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Honor. Patriotism. Duty

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

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Honor. Patriotism. Duty

CHINA PREPS NUKE BOMBERS ON DISPUTED REEFS

STORY BY FRANCES MANGOSING

For the first time, the People's Liberation Army Air Force has landed one of its nuclear strike-capable bombers on one of the islands claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea, escalating China's militarization of the disputed waters and bringing the Philippines and its neighbors in Southeast Asia within range of the aircraft.

A2

FROM A1

By Frances Mangosing
@FMangosingINQ

The Philippines has come within easy reach of China's top-of-the-line nuclear strike-capable bomber after the Chinese military demonstrated that it could operate from its artificial islands in the South China Sea, according to security analysts.

Upping the ante in the territorial dispute in the region, China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) said in a statement on Friday that some of its bombers recently conducted takeoff and landing training "on islands and reefs in the South China Sea in order to improve our ability to reach all territory, conduct strikes at any time and strike in all directions."

It said the pilot of the H-6K bomber conducted assault training and then carried out takeoffs

and landings at an airport in the area, describing the exercise as preparation for "the West Pacific and the battle for the South China Sea."

Wang Mingliang, a defense expert cited in the statement, said the exercise would help the PLAAF "strengthen its combat capability to deal with maritime security threats."

The PLAAF's statement did not provide the precise location of the exercise.

First time

In an analysis published on its website, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said the runway was believed to be on Woody Island, China's largest base in the Paracel Islands, which is also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan.

"I believe this is the first time a bomber has landed in the #SouthChinaSea," Bonnie Glaser, director of the China power project at CSIS, said on Twitter. She

China lands bombers on SCS isles

By JANVIC MATEO

The entire Philippines is now practically within striking distance of China following the deployment of bomber aircraft at a disputed island in the South China Sea.

State-run Chinese newspaper *People's Daily* on Friday posted on its Twitter account a video of a long-range bomber landing in an island in the disputed waters.

Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) said the video was taken at Woody Island, China's largest base in the Paracel Islands that is also being claimed by Vietnam.

"Chinese bombers including the H-6K conduct takeoff and landing training on an island reef at a southern sea area," read the Twitter post by *People's Daily*.

With its deployment in the Paracels, AMTI said the bombers could now reach almost the entire South China Sea.

"Nearly all of the Philippines falls within the radius of the bombers, including

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China From Page 1

Manda and all five Philippine military bases earmarked for development under the US-Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement," the AMTI said.

"An H-6K, with its technical upgrades giving it a combat radius of nearly 7,000 nautical miles, would dwarf this radius, putting all of Southeast Asia in range of flights from Woody Island," it added. AMTI said China has also built large hangars that could accommodate bombers like the H-6 series at its "Big

3" outposts in the Spratlys, which is comprised of Philippine-claimed Zamora (Subi), Panganiban (Mischief) and Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reefs.

"Future deployments to the Big 3 in the Spratlys would bring Singapore and much of Indonesia within range of even China's lower-end bombers, while the H-6Ks could reach northern Australia or US defense facilities on Guam," it said.

The deployment of the bombers came on the heels of the reported deployment of a missile system in a disputed island near the Philippines.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has yet to comment on the deployment of the bomber

international allies, Lacson said there would be a greater chance to apply pressure on China and have a balance of power in the region.

"We cannot do anything on our own but with the help of the other countries, we can exert pressure on China," Lacson said.

Sen. Leila de Lima, for her part, criticized President Duterte for opting to remain "meek and humble" in response to China's incursions.

"I often wonder what's going on in the madman's head. President Duterte said that if we will just remain meek and humble, China might be merciful and will give us a bigger share from the joint exploration in the West Philippine Sea," De Lima said in a statement.

"In short, we have to behave to gain more from the resources that rightfully belong to us in the first place as affirmed by the UN Arbitral Tribunal's ruling in July 2016," she added.

Appeal to allies

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the development is the reason for the Philippines to be concerned about China's continued militarization of the South China Sea.

Lacson said the Philippine government should seek help from its allies in order to exert pressure on the regional super power.

While the administration has been downplaying the reported incursions of China in the West Philippine Sea, Lacson said these actions should be taken seriously and the government cannot afford not to respond to this.

Since the Philippines on its own cannot confront China and expect a positive response, Lacson said the government should appeal to its allies.

He said the country has the ruling of the Arbitral Tribunal to back up its claims in the West Philippine Sea so it has something to stand on when arguing its case against China's incursions.

By tapping the help of its

Just like Lacson, De Lima said the Philippines could join international calls to pressure China to stop its military build-up in the West Philippine Sea and to join efforts in finding a just and peaceful solution to the conflict over this area.

De Lima said what the country needs is a strong leader who would stand up against the countries who attempt to take over its territories.

"Turning a blind eye to China's military expansion in our Exclusive Economic Zone over the West Philippine Sea and entering into a 'joint exploration' with them are nothing short of a betrayal of the Filipino people," De Lima said.

"No, this is not just failure to adopt an effective foreign policy, this is treason, definitely an impeachable offense," she added. - With Marvin Sy, Jaime Laude

'Sailing is in our DNA': Balangay back from voyage to China

By **Gabriel Cardinoza**
@gabrielcardinozaINQ

SAN FERNANDO CITY—Three replicas of the ancient Filipino sailboat balangay made history on Saturday when they returned, following a successful expedition through the South China Sea from Poro Point here to Xiamen, China.

The voyage of the balangay to China commemorated the travel 600 years ago of Sultan Paduka Pahala of the Sultanate of Sulu to the Middle Kingdom, said Arturo Valdez, expedition leader and a former environment undersecretary, during arrival honors at Poro Point.

Sultan Paduka Pahala sailed to China in 1417 for a tribute mission but he died there and was buried in Shandong, China.

"We covered almost 2,700 nautical miles and crossed the vast South China Sea, which nobody had done before," Valdez said.

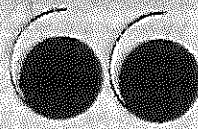
He led 33 crew members of the vessels "Sama ng Tawi Tawi," "Lahi ng Maharlika" and "Sultan Sin Sulu." They left Poro Point for Xiamen on April 30 and headed home on May 16.

Valdez said they first planned to go to China in 2009 after the balangay sailed around Southeast Asian countries. But the expedition ended its journey in Vietnam.

Homesick

He said the China voyage would have enabled them to participate in the world exposition in Shanghai in 2010.

"It was the shift of the monsoon wind that stopped us from pursuing our travel [to China],



When we arrived in Xiamen, the Chinese were shaking their heads wondering how we managed to get there on a boat like that

Arturo Valdez
Balangay expedition leader

With crew members already homesick after traveling for almost 17 months, I decided [to call it off] and told them it was time to go home," Valdez said.

Last year, after building two more balangay in Mairabung town in Sulu province, Valdez said he again attempted to pursue the trip to China.

But the South China Sea had been rough, prompting him to call off the voyage again.

'Dungon'

This year, the weather finally gave them a window to sail. "When we arrived in Xiamen, the Chinese were shaking their heads wondering how we managed to get there on a boat like that," Valdez said.

The balangay, which is about 15 meters long, is made of wood called "dungon." Using only its sails, a balangay can have a maximum speed of 10 knots. But if its small engine is running, it can

move up to 30 knots.

Valdez said the balangay voyage showed that the great seas around the Philippines—the Java Sea, Celebes Sea, Sulu Sea, South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand—are waters that connect the people of Southeast Asia.

The balangay originated from Butuan City. A piece of balangay wood was dug up in 1976 and carbon-dating placed its origin to as far back as 1,700 years ago.

Maritime tradition

"It simply showed that we had a maritime tradition at that time. Sailing is in our DNA because we are the heirs of the great traditions of our maritime forbears," Valdez said.

John Manginsay, master mariner and skipper of the lead boat Sama ng Tawi Tawi, said they had the scare of their lives when they sailed blindly through heavy fog for 12 hours on the second day of their journey to China.

"Because of prayer, we reached our destination safe and complete," Manginsay said.

"Our sailboats are very small compared to the modern boats now. We were quite afraid. But we conquered our fear. I think each one of us has a calling to complete this as a team," he added.

Last voyage

Valdez said the balangay voyage to China would be his last. "To sail in an ancient boat in the modern times is really so risky. We just have to thank God for really taking good care of us," he said.

"To sail the [balangay] again is pushing your luck too far," he added. INQ *HP*

33 complete journey from southern Phl to China in *balangays*

By JUN ELIAS

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union — Thirty-three people survived a 22-day journey on a replica of an ancient wooden boat, sailing from southern Philippines to China.

The crew of 32 Filipinos and one Chinese arrived here Saturday on three wooden *balangays* after sailing a total of 2,700 nautical miles crossing the South China Sea.

The crew led by Environment Undersecretary Arturo Valdez said their mission was to commemorate Sultan Paduka Batara's voyage in 1417 from southern Philippines to China to pay tribute to the emperor of the Ming dynasty in Beijing. The sultan died on the way back to Sulu and was buried in Dezhou, Shandong province in China.

The *balangay* is a wooden plank boat and is the oldest watercraft found in the Philippines, first mentioned by Pigafetta in his 16th century chronicles. Nine *balangays* were discovered in Butuan City, Agusan del Norte, in 1976, three of which have been excavated. Extensive examination revealed the boats date to as far back as 320 AD.

Replicas of the *balangay* were made by traditional boat builders from Tawi-Tawi using ancient techniques.

The crew's original plan was to travel to China last year but the date of departure from Poro Point here was rescheduled to April 28.

They spent six days in Xiamen, China and then took a train to Dezhou in the eastern province of Shandong since the Grand Canal link to the city was reportedly no longer navigable.

"The significant message of Balangay Expedition is to bring back the true identity of Filipinos... The waters across the Philippines, Southeast Asia and China never divided us but unified us. Our nation shares a long and colorful history with our neighboring countries," Valdez said.

"This enduring friendship has contributed to our rich culture, stimulated trade between our nations and fortified the foundation of our continuing quest for economic development," he added.

This is not the first adventure of the Expedition Team.

In 2006, the team completed their quest to climb Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world.

In 2009, the team set sail from Tawi-Tawi on a 17-month voyage on the *balangay* with port calls in Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Their

original plan was to continue on to China but they had to abandon this part of the trip because of bad weather.

"That was the first attempt to mark the 600th anniversary of the historical journey of Sultan of Sulu," Valdez said.

The crew were given arrival honors at Poro Point pier and given supplies as they sailed to go back to Manila.

6

ENTIRE PH 'WITHIN RANGE' - US THINK-TANK

Beijing deploys bombers to reef

BY DEMPSEY REYES AND AFP

CHINESE air force bombers have landed for the first time on one of the disputed islands in South China Sea (West Philippine Sea), within range of the Philippines, in a move that could provoke renewed tensions between countries bordering the strategically vital maritime region.

Bombers of various types—including the long-range, nuclear strike capable H-6K—carried out landing and takeoff drills at an unidentified island airfield after carrying out simulated strike training on targets at sea, the Chinese air force said in a statement Friday.

Wang Mingliang, a defense expert cited in the statement, said the takeoff and landing exercises on islands in the South China

Sea would help the air force "strengthen its combat capability to deal with maritime security threats."

The Asia Maritime Transparency Institute (AMTI) of the Washington-based Central for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on Saturday released a report discussing the recent deployments made by Beijing in the disputed waters.

► Reef A8

REF FROM A1

Beijing deploys

In its analysis, AMTI said the location of the runway was believed to be Woody Island, China's largest base in the Paracel Islands, which is also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan.

AMTI said the Chinese air force—the People's Liberation Army Air Force—landed aircraft bombers including the "top-of-the-line" H-6 aircraft in an outpost within the South China Sea.

The base H-6 aircraft's combat radius of nearly 1,000 nautical miles means even China's basic bombers taking off from Woody Island could cover the entire South China Sea," the AMTI wrote.

PH within radius

This means that nearly the entire Philippines "falls within the radius" of the Chinese bombers that took off Woody Island, it added.

The bombers can reach Manila and all five Philippine military bases earmarked for development under

the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) of the United States and the Philippines.

"An H-6K with its technical upgrades giving it a combat radius of nearly 1,900 nautical miles, would dwarf its radius, putting all of Southeast Asia in range of flights from Woody Island," the think-tank claimed.

In a map posted on its website, AMTI showed other countries covered within the radius of the bombers: Brunei, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and small portions of Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan and Laos.

"I believe this is the first time a bomber has landed in the South China Sea," Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the CSIS, tweeted.

The move comes weeks after US network CNBC reported that China had installed anti-ship and air-to-air defenses on outposts in the Kalayaan (Spratly) Islands that are also claimed by Vietnam and the Philippines, citing sources close to US intelligence.

Washington warned that Beijing would face unspecified "consequences" over its militarization of the South China Sea, and said it had raised the issue with China.

The South China Sea issue has been brewing for years, with China, the Phil-

ippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam making competing claims in waters with vital global shipping routes and what are believed to be significant oil and natural gas deposits.

China has engaged in years of land-reclamation efforts on reefs it controls in the region and built both civilian and military facilities in the contested area.

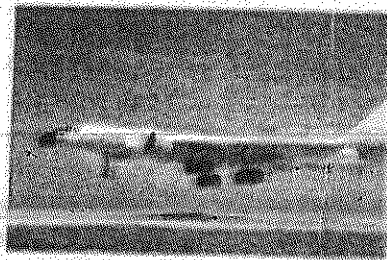
Chinese military facilities include air bases, radar and communications systems, naval facilities and defensive weaponry including landing strips able to accommodate military planes.

Big 3

AMTI said Woody Island had a role for "eventual deployments" to the Spratly Islands.

China has built military bases and installed missile systems in the so-called "Big 3" islands in the Spratlys, which the Philippines calls the Kalayaan Island Group. The Philippine government however has downplayed China's moves, saying the missiles were not aimed at the country.

The Big 3 islands or reefs are Subi (Zamora), Mischief (Panganiban) and Fiery Cross (Kagitingan), all owned by



Screen grab from a video posted by *People's Daily* shows a bomber landing on a reef in South China Sea.

Manila as ruled by a United Nations arbitral tribunal in July 2016.

According to the think-tank, the hangars built by Beijing within the Big 3 reefs "can accommodate bombers" such as the H-6 series of the Chinese Air Force, as well as large transport, patrol and refueling aircrafts.

It also said that the possible deployments of the bombers on the "Big 3" reefs in Spratlys "would bring Singapore and much of Indonesia" within the range of China's lower-end bombers, while the H-6K aircraft bombers could also reach the northern portion of Australia or even the US defense facilities in Guam.

On Friday, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said it was conducting naval and aerial patrols in the area.

Decree no guarantee vs PH Rise encroachment

A PROCLAMATION signed by President Rodrigo Duterte on Tuesday to protect resource-rich Philippine Rise is not a guaranteed protection against foreign encroachments according to an environmental group.

"No, unfortunately it is not a guarantee, but we can ask for transparency in the monitoring of vessels around the area. There is now technology, monitoring, control, surveillance, a mandate of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and also with DENR if there is a protected area and all other enforcement agencies," Gloria Estenzo-Ramos said in a media briefing of Oceana Philippines at Museum Cafe in Greenbelt, Makati City, also on Thursday.

DENR is the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Ramos said the proclamation would mean nothing if the law that should enforce it was not implemented, and "if the citizens and stakeholders are not doing anything."

She pressed for the formation of an alliance between the stakeholders and the enforcers so actions are well-coordinated.

"That is what we are doing in Tañon Strait," Ramos said.

Tañon Strait is a marine protected area located between Cebu Island and Negros Island and connects the Bohol Sea in the south and the

Visayan Sea in the north.

Ramos said the proclamation is a highly significant event because May is the Month of the Ocean and 2018 is the International Year of the Reef.

Daniel Ocampo, campaign manager of Oceana, said Filipinos have to be vigilant and that there are tools and platforms such as social media to prevent foreign countries from claiming what rightfully belongs to Filipinos.

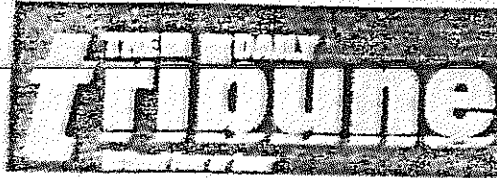
The Philippine Rise or the Benham Rise is a 24.4-million hectare undersea plateau 135 miles off the coast of Aurora province in Luzon, which is the nearest port to the 17,000-hectare, almost 50-meter deep no-take zone Benham Bank, the shallowest part of the undersea region.

The 13.4-million hectare outer section of Philippine Rise was validated by the United Nations' Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf as part of the Philippine territory in 2012.

Two years ago, government scientists reported 100 percent coral cover in sampling sites during an expedition to Benham Bank and documented some 120 species of reef fishes.

The Philippine Rise, Oceana said, is the spawning site of one of the most expensive fishes in the world, the Pacific blue fin tuna.

By CATHERINE MODESTO



China lands bombers in disputed region

China has for the first time landed several bombers on an island in the disputed South China Sea, a move that could provoke renewed tensions between countries bordering the strategically vital maritime region.

Several bombers of various types – including the long-range, nuclear strike capable B-6K – carried out landing and take off drills at an unidentified island airfield after carrying out simulated strike training on targets at sea, the Chinese airforce said in a statement Friday.

Wang Mingliang, a defense expert cited in the statement, said the takeoff and landing exercises on islands in the South China Sea will help the air force “strengthen its combat capability to deal with maritime security threats.”

The move comes weeks after US network CNBC reported that China had installed anti-ship and air-to-air defences on outposts in the Spratly Islands that are also claimed by Vietnam and the Philippines, citing sources close to US intelligence.

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China lands bombers in disputed region

From page 1

Washington warned that Beijing would face unspecified “consequences” over its militarisation of the South China Sea, and said it had raised the issue with China.

“I believe this is the first time a bomber has landed in the #SouthChinaSea,” Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, tweeted.

In an analysis published on its website, CSIS said the location of the runway was believed to be Woody Island, China’s largest base in the Paracel Islands, which is also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan.

The South China Sea issue has been brewing for years, with China, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam making competing claims in waters with vital global shipping routes and what are believed to be significant oil and natural gas deposits.

China has engaged in years of land-reclamation efforts on reefs it controls in the region and built both civilian and military facilities in the contested area.

Chinese military facilities include air bases, radar and communications systems, naval facilities and defensive weaponry including landing strips able to accommodate military planes.

The reported landings of the Chinese military aircraft came after the Palace said last Friday President Duterte is expected to visit Pagasa Island which is among the Spratly islands.

“Well, I think, time will really come that the President will visit the Pagasa Island,” Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said.

Roque said a visit of the President to the Pagasa Island would serve as an evidence of sovereignty.

“If the President will not do it now, I think, before his term will be finished, he will go there, not only to show to the world our entitlement in Kalayaan but to visit our soldiers and

our countrymen living there,” he said.

In July 2016, the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled in favor of the Philippines’ arbitration case nullifying China’s nine-dash line map.

Mr. Duterte temporarily shelved the PCA’s decision to give way for friendly and peaceful dialogues but told Chinese President Xi Jinping that he would raise the issue again before his term ends in 2022.

In April last year, Duterte said he will visit Pagasa Island but eventually scrapped his plan, including the planting of the national flag to preserve the revived and improving China-Philippines relations.

US airs concern

The United States earlier expressed concern over developments in the South China Sea.

“We have long been concerned about developments in the South China Sea that threatens stability, security and the peace among the nations that are connected to this part of the world,” Patrick Murphy, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia, said in a roundtable discussion at The Peninsula, Makati.

Murphy made the remark when he was asked how US views China’s reported installation of missiles in three outposts at the contested West Philippine Sea.

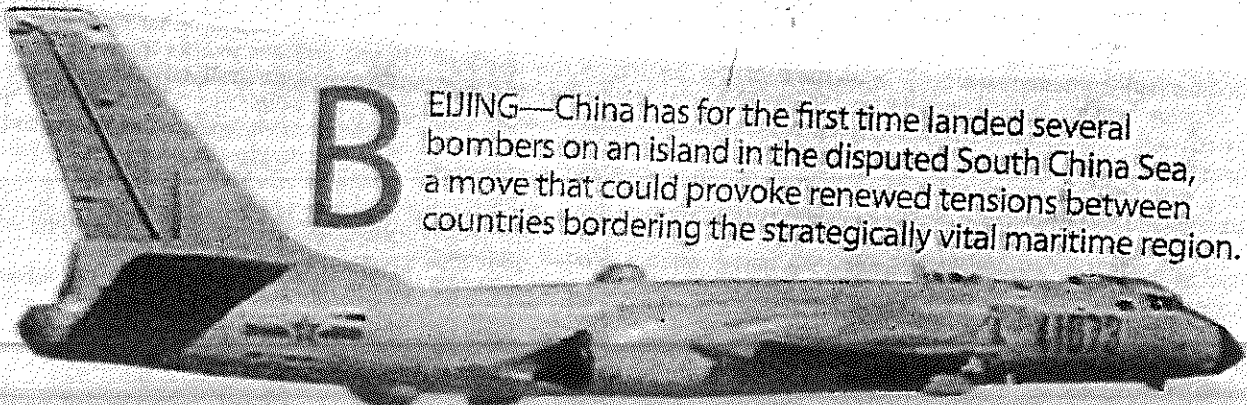
Murphy said they are not a claimant country, but US is an “interested party” in the region.

“What I can say more broadly for the United States as a Pacific nation, the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea is a very important territory for many nations in the region.”

“Almost half of the world’s trade and commerce transit through the South China Sea and all of us have interest in abiding by international law to exert our freedom of navigation, our freedom of overflight and the right to unimpeded commerce,” he added.

AFP

CHINA BOMBERS LAND ON SCS ISLE



BEIJING—China has for the first time landed several bombers on an island in the disputed South China Sea, a move that could provoke renewed tensions between countries bordering the strategically vital maritime region.

THEY HAVE LANDED. China has for the first time landed several bombers, including the long-range, nuclear strike capable H-6K on an island in the disputed South China Sea. Washington warned that Beijing would face unspecified 'consequences' over its militarization of the South China Sea, and said it had raised the issue with China. **CSIS Photo**

This is particularly near the five military bases of the Philippines, according to official sources.

Several bombers of various types—including the long-range, nuclear strike capable H-6K—carried out landing and takeoff drills at an unidentified island airfield after carrying out simulated strike training on targets at sea, the Chinese airforce said in a statement Friday.

Wang Mingliang, a defense expert cited in the statement, said the takeoff and landing exercises on islands in the

South China Sea will help the air force "strengthen its combat capability to deal with maritime security threats."

In a report, the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative of the Center of Strategic and International Studies warned the H-6 aircraft or even China's basic bombers taking off from Woody Island could cover the entire South China Sea where some Asean member countries have overlapping claims.

"Nearly all of the Philippines falls within the radius of the bombers, including Manila and all five Philippine military

bases earmarked for development under the US-Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement," the AMTI warned.

The Xian H-6K, an updated version of the H-6 medium-range bomber, made its first flight in 2007 and entered service in 2009.

The long-range bombers are among estimated 15 bombers that China operates designed for long-range attacks and stand-off attacks.

The AMTI said Woody Island would be used as a blueprint for eventual deploy-

ments to the Spratly Islands farther south. So far, the Department of Foreign Affairs has yet to comment on the issue, which said it had previously asked the public for "diplomatic space" a new diplomatic phrase regularly used by the present non-career-foreign-chief expressing his way not commenting on the matter.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque, on the other hand, also refused to comment and deferred to Cayetano.

Cayetano, however, is currently in Honolulu, Hawaii for an official visit.

Maritime expert and professor Jay Batongbacal said the Philippines continuing silence with respect to China's actions means the country was allowing and accepting China's control over the disputed South China Sea.

"Impliedly, it is also surrendering any and all hope of pursuing any of its rights and claims in the South China Sea, both now and in the future," Batongbacal said.

Batongbacal warned that China would keep on claiming the whole waters and its features.

"They will just keep going. Without unity within the region, they have no reason not to," he said.

Turn to A2

Washington warned that Beijing would face unspecified "consequences" over its militarization of the South China Sea, and said it had raised the issue with China.

"I believe this is the first time a bomber has landed in the South China Sea," Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, tweeted.

In an analysis published on its website, CSIS said the location of the runway was believed to be Woody Island, China's largest base in the Paracel Islands, which is also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan.

The South China Sea issue has been brewing for years, with China, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam making competing claims in waters with vital global shipping routes and what are believed to be significant oil and natural gas deposits.

China has engaged in years of land-reclamation efforts on reefs it controls in the region and built both civilian and military facilities in the contested area.

Chinese military facilities include air bases, radar and communications systems, naval facilities and defensive weaponry including landing strips able to accommodate military planes.

The bombers, according to experts, can at least each carry 6 air-launcher cruise missiles under its wings.

One bomber can carry CJ-10A cruise missiles with conventional or nuclear warheads; and YL-12 anti-ship missiles.

It can reach a range of 2000 to 2200 kilometers and 400 km, respectively.

The CJ-10 missile was "specially designed to counter the US Navy's carrier battle groups," the expert said.

The CJ-10 is the first long-range land attack missile, developed in China. It was specially designed to counter the US Navy's carrier battle groups.

The air-launcher CJ-10A has a range of 2 000-2 200 km. It can also carry YL-12 anti-ship missiles with a range of around 400 km.

This news comes on the heels of other recent deployments of Chinese military platforms in the South China Sea, including Y-8 military transport planes, YJ-12B cruise missiles, and HQ-9B surface-to-air missile systems on each of the Big 3.

This development comes two days after President Rodrigo Duterte said he was aware of China's missiles deployment and military assets on its built-up islands in the disputed sea.

But he said there was no point in questioning China's actions there.

"There is an airport. There are missiles there installed. There are military equip-

ment already in place. So what's the point of questioning whether the planes land there or not? There's an airstrip," Duterte said.

International observers, however, said the landing of H-6K bomber on Woody Island was another recent move by China that further escalates the tension in the region.

Over the past years, China has claimed some of the features of the disputed South China Sea particularly the Philippine-owned-reefs-turned-islands in the Kalayaan Group of Islands (Spratlys) where Beijing has installed weapon system in the region.

The reclamation in the South China Sea started when a standoff happened between the Philippines and China after Manila caught Beijing for catching live turtles and other resources within the country's territory.

China's activities over the disputed sea became more visible when the Philippines filed a case before the Arbitral Tribunal and ruled in favor of Manila three years after declaring Beijing's 9-dash line claim as excessive and illegal.

The Philippines has won an arbitration case against China on July 12, 2016 invalidating Beijing's nine dash line of its so-called Chinese ancient map.

China, on the other hand, slammed the order and said it would not recognize the Tribunal ruling, stressing its claim to the sea was "indisputable."

Manila's arbitration case is limited to determining the role of historic rights and the source of maritime entitlements in the South China Sea and did not tackle territorial ownership.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration's mandate is limited to the interpretation or application of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea.

Duterte set aside the ruling to forge better ties with China, but vowed to raise it at a proper time during his presidency which ends in 2022. **AFP, Sara Susanne Fabunan**

CHINA

The AMTI said that China had built large hangars at all three of its "Big 3" outposts in the Spratlys, particularly Subi, Mischief, and Fiery Cross Reefs, that could accommodate bombers like the H-6 series, as well as the large transport, patrol, and refueling aircraft.

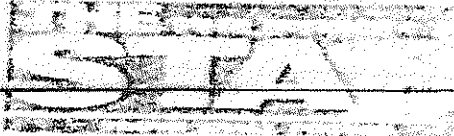
The American think tank said that future deployments to the Big 3 in the Spratlys would bring Singapore and much of Indonesia within range of even China's lower-end bombers, while the H-6Ks could reach northern Australia or US defense facilities on Guam.

H-6K, which has nuclear strike capability, is capable of attacking US carrier battle groups and priority targets in Asia.

Chinese long-range bomber consists of new engines, can carry more fuel for longer range, and contains revised forward fuselage.

The H-6K has rear 23 mm guns and gunner which is made of electronic components.

The bombers' landing comes weeks after US network CNBC reported that China had installed anti-ship and air-to-air defenses on outposts in the Spratly Islands that are also claimed by Vietnam and the Philippines, citing sources close to US intelligence.



2 soldiers hurt in landmine blast

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Two soldiers were wounded in a landmine explosion in Kalawit, Zamboanga del Norte on Friday.

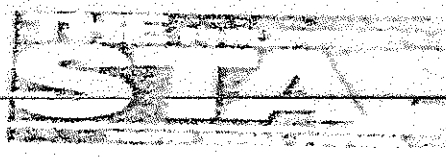
The rebels planted the landmine on Palalian bridge at around 10 a.m. as a military truck was passing. Chief Inspector Helen Galvez, Zamboanga peninsula police spokes-

person, said yesterday, citing the report of soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Battalion.

Galvez said the rebels detonated the landmine when they saw the soldiers.

"The explosion was succeeded by bursts of gunfire from the enemies who were positioned beside the bridge," she said. □

-Roel Pareño



ACROSS THE COUNTRY

AFP overruns Quirino NPA camp

TUGUEGARAO, Cagayan - Government troopers recovered high-powered firearms after it overran a New People's Army (NPA) camp in Sitio Pulang Lupa, Barangay Disumungal, Nagtipunan, Quirino yesterday.

Five M16 and two M14 rifles, various types of ammunition, police uniforms and combat boots were recovered from the abandoned NPA Jair, according to Superintendent Mario Espino, Cagayan Valley police director.

Espino said the camp was the jump-off point of rebels who attacked the Macidela police station last year. The raid left a police officer dead and two others wounded.

- Raymund Catindig

Landmine blast injures 2 soldiers in Zamboanga

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Two soldiers were wounded when suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels bombed a bridge in the province of Zamboanga del Norte, a top police official disclosed yesterday.

Police Regional Office 9 (Zamboanga) Director, Chief Supt. Billy Beltran, said the incident occurred in Barangay Palalian, Kalawit, Zamboanga del Norte at about 10 a.m. Friday.

Beltran did not release the identities of the two wounded soldiers but said they belonged to the Charlie Company of the Army's 42nd Infantry Battalion.

He said investigation showed that the suspected NPA rebels detonated a landmine when they saw six soldiers approaching the bridge.

The soldiers had disembarked from a KM450 truck and were about to inspect the bridge after they saw three rebels "laying landmine at the structure," Beltran said, adding that a brief firefight ensued when other suspected NPA rebels positioned on a high ground opened fire at the soldiers.

The suspected rebels fled toward Barangay New Salvacion, Labason, Zamboanga del Norte.

The troops later recovered more or less 100 meters of wire, three nine-volt batteries, and shrapnel.

Government troops are now tracking down the suspected NPA rebels who fled to the hinterlands.

In Zamboanga City, police are investigating the identity of the gunman behind the attempted gun slay of a Marine soldier late Friday.

Chief Insp. Helen Galvez, Police Regional Office-9 (PRO-9) information officer, said that Marine soldier, Sgt. Fredencio Braba, 41, survived the attempt on his life but was wounded.

Braba is currently assigned in the province of Tawi-Tawi.

Galvez said Braba was aboard a pedicab on his way home when shot by a lone gunman at around 7:40 p.m. Friday at Salamat village, Barangay San Roque, Zamboanga.

She said the suspect pursued and opened fire for the second time but missed, as the victim, although wounded, managed to run to his home. The soldier was later admitted to a hospital for treatment.

PNA

NEDA TO POUR P3B TO DEVELOP DAVAO DISTRICT

By F. Pearl A. Gajunera

NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority XI Director Maria Lourdes Lim said that over P3 billion worth of projects will be allocated to Paquibato District, Davao City.

During the Serbisyo Caravan of the Local and National agencies in Sitio Panaca, Barangay Colosas, Paquibato District, Lim laid the plans of the different government agencies to help improve Paquibato District.

"The Department of Public Works and Highways [DPWH] will pour their efforts to improve the roads of Paquibato while other agencies, including the Department of Agriculture [DA], City Agriculture Office [CAO] will provide for the needs of the farmers," Lim said.

She said that the government is doing its best to give a better life for the residents of Paquibato especially that it is known to be a conflict area due to the presence of the New People's Army.

"We are lucky that the City Government of Davao is cooperating well with our project, recently they launched the Peace 911 here aiming to help the community achieve peace and a sustainable livelihood for the residents here," Lim added.

Mayor Inday Sara Duterte also vowed to continue to extend the services of the city government to Paquibato District through the Peace 911.

"The Peace 911 will be the city's bridge to the people of Paquibato so that we can attend to their needs," Mayor Inday said.

She said that the city will look closely to the concerns of the residents of Paquibato to bring development and economy in the area.

Meanwhile, Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Secretary Francis Tolentino said that they will replicate the serbisyo caravan established by the Association of the Regional Executives of National Agencies XI.

Tolentino, who represented President Rodrigo Duterte, lauded the efforts of the ARENA XI to extend the government services to far-flung areas.

"This is a good example that we should replicate in the entire country, through this activity, it will be easier for those who lives far from the city to receive the services of the government," he said. 12

KIDNAP VICTIMS

**DU30 RECEIVES
FREED WOMEN COPS**

DAVAG CITY—President Duterte on Saturday received two female police officers, who were separately freed by their Abu Sayyaf captors this week in Sulu, from emissaries who worked for the officers' release.

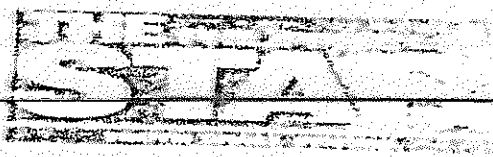
Present at the turnover, which was off-limits to media coverage, were Special Assistant to the President Christopher Go, Philippine National Police Chief Director Gen. Oscar Albayalde, Task Force Sulu commander Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, and Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza.

Snatched

The two police officers, PO2 Benierose Alvarez and PO1 Dinah Gumahad, along with two others, were taken by Abu Sayyaf bandits in Patikul town on April 29.

The two police officers were to visit their soldier-boyfriends when they were snatched. The bandit group demanded P5 million for each victim.

No ransom had reportedly been paid.—ALLANAWAL INQ



Rody receives freed policewomen

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY - President Duterte yesterday received the two female police officers released by the Abu Sayyaf who kidnapped them in Patikul, Sulu last month.

The President received the two former captives from Moro National Liberation Front chairman Nur Misuari and Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza in turnover rites at the Davao International Airport.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Oscar Albayalde presented PO2 Bernierose Alvarez and PO1 Dinah Gumahad to the President.

However, there was no word yet as to what happened to civilians Jakosalem Ahamad Blas and Faizal Ahidji, who were also kidnapped along with the two policewomen.

Gumahad and Alvarez were

released unharmed on Tuesday and Wednesday respectively in two separate places in Sulu by their Abu Sayyaf captors led by Almujer Yadah reportedly after paying P2.5-million ransom.

The victims were turned over by a certain MNLF commander Abraham Joel to former Sulu governor Abdusakur Tan in Indanan town.

The two female cops were abducted last April 29 with their two civilian companions after visiting a friend in Patikul town.

Albayalde, on the other hand, stressed that no ransom was given.

"As far as the PNP is concerned, we didn't give any ransom," he said.

Regional police spokesman Senior Insp. Jemar delos Santos said the two policewomen are still suffering from psychological trauma following their release.

- With Roel Pareño, Christina Mendez, Emmanuel Tupas

Duterte meets police officers freed by Sayyaf

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday received the two policewomen who were freed by suspected Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) members after being held captive for two weeks.

The President welcomed Police Officer 2 Benierose Alvarez and Police Officer 1 Dinah Gumahad during the turnover in Davao City.

A statement issued by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) said the

two police officers were "recovered" with the assistance of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) chairman Nur Misuari.

"Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza, accompanied by Misuari, personally fetched the two PNP of-

ficers in Jolo today and turned them over to President Duterte," it added.

Also present during the handover were Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Carlito Galvez, PNP chief Oscar Albayalde, and Sulu Task Force head Gen Cirilito Sobejana.

The two police officers, along with two civilians, were abducted by armed men on April 29 in the town of Patikul, Sulu.

They had just come from Camp Teofilo Bautista near the Jolo Airport when they were waylaid by suspected members of the Abu

Sayyaf Group.

Authorities in Sulu said the two police officers underwent medical examination and debriefing from the military.

The government said no ransom was paid in exchange for the release of the two policewomen.

"As far as I know, we don't pay ransom," Palace spokesman Harry Roque said in a news briefing.

Albayalde earlier said the kidnappers demanded P5 million for the release of the two police officers. 12

Abducted policewomen freed, presented to Rody

JOLO, Sulu — The two policewomen who were abducted some two weeks ago in Sulu by suspected Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) members were rescued on May 19 and were formally turned over to President Duterte in Davao City.

The two Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel were rescued with the assistance of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) chairman Nur Misuari, who was reportedly personally requested earlier by the President to help in the captive's safe return.

Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza, accompanied by Misuari, personally fetched the two PNP officers in Jolo yesterday.

Also present during the handover were AFP chief of staff Carlito Galvez, PNP chief Oscar Albayalde, and Sulu Task Force head Gen. Cirilito Sobejana.

"Since day one, President Duterte instructed us to work on the safe release of the victims," he said.

Police Officer 2 Benierose Alvarez and Police Officer 1 Dinah Gumahad, along with two civilians, were abducted by armed men on April 29 in the town of Patikul.

They had just come from Camp Teofilo Bautista near the Jolo Airport when their tricycle was waylaid by suspected members of



Rescued Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza and PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde with the two policewomen who were rescued from their abductors yesterday. The two were kidnapped last April 29 in the town of Patikul by suspected Abu Sayyaf members.

the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Authorities in Sulu said the two police officers underwent medical examination and

military debriefing.

Sobejana said military operations have been heightened to rescue the remaining kidnap

victims on the island.

Last week, a number of Abu Sayyaf members were killed following a rescue attempt by the military.

2 lady cops na dinukot iprinisinta kay Digong

Formal nang iprinisinta kanapon kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang dalawang babaeng pulis na dinukot at pinalaya ng mga pinaghihinalaang miyembro ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa Sulu.

Ang dalawang lady cops na sina Police Officer 2 Benierose Alvarez at Police Officer 1 Dinah Gumahad na dinukot ng mga armadong katakahan noong Abril 29 sa bayan ng Patikul ay nabawi sa tulong ni Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) chair Nur Misuari.

Personal na sinundo ni Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza kasama si Misuari ang dalawang PNP officers at iprinisinta nila sa Panguic.

"Since day one, President Duterte instructed us to work on the safe release of the victims," sabi ni Dureza.

Kasama rin sa nangyannong handover sina AFP Chief of Staff Carlito Galvez, PNP Chief Dir. Gen. Oscar Albayalde, at Sulu Task Force head Gen. Cirilito Sobeyana.

Ayon sa ulat, kalalabas lamang mula sa Camp Teofilo Bautista na malapit sa Jolo Airport ng sinasakyang tricycle ng dalawang pulis nang parahin ito ng mga suspek na diumano'y miyembro ng ASG at dukutin kasama ang dalawa pang sibilyan na una na ring pinalaya.

Sina Gumahad at Alvarez ay isinaalim na sa medical examination at debriefing ng militar. (Malou Escudero/Joy Santos)

TERROR GROUPS STEP UP RECRUITMENT, TARGET KIDS

TERRORIST groups have continued their "massive, discreet, and decisive" recruitment in Mindanao, nearly one year after their debilitating siege of Marawi City, a professor of a think tank devoted to peace efforts said Saturday.

Rommel Banlaol of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research said these recruitment efforts have only strengthened as terrorists have taken advantage of the "desperate condition" of Marawi's displaced residents.

He told radio station dzBB that these violent extremists have been

aggressively recruiting young people in tent cities, schools and communities, exploiting the siege victims' grievances against the slow rebuilding efforts of the government.

The terrorists are enlisting children even as young as nine years old, especially those who can already handle a gun, Banlaol added.

Memories of the siege, which began May 23 last year, are still fresh in their minds, he said.

The Duterte administration, which declared martial law in Mindanao considering the Marawi siege, should also rebuild the Marawi residents' "spirit and sense of hope" and not just restoring their destroyed homes, the professor said.

Banlaol said the displaced residents of Central Mindanao only want the government's assurance that they will get a chance to till their land and, quoting a local teacher or Ustadz, said they can take care of their rest of their needs, such as education, health, and peace and order, among others.

To counter the enticements of extremists, the Duterte administration must "plant the seeds of peace and hope" in the hearts and minds of the internally displaced people in Central Mindanao and elsewhere, he added.

Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research was created to better integrate peace studies with research on political violence and terrorism.

The group is an independent organization that is divided into two centers: The Center for Intelligence and National Security Studies, and The Center for Transnational Crimes Research and Non-Traditional Security Studies. 12

BABE'S EYE VIEW

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ambassador B. ROMUALDEZ

ASEAN's increasing global role

I recently presided over the first regular meeting of the ASEAN Committee in Washington (ACW) that is now under the chairmanship of the Philippines after Myanmar. ACW is an organization of ASEAN ambassadors to the United States, who regularly engage in discussions on how to further elevate the profile of ASEAN among US legislators, government officials and private sector groups.



I invited US-ASEAN Business Council president Alex Feldman, and Asia Society Policy Institute managing director Wendy Cutler who previously served as the Deputy Trade Representative of the United States to join us for lunch at the Philippine Embassy. We discussed ASPI's white paper on ASEAN-US relations that will be presented on June 19 at our Chancery in Washington where I will host a dinner. Aside from the ASEAN ambassadors, I also invited several US legislators, businessmen and officials from the Trump administration for the formal presentation of the white paper.

ASPI tackles major challenges faced by the region and provides recommendations on how policy makers can navigate an increasingly complex trade landscape, among others. A recent ASPI Trade Forum Issue Paper titled "Shifting Trade Winds: US Bilateralism and Asia Pacific Economic Integration" authored by Cutler and other Trade Forum members noted that the "Asia-Pacific region continues to be a bright spot on the global economic scene," pointing out that in 2017, nine of the 15 fastest-growing economies were in Asia.

The 2017 Global Economic Prospects issued by the World Bank also listed Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines - all ASEAN member-nations - in its roster of the fastest growing economies in the world. ASEAN is an important trading partner for the US, with the 10-member nations comprising the 4th largest export market for the United States. In 2016, trade between the US and ASEAN stood at \$236 billion. Collectively, the members of ASEAN represent a huge market with a GDI of over \$2.4 trillion, and a labor force of over 600 million that is the third largest in the world.

During a gathering of American businessmen as well as US and ASEAN diplomats in Washington last month, Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish noted that there is "a tremendous opportunity to deepen trade ties, enhance economic and job growth and expand US exports." Gerrish also said the US has an interest in ensuring that the ASEAN remains a free, fair and open trade destination for export and business even as the member-nations pursue integration through the ASEAN economic community.

Democratic Congressman Joaquin Castro of Texas is also convinced that ASEAN is "well-poised to be the success story of our generation," noting that "the region's dynamic and young population of 650 million, its innovative economy that approaches three trillion, and the region's critical location at the nexus of critical trade routes equip the region well for success. The United States must support and be part of this success story," he exhorted.

The growing importance of the regional bloc has not escaped the notice of US policymakers and legislators, as underscored by the passage of a resolution by the US House of Representatives in November last year recognizing the 50th anniversary of ASEAN and the 40th anniversary of US-ASEAN diplomatic relations.

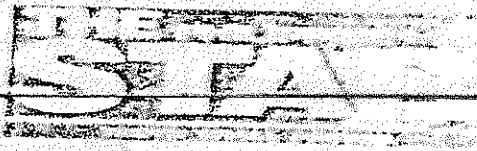
The resolution - authored by Congressman Castro and Republican Congresswoman Ann Wagner of Missouri who are also co-chairmen of the ASEAN Caucus - highlights the strategic and economic importance of the partnership between the US and ASEAN and seeks to raise awareness about the regional bloc's crucial role in helping maintain peace, prosperity and stability in the region as well as in maintaining global order.

The ASEAN Caucus, which was established in January 2017, aims to expand dialogue and enhance US-ASEAN engagement on high priority issues. The resolution filed by Castro and Wagner is seen as an important initiative in strengthening the ties between the US and the regional group and increasing cooperation on issues that are crucial to American interests such as the maritime disputes in the South China Sea and the denuclearization of North Korea.

We are currently in Honolulu with Executive Secretary Bingbong Medialdea, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Interior Secretary Eduardo Año for briefings with US Pacific Command (USPACOM) Commander Admiral Harry Harris, not necessarily on military relations alone but other aspects relative to US engagement in ASEAN. US and Philippine troops recently concluded the 34th Balikatan Exercise to enhance interoperability and heighten response capability on mutual defense, counterterrorism, and humanitarian and disaster response during calamities or nuclear attacks.

The USPACOM will also be conducting meetings with other ASEAN countries like Indonesia and Singapore, with the island state now getting more attention than usual as it is the venue for the meeting between US president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. While the summit is still "up in the air" after North Korea threatened to scuttle the talks if the US insists on "unilateral nuclear abandonment," Trump was cool about it, saying that "if the meeting happens, it happens. And if it doesn't, we go to the next step... We'll see what happens."

That an ASEAN nation was chosen for the potentially historic Trump-Kim summit underscores the growing global importance of the region not only in terms of the economy but in security as well. As noted by analysts, ASEAN leaders are fully supportive of Singapore in facilitating the unprecedented meeting and are helping ensure that the outcome is positive and encouraging. If all goes well, a potential new era of peace and security will enhance ASEAN's economic growth even more.



Week of Peace

EDITORIAL

Coinciding with the start of Ramadan this year, a government-organized task force has launched a weeklong commemoration of the siege that destroyed the city of Marawi. The special week, culminating in the first anniversary of the start of the siege on May 23, is dedicated to the promotion of lasting peace and the rebuilding of the ruined city.

It is a daunting challenge; peace has been elusive in several areas in Mindanao. Marawi is not new to armed conflict. In 1972, the Moro National Liberation Front attacked several government targets including a university, radio station and a Philippine Constabulary base in the city. But the rebellion was crushed, and Marawi prospered during several decades of relative peace – until last year, when Islamist terrorist Maute militants launched their attack.

The Maute threat was deemed so serious that President Duterte imposed martial law in the city. It is to the credit of the Armed Forces of the Philippines that this martial law has not been compared to that of dictator Ferdinand Marcos, and there has been muted protest against its yearlong extension and expansion of its coverage throughout the entire Mindanao.

Martial law, however, is not enough

to secure lasting peace in Marawi. The people of the city themselves – a number of whom reportedly supported the Mautes – must become the principal catalysts for peace. Even as they rebuild from the ashes of a bloody conflict, they must guard against the resurgence of the Mautes and the possible arrival in the city of the terrorists' foreign cohorts, members of the Islamic State who have been driven out of their strongholds in Syria and Iraq.

Marawi residents will get a lot of support not only from the national government but also from the private sector as well as the international community. At the ceremonial launch of the Week of Peace, among those present were European Union Ambassador Franz Jessen and investors from EU states who vowed to continue assisting in the reconstruction and peace efforts despite President Duterte's frequent verbal assaults on the EU. The United States, the first country to assist the AFP with missiles, drones and other combat materiel at the start of the siege, is also sustaining its support in rebuilding Marawi.

The road to enduring peace is tortuous, but the city has returned to life. The resilience of residents is the best guarantee that Marawi is headed for recovery. 10



EDITORIAL

A view to progress

Chinese President Xi Jinping in a pitch for its neighbors to jump in and join the bullet-train development happening in the Asian giant said "you can take a ride on our express train or just...hitchhike, all are welcome", to which President Duterte clearly had shown he will make sure the Philippines will not hitchhike.

Economics-wise, the fears of China and Philippines confrontation over the territorial dispute are unfounded nor will it provide benefit to either country and leaders of both nations had stated time and again such position.

China looks at the Philippines as an equal, primarily as a result of the what Chinese experts said were strategic adjustments by the Duterte administration that warmed bilateral ties.

The Chinese view is that the Duterte government discarded the Western-influenced mentality of power politics.

Some Chinese scholars said under Western influence, former president Aquino and some of his high-ranking officials considered international relations as an arena for power and benefits, and sought to balance between major powers.

Again the Chinese view is that the former regime attempted to gain rights and interests in the South China Sea by taking advantage of America's pivot to Asia, "but failed to cash in on the American strategy, and instead suffered setbacks and the deterioration of the China-Philippine relationship and an escalation in regional tensions."

When Rody came to power, while acknowledging the disputes between China and the Philippines, he realized that there are huge common interests between the two.

He chose the approach of dialog, not confrontation, and cooperation rather than conflict, to improve relations with China and to achieve the goal of a win-win cooperation.

Experts also hail the focus of the new government on social and economic development.

China sees the moves of Rody as ultimately redounding the improvement of the country's economy.

The shift from political struggle to economic development put an end to the backward economic situation.

While Noynoy focused on his politics of vindictiveness which was packaged as his anti-corruption pursuit, Rody pursued an independent foreign policy, fought against drug trafficking, and focused on building infrastructure, in an attempt to create a favorable business environment to attract foreign investment and create more job opportunities.

The result of improved relations between the neighbors were that last year, trade between both exceeded \$50 billion, and China became Philippines' biggest trading partner while Chinese investment in the Philippines registered a 67 percent increase from a year ago.

China also imported 1 million tons of tropical fruits from the Philippines and Chinese tourists made 1 million trips to the country last year.

Chen Qing Hong, Assistant Research Fellow at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said when the Philippines shifted its focus to its economy and its development that helped open new horizons for cooperation.

Chen said the policy of China to throw open its economy and support global free trade in contrast to US President Donald Trump's America First policy and trade protectionism proves Rody made the right choice in latching onto the Chinese economic express.

"In the Philippines, however, some people, either out of ignorance or due to ulterior political motives, are trying to smear Duterte's China policy by cooking up disputes relating to Benham Rise and by exerting public pressure on the joint development of the South China Sea," Chen said.

"In fact, as far as Benham Rise is concerned, they should not have made a fuss out of it at all. China's Foreign Ministry has repeatedly stated that 'China respects the Philippines' rights and interests over the area of Benham Rise' and 'there has never been and will not be any dispute over this region between China and the Philippines'," he said.

Such views are being fostered, of course, by the yellow liberals which greatly rely on the backing of the US and their European financiers.

An Asian century beckons and the yellow liberal critics of Rody are doing their best to frustrate the country from joining it for their benefit.

It that's not hypocrisy, then what is?