

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



# TEAM **ARMY**

Serving the people. Securing the land.

[oacpa.army2012@gmail.com](mailto:oacpa.army2012@gmail.com)  
OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## NEWS CLIPPINGS

24 May 2018

Thursday



*Honor. Patriotism. Duty*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

24 MAY 2018

| Weather Forecast- <a href="http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast">http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast</a> |  |               |
|---|--|---------------|
| PAGE NR.  | TITLE  | SOURCE        |
| <b>NATIONAL NEWS</b>  |  |               |
| 1-3   | Joblessness feared over second train                             | P Star-1      |
| 4-5   | Senate, house panels ok nat'l ID system                          | PDI-1         |
| 6   | Duterte tells drug suspects to stay in jail if they want to live | PDI-A4        |
| 7-8   | Risky hunt for oil in disputed sea                               | PDI-A2        |
| 9   | Sotto uneasy over Chinese presence in WPS, calls for diplomacy   | M Bulletin-2  |
| <b>AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS</b>   |  |               |
| 10  | 20 poachers nabbed off Palawan                                   | P Star-12     |
| 11-12   | Military caught unprepared in battle with terrorists             | PDI-A6        |
| 13  | Du30 to mark city liberation                                     | PDI-A6        |
| 14  | Jordan donates 2 attack helicopters                              | PDI-A7        |
| 15  | Jordan offers 2 military helicopters to PH                       | M Bulletin-1  |
| 16  | 'Lawless violence' may be ground for ML                          | PDI-A2        |
| 17  | Mindanao martial law stays-Palace                                | M Bulletin-2  |
| 18-20   | Concom votes to add 'lawless violence' as ground for martial law | D Tribune-1   |
| 21-23   | ML in Mindanao stays-Palace                                      | D Tribune-1   |
| 24  | Dela Vega is new AFP-WestMinCom chief                            | M Bulletin-11 |
| 25  | Duterte's daughter, grandchildren received Dengvaxia shots-Go    | M Bulletin-2  |
| 26  | Duterte: Gov't working on P77-B projects for Philippine Navy     | M Bulletin-2  |
| 27-28   | Duterte says 'violent' option crossed his mind                   | D Tribune-1   |
| 29-30   | Narco cops, soldiers next  | M Standard-A1 |
| 31  | 5 soldiers wounded in IED attack by NPA                          | M Bulletin-11 |
| 32  | Ex-NPA rebel leads gov't troops to depot                         | M Standard-A6 |
| 33  | Ex-NPA rebel leads gov't troops to explosives depot              | D Tribune-3   |
| 34  | NPA surrenders: AFP civic action program vs Reds very effective  | D Tribune-3   |
| 35  | Be patient, gov't asks Marawi folk                               | PDI-A6        |
| 36-37   | 2 China firms blacklisted by WB join Marawi rehabilitation       | P Star-6      |
| 38-39   | 'Mop up Marawi now, rehab it later'                              | M Times-A1    |
| 40-41   | Govt yet to release P17-B Marawi rehab fund – OCD                | M Times-A3    |
| 42-43   | Marawi rehab: Mayor insists on bomb-clearing operations          | M Standard-A1 |
| 44-45   | A year after, thousands remain displaced                         | Malaya-B1     |
| 46  | AFP todo bantay pa rin sa Marawi                                 | Ngayon-2      |
| 47  | Abu dar emerges as new Maute group leader-AFP                    | PDI-A4        |
| 48  | Slain Abu Sayyaf leader's henchman captured in Sulu              | M Bulletin-2  |

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

|                                     |   |               |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------|
| 49                                  | Abu Sayyaf member nabbed in Zamboanga                                       | Malaya-B2     |
| 50                                  | Abas gets CA nod as comelec chair, vows to inhibit self from BBL plebiscite | PDI-A3        |
| 51                                  | No to Bangsamoro police force-PNP   | M Times-A2    |
| 52-53                               | CA confirms Abas as Comelec chair   | M Bulletin-1  |
| 54                                  | CA confirms Abas as chairman of Commission on Elections                     | M Standard-A3 |
| <b>EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY</b> |   |               |
| 55                                  | Du30 China policy has public support?                                       | P Star-8      |
| 56                                  | What, me worry?   | PDI-A13       |
| 57                                  | Heroes  | P Star-8      |
| 58-59                               | Marawi City: A year of valor and bravery                                    | P Star-9      |
| 60                                  | A new deadline to wipe out Abu Sayyaf                                       | M Bulletin-8  |
| 61                                  | Besieged still  | M Standard-A4 |
| 62-63                               | Falling from grace  | M Standard-A4 |
| 64                                  | Real threat remains   | D Tribune-6   |

# Joblessness feared over second TRAIN

By MAYEN JAYMALIN

As people reel from soaring prices of fuel and other consumer goods, the country's largest labor group yesterday warned of possible mass displacement of workers with the passage and implementation of part two of the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN 2) law.

The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) said TRAIN 2, set to be implemented later this year even as calls snowball for the repeal of TRAIN 1, could hurt workers more by removing tax subsidies or incentives.

Economic managers have opposed any suspension or repeal of TRAIN 1 and are pushing for the speedy passage of TRAIN 2 to finance infrastructure projects. Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno recently told *TV 5* that rising world crude prices were to blame, not fuel excise taxes under TRAIN 1, for the surge in local pump prices.

"There are very real fears that changing the tax regime at this time and removing tax subsidies may cause the relo-

cation of certain industries. This will translate to job losses," TUCP said in a statement.

TUCP urged Congress and the Department of Finance to further study how TRAIN 2 could benefit ordinary people and consumers.

Rep. Carlos Zarate of Bayan Muna said most Filipinos became poorer by P12.5 billion in the first three months of this year alone due to the TRAIN law.

He said P12.5 billion is the amount of additional taxes the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has collected since the implementation of TRAIN in January up to March.

Zarate said poor families, workers and the middle class were the ones that contributed

Turn to Page 4

# Joblessness From Page 1

most of the amount to the national treasury.

He cited a study by research and advocacy group Ibon Foundation, which showed that TRAIN adversely affects 60 percent of Filipino families, while the upper 40 percent are benefitting from it.

There are two pending TRAIN-related proposals in the House of Representatives. Opposition congressmen are seeking the suspension of the law while it is being reviewed, while the Bayan Muna-led Makabayan bloc of seven party-list representatives wants it repealed.

"The law is detrimental to a majority of the Filipino people. What is needed now is not just a mere review or suspension of TRAIN. The situation necessitates its repeal," Zarate said.

He said Filipinos do not feel the reported 6.8-percent growth of the economy because of higher prices of products and services caused by the tax reform law.

President Duterte's economic managers have frowned upon proposals in both the House and the Senate to amend the TRAIN law.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III has said the suspension or repeal of the statute would deprive the government of funds for the

increased salaries of soldiers and policemen, and the free education program in state universities and colleges.

"We need not wait anymore for even more adverse effects, more price shocks, affecting especially the poor, before Congress should decisively act. Hundreds of workers of Coca-Cola were laid off, prices of petroleum products have been going up," Zarate said.

He said rice, which is supposed to be value added tax-exempt, became more expensive by at least P2 per kilo, while prices of meat products like beef, chicken and pork rose by P10 to P20 per kilo.

Zarate lamented that administration officials like Dominguez continue to insist that TRAIN has minimal impact on consumer prices.

## Transparency

Senators are demanding transparency from economic managers on the actual adverse effects of the TRAIN law amid mounting calls to suspend the law blamed for the spike in prices of fuel and other consumer goods.

Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito said yesterday he voted for TRAIN based on the Senate version that included safeguards and safety nets, especially for the poor.

Ejercito and Sen. Paolo

Benigno Aquino IV said the economic managers did not foresee inflation reaching 4.5 percent.

"Did they know that inflation will breach four percent despite their repeated assurances the TRAIN will not be as inflationary as feared?" Ejercito said.

"I think they should tell us everything so we can take the proper action based on accurate assumptions and data to temper the effects of TRAIN," he said.

Ejercito said he is still finding out how and why the provision to suspend excise taxes on fuel when inflation exceeds four percent, which he proposed, was deleted from the Senate version.

He said the DOF late last year projected inflation this year to range from two to four percent only.

Inflation hit 4.5 percent last April.

Last February, or a month after TRAIN took effect, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas revised the inflation forecast to 4.3 percent on average.

Ejercito and Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto said the TRAIN law also provides that increased excise taxes on fuel will be suspended if the price of oil per barrel exceeds \$80.

## Rollback needed

Aquino lamented the effects of TRAIN are aggravated by the hike in power rates.

Aquino said an immediate rollback of fuel prices to pre-TRAIN law rates should be implemented to ease the burden on Filipino consumers.

While he welcomed the statement of Malacañang about being open to the suspension of the implementation of the excise tax on fuel,

Aquino pointed out that this is already provided under the TRAIN law and would have no immediate impact on pump prices.

Aquino explained that the provision in the TRAIN law calls for the suspension of the increase in the excise tax on fuel when the price of crude oil in the world market breaches \$80 per barrel.

He said this would only apply to further increases in the excise tax rate that would take effect in January 2019 and again in January 2020.

"What the people want is something immediate. They can no longer afford to wait because they are already drowning from the continued rise in the price of goods," Aquino said.

Aquino said he has been going around the country to ask the people how they are coping with inflation.

He said poor families have been reeling from the increase in the price of goods and that many of them could now only afford to eat once a day.

While he acknowledged that the TRAIN law is not solely to blame for the rise in the prices of goods, Aquino said this was something that could be tweaked so that an immediate impact could be felt by consumers.

Aquino has filed Senate Bill 1798, which calls for the suspension of the imposition of the excise tax on fuel based on inflation.

"Under this bill, when inflation exceeds the target range for three consecutive months, the excise tax on fuel will be rolled back," Aquino said in a privilege speech he delivered yesterday.

