalim ng superbisyon ni Lt. Col. Marlou Jomalesa ang hindi pa madeterminang bilang ng mga bandido sa kagubatan ng Sitio Kan Alas, Brgy. Tanum, Patikul.

Nabatid na nagsasagawa ng pursuit, search, and rescue operations ang mga sundalo para sa mga biktima ng kidnap for ransom

ng ASG nang makasagupa ang mga bandidong grupo na nasa ilalim ni ASG sub-leaders Hajan Sawadjaan, Injam Yadah at Ben Quirino @ Ben Tattoh/Ben Yadah.

Tumagal ng halos isang oras na ikinasawi ng tatlong sundalo na kapwa may ranggong Private First Class (PFC) habang labing-isa naman ang namatay sa panig ng mga bandido na ang apat ay kimilalang sina Amah Talah, Taha Sawadjaan, nakabahatang kapatid ni Abu Sayyaf Sub-Commander Harib Sawajaan, Ben Quirino alyas Ben Tattoh at Adzen Sawadjaan.

Ang rescue mission ay upang iligtas ang dalawang babaeng pulis na bihag ng

mga bandido na sina PO2 Benierose Alvarez at PO1 Dinah Gumahad at iba pang mga hostages.

Ang dalawang pulis ay dinukoi noong Abril 29 sa Brgy. Liang Patikul, Sulu kung saan pinataya ang kanilang dalawang kasamang sibilyan.

Samantalang nagtamo rin ng merami pang sugatan ang mga bandido base sa mga bakas ng dugo na nakita sa lugar na diwanan ng mga ito sa pagtakas.

Narekober naman sa pinangyarihan ng engkwentro ang isang M653 baby armalite, ilang rounds ng mga bala, mga sangkap sa pag-a-asmble ng Improvised Explosive Device at iba pa. - Joy Cantos -

Encounter: 3 sundalo, 11 terorista patay! *17 pa sugatan*

Tatlong sundalo at 11 terorista ang nasaw habang 17 pa sa tropa ng gobyerno ang nasugatan sa neganap na engkwentro sa pagitan ng Philippine Army (PA) at Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa pagpapatibay

ng search and rescue mission ng militar sa mga hostages sa Sulu kamakalawa. Ayon kay Brig. Gen. Cirilo Sobejana, commander ng Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu, dakong alas-6:15 ng umi-

ga habang nagsasagawa ng rescue operations ang militar nang makasagupa ng tropa ng 5th Scout Ranger Battalion (SRB) ng PA sa ilalim ng supervisoryon ni Lt. Col. Mariou Jomalesa ang hindi pa

NI JOY CANTOS

madeterminang bilang ng ASG sa ilalim ng pamumuno nina ASG sub-leader Hajar Sawadjaan, Injam Yadah at Ben Quirino alias Ben Tattoh/Ben Yadah sa kagubatan ng Sitio Kan Alas, Brgy. Tarum, Patikul.

Ang bakbakan ay tumagal ng halos isang oras na ikinasawi ng dalawang sundalo na kapwa may ranggong

Private First Class (Pfc) at napatay rin ang naturang ASG sub-leader kasama ang 10 pang terorista habang 17 pang sundalo ang nasugatan.

Sinabi ni Sobejana na apat sa 11 mga nasawing terorista ay nakitalang sina Amah Talah, Taha Sawadjaan, nakababatang kapatid ni Abu Sayyaf Sub-Commander Hatib Sawajaan, Ben Quirino alias Ben Tattoh/Ben

Yadah at Adzren Sawadjaan.

Narekober sa lugar ang isang M-653 baby armalite, ilang rounds ng mga bala, mga sangkap sa paggawa ng improvised explosive device at iba pa.

Ang rescue mission ay upang iligtas ang

mga pulis na binihag ng ASG nitong Abril 29 na sina PO2 Benierose Alvarez at PO1 Dinah Gumahad at iba pang mga hostages sa Bray Liang, Patikul. Nauna namang pinalaya ang dalawang sibilyan na kasama sa mga dinukot.

Handwritten mark resembling the number '15'.



Duterte expects more terrorists to surrender

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte is optimistic more members of the Maute terrorist group will turn themselves in to the authorities, following the surrender of 27 members of the terrorist group. ■/Page 6

By EFREN MONTANO

**CENTRAL
MINDANAO
NATIONALISM
ALBAVALDI**

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DUTERIE...

From Page 1

"Let the time pass by, give us time to rebuild, give us time to establish the goodwill. I am inviting the other Maute members or whoever is causing trouble here in Marawi, you come down and we will talk how we can improve your lives," he said.

The President made the remarks in his speech on Friday during the turnover of loose weapons and distribution of aid to former members of the Maute terrorist group.

During the event held in Marawi City, 27 former members of the Maute terrorist group who surrendered to the government were presented to the

President.

"My brothers from Marawi, the government really wants peace. The government won't come here and kill. That is a waste of time and money, and all the lives of people," he assured the surrenderers.

He added that the government wanted to avoid bloodshed and violence and that they were sincere in talking about peace.

"So I propose to you, the other Maranao, come back down here and you will see your surrendered firearms, which will no longer have a purpose," the President said.

While thanking the military for its sacrifices, he expressed hope that Mindanao would be a center of growth and development even after the horrors of the

Marawi City siege.

"When I saw our Maranao brothers and sisters return to Marawi to reclaim their land, their homes and their lives, I immediately felt a sense of hope that Mindanao can rise as a center of growth and development, not just in the Philippines but the entire region," he said.

He stressed that this was why the government embarked on an "unprecedented infrastructure development program that intends to facilitate commerce and trade in Mindanao."

"With the support of the Maranao, I am confident we can spur economic growth and solve the political and socioeconomic roots of violent extremism in the region," the President added.

He also made known his

plan to send the Maranao, including former Maute group members, to Malaysia to learn the fundamentals of planting rubber trees and oil palm trees.

The President said he would talk to newly elected Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to seek agricultural training for Filipinos.

Malaysia is one of the world's largest producers of palm oil.

"You will study there how to plant rubber and oil palm trees. It's difficult to plant oil palm in the fields, but rubber is good," the President said.

In his speech, the President bared his plan to give idle government lands to the Maranao so these could be converted into productive plantations.

READY TO SET ASIDE CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE

DUTERTE VOWS ANEW TO RETIRE AFTER COUNTRY SHIFTS TO FEDERAL SYSTEM

President Duterte has declared again that he would step down once the country completes the shift to a federal system of government.

"I'm still good until 2022. But once there's already a federal setup, I will step down. I will give it to [you]. Choose your leader, I'm ready to retire," he said.

Mr. Duterte made the remarks in a speech on Friday in Marawi City, where he accepted firearms surrendered by former members of the Maute terror group and distributed aid to them.

Military and local officials presented 27 Maute surrenderees to the President.

It was not the first time Mr. Duterte had offered to cut

short his six-year term and give way to a new leader if a federal form of government was put in place before 2022.

Having been elected in May 2016, the President has a constitutional mandate to serve until June 2022.

Transitory position

In February, he renewed his offer to step down from office, saying he did not want to take on a transitory position.

On Friday, Mr. Duterte again said he would resign once his administration had completed the shift to a federal form of government, or if the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) pushed through.

"If the BBL or federalism is

completed by 2022, if it's in place and requires new elections, I will step down," he said.

He would renew talks with Moro National Liberation Front founding chair Nur Misuari once the proposed BBL is passed, he said.

Misuari had voiced opposition to the BBL, saying it only served certain Moro groups.

Congressional leaders had earlier promised the President during a meeting in Malacanang that they would pass the BBL by May 30.

"I want us to look for a formula. Let's talk about this. I'm just waiting for the BBL. And once it is passed, I will start talking with Misuari," Mr. Duterte said. —JULIE M. AURELIO INQ AB

Senate focusing on BBL, Cha-cha, federalism

By VANNE F. TERRAZOLA

The proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), Charter change (Cha-cha), and shift to a federal form of government will be prioritized by the Senate as it resumes sessions today after a seven-week recess.

The Upper Chamber will find its hands full of legislative work especially with only three weeks left before the 17th Congress goes on sine die adjournment on June 2, which would mark the end of its second regular session.

Senate Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III said the Senate



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Senate focusing on...

◀1

would "try its best" to finish working on at least 24 bills, which are part of the President Duterte's priority measures.

Particularly topping the Senate's priorities is the Senate Bill 1717, or the proposed BBL, which would establish the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region and replace the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

President Duterte had repeatedly appealed to Congress to pass the measure to solve the decades-long extremism in Mindanao.

The BBL is pending approval on second reading in the Senate.

The House of Representatives' version of the measure, meanwhile, has been endorsed by a joint House committee.

The Senate will also continue deliberations on the proposals for Cha-cha and federalism at the Senate Committee on Constitutional Amendments, Revision of Codes, and Laws.

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel III had earlier said they may wait

for the recommendations of Duterte's Consultative Committee reviewing the 1987 Constitution to include in their discussions.

Solto said that another priority would be the proposed Prevention of Terrorism Act, which seeks to amend the present Human Security Act and impose tougher penalties for individuals who commit acts of terror.

The Senate will also tackle bills on economic reforms and consumer rights such as the proposed amendments to the Corporation Code of the Philippines, amendments to the Agricultural Tariffication Act, amendments to the Government Procurement Act, Budget Reform Act, the proposed Innovative Startup Act, and the Philippine Fare Discount bill.

Pimentel had said that they will likewise start discussions on the planned Tax Reform Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Package 2, second of the Duterte administration's four-tranche comprehensive tax reform program, which aims to rationalize tax incentives on investments.

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Senate to work on 24 priority bills

BY JEFFERSON ANTIPORDA

THE Senate vowed to give priority to at least 24 bills, including the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), during the remaining eight days of the second regular session of congress.

Congress will resume its session today

Senate Majority Leader Vicente Sotto 3rd said leading the list of priority measures is Senate Bill 1717 that seeks to establish the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region to replace the Autonomous Region

in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Interpellations are being held on second reading.

The House of Representatives' version of the measure has been endorsed by a joint House committee.

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, who

heads the Sub-Committee on the BBL, earlier said he would try to have the bill passed before the anniversary of the siege in Marawi City on May 23 and have it signed by President Rodrigo Duterte before the end of the 17th congress in 2019.

Senate President Aquilino Pimentel 3rd had asked the President to certify the BBL bill as urgent.

The upper chamber will also prioritize the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2017 (SB 1715), which seeks to amend the Human Security Act and impose tougher penalties for individuals who commit acts of terror.

The Senate will also work on the Charter change bill and the

shift to a federal form of government, which is being discussed by members of the Senate Committee on Constitutional Amendments, Revision of Codes and Laws.

The committee headed by Sen. Francis Pangilinan has completed the series of consultative hearings on charter change conducted in different parts of the country. The senator said most of the resource persons who participated were against the move.

The Senate will also tackle bills on economic reforms and consumer rights such as the proposed amendments to the Corporation Code of the Philippines (SBN 1280), amend-

ments to the Agricultural Tariffication Act, amendments to the Government Procurement Act, Budget Reform Act, the proposed Innovative Startup Act (SBN 1532) and the Philippine Fare Discount Act (SBN 1597).

To help streamline the bureaucracy further and improve government processes, the chamber will also work on the proposed Open Access in Data Transmission Act (SBN 1763), Philippine Energy Research and Policy Institute Act of 2017 (SBN 1574), the National Museum Act (SBN 1529), the Retirement Law of the Office of the Ombudsman (SBN 1762), amendments to the Fair Elections Act, and

the bills creating the Department of Disaster Response and Preparedness, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Included in the list are bills on pro-justice reforms such as the Anti-Discriminate Act of 2017 (SBN 1619), proposed Criminal Investigation Act, the proposed Community Service in lieu of Imprisonment Act, pro-health and social service reforms such as the proposed Philippine HIV and AIDS Policy Act (SBN 1390), Enhanced Universal Healthcare Act, the One Town, One Doctor Act of 2016 (SBN 930), and the amendments to the Social Security Act.

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Duterte sees surrender of more Maute men

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte is optimistic more members of the Maute terrorist group will turn themselves in to the authorities, following the surrender of 27 members of the terrorist group.

"Let the time pass by, give us time to rebuild, give us time to establish the goodwill. I am inviting the other Maute members or whoever is causing trouble here in Marawi, you come down and we will talk how we can improve your lives," he said.

The President made the remarks in his speech on Friday during the turnover of loose weapons and distribution of aid to former members of the Maute terrorist group.

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"My brothers from Marawi, the government really wants peace. The government won't come here and kill. That is a waste of time and money, and all the lives of people," he assured the surrenderers. He added that the government wanted to avoid bloodshed and violence, and that they were sincere in talking

about peace.

"So I propose to you, the other Maranao, come back down here and you will see your surrendered firearms, which will no longer have a purpose," the President said.

While thanking the military for its sacrifices, he expressed hope that Mindanao would be a center of growth and development even after the horrors of the Marawi City siege.

"When I saw our Maranao brothers and sisters return to Marawi to reclaim their land, their homes and their lives, I immediately felt a sense of hope that Mindanao can rise as a center of growth and development, not just in the Philippines but the entire region," he said.

He stressed that this was why the government embarked on an "unprecedented infrastructure development program that intends to facilitate commerce and trade in Mindanao."

"With the support of the Maranao, I am confident we can spur economic growth and solve the political and socioeconomic roots of violent extremism in the region," the President added.

EDITORIAL

Incessant intrusions

All this time, the two polar positions of war or appeasement have been the only options on the China-Spratlys question that the Duterte administration seems capable of processing and presenting to the Filipino people.

As late as March this year—in a speech where he tried to justify the idea of “joint exploration” and “co-ownership” with China of resources in the West Philippine Sea, a plan that concerned observers have described as fundamentally unconstitutional—President Duterte reiterated his oft-repeated line that he would not send Filipino soldiers to confront Chinese intrusions in the area, to avoid the prospect of a “massacre.” Chinese President Xi Jinping had supposedly warned him that “there would be trouble” if the Philippines began drilling for oil in the Spratly Islands.

Thus, in the face of one Chinese provocation after another, each more outrageous than the last, Malacañang’s default response has been an anemic statement of concern designed more, it appears, to soothe Beijing than to level up with the public at home.

On news that China had violated its own promise to the international community not to militarize the area when it built hangars, control towers and a runway on Panganiban (Mischief) Reef, which is within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone, Mr. Duterte’s spokesperson Harry Roque basically threw up his hands: “I think whether or not we like it, they intended to use them as military bases. So, what do you want us to say?” He would follow that up with an even more staggering statement: “There will come a time when China’s might has ceased, when we will have to thank them for those islands.”

Naturally emboldened, Beijing ramped up its takeover by next landing military planes on Panganiban Reef. Roque’s response? “[The] secretary of foreign affairs has said that we are preparing and exploring the possibility of a diplomatic protest. We’ll leave it at that.” And apparently they did, because nothing more was heard of the planned diplomatic protest.

Less than a month later came the explosive CNBC report that China has installed antiship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missiles on Panganiban Reef, Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef and Zamora (Subi) Reef. The report came with satellite images, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry subsequently confirmed the news by saying that “the relevant deployment targets no one.” Foreign Secretary Alan Cayetano’s response, however, was the height of nonchalance: “We’re verifying the information.”

Vietnam, for one, was having none of that empty, noncommittal stance: It publicly reminded China to “show its responsibility in maintaining peace, stability in the East Sea,” and asked that it withdraw its missiles. There was no mention of threat of war, but Vietnam’s firm statement, while it may receive only a shrug from Beijing, at the very least brings the issue to the consciousness of the international community. Vietnam’s statement also puts China on notice that it cannot simply get away with its incessant muscle-flexing and double-talk.

Manila’s dilly-dallying, meanwhile, could only make the likes of Sen. Panfilo Lacson apprehensive: “If up to now, the government still has not confirmed the presence of a foreign country’s missiles in one of our islands, we may have a serious national security problem,” he said in a statement that called for a Senate investigation into the matter.

China is not letting up; it has reportedly landed a plane again in the area, this time on Zamora Reef. Zamora is a mere 12 nautical miles away from Pagasa Island, which is inhabited by a small Filipino community. It’s the first confirmed landing of a Chinese military aircraft on the reef, according to the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative of the think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

It’s time everyone took note that China’s intrusions are getting deeper and deeper into Philippine territory. Why isn’t Malacañang livid at this incessant provocation?

Jardeleza: 'Unpleasant history' immaterial to quo warranto case

Jardeleza I.

(Excerpt from opinion)

RESPONDENT Chief Justice Maria Lourdes P.A. Sereno (respondent) in her *Ad Cautelam* Respectful Motion/or Inhibition (Motion) seeks to prevent me from participating in this special civil action for *quo warranto*. She invokes the New Code of Judicial Conduct, which enjoins judges to disqualify themselves from participating in a matter in which it may appear, to a reasonable observer, that they are unable to decide a matter impartially, and where the judge has actual bias or prejudice concerning a party. She further invokes the due process clause of the Constitution.

Determining whether a sitting justice of the Supreme Court should recuse in a case is an exercise fraught with constitutional difficulty. This is due in no small measure to the absence of a clear litmus test by which a jurist's impartiality is measured. Walking the tightrope between a judge's duty

► Jardeleza A8

to decide and inhibition being a matter of conscience, the Court has made largely ad hoc decisions that turn on the factual subtleties of each case. This has prevented the development of a bright line rule on inhibition. In the Philippines, this tightrope walk between judicial accountability and judicial independence is made more problematic by the very paucity of formal mechanisms that institutionalize the reconciliation of these two concepts. This gap in the law is complicated by the history, practice and tradition of the Court respecting recusal from within its ranks: the individual justices of the Court decide for themselves whether to inhibit from a case, and whether to explain their decision or remain silent. Finally, because the Court itself abides by the Justice's judgment, and because there is no appeal, a Justice's decision on the matter of his recusal is final.

The Motion cites three charges that allegedly evidence my bias or prejudice against respondent, namely that: (1) I have stated that she committed treason; (2) I described her actions during my nomination to the Court as "inhuman" and "not those of a normal person," and (3) my negative characterization of her persists to this day.

In the interest of full transparency and to provide a more complete context, I shall also narrate the relevant events which preceded my testimony before the House Committee on Justice:

1. In June 2014, respondent attempted to block my nomination to the Court on the ground that I lacked integrity as shown by my handling of the West Philippine Sea arbitration case which the Philippines filed before the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. I was then Solicitor General and led the Philippine legal team that worked on the crafting of the arbitration case. I would later be appointed the Philippine Agent for purposes of the arbitration.

In public filings made in *Jardeleza v Sereno*, respondent accused me of committing treason, being a "traitor," and being disloyal to the country through my alleged "deliberate refusal to promote the remedies available to the Philippines, and deliberately weakening the country's arguments."8 She also faulted me for allegedly demonstrating "weakness of character" when I was supposedly "not willing to protect the interest" of the Republic, even inferring that I "may have been listening to extraneous factors or may have been promised something", thereby imputing that I may have

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compromised national interests because of personal agenda.

On August 19, 2014, the Court ordered my inclusion in the JBC (*Judicial and Bar Council—ed.*) shortlist. President Benigno S. Aquino III appointed me to the Court the following day.

2. On June 29, 2015, a little over a year before the final award on the West Philippine Sea arbitration case was issued, I gave the commencement address at the occasion of the graduation of the University of the Philippines College of Law Class of 2015. In my address, I spoke about the value of hard work and integrity in one's success and shared my harrowing experience in aspiring for a seat in the Court. I recalled then how painful it was to spend a whole lifetime building a reputation worthy of my parents and my family, only for my integrity to be disparaged at the peak of a legal career. I told the graduates that in life, when faced with a shark or a bully, they should stand their ground and push back. Admittedly, I referred to respondent's viciously false accusations as those consistent of a "bully" and a "shark."

3. On July 12, 2016, the Arbitral Tribunal in The Hague promulgated its ruling, which was an astounding decision in favor of the Philippines. With this, I was free at last to talk about the arbitration and, more importantly for me, the treatment of Itu Aba. The first opportunity presented itself within three months from the date of the issuance of the arbitral decision. On October 21, 2016, I was invited to deliver the keynote speech before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP)—Western Visayas Regional Convention, which had for its theme, "Ensuring a legal system based on respect for the Rule of Law."

In my remarks, I shared the complete story behind the Itu Aba issue. There, I recounted how the Philippine legal team, composed of lawyers from different offices within the Executive Department, and in coordination with our international legal team, unanimously and purposively embarked on a low-risk strategy involving the question of which features to include in the Philippine submission. Specifically, only features that (in our estimation

and based on evidence known or available to us) could, at worst, be declared only as rocks were included in our January 2013 submission to the Arbitral Tribunal. Relatedly, the team made a deliberate decision not to include Itu Aba, the largest feature in the Spratly Islands, as it was reputed to have sources of potable water which, arguably, could qualify

it as an island, to the detriment of the entire Philippine case.

In brief, the risk posed by including Itu Aba was this: If declared by the arbitral tribunal to be an island, Itu Aba would generate a 200 Nautical Mile (NAM) Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that would cover large parts of the Philippine EEZ in the west, including Reed Bank and extending almost up to Palawan. This was a risk none of the members of the Philippine legal team was willing to take.

Toward the end of the year, however, foreign counsel recommended the amendment of the Philippine statement of claim, with the addition of other features, among them, Itu Aba. Considering the gravity and sensitivity of the proposal, we asked counsel to visit Manila to

personally discuss the matter with the rest of the Philippine legal team. In a meeting held in Malacanang in January 2014, the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal were discussed. In the end, the team unanimously affirmed the low-risk strategy initially agreed upon and decided against amending the Philippine submission to include Itu Aba.

Despite this, foreign counsel again proposed, during the preparation of the Philippine Memorial, to include therein fourteen (14) paragraphs mentioning Itu Aba. These additional paragraphs would argue that although Itu Aba is the largest high-tide feature in the Spratly Islands, it is still incapable of sustaining human habitation or economic life of its own, and thus cannot be held to be an island. After reminding counsel that the matter has already been decided in the January 2014 Manila meeting, I proposed that the recommendation be placed in a formal memorandum addressed

to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and myself, for purposes of elevating the matter to then President Aquino for his decision. After discussion, President Aquino decided to go with the foreign counsel's recommendation and the additional paragraphs mentioning Itu Aba were included in the Memorial.

Respondent would later on use this same confidential Memorandum to block my nomination and impugn my integrity before the JBC. I emphasize that neither respondent nor her informant, Senior Associate Justice Antonio T. Carpio, were part of the Philippine legal team. They did not participate in the discussions that led to the initial adoption of the low-risk strategy, nor in the decision not to amend the Philippine submission. In fact, I did not furnish re-

spondent or Justice Carpio a copy of this confidential Memorandum in view of its highly sensitive content.

My actions and words complained of are wholly extraneous and immaterial to the facts and issues raised in this Quo Warranto petition which specifically relates to respondent's alleged deficient submissions of her Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALIN). That I cannot be impartial and decide this case on the merits based on the facts and evidence on record cannot be presumed simply on account of my unpleasant "history" with respondent.

This Resolution is intended to serve as a record upon which all well-informed and reasonable observers who care to know the facts can make their own judgment on whether my acts and words rise to the level of a disqualifying bias or prejudice. To borrow from Chief Justice Rehnquist, I imagine that other reasonable observers may arrive at a legal conclusion contrary to mine, and that there may be sound arguments that plausibly lean towards my recusal. Perhaps if I were preoccupied with avoiding controversy and would like to act in favor of simple convenience, I may as well recuse. My conscience, aided by my self-examination and

analysis of the pertinent laws and the facts of the present case, nevertheless impels me otherwise.

In my Commencement Address to the U.P. College of Law in 2014, I described the two months that started with respondent's attack on my integrity, the JBC's rejection of my nomination, my decision to take on a sitting Chief Justice in *Jardeleza v. Sereno*, the Court's last-minute decision to allow my nomination, and finally my appointment by President Aquino, as the most painful and difficult time of my life, as well as of my wife and children. My family and I had to live those two terrible months with the label "traitor" tarred and feathered on my being. In my address, I described our painful experience as one "I would not wish on anybody, not even to those who made these vile accusations against me."

Today, four years later, respondent and her family have had to face up to more months of attacks on her integrity. Perhaps, because my family and I have endured such a harrowing experience, I fervently hope that reasonably informed persons would believe that I would be among the last to taint another human being's name out of sheer spite.

**FRANCIS J. JARDELEZA,
ASSOCIATE JUSTICE**

JJC

A sober understanding of the South China Sea conflict

WHEN the decision on the arbitral case that the Philippines filed against China was released in July 2016, I was catapulted into social media fame (or notoriety) by explaining the South China Sea conflict and why the decision will not resolve it.

At the time, I was still finishing my master's and working as a teaching assistant. During my free time, I was answering queries from different folks who wanted to deepen their understanding of the issues. Let me share one of them: the conversation I had with a friend, Marvin, who raised challenging points. Our conversation pivoted around the theme of rules-based order in the South China Sea, the role of the UN Convention on the Law of Sea (Unclos) in crafting it, and our role in escalating the conflict.

Marvin (M): Can you imagine how much trouble Europe with the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas would be without rules-based order?

Sass (S): The rules-based order that shaped these seas weren't wrought by a unilaterally sought arbitration but patient negotiations among the coastal States that have reconciled their interests. That is the crucial difference, and the difference that mattered—the reason why these seas have far more stability than the South China Sea.

M: Unclos, as foundation element of a rules-based order, was precisely designed to avoid wars by putting nation-states on even footing, including small countries.

S: I agree. However, Unclos



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also mandates that the States bordering enclosed or semi-enclosed areas, such as the South China Sea, to cooperate. As stated in Article 123: "States bordering an enclosed or semi-enclosed sea should cooperate with each other in the exercise of their rights and in the performance of their duties under this Convention."

The arbitration proceedings and the animosity that it unleashed just made cooperation very difficult, making it hard for the coastal States to fulfill this duty to cooperate, which the Unclos obliges them to do.

If we are going to read the treaty according to the rules of treaty interpretation, i.e. that treaties should be read in light of their purpose, then we get the same emphasis on cooperation. In the Preamble, the Unclos, above all else, is "prompted by the desire to settle, in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation." If the interpretation and application of the Unclos doesn't produce mutual understanding and cooperation, then the Unclos isn't being faithfully enacted for its intended purpose.

The rules-based order in the South China Sea, just like the rules-based order in the Baltics and the Mediterranean, depends on

the negotiated cooperation of the coastal states, through which they reconcile their legitimate interests, achieve mutual understanding and cooperation. This cannot be done through a unilaterally sought arbitration proceedings overseen and helmed by men here in The Hague who wouldn't live the consequences of their 501-page decision.

M: Is it not obvious that the selection of the 9-dash line is a conscious territory grab based on an officious Kuomintang cartographer's practical 20th century wet dream — he actually dusted off old Western maps and just translated their names into Mandarin and as islands many sea features putting a lie to the current China claim in domestic campaigns of long-time "exploration and occupation."

S: When you said that by drawing the 9-dash line the Kuomintang was consciously doing a "territory grab," it was not quite clear from whom they are grabbing the territory.

Our country's first position on the status of the Spratlys was what the Marcos administration stressed in 1971:

"In 1957, we affirmed that the Spratly island group falls under the de facto trusteeship of the Allied powers by virtue of the Japanese Peace Treaty signed and concluded in San Francisco on September 8, 1951, whereby Japan renounced all her rights, title, and claim to these islands. By virtue of that trusteeship no

one may introduce troops on any of these islands without the permission and consent of the allied powers. Our position on this matter remains firm."

Based on this, the Spratlys are nobody's territory but as understood by the Marcos administration, falls under the de facto trusteeship of the Allied powers of which China was a member. Yet despite holding this position, we built the Rancudo airfield on Thitu island (Pagasa) in 1975, without the permission and consent of the Allied powers of which China was a member. A clear violation of the "agreement" the Philippines was referring to.

So, perhaps before we point a finger at another country and condemn them as evil territory grabber, let us first have an honest assessment of what happened and how things unfolded and our country's contribution to how the conflict escalated into what it is now. Based on the history of the disputes, China isn't that evil, and the Philippines is definitely far from being innocent.

China's assertion of sovereignty within that 9-dash line is unacceptable because that sea has traditionally been an open sea. That was the order before the Europeans came, the order China and other coastal states mutually accepted. As I've always said, the future of the South China Sea lies in its pre-colonial past. *AS*

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'A dog with a leash'

ON 25 October 2016, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte aka Digong pronounced himself, rather emphatically, on the presence of US troops in the country with the following words:

"I really hate it. I don't want it. We don't need it."

"US shouldn't treat the Philippines like a 'dog with a leash,'" he added.

Thenceforth, he ordered the annual PH-US military exercise Balikatan be reduced to training for humanitarian assistance and natural disaster operations, with a view to doing away with it altogether at the appropriate time.

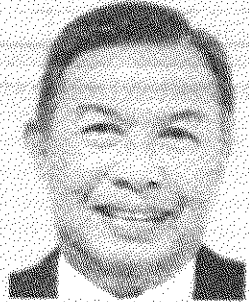
The just-concluded Balikatan exercise, however, not only focused on humanitarian aid and natural disasters but also training for "man-made emergencies like, for example, a chemical attack", according to the spokesman of the Philippine side.

Consequently, the number of participants in the exercise substantially increased to some 3,000 members of the US Marines, Army, Air Force and Special Operations Force, along with 5,000 Filipino soldiers.

Moreover, some 60 Australian and 20 Japanese military personnel reportedly participated in the exercise.

Balikatan 2018 featured "civic action activities in pre-selected areas in Cagayan and Central Luzon; an Amphibious Landing at the Naval Education Training Command, San Antonio, Zambales; and a combined Arms Live Fire Exercise at Col. Ernesto Rabina Air Base, Tarlac (Crow Valley)".

REY O. ARCILLA



'Occasional ranting and raving at Washington's treatment of its oldest ally in these parts amounts to nothing more than bluster if not followed through with substantive and meaningful action.'

The media were not allowed to cover the last one.

Obviously, Balikatan2018 is in contradiction of Digong's expressed intention to rid the country in due course of foreign troops and their involvement in military exercises in order to be consistent with his goal of establishing closer ties with China and Russia.

Question is, does the defense department headed by Delfin Lorenzana, whom he once called a CIA man, and the armed forces, share his goal?

If not, and he is unable to convince them to follow his lead, he can say goodbye to his independent foreign policy. What would China and Russia think? That he is just using the US card to get what he wants from them? He will lose his credibility and their trust.

Occasional ranting and raving at Washington's treatment of its oldest ally in these parts amounts to nothing more than bluster if not followed through with substantive and meaning-

ful action. For instance, when is he going to order the review of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), both of questionable constitutionality?

As I have written in the past in this space, consistency is key in the pursuit of an independent foreign policy. Digong has to be consistent. Otherwise, he can just let the defense/military establishment, as well as the slavish pro-US elements in our society (the Yellowtards for one), dictate foreign policy.

Need I say that such a course of action will forever consign us to being "a dog with a leash", a mighty long leash that, exasperatingly, extends and is tugged from halfway around the globe?

SERENO'S OUSTER

Just before Gloria Arroyo reached the end of her "Hello Garci" term, she appointed the late Renato Corona as Chief Jus-

tice.

Corona's appointment was generally perceived as an "insurance" against cases that may be filed against her after she leaves Malacañang.

But as fate would have it, Corona was ousted as Chief Justice, courtesy of twenty (20) senators who were allegedly bribed by Noynoy Aquino, Arroyo's successor, through the illegal Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP).

They are (with the corresponding amount allegedly received by them): Franklin Drilon, P100M; Francis Escudero, P99M. Juan Ponce Enrile, P92M; Edgardo Angara, Alan Cayetano, Pia Cavetano, Jinggoy Estrada, Gregorio Honasan, Lito Lapid, Loren Legarda, Sergio Osmena III, Ralph Recto, Ramon Revilla, Jr, Vicente Sotto, Antonio Trillanes IV and Manuel Villar, P50M each; Joker Arroyo, P47M; Aquilino Pimentel III, P45.5M; Teofisto Guingona III, P44M; and Francis Pangilinan, P30M. Shouldn't these people except, of course, the deceased ones, be made to account for the amount they received? b4

The ouster of Corona accomplished Aquino's three objectives: 1) punish Corona for the Supreme Court ruling that the Hacienda Luisita owned by the Cojuangco-Aquino family was subject to land reform and deciding that the amount to be paid by the farmer-beneficiaries must be based on the 1986 price; 2) Arroyo spent some six years in hospital deten-

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tion, courtesy of Aquino's now detained ex-justice secretary Leila de Lima; and 3) he was able to appoint a Chief Justice in the person of Maria Lourdes Sereno who, again as generally perceived, would protect him from lawsuits after his term ends.

With Sereno gone, Aquino must be losing sleep nowadays, not only over the cases that have been filed against him so far, but also over the implementation of Corona's Supreme Court ruling on Hacienda Luisita whereby the Cojuangco-Aquino family reportedly stands to lose some P3 billion.

What goes around comes around...

Incidentally, I agree that had the framers of the 1987 Constitution intended that a Supreme Court member, among other officials mentioned in Section 2, Article

XI, can only be removed by impeachment, they would have used the words "MAY ONLY" be removed by impeachment... As it were, the framers only used "MAY" which means that the officials concerned can also be removed by other means, including quo warranto.

In any case, Sereno was guilty of violating the Constitution for failing to file statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN). That alone justifies her removal from office.

REMINDERS

This segment is intended to remind the Duterte administration of some of its yet unfulfilled promises and matters that need attention and/or follow-up action. More importantly, the people are entitled to know what's being done about them.

1) Digong's promise to rid the

country of foreign troops. This, of course, necessitates re-visiting the lopsided VFA and the EDCA with the US.

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

3) The retrieval of the Balangiga bells. (Sources say the return of the bells is under negotiation. Is our embassy in Washington on top of this?)

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

Today is the 17th day of the twelfth year of the enforced disappearance of Jonas Burgos, son of the late press icon and founder

of this newspaper, Joe Burgos.

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

From an internet friend:

A desperate looking woman stood poised on the edge of a high cliff about to jump off.

A filthy tramp wandering by stopped and said, "Look, since you'll be dead in a few minutes, and it won't matter to you, how about a little sex before you go?"

She screamed, "NO! Bug off you filthy old bastard!"

He shrugged and turned away saying, "Okay, I'll just go and wait at the bottom."

She didn't jump.

15 May 2018

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AFP to poll bets: Refuse NPA extortion demands

By Priam Nepomuceno May 14, 2018, 5:31 pm

MANILA -- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Monday reminded candidates for this year's Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE) not to give in to extortion rackets of communist rebels.

"We advise the candidates and business owners not to give in to the group's demands and report their illegal activities immediately to the proper authorities like the Comelec (Commission on Elections), PNP (Philippine National Police), and the Armed Forces of the Philippines," AFP public affairs office chief Lt. Col. Emmanuel Garcia said in a statement.

He added that giving in to their extortion activities will only give the NPAs the means to conduct further atrocities against the government and its constituents.

"Legal ramifications are also waiting for those who will be proven to finance the CPP-NPA and its terror activities," Garcia said.

The AFP earlier said it is ready to secure the village polls, noting that it has yet to monitor any security threat on the polls.

Over 90,000 AFP personnel have been deployed in this year's village and youth polls. **(PNA)**

www.pna.gov.ph