The bill introduced by Aquino was actually incorporated



**Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III stresses a point during a Senate committee hearing on human resources development and overseas employment yesterday.** JEREMY PINTOLO

in the Senate's version of the TRAIN when it was approved last year but it was deleted during the bicameral conference committee meetings on the bill.

Apart from passing his proposed bill, Aquino urged the government to immediately implement the unconditional cash transfer provision of the TRAIN law, which would provide 10 million poor families with a cash grant of P200 per month.

He lamented that close to five months into the implementation of TRAIN, only 2.6 million of the 10 million families have received the cash grant.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros, in response to Aquino's speech, said the TRAIN law has a "big uncompensated impact" on large families and individuals earning less than minimum wage.

"The law is asking people who have already suffered so much in life to make more uncompensated sacrifices," Hontiveros said.

"In fact, according to our own estimates, using the DOF's

own micro simulation, 1.7 million near poor wage earners are in danger of becoming poorer. The cash transfers provided by the TRAIN bill to cushion the impact of the new tax measure to the poor are not enough," she added.

Hontiveros said the TRAIN law would have been more acceptable if it lowered the value added tax (VAT) rate and if monthly transfers to the poor were made available for a longer period of time corresponding to the phased implementation of fuel excise tax increases.

In a tweet yesterday, Sen. Panfilo Lacson recalled how he pushed for removal of a total 143 VAT exemptions granted by the government over the years and for the reduction in VAT rate to 10 percent.

Lacson said his proposal would have negated the need to impose an increase in the excise tax on fuel.

"I don't regret voting against the measure," he said.

- With Marvin Sy, Jess Diaz, Paolo Romero

# SENATE, HOUSE PANELS OK NAT'L ID SYSTEM

Reconciling differences, the bicameral conference committee has adopted a bill providing for a national identification card that can be accepted in all public and private transactions. But critics warn civil rights may be violated.

By DJ Yap  
@deejayapINQ

As early as this year, Filipinos will be carrying national identification cards with their personal data that can serve as proof of identity in transacting

with the government and the private sector.

Having a national ID card won't be compulsory, but it will be "very inconvenient" for citizens to manage without one, according to Sen. Panfilo Lacson, chair of the Senate public

order committee.

He said the Senate and the House of Representatives reconciled their differences and agreed on a common version of the bill in a meeting of the bicameral conference committee on Tuesday night, putting it on

the verge of passage into law. Under the version adopted by the bicameral committee, only the individual's full name, sex, birthdate, birthplace, address and nationality, as well as biometric information, will be stored in the ID system. Lacson

said on Wednesday. The two panels agreed to adopt the Senate version with minimal amendments, doing away with the proposal in the House to require sensitive information, such as the cardholder's parents' names, permanent ad-

dress, height and weight. "They agreed to adopt the Senate version with minor amendments," Lacson said of the House contingent. "They had some suggestions, but substantially, it's the Senate version." **A4**

## FROM A1

Both the House and Senate versions provide for the creation of a Philippine Identification System to help citizens establish their identity "as a means of simplifying public and private transactions."

Besides serving as official proof of identity, the ID card may be presented in requesting social welfare, services and benefits from government agencies, applying for passports and driver's licenses, opening bank accounts, registering as a voter, and getting admitted to schools and hospitals.

Jose Celorico Jr., an employee of the Makati Public Safety Department, said a single ID card would be more convenient for him. "I don't have to bring all my IDs (at least six), which may be easily lost," he said.

### Critics' fears

Critics have raised fears about the proposed ID system jeopardizing the security of Filipinos and leaving them vulnerable to violations of their privacy and other rights.

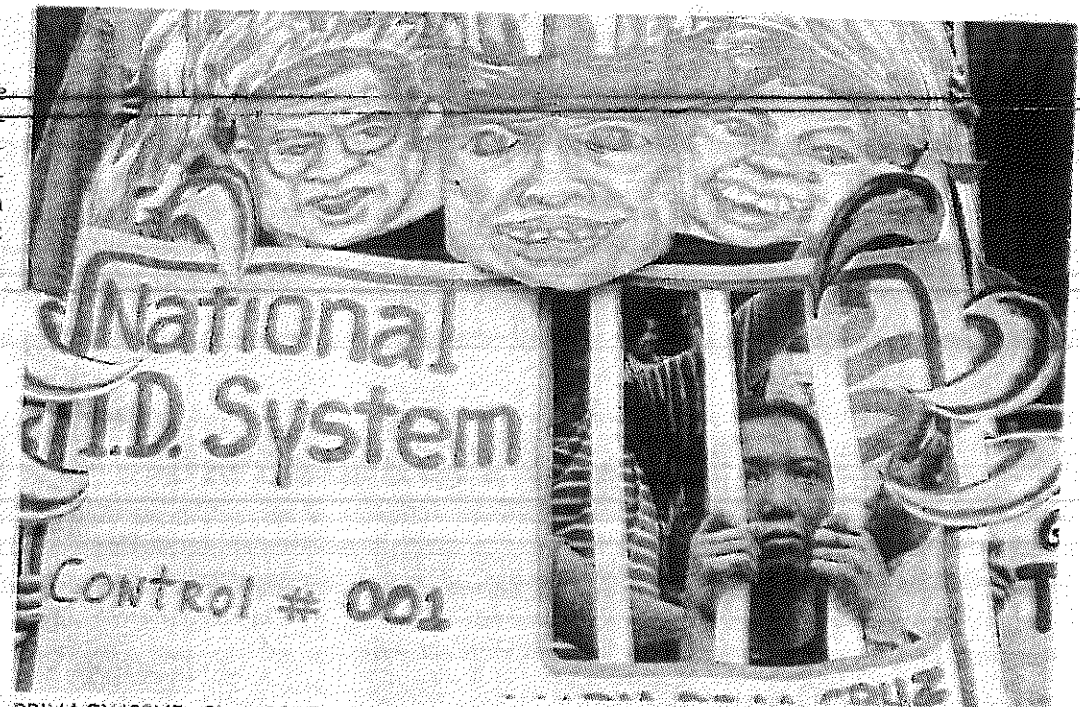
Kabataan Rep. Sarah Elago cautioned against the national ID system. "For a regime that holds a record of criminalizing dissent and silencing vocal critics, this could be an additional arsenal for further espionage and repression," she said.

Beyond the provision of an ID card, the government should deal with people's demand for better access to quality social services, Elago said.

"What good is an ID, if there are not enough public hospitals, schools and facilities for our people who need these services the most?" she asked.

Edre Olalia, president of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, said that on its face, the proposal would simplify transactions and identification.

"However, there is reasonable



**PRIVACY ISSUE** Since 2005, critics have raised fears that the proposed ID system will jeopardize the security of Filipinos and leave them vulnerable to violations of their privacy and other rights. —INQUIRER PHOTO

ground to be wary that it will be abused to intrude into one's privacy and liberty," Olalia added.

Loretta "Etta" Rosales, former human rights commission chair, said Filipinos should oppose the proposed national ID system.

"Under more humane conditions where people are free to walk the streets and enjoy the comfort of police protection, I would say 'yes' because this facilitates government services to the public. But conditions are not healthy and safe," she said.

### Safeguards, penalties

On the contrary, a national ID system can facilitate control of people's profiles by forces in government that do not believe in the rule of law, Rosales said.

Human rights group Karapatan also opposed the measure.

"The measures in Congress on the national ID are designed to infringe on the citizens' right to privacy, the right against surveillance and other forms of

civil rights violations," said Cristina Palabay, Karapatan secretary general.

The ID system, to be maintained by the Philippine Statistics Authority, pur in safeguards against unwarranted disclosure of private information.

In the Senate version of the bill, entities that fail to accept the ID card shall be fined P500,000.

Anyone who commits fraud using the card will be fined up to P500,000 or imprisoned for up to two years, or both.

Severe violations carry tougher penalties.

Willful use or disclosure of a cardholder's personal data carries a penalty of six to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to P5 million.

### P2-B funding

The same offense, if committed by state officials or agents with custody of the ID system, is punishable by up to 15 years in jail and up to P10 million in fines.

"Implementation [can hap-

pen] this year" when the bill is signed into law, Lacson said.

Davao City Rep. Karlo Nograles, chair of the House appropriations committee, ensured a P2-billion funding for the ID system for 2018.

Full implementation of the program will require P25 billion in five years.

Nograles said the approved consolidated bill "will help prevent another Marawi from happening."

The House passed the bill in September last year, while the Senate approved its version in March. The final version will be returned to both chambers for ratification and then sent to Malacañang for President Duterte's signature.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said the proposed national ID system was a priority administration bill. —WITH REPORTS FROM JHESSET O. ENANO, JEROME ANING, MELVIN GASCON, CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO AND DEXTER CABALZA INQ



## WARNING TO RICH TRAFFICKERS

# DUTERTE TELLS DRUG SUSPECTS TO STAY IN JAIL IF THEY WANT TO LIVE LONGER

By Christine O. Avendaño  
@10avendanoINQ

In his latest threat in his bloody antidrug campaign, President Duterte warned people in Cebu province who had enriched themselves by trading illegal drugs to find a way to be arrested and stay in jail if they wanted to live longer.

The President issued the warning in a televised speech on Tuesday, noting that many in Cebu who became rich through illegal drugs even flaunt their wealth.

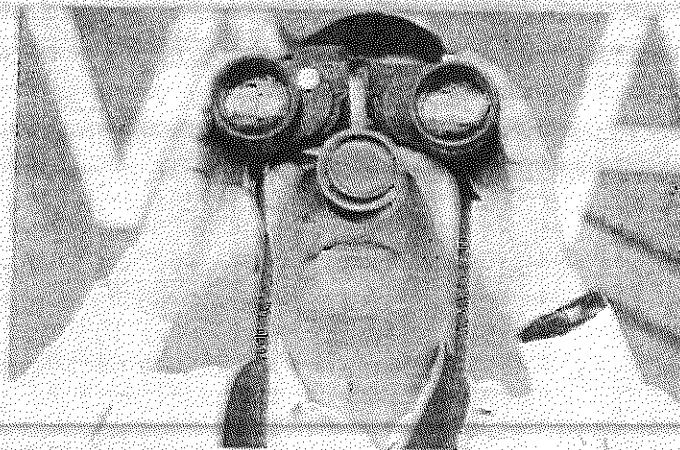
"You know, if I were you guys in Cebu, stay in jail. Look for your own reason to be in jail. Do not go out of the facility. It would not be healthy for you," Mr. Duterte said in a speech on the 120th anniversary of the Philippine Navy.

### Killed during detention

There has been at least one high-profile drug suspect, however, who was shot dead by police in his jail cell in what was believed to be a rubout.

Police killed Mayor Rolando Espinosa inside a jail in Leyte province in 2016 in what they said was a gunfight, but government investigators declared it a murder.

Murder complaints against an officer and his men involved in the alleged shootout were later downgraded to a lesser charge of homicide that allowed them to be released on bail and reinstated in the force.



**NAVY ANNIVERSARY** President Duterte takes a closer look at the Philippine Navy fleet during the service command's 120th anniversary program at Coconut Palace. In a speech marking the event later in Cebu, he reiterated his position that drugs "will destroy the nation." —MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Mr. Duterte said it was difficult to arrest a drug user or trafficker because an illegal drug was a "merchandise that you have to be caught with it in your control."

He said some of those who got rich from the drug trade flaunted their wealth as if they were "righteous" people "just because there is no evidence, although you're the ones responsible."

### Promise to policemen

In his rambling speech that initially touched on terrorism and the South China Sea territorial disputes, Mr. Duterte veered to his antidrug campaign, reiterating his position that drugs "will destroy the nation."

He said his drug war involved both the police and the

military because their mandates were to "protect the people and preserve the nation."

He again repeated his promise that he would not allow a single policeman or soldier to go to jail for performing his duty in the war on drugs.

But he issued a veiled threat to law enforcers involved in drugs while acknowledging that the Philippine National Police had been infiltrated by criminals.

"I'm just warning them that if you are into it, you will be the first to go," he said.

"And to all of those criminals out there, to all those rogue policemen and all creating hell for us, I have yet sufficient time to correct all of these things," said Mr. Duterte, a former government prosecutor and mayor.

"You might not like the way how I correct things but I would just love to warn you that there is no turning back on this and I am there in the drug war in front," he said.

### 4,251 dead in sweeps

In a report, the PNP said that as of April 30, police officers had killed 4,251 suspected drug offenders in alleged gunfights during antidrug sweeps.

Most of those killed, however, were from impoverished communities. Human rights watchdogs have cited much higher death tolls, which the government disputes.

Mr. Duterte denies condoning extrajudicial killings and has lashed out at critics, including former US President Barack Obama, Western governments and UN human rights officials, who have raised alarm over the drug killings and threats to human rights.

On Friday, the President disclosed that he wanted to reply to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein's critical remarks in March but was advised "to shut up" at the time by his national security adviser, who told him that Zeid was royalty from Jordan, which was providing two assault helicopters to the Philippines.

Zeid has suggested that Mr. Duterte "needs to submit himself to some sort of psychiatric evaluation" over his "unacceptable" remarks against some top human rights defenders. —WITH A REPORT FROM AP INQ

# Risky hunt for oil in disputed sea

HANOI/HONG KONG—Some oil blocks off Vietnam's sprawling coastline fall within an area of the South China Sea demarcated by China's "nine-dash line," the basis for Beijing's controversial claims to most of the resource-rich waterway.

Last week, sources said Rosneft Vietnam BV, a unit of Russian state oil company Rosneft, had expressed concern its recent drilling in one such block could upset Beijing.

That prompted Vietnam's foreign ministry to assert the blocks are "entirely under Vietnamese sovereignty and jurisdiction," and a warning from Beijing to respect its sovereign rights.

## Red Emperor incident

In March, Vietnam halted an oil drilling project in the nearby "Red Emperor" block following pressure from China.

The Red Emperor incident was a "blow to Vietnam's upstream sector and the government's bid to develop the offshore oil and gas resources that it is legally entitled to under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea," according to risk analyst Verisk Maplecroft.

The area is important for Vietnam's economic development.

State-run Vietnam Oil & Gas Group, or PetroVietnam, made up 20 percent of Vietnam's GDP and 30 percent of Hanoi's total budget revenue from 1986 to 2009.

Vietnam has between 33 billion and 44 billion tons of crude oil and gas reserves in the waters, according to PetroVietnam, which currently produces 22-33 million tons of oil equivalent a year from the blocks.

According to consultancy firm Wood Mackenzie, if China's nine dashes were connected as one continuous line, it would bisect or incorporate 67 of Vietnam's oil blocks.

Four of those blocks are currently producing, with others at varying stages of exploration or development according to Wood Mackenzie.

## Offshore tensions

China's claims in the South China Sea overlap the exclusive economic zones of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

Despite fierce diplomatic objections by Beijing, the Philippines sought a ruling in 2016 against China in an arbitration case brought under the United Nations Convention of the Law of Sea (Unclos).

The five international judges handed Manila a sweeping victory that dismissed China's claims and removed any legal basis for Beijing to create a network of linked territorial and economic seas under its control, legal experts said.

Chinese officials, who refused to participate in the case, dismissed the ruling as a farce

and have continued to insist on jurisdiction over most of the waterway—although they have not yet defined the line as a continuous one.

China and other claimants have previously discussed joint development of energy projects in disputed waters, but the proposals have been spoiled by issues over sovereignty.

Last month, the Philippines said it was looking to seal a pact with China within a few months to jointly explore for oil and gas in waters claimed by both countries.

#### Flash point

But while China has been ambiguous about precisely what it claims, the waters around Vietnam's southeastern oil fields have long been a flash point.

Beijing has often attempted to thwart activity through backroom diplomatic threats and, at times, pressure at sea.

Those backroom threats were particularly acute in 2007 and 2008, after which US company ExxonMobil Corp. refused to bow to pressure but British oil giant BP and others withdrew from some blocks.

China's reaction to Rosneft's drilling will be "quite a test of just how far Beijing is willing to go," said Ian Storey, a South China Sea expert at Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute.

"This is a means for China to try to comprehensively trash, in a practical way, the legal ruling against its claims by the arbitral tribunal back in 2016," Storey said.

At the same time, Beijing and Moscow had an understanding that they won't challenge each others' core interests including the South China Sea, he said.

#### Internationalization

Both Vietnamese and foreign diplomats have described Hanoi's efforts to lure foreign companies as part of a strategy to counter Chinese pressure by "internationalizing" the South China Sea dispute.

In May and June 2011, Hanoi

lodged formal protests over the actions of Chinese civilian vessels interfering with seismic survey ships, at one point cutting sonar cables towed from a Norwegian-registered ship exploring on contract to PetroVietnam.

Tensions spiked in May 2014 as rival Coast Guard and fishing fleets clashed at sea in ramming and blocking actions after Chinese National Offshore Oil Corp. moved a large deepwater rig to drill test wells in exploration blocks off the Vietnamese central coast.

The Chinese company later withdrew amid large scale protests and riots in Vietnam.

Vietnam's crude oil production that year reached 15.53 million tons, according to its General Statistics Office. By 2017, its crude oil output had fallen to 13.567 million tons—a decrease of 12.6 percent.

In April, PetroVietnam said maritime tensions with China would hurt its offshore exploration and production activities in 2018, making the Rosneft drilling particularly important.

#### Vietsovpetro

It was partnership with Russia under which Vietnam began exploiting its oil reserves.

With both Vietnam's gold star and Moscow's hammer and sickle on its logo, the Vietnam-Soviet Petroleum Joint Venture, "Vietsovpetro," was created in 1981.

Vietsovpetro began to explore Vietnam's continental shelf and discovered the country's first oil field, Bach Ho, in 1984.

Unlike other nations, Russian oil concerns in the region appear to have been largely left alone, according to Moscow-based Southeast Asia analyst Anton Tsvetov of the independent think tank Center for Strategic Research.

It was unlikely that, beyond official rhetoric, China would directly pressure either Rosneft or the Russian government over the latest Vietnamese drilling, Tsvetov said.

—REUTERS A2

## Sotto uneasy over Chinese presence in WPS, calls for diplomacy

By VANNE ELAINE P. TERRAZOLA

Senate President Vicente Sotto III admitted that he is uncomfortable with China's construction of artificial islands in disputed regions of the West Philippines Sea, but maintained that the government should pursue a diplomatic approach in dealing with the powerful country in its militarization of the disputed waters.

"Yong isyu sa mga islands at mga structures na tinatayo nila dun, hindi ako talaga comfortable d'on (On the islands and structures China built there, I am really not comfortable with those)," Sotto said in a television interview Tuesday night.

Sotto said he believes that allies, particularly the United States and Japan, as well as neighboring countries in Asia, could be tapped to assist the Philippines in addressing the issue.

The Upper Chamber is set to discuss China's recent activities in the West Philippines Sea, including its deployment of missile systems and nuclear-armed

bomber planes.

Sotto said the Committee on Foreign Relations will lead the inquiry, together with Committee on Defense and National Security.

Tatalakayin namin yun, tiyak yun. Kasi, una, may question dun sa, 'Inyo ba yan o amin yan?' (We will discuss that for sure. Because in the first place, there is a question whether or not the territory is ours)," he said.

"The primary (committee to handle the hearing) would be the committee on foreign relations. Para diplomatic ang approach at hindi yung gusto ng iba na — wala naman tayong ibubuga kung maikikipag-away tayo kaagad, eh. So we try the diplomatic approach (So that the approach would be diplomatic, unlike what others want — we don't have the capabilities if we would start a fight with China)," he explained.

Sotto, however, questioned criticisms on China's installations and deployment of weapon systems when, he said, the country was indifferent on US military activities in the region.

## ACROSS THE COUNTRY

### 20 poachers nabbed off Palawan

Twenty Vietnamese fishermen have been caught fishing in the waters off Palawan, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said yesterday.

Authorities seized 54 sharks and stingrays from the suspects, according to Capt. Cheryl Tindog, spokesperson for the Western Command.

Navy personnel were on patrol near Mangsee Island on May 19 when they spotted two Vietnamese fishing vessels with 10 crewmembers each on board.

A Navy vessel escorted the fishermen to Puerto Princesa where they underwent medical check-up and were turned over for inquest.

✓ - Michael Punongbayan

# Military caught unprepared in battle with terrorists



(Second of three parts)

By Divina Suson,  
Allan Nawal, Richel Umel  
and Julie Alipala  
@inquirermindanao

MARAWI CITY—The five-month campaign to retake Marawi City from gunmen loyal to the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group last year introduced the Armed Forces of the Philippines to urban warfare, which had caught by surprise even its battle-hardened troops.

Military, police and local government officials have admitted they underestimated the strength of what they initially regarded as a group of suspected criminals, led by brothers Omar and Abdullah Maute, whose activities had been confined to their hometown of Butig in Lanao del Sur province.

Zia Alonto Adiong, spokesperson for the provincial government, said the military was caught by surprise because it had always dismissed the Maute group as "just a local, family-based terrorist group [that is] not tied with an international terrorist network."

### Military miscalculation

Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., deputy commander of Joint Task Force Ranao, said that while the military was aware of the Maute group's plan to seize Marawi, it miscalculated the magnitude of preparations made by the terrorists.

"Looking back, actually we preempted their plan. Their plan was to attack on May 26, which was then the first day of Ramadan," Brawner said.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., in an earlier interview, said the government had seen the crisis coming. He said this was the reason a military operation was conducted in Marawi just before the siege.

The Inquirer was the first to report on the operation at an



**CLEARING OPERATION** Members of the Philippine Marines 1st Brigade go house to house in a clearing operation against terrorists at the main battle zone in Marawi City in this file photo taken last September. —JEFFREY MAITEM

apartment in Barangay Basak Malutlut, which was adjacent to the Lanao del Sur provincial police headquarters, on May 22.

It turned out that the operation's target was Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, touted to be the "emir" of IS in South-east Asia and one of the leaders of the siege.

Skirmishes resulting from that operation eventually turned into fierce fighting that saw thousands of soldiers, military hardware and logistics deployed to the city.

"All of a sudden different groups started appearing in the city so we were caught by surprise in the sense that we were not aware that there were so many of them already in Marawi," Brawner said.

#### Urban warfare

The siege, he said, made the military realize that soldiers were not ready for "this kind of warfare."

"We have a unit trained in urban warfare, the Light Reaction Battalion, which saw action in Zamboanga City. But in Marawi, we saw their number was not enough. We deployed

more soldiers—Scout Rangers, Special Forces, Marines and [troops] from the Army infantry battalions—but most of them were not trained in [urban warfare]," Brawner said.

Senior Supt. John Guyguyon, who headed the Lanao del Sur police at the height of the siege, said the authorities "underestimated the capability of the enemy."

"We did not expect it to happen. We were caught by surprise," Guyguyon, now Zamboanga del Sur provincial police director, told the inquirer by phone. "Our security was quite lax."

Rear Adm. Rene Medina, commander of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao that suffered 35 dead and 399 wounded in the battle for Marawi, said the authorities erroneously regarded the Maute group as a mere "criminal group engaged mostly in drug trafficking in Lanao del Sur."

The then AFP chief of staff, Gen. Eduardo Año, said the siege could have been prevented as he criticized the Maranao for not sounding off an early warning.

"The fight against terrorism

is not just the job of the military and the police," Año said on the sidelines of the turnover of command at the AFP Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) in September last year.

#### 'Preposterous'

But Adiong, the spokesman for the provincial government, said it was "preposterous" to blame the people of Marawi and the Maranao for the crisis.

"I'll put it in one sentence: We are the victims here," he said.

"We have witnessed the Zamboanga siege and the Ipil siege. Nobody blamed the civilians of Zamboanga, nobody blamed the residents of Ipil," he said.

Adiong was referring to the 1995 rampage of the Abu Sayyaf in Ipil town, Zamboanga Sibugay province, during which 53 people, mostly civilians, were killed and the 2013 siege of Zamboanga City by followers of Moro National Liberation Front leader Nur Misuari, where nearly 200 people died.

Adiong said the local government was never complacent. "It's not that we allowed it

but it was more of an underestimation," he said.

Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Albayalde said the PNP had to strengthen its intelligence gathering after the Marawi siege.

"Intelligence can preempt and prevent a crime from happening," Albayalde told the Inquirer in Zamboanga City on May 10.

#### Military rewriting doctrines

Brawner said the military started "rewriting our doctrines" after its experience in Marawi.

"We are reorganizing, we are retooling, reequipping and we are retraining," he said.

"But as a nation, we saw that we really needed to cooperate with each other so we can defeat this violent extremism," Brawner said.

He admitted that the threat from the Maute group remained seven months after its defeat. "Its recruitment activities are still going on in towns around Lake Lanao in Lanao del Sur," he said.

Albayalde agreed. "We knew it would not stop. The threat will always be there and I think that with a vacuum in leadership, they will strive to have a new leader," he said.

Adiong said defeating violent extremism should involve "civilian participation, taking into account the roles of both Muslims and non-Muslims."

Guyguyon said the most important lesson the police learned from the crisis was to give importance to reports from civilians.

"Validate, connect with people in the know, strengthen target hardening and improve programs on police-civilian relations so that we can convince people to help in a timely manner," he said.

Medina said: "We have failed to capacitate and strengthen our local government, especially the barangays in Marawi to perform their mandate on peace and order."

—WITH REPORTS FROM JEFFREY MAITEM, JIGGER JERUSALEM AND JEANNETTE LANDRADE INQ

MARAWIRITES

DU30 TO MARK CITY LIBERATION

By Christine O. Avendaño @10avendanoINQ



President Duterte will visit Marawi City on the first anniversary of its liberation by government forces from terrorists in October.

"We will go on the liberation of Marawi not [at] the start of the siege [on May 23]. Why honor [the anniversary of the siege]?" Special Assistant to the President Christopher "Bong" Go said in a text message to reporters on Wednesday, answering questions whether Mr. Duterte was traveling to Marawi for the first anniversary of the city's fall to terrorists a year ago.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines issued a statement on Wednesday, urging Filipinos to look back and celebrate their country's triumph over violent extremism.

"Marawi has been liberated. If we have to look back to it, let's do so to learn from it and move on," Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesperson for the military, said in a statement.

Arevalo also urged the public to pay tribute to the heroism and sacrifice of 165 soldiers who were killed.

—WITH A REPORT FROM JEANNETTE LANDRADE INQ



## ESPERON'S PROJECT

**JORDAN DONATES 2 ATTACK HELICOPTERS**

The Philippines has accepted Jordan's donation of two refurbished Cobra attack helicopters, President Duterte said.

The President in a speech during the 120th anniversary of the Philippine Navy on Tuesday, said National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., who is now in the Jordanian capital, Amman, personally worked on the donation.

The Philippines will spend for the refurbishing of the multimillion-dollar, single-engined Cobras, according to the popular

defense website MaxDefense.

The President also confirmed that it was Esperon who had persuaded him not to speak out against Zeid bin Ra'ad Zeid al-Hussein, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who had slammed the his administration for its actions against UN special rapporteurs.

Al-Hussein is a cousin of Jordan's King Abdullah. A7

Mr. Duterte said the government could not afford the high-tech, US-made helicopters.

—CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO INQ

# Jordan offers 2 military helicopters to PH

By GENALYN D. KABILING

Jordan has offered two military helicopters to the Philippines despite President Duterte's tirade against the king's cousin, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein, who is the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The President announced Jordan's latest military assistance to the country during the 120th anniversary of the Philippine Navy outside the Coconut Palace Tuesday.

In his remarks Duterte said: "That's why I was late because I was reviewing it. Jordan is giving us two Cobra heli-

copters; those things that we cannot really afford."

He said National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr traveled to Jordan to accept the military equipment from the Middle Eastern country.

He was the one who worked for it. He is now there. ▶ 10

## Jordan offers 2 military... ◀ 1

in Jordan and I got this electronic copy for his authority to accept it," he added.

Duterte admitted that Esperon had earlier asked him to stop talking about the UN rights chief to avoid derailing the military aid.

Zeid, the cousin of King Abdullah II of Jordan, had earlier questioned Duterte's mental health, saying he should undergo a psychiatric evaluation.

"I prepared a little you know, as maybe a rebuttal and I said - and he said, 'Please do not do it or else we will. I will lose the (helicopters)," Duterte said.

Zeid had earlier said the President needed to get a psychiatric evaluation following his verbal attacks against some UN officials critical of his brutal drug war. He said it was disgraceful that the President would use the "foulest of language" after the government accused a UN rapporteur of alleged connections with Communist terrorists.

The President called Zeid "empty-headed," admitting he wanted to seek revenge despite the advice to refrain from commenting on the UN official's remarks.

### Labor protection pact

In the same anniversary celebration, the President said that the Philippines is back on good terms with Kuwait following the signing of a labor protection pact.

The President has expressed gratitude to Kuwait for forging an agreement providing additional protection for Filipino workers in the Gulf state.

He cited that that Kuwait has shown "courage" in meeting his challenge for the protection of Filipino workers following reports of abuse at the hands of some employers.

"We're okay now with Kuwait, we're okay now. My conditions were met," Duterte said during the Philippine Navy anniversary celebration in Manila.

"I'd like to thank officially the Kuwait government for giving us these conditions, which would better place in a more... maski konting kaligayahan lang naman sa mga OFW (bring some happiness to our OFWs)," he added.

The Philippines and Kuwait earlier inked a landmark agreement governing the working conditions of Filipino workers, including granting them a day off in a week.

The signing of the labor accord has prompted the Duterte government to lift the total ban on the deployment of Filipino workers imposed since February due to recent cases of abuse.

Duterte said he made several conditions to make Filipino workers safer in Kuwait, which were granted by Kuwait.

"The Kuwait government has shown the courage also in meeting our challenge," he said.

"I demanded that they'd be allowed to sleep seven hours guaranteed, no physical abuse, that their cellphones and passports are not confiscated, and they have a day off once a week. So if these conditions are met, I'll sign the total - the lifting of the ban," he added.

# 'Lawless violence' may be ground for ML

By **Marion Ramos**  
@MRamosINQ

A "series of attacks" mounted by communist insurgents may justify placing the entire country under martial law, raising a specter reminiscent of the Marcos-era military rule.

Members of the consultative committee created by President Duterte to recommend changes to the 1987 Constitution have unanimously approved the amendment to the provision on

the imposition of martial law, retired Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Eduardo Nachura said on Wednesday.

Nachura, head of the subcommittee on the federal government structure, said the body also adopted the proposed changes in the provisions on the legislative and executive branches of government on Tuesday, the eve of the first anniversary of Mr. Duterte's martial law declaration in Mindanao.

He said the proposed amend-

ment added "lawless violence" as a reason for the President to impose martial law, apart from rebellion and invasion.

### Within 48 hours

"Lawless violence does not have to be widespread as a ground [for the President] to declare martial law or suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus," Nachura told a press briefing.

Under Section 18, Article VII of the Constitution, the Chief Executive may proclaim martial law

"in case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it ... for a period not exceeding 60 days" and suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus.

The President would have to file a report to Congress within 48 hours after the martial law declaration.

Retired Lt. Gen. Ferdinand Bocobo, a committee member, said he made the suggestion in recognition of the present challenges to national security and the similar threats besetting other countries.

"We are adapting to what is the present situation and what we could foresee in the future. Terrorism and violent extremism are happening not only in the Philippines," Bocobo said.

### 'Large-scale' attacks

Lawless violence, he said, are acts related to terrorism and violent extremism.

Asked if attacks carried out by the New People's Army (NPA) rebels were enough reason for a martial law declaration, Bocobo

said such would have to be "simultaneous or large scale."

The late dictator Ferdinand Marcos made use of the NPA attacks in justifying his proclamation of martial law in 1972, setting off the darkest period in the country's history that was characterized by human rights abuses.

"For NPA attacks to fall under 'terrorism' as ground to declare martial law, these attacks should cause widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace," Bocobo said. INQ

# Mindanao martial law stays – Palace

By **GENALYN D. KABILING**

**M**artial law in Mindanao will not yet be lifted by President Duterte a year after terrorists laid siege to Marawi City.

Presidential Spokesman Harry Roque said the martial law proclamation would only be revoked once there is no more need for such security measures.

"Walang gusto magkaroon ng [No one wants] martial law beyond the necessity of having martial law. So the Palace would like to assure the public that the moment the need for martial law ceases, it will be lifted," Roque said.

But certainly one year after the siege, the time to lift martial law is not yet here. So it will be lifted as long as there is no need for martial law," he added.

The Liberal Party earlier called on the Duterte administration to lift

martial law in Mindanao, which allowed warrantless arrests, due to the absence of a rebellion in the south.

The once ruling party claimed that the even though the war was over, Marawi residents could not yet start the healing of the wounds of the past amid the implementation of the martial law in Mindanao.

President Duterte placed Mindanao under martial law on May 23, 2017 following the attack of the Islamic State-inspired Maute group on Marawi City.

The proclamation was extended until the end of the year supposedly to suppress lawless violence and rebellion in Mindanao.

The President, meantime, did not attend any commemorative activity of the first anniversary of the Marawi siege Wednesday.

Roque explained there was no need to commemorate the terror siege, that left hundreds dead and displaced thousands of families.



**PRESIDENT DUTERTE**

# TRIDUNE

## Concom votes to add 'lawless violence' as ground for martial law

The Consultative Committee (Concom) tasked by President Duterte to review the 1987 Constitution has voted to add "lawless violence" as one of the grounds to declare martial law in the proposed Federal Constitution it is drafting.

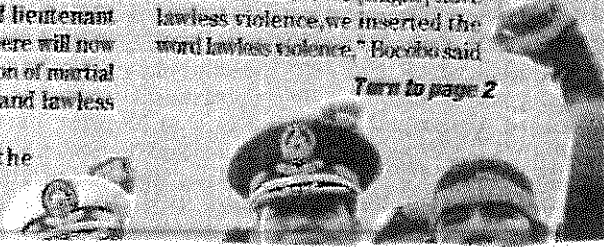
Concom member and retired lieutenant general Ferdinand Bocobo said there will now be three grounds for the declaration of martial law namely invasion, rebellion and lawless violence.

Bocobo, who proposed the inclusion of the phrase "lawless violence", said that this could

refer to both terrorism and violent extremism.

"In the original provisions of the grounds for the declaration of martial law, it's just rebellion or invasion but because of the events in the present time and perhaps in the future where we [might] have lawless violence, we inserted the word lawless violence," Bocobo said

Turn to page 2



# Concom votes to add 'lawless violence' as ground for martial law

From page 1

in a press briefing at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC).

"Lawless violence means terrorism and violent extremism," he added, noting that this term will be explained and its parameters defined in the proposed Constitution's annotation.

Bocobo said that the term "widespread lawless violence" was initially proposed but "widespread" was eventually dropped since lawless violence may not necessarily be widespread but still endanger public safety or pose serious threats.

He noted that the provision was adopted after consulting resource persons from the Department of National Defense, the office of the National Security Adviser, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government based on the current threats of national security.

The provision was among the revisions in the Article on the Executive Branch approved by the Concom in an en banc session on Tuesday, Bocobo said.

Below is a comparison of Section 18 in the 1987 Constitution and in the Concom's proposed federal Constitution:

The 1987 Constitution reads:

"Section 18. The President

shall be the Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces of the Philippines and whenever it becomes necessary, he may call out such armed forces to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion or rebellion. In case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it, he may, for a period not exceeding sixty days, suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus or place the Philippines or any part thereof under martial law..."

The Concom's proposed amendment reads:

"Section 18. (1) The President shall be the Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces of the Philippines and whenever it becomes necessary, he may call out such armed forces to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion or rebellion.

(2) In case of lawless violence, invasion or rebellion when the public safety requires it, he may for a period not exceeding sixty (60) days, suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus or place the Philippines or any part thereof under martial law..."

On May 23, 2017 President Duterte declared martial law in the entire Mindanao island amid the ongoing clashes between government troops and Maute group terrorists in Marawi City.

Wednesday, May 23, 2018, marks

the commemoration of the first anniversary of the Marawi siege and the day Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao.

President Duterte's Consultative Committee (Concom) to review the 1987 Constitution has included the constitutional recognition of the existence of the Bicameral Conference Committee in the proposed federal Constitution it is drafting.

Concom member and former associate justice Antonio Eduardo Nachura said that this provision was among the revisions in the Article on the Legislative Branch approved by the Concom in an en banc session on Tuesday.

"There is one provision we approved to include in the article on the Legislative Department. Finally, there is constitutional recognition of the existence of the bicameral conference committee," Nachura said in a press conference at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) on Wednesday.

Nachura explained that the Bicameral Conference Committee is already part of the Legislative Branch's legislative process but it is not found in the 1987 constitution. The Concom's proposed Constitution gives it Constitutional recognition.

Under the current congressional practice, if the House-

approved version is compatible with that of the Senate or vice versa, the final version's enrolled form is printed. Alternatively, one chamber may simply adopt the other's approved bill.

In case of differences between a House-approved and Senate-approved bill, which is more often the case, the Bicameral Conference Committee is called to reconcile or "harmonize" conflicting provisions of the two versions.

The Bicameral Conference Committee submits a report on the reconciled version of the bill, which is ratified by both chambers. The Senate prints the reconciled version in its enrolled form.

Eventually, the final enrolled form is submitted to Malacañang. The President either signs it into law, or vetoes and sends it back to the Senate with veto message.

Below is a comparison of Section 26 in the 1987 Constitution and in the Concom's proposed federal Constitution:

The 1987 Constitution reads:

"Section 26: (1) Every bill passed by the Congress shall embrace only one subject which shall be expressed in the title thereof.

(2) No bill passed by either House shall become a law unless it has passed three readings on separate days, and printed copies thereof in its final form have been

distributed to its Members three days before its passage, except when the President certifies to the necessity of its immediate enactment to meet a public calamity or emergency. Upon the last reading of a bill, no amendment thereto shall be allowed, and the vote thereon shall be taken immediately thereafter, and the yeas and nays entered in the Journal."

The Concom's proposed federal Constitution reads:

"Section 26: (1) Retain the existing provision.

(2) Retain the existing provision.

(3) There shall be a bicameral conference committee composed of members chosen by each house that shall reconcile conflicting provisions of the bill passed by both houses. The reconciled version as agreed upon by the bicameral conference committee shall be subject to vote by each house in accordance with their respective rules."

Voting 19-0, the Concom approved this among other provisions by unanimous acclaim.

Nachura and Atty. Laurence Wacnang voted yes with reservations to submit a written explanation, while Concom member and former Senate President Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. voted yes subject to style and submission of comments.

**HEADLINE****SITUATION STILL REQUIRES IT, SAYS ROQUE**

# ML in Mindanao stays – Palace

By Komfie Mansio and Mario J. Mallari

Mindanao will remain under martial law since the situation in the region still warrants it and it will be lifted if the government sees it fit, Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said yesterday.

“Certainly one year after the siege, the time to lift martial law is not yet here. So it will be lifted as long as there is no need for martial law,” Roque added.

A year after the Islamic State (IS)-linked Maute group laid siege to Marawi City, the President does not see any valid reason to lift the order, Roque said.

Some 165 military personnel and police officers were killed while 908 Maute terrorists were neutralized in the five-month campaign to retake Marawi City from the extremists.

Nobody wanted martial law beyond the necessity of having

Turn to page 2



**From page 1**

martial law ceases, it will be lifted, he added.

Roque did not provide details on the timeline or conditions set by Mr. Duterte or the military for the lifting of the declaration.

Earlier, the military said while the threat of terrorism had been greatly reduced with the defeat of the Maute-ISIS terrorists in Marawi City, on Tuesday bared the existence of "sleeper cells" in many parts of the country, Philippine Army (PA) commander Lt. Gen. Rolando Josecito Bautista said.

"We discovered in the Marawi campaign that there are ISIS 'sleeper cells' not only in Mindanao but also in Luzon and Visayas, you will see there ISIS cells. There you will see that they have one in Baguio, in Dagupan, in Tarlac, Pangasinan in Visayas, they have in Samar, in Cebu and so forth," he said.

Bautista said these "sleeper cells" could launch "lone wolf" attacks.

Bautista added that the declaration of martial law in Mindanao has contributed greatly to government efforts to hunt down remaining terrorists in the island.

"First, we can hold a person particularly if they are very suspicious and they have a

background of terrorist activity since in the Human Security Act, you can take into custody a terrorist or suspicious person in 36 hours after which you need to release the person unlike under martial law when we can hold the person and taking him into custody is not a question. For instance, if the person is a foreigner then we have to ask our counterpart abroad so it will take time," he added.

Another advantage of martial law, according to the PA chief, is that troops can search a particular house suspected of being an improvised explosive device or ammunition factory without any warrants from the courts.

Earlier, Kabataan Rep. Sarah Elago called on the Duterte administration to lift the martial law order in Mindanao amid reports of alleged human-rights violations in the region. An accusation vehemently disputed by the military.

Exactly a year ago, Maute fighters led by Isnilon Hapilon tried to take over Marawi City by launching coordinated attacks on the city's vital military, civilian and business establishments.

Government forces quickly fought back and prevented the Maute group from achieving its goal, leading to a five-month-long

firefight which left the whole city in ruins.

#### **AFP still on alert**

Col. Edgard Aravalo, spokesman of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), said that the military is working closely with the local governments to ensure that there will be no repeat of the Marawi City siege.

Aravalo said that while the AFP was successful in foiling an attempt by the IS-inspired terrorists, led by Isnilon Hapilon and the Maute brothers, to sow terror in Mindanao, "but AFP is not letting its guard down."

He said that they "continue to monitor reports and do proactive measures to frustrate efforts of the remnants of the Maute-ISIS Group to recruit, reorganize, and regroup."

"(The AFP) enlist the active involvement and vigilance of our people and the local government in reporting their observations to the security forces," said Aravalo.

There were recent reports of alleged recruitment activities by the Maute group in the vicinities of Lake Lanao, led by its new leader Abu Dar, who supposedly in possession of the huge cash loots by the terrorists.

Aravalo said that the AFP is not celebrating the anniversary of the eruption of the Marawi City.

there are things that came out during and after the conflict that could be celebrated.

Among these, he said, are determination and perseverance of the victims of the siege, the care and compassion of nameless and faceless individuals and groups who contributed material and non-material items to combatants and non-combatants, and the heroism and sacrifices of government troops.

A total of 165 government troops were killed in action while thousands others were wounded during the five-month siege that erupted May 23, 2017 and ended Oct. 23, 2017.

About 50 civilians also perished while hundreds of thousands others were displaced and their homes ruined by the war.

On the other hand, a total of 908 terrorists, led by Hapilon and brothers Ottoh, Mahi, Abdullah and Omarichayam, were also killed.

According to Arevalo, the AFP is now active in assisting other government agencies, under the Joint Task Force Bangon Marawi, to rebuild the Islamic City and help residents to start with their new life.

"Marawi has been liberated. If we have to look back to it, let's do so to learn from it and move on," said Arevalo.

"The efforts of the AFP, in cooperation with other line agencies of government, are now on the physical Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Marawi, and the prevention of its repeat—in the City or elsewhere in the country," he added.

Arevalo cited the vigilance and cooperation of the people of Bohol that resulted in the foiled plot by the Abu Sayyaf group to sow terror activities in the tourist destination last year when government troops neutralized several ASG personalities in Inabanga town.

"Inabanga, Bohol is classic case of how the ASG members from Sulu cannot survive in a province where the people and local government are vigilant and proactive in reporting and cooperating with security forces," said Arevalo.

Arevalo said that the Marawi City siege also prompted the AFP to redraft its doctrines and revised techniques, tactics and procedures to conform with the challenges posed by terrorist groups.

In particular, the AFP acknowledges the need to improve its urban warfare capability.

Arevalo added the AFP has learned many lessons in the conflict and vowed not to let its guard down again.

## Dela Vega is new AFP-WestMinCom chief

By NICHOLAS LACSON

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Philippine Army Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega formally assumed yesterday the top post in the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom) based in this city.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana formally installed Dela Vega yesterday during a simple ceremony held at the grandstand of AFP-WestMinCom, and witnessed by local and national government officials including police directors and military field commanders.

Dela Vega graduated from the Military Academy in 1985, class Sandiwa and was the former commander of the Sixth Infantry Division of the Philippine Army and has served in the military for the past 33 years.

Dela Vega, a native of Lipa City, said in his speech yesterday that his "assumption as commander of the AFP-WestMinCom comes at the time when the landscape

security of the region has become more manageable and stable."

He said President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has issued "marching orders thru the defense department to the general headquarter for us to further improve the peace and order condition in our area of responsibility."

Given that order, Dela Vega assured that the effort to properly address violence and terrorism shall be pursued.

Since Mindanao is still under Marshal Law, the different Task Forces in

Mindanao will concentrate more in the collection of loose firearms as this is one reason why terrorism, illegal drug operations and rido continue to exist in many Muslim dominated areas in Mindanao, Dela Vega emphasized.

According to Dela Vega, the military was able to collect about 6,000 loose firearms of different calibers from civilians and politicians last year.

"We need to collect them from those gun holders in order for the community to be safer than ever," he said. 11

## Duterte's daughter, grandchild received Dengvaxia shots – Go

By ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

Three members of President Duterte's immediate family, including two children, were among the Filipino schoolchildren who were administered with the controversial anti-dengue Dengvaxia vaccine.

Special Assistant to the President Christopher Go said Tuesday bared that three young members of Duterte's family were vaccinated with Dengvaxia.

He, however, clarified on Wednesday that only two Duterte children and one adult received the vaccine.

Go clarified in a text message to Palace reporters that Duterte's youngest daughter Veronica, granddaughter Sabina, and former Davao City Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte's wife January, all received the vaccine.

Duterte's most trusted aide said the clarification was made by January herself.

He was not able to tell when the family members received the vaccine or how many dose were given.

"Kitty (Veronica), Sabina, and January (wife of Paolo) Uno, not yet. Per correction by January Duterte," Go's text message read.

Go made the initial revelation Tuesday after being supposedly asked by a reporter during the 120th anniversary celebration of the Philippine Navy in Pasay City.

"May nagtanong kanina na reporter kung na-inject raw ba si Kitty at yung dalawang anak ni Paolo. Ikinonfirm naman po ng mga nanay nila na positive po na-inject po sila (A reporter asked earlier if Kitty and Paolo's two kids were injected, the mother confirmed they received such injections)," he said Tuesday.

The revelation about Duterte's family came amid the government's investigation into the deaths of several children who were administered with the now controversial vaccine.

More than 800,000 Filipino children have received the vaccine under the program initiated by the Aquino administration.

Dengvaxia manufacturer Sanofi Pasteur, however, revealed that the vaccine



BONG GO

could worsen the effects of dengue on those who have not been exposed to the virus.

The Department of Health (DOH) said that as of May 15, 11 of the 87 children who died after receiving at least one dose of Dengvaxia had dengue despite their vaccination.

The DOH, however, clarified that they do not have any evidence yet whether the vaccine had influenced or caused the deaths of the children.



## Duterte: Gov't working on P77-B projects for Philippine Navy

President Duterte assured that the government is working on implementing the Second Horizon of the Revised Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Modernization Program which includes a number of projects for the Philippine Navy worth P77 billion.

Duterte made the statement during the celebration of the Philippine Navy's 120th anniversary celebration in Pasay City.

In his speech, Duterte assured the soldiers and marines of the government's efforts to enhance their capabilities.

"We live in exciting times for our armed forces as we further enhance the capability of our Navy," Duterte said.

"Since the beginning of this administration, I have exerted efforts to upgrade your equipment and artillery," he added.

These include the additional two units of TC90 aircraft, two units of multi-purpose assault crafts and one strategic sealift vessel, among others.

In his speech, the President congratulated the Philippine Navy for its 120 years of unwavering service, sacrifice, dedication and

commitment to defend Philippine waters and secure the country's maritime borders.

"To the brave soldiers and marines of our Navy, you have made the Filipino people proud and continue to do so with gallantry in defending our sovereignty in our territorial waters, particularly in the West Philippine Sea," Duterte said.

The President also recognized the efforts of the men and women of the Navy and Marines in the liberation of Marawi. The country is commemorating the one-year anniversary of the start of the Marawi Siege on May 23.

He also recognized them for helping even now during the rehabilitation of the war-torn city.

"It was only last year when we celebrated the Philippine Navy's anniversary during the Marawi siege.

Then we honored the heroic efforts of the men and women of the Navy and Marines in the liberation of Marawi. Today, we once again honor them as we make significant progress in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of that city," Duterte said. (Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos)

# PHILIPPINE

## Duterte says 'violent' option crossed his mind

By Komfie Manalo

President Duterte admitted considering a more "violent" option in asserting the Philippines' right over the South China Sea dispute amid China's moves to further militarize the disputed region but said he is afraid of making the mistake of destroying the country.

"I would have taken a stronger but probably a more violent way of doing it... it has something to do with my desire to defend but at the same time not to make any move that would be destructive to the nation. I cannot afford at this time to go to war. I cannot go into a battle which I cannot win and it would only result in the destruction and probably a lot of losses for our Armed Forces," Mr. Duterte, speaking at the celebration of the Philippine Navy's 120th anniversary late Tuesday said.

Duterte told the crowd of mostly Navy officers and personnel that it would be great loss for the country that may end up into a losing war with China if the conflict turns into a shooting match. "That is the reality on the ground," he said.

"Me, I want to," Duterte said referring

Turn to page 3

From page 1

to his desire to go to war with China to defend the Philippine-claimed territory off the South China Sea that China is occupying despite a landmark ruling by the United Nations-backed arbitral tribunal debunking China's claims.

"But you know, when I assumed the presidency, there was already this ruckus in the West Philippine Sea," he said.

The President said that what is happening in the contested islands in the WPS is part of geopolitics. However he said he cannot rely on just one nation and country "to defend us and maybe to help us in our hour of need."

The United States, which signed a Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines in 1951, has consistently declared that its commitment to defend Manila is "iron clad" and wants to strengthen the alliance by assisting in building and maintaining the capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

**Cobra choppers for AFP**

The kingdom of Jordan, meanwhile, is donating two Bell AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters to the Philippines, which could be the country's most modern combat helicopter.

Mr. Duterte made the announcement during the Navy event as he assured the soldiers and marines of the government's efforts to enhance their capability.

"Allow me to just insert something. I don't know if I'm supposed to make it public and I really do not have a way of knowing whether it would make

[National Security Adviser Hermogenes] Esperon happy or not. But in my table before I left, that's why I was late because I was reviewing it. Jordan is giving us two Cobra helicopters. Those things that we cannot really afford," the President told the audience which was met with applause.

Duterte went on to say, "He (Esperon) was the one who worked for it. He is now there in Jordan and I got this electronic copy for his authority to accept it. And to Jordan, which faces the same problem like the Philippines, it's terrorism."

It was also Esperon Jr., who advised the President to "swallow the insults" and refrain from criticizing the cousin of Jordan's king United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein because King Abdullah is willing to donate two Cobra helicopters to the Philippines.

"Esperon said, 'no, do not do it. Maybe, mayor, you can swallow insults. Anyway you are doing it almost everyday. You are throwing curses, epithets and all and the people that you... they cannot answer back, this time I am asking you to shut up'," the president said.

To recall, Duterte had a brief spat with Zeid in March this year with the UN Human Rights commissioner said that the Philippine president needs to see a psychiatrist over his reactions to criticisms from human rights advocates who voiced their disapproval on his bloody drug war.

The President then called Zeid "empty-headed." He said he was also prepared to rebut Zeid but Esperon reined on him.

He said, "I prepared a little you know, as a maybe a rebuttal. He (Esperon) said, 'please do not do it or else we will. I will lose the (helicopters).'"

In his speech, Mr. Duterte announced that the government is currently working on implementing the Second Horizon of the Revised AFP Modernization Program, which encompasses a number of projects for the Philippine Navy amounting to P77 billion.

"We live in exciting times for our armed forces as we further enhance the capability of our Navy," the President said.

"Since the beginning of this administration, I have exerted efforts to upgrade your equipment and artillery," he added.

These include the additional two units of TC90 aircraft, two units of multi-purpose assault crafts and one strategic sealift vessel, among others.

Among the highlights of the anniversary celebration include the Navy's capability demonstration on amphibious operations, counter-terrorism, and hostage crisis response by the Naval Special Operations Group and the Marines Special Operations Group.

Aside from showcasing the Navy's capabilities, the event honored outstanding units, officers and enlisted personnel for serving with honor and excellence.

The President congratulated the Philippine Navy for its 120 years of unwavering service, sacrifice, dedication and commitment to "defend our shores, protect our seas, and secure our maritime borders."

"To the brave soldiers and marines of our Navy, you have made the Filipino people proud and continue to do so with gallantry in defending our sovereignty in our territorial waters, particularly in the West Philippine Sea," he said.

Duterte also recognized the efforts of the men and women of the Navy and Marines in the liberation of Marawi.

"It was only last year when we celebrated the Philippine Navy's anniversary during the Marawi Siege. Then, we honored the heroic efforts of the men and women of the Navy and Marines in the liberation of Marawi. Today, we once again honor them as we make significant progress in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of that city," he said.

At the same time, the President recognized the Navy's accomplishments and contributions in humanitarian assistance, maritime law enforcement, counter-terrorism, and disaster relief operations.

"These noble endeavors have made our kababayans feel safer in challenging circumstances," he said.

The Chief Executive likewise expressed confidence that together with the AFP, the country can realize its aspiration of building a strong and resilient nation.

# Narco cops, soldiers next

*Rody's drug war targets scalawags in uniform*

By Vito Marcelo

THE government's war on drugs will now focus on military and police personnel linked to the illegal narcotics trade, President Rodrigo Duterte said Tuesday night.

"Drugs destroy the nation, period. And the drug war will include the military and the police," the President said in a speech during the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Philippine Navy. The President admitted that the government was partly to blame for failing to do complete background checks when recruiting military and police personnel.

"There's a number of them who are really corrupt and are really criminals, but who maneuvered somehow to get into the service," Duterte said, vowing to get rid of those linked to drugs.

The President has drawn intense criticism over his bloody drug war, which has claimed the lives of more than 4,000 suspected drug pushers and users.

Metro Manila police chief Camilo Cascolan, meanwhile, urged residents to stay vigilant and continue to help the government and police in the campaign against crime, particularly in the fight against drug trafficking.

Cascolan made the appeal after police in Pasay City killed a suspected drug pusher.

Police said the suspect, Arnes Lumanlan, 22, tried to shoot it out with them when he was about to be arrested in his house on 35 Saint Cecille Street, Maricaban, Pasay City.

Cascolan said Lumanlan was a member of the Batang City Jail gang and was reputed to be a notorious drug pusher in the neighborhood.

*Next page*



## Narco...

From A1

The Metro Manila police chief praised the concerned citizen who had tipped off the police on Lumanlan's whereabouts, saying this kind of coordination between the public and law enforcement would help the government win the war on drugs.

On Tuesday, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency opened the country's first community-based reformation center designed to rehabilitate drug users in Sarangani, Mindanao.

PDEA Director General Aaron Aquino spearheaded the inauguration of Balay Silangan Reformation Center or "house of hope," a temporary shelter intended to reform drug offenders and to turn them into self-sufficient and law-abiding citizens in Barangay Nagran, Malungon town.

"The Balay Silangan Reformation Center welcomes with open arms drug offenders who aspire a renewed life and have chosen to be on the side of the government rather than help peddle illegal drugs in the streets," he said.

According to PDEA, Malungon has recorded a total of 303 drug users who have surrendered to the authorities. Out of these, 100 would undergo the reformatory process at the center.

"Balay Silangan is PDEA's pilot harm-reduction program. This will greatly help PDEA's effort to clear 26,000 barangays in the country from illegal drugs by 2022," he said.

"PDEA values life and we want the former drug offenders to have the opportunity to rehabilitate, to regain their dignity and place in our society," he added.

With Rio N. Araja

# 5 soldiers wounded in IED attack by NPA

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY - A spokesman for the Army's Southern Command 10th Infantry Division (10th ID) condemned an attack made by the New People's Army (NPA) on patrolling soldiers with the use of an improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Compostela Valley last Monday.

10th ID Spokesperson Capt. Jerry Lamosao charged that the NPA terrorists have continued to defy international humanitarian law for frequently using IEDs to attack military and police personnel, as well as civilians.

"Not only the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is condemning this dastardly act, but also the local government officials (where the attack took place)," Lamosao said.

On Monday, five soldiers were hit and wounded by IEDs, allegedly planted along the road in Kilometer 15, Barangay Cabuyoan, Mabini town, Compostela Valley (ComVal) province.

The group, which was alleged to have laid the IEDs that possibly, was the Millsybug Bayan, led by certain "Janu" of Guerilla Front 2, Sub-Regional Committee 2 of the CPP-NPA Southern Mindanao Regional Committee (SMRC), claimed Capt. Lamosao.

A team of the Army's 46th Infantry Battalion (46th IB) was tasked to establish blocking position towards Kilometer 15, while also extending security to another 46th IB team which was undertaking a peace and development program in Barangay Cabuyoan of that same town,

he said.

"Despite this incident, our operating troops will continue with their peace and development activities in their areas of responsibility," he said.

Lamosao added the wounded sol-

diers have already been evacuated from the blast site and are already in stable condition in a military hospital.

"We urged the human rights group to come out and also condemned this continuous use of IEDs by the Communist

terrorists," Lamosao said.

The 10th ID spokesperson challenged human rights groups to file a case for violation of Republic Act 9851, or the Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law.

## Ex-NPA rebel leads gov't troops to depot

KIDAPAWAN CITY—A former communist New People's Army rebel who has earlier surrendered to government forces in North Cotabato led the military to an encampment where war materiel were recovered Tuesday.

Jonaden Sicao, 22, of Magpet, North Cotabato, volunteered to lead Tuesday the troops in locating the items he hid more than a month after his surrender to government troops, according to military officials.

Sicao surrendered to the military on April 4, saying he had lost trust in the communist movement and that he wanted to go back to school.

Lt. Proten Bonacua, Alpha company commander of 19th Infantry Battalion, said the items, which include one home-made grenade launcher and three Improvised Explosive Devices, were found in an abandoned NPA encampment in Barangay Kinarum, Magpet.

In a related development:

• For the first time, three former rebels of the NPA who recently surrendered confirmed that the civic action program launched by the military had been very effective in the fight against insurgency.

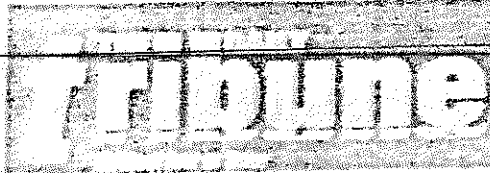
"Keep it up, sustain your so-called Bayanihan civic action program because it is hurting the NPA," said Ka Jelly in an exclusive interview with the Philippine News Agency in Camp Aguinaldo on Tuesday.

Ka Jelly had been with the NPA for almost two decades before he and two of his comrades decided to surrender last May 18 to Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, commanding general of the Joint Task Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which secures Metro Manila.

Arrojado is a veteran military strategist in the AFP's war on terror in Mindanao, particularly against the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu and Basilan, before he was assigned to his current position.

Ka Jelly, whose testimony was corroborated by his comrades, Ka Kern and Ka Dodong, said they decided to surrender after realizing that they were fighting fellow Filipinos.

During the interview, Ka Jelly said he considered the AFP's civic action program a success "because it has been benefiting the people down to the grass root level, since the program includes free medical-dental treatment, food, shelter and other civic actions." PNA



## Ex-NPA rebel leads gov't troops to explosives depot

Kidapawan City — A former communist New People's Army (NPA) rebel who had earlier surrendered to government forces in North Cotabato led the military to an encampment where war materiel was recovered Tuesday.

Junaden Sicao, 22, of Barangay Manobo, Magpet, North Cotabato, volunteered to lead Tuesday the troops in locating the items he hid more than a month after his surrender to government troops.

Sicao surrendered to the military on April 4, saying he had lost trust in the communist movement and that he wanted to go back to school.

Lt. Proten Bonacua, Alpha company commander of 19th Infantry Battalion (IB), said the items, which include one home-made grenade launcher and three Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), were found in an abandoned NPA encampment in Barangay

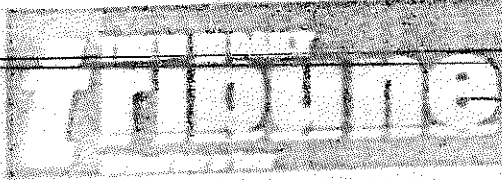
Kinarum, Magpet.

Sicao admitted his role was to plant and set off IEDs in routes regularly used by government forces. He declined to answer queries from reporters when asked as to how many bombing jobs he had carried out in the past.

Last month, the 19th IB also facilitated the mass surrender of 34 NPA rebels, where two high-powered firearms were turned over to the Army in Barangay Manobo, also in Magpet.

Lt. Col. Ehrlich Noel Paraso, the 19th IB acting battalion commander, believed the surrender manifested the rebels' desire to a new life away from continuously hiding in the forest and evading government forces.

"The surrender has put the NPA organization in disadvantage in remote Magpet villages, which they usually consider as their strongholds," Paraso said. **PNA**



## NPA surrenderers: AFP civic action program vs Reds very effective

For the first time, three former rebels of the New People's Army (NPA) who recently surrendered confirmed that the civic action program launched by the military has been very effective in the fight against insurgency.

"Keep it up, sustain your so-called Bayanihan civic action program because it is hurting the NPA," said Ka Jelly (true name withheld for security reasons) in an exclusive interview with the Philippine News Agency (PNA) in Camp Aguinaldo on Tuesday.

Ka Jelly had been with the NPA for almost two decades before he and two of his comrades decided to surrender last May 18 to Brig. Gen. Alan Arrojado, commanding general of the Joint Task Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (JTF/AFP), which secures Metro Manila.

Arrojado is a veteran military strategist in the AFP's war on terror in Mindanao, particularly against the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu and Basilan, before he was assigned to his current position.

Ka Jelly, whose testimony was corroborated by his comrades, Ka Kem and Ka Dodong, said they decided to surrender after realizing that they were fighting fellow Filipinos.

During the interview, Ka Jelly said he considers the AFP's civic action program a success "because it has been benefiting the people down to the grass root level, since the program includes free medical-dental treatment, food, shelter and other civic actions."

"That is why I urge the AFP to intensify this Bayanihan civic action program because the NPA is having a hard time countering this humanitarian effort," he said. "There is no way to put down a good program that benefits the people."

As a former rebel, Ka Jelly manifested how the communist movement is having a difficult time countering the civic action program undertaken by the AFP through the years that he said should be sustained.

Ka Jelly said he was recruited by the NPA in Compostela Valley in Davao del Sur in 1999 when he was only 17 years old.

"Actually, I joined the NPA just for fun and adventure and my desire to own a gun," he said, noting that as a rebel he participated 15 times in raids of military units in Pantukan, Compostela Valley.

"During the raid of an army detachment in 2003, four soldiers were killed and four others (were) wounded during the hour-long of fighting," he added.

He identified two NPA rebels who met them in Lucena only as Ka Anak and Ka Sera.

During the series of lectures, he counted 210 NPA comrades, 40 of them non-combatants.

It was there that they were told by the sub-region finance committee that the NPA has been experiencing lack of funds, despite the collection of revolutionary taxes.

He also expressed hope that other NPA rebels would surrender so that the country would attain lasting peace sooner than later. **PNA**

## RECONSTRUCTION

## BE PATIENT, GOV'T ASKS MARAWI FOLK

By Melvin Gascon  
and DJ Yap  
@Team\_Inquirer



The government on Wednesday appealed to the people of Marawi for patience, saying it was trying to expedite the reconstruction of their city and the restoration of normality to their lives, which they had been spending in shelters or temporary homes and joblessness since fleeing a terrorist attack a year ago.

"The magnitude of destruction of this disaster is immense, but we are doing our best to fast-track the process," Eduardo del Rosario, chair of Task Force Bangon Marawi, said by phone.

Thousands have returned to the city, living in government-run shelters, since the end of fighting last October,

but tens of thousands of others remain in the evacuation centers, waiting to hear from the government when they can go home.

Citing a report issued on April 16 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sen. Leila de Lima said in a statement from police detention on Wednesday that 59,495 of the 77,170 families, or 353,921 people, remained displaced as of March 6.

"I call on the Duterte administration to go beyond just building infrastructure and hasten humanitarian assistance to the [displaced]. This way, these families can rebuild not just their properties but also their lives," De Lima said.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV said on Wednesday that he filed resolutions for inquiries into rehabilitation efforts in conflict-affected areas and the circumstances that led to five months of fighting between state security forces and terrorists in Marawi. *INQ*

"A year after the Marawi siege, the government has yet to present a comprehensive plan on how it intends to rehabilitate the city and assist our countrymen there," Trillanes said. *INQ*

## 2 China firms blacklisted by WB join Marawi rehabilitation

By **CHRISTINA MENDEZ**

Two Chinese firms blacklisted by the World Bank in 2009 for corruption in the Philippines are included in the consortium to rehabilitate war-torn Marawi City.

Malacañang, however, said the two firms – China State Construction Engineering Corp. and China Geo Engineering Corp. – are not disqualified under Philippine laws.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque yesterday said the World Bank blacklisting of corruption against the two Chinese firms for corruption would have no bearing.

"First thing, that record will not disqualify them," Roque said.

Following Duterte's non-combative stance toward Beijing in the South China Sea over recent developments, Roque said the government is not keen on imposing a ban on the two Chinese firms.

"I reiterate under the law that either provides for the Swiss challenge, the BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer Law)

or the Government Procurement Act, the Philippine government should have them blacklisted for them to be disqualified in participating in any public tender," Roque said.

The opposition Liberal Party (LP) on Tuesday said the World Bank blacklisted the two Chinese firms for corrupt practices in the Philippines.

"The people of Marawi already suffered enough," the LP said in statement.

"The (Duterte) administration should not aggravate their pain by turning a blind eye on martial law abuses and counting on Chinese contractors with questionable backgrounds to take charge of Marawi City's rehabilitation."

Roque, however, said he would consult the officials of Task Force Bangon Marawi and call their attention to the issue.

Roque added the President skipped the commemoration of the first anniversary of the Marawi siege yesterday, saying the event is not something that should be celebrated.

Duterte did not have any

public engagement, exactly a year after Maute terrorists occupied Marawi, burned several buildings and held hostage dozens of civilians.

"The commemoration of the siege itself is just about remembering. The siege by our enemies is not something that should be celebrated," Roque said.

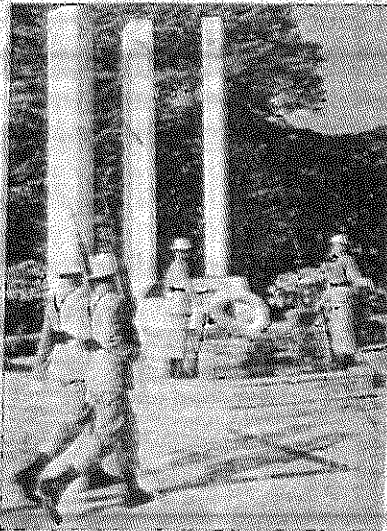
Nearly 1,000 terrorists, more than 160 soldiers and policemen and almost 100 civilians died during the siege, which prompted the President to impose martial law in the entire island of Mindanao.

Duterte has assumed full responsibility for the siege, admitting that he did not anticipate the clashes to last for four months.

More than P72 billion is needed to rebuild the main combat zone and surrounding areas, according to officials.

Malacañang also rejected appeals to lift martial law in Mindanao.

"Nobody wants to have martial law beyond the necessity of having martial law so the Palace would like to assure



Army soldiers offer flowers at the Shrine of Unknown Soldiers at the Libingan Ng Mga Bayani in Taguig yesterday on the first anniversary of the Marawi siege. FDD GUMBAN

the public that the moment the need for martial law ceases, it will be lifted," Roque said.

Duterte's longtime aide Christopher Go said the President was not keen on visiting Marawi a year after it was "desecrated" by the Islamic State-linked Maute group.

"What we should do at this time is to reflect on the lessons

we have learned during this dark chapter in our history, to prevent a similar incident from happening again in any part of our country and to sustain our efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the city," Go said.

Go said the President prefers to visit Marawi during the celebration of its liberation from the terrorists. Duterte declared Marawi liberated last Oct. 17.

"The President prefers to return to Marawi at a time when the lives of Maranaos have returned to normal," he added.

### 'Far from full recovery'

Hundreds of displaced residents still remain in emergency shelters as the threat of terrorists and unexploded bombs lingers in the ruins of Marawi that was held by the Maute group for five months last year.

Fr. Teresito Soganub, the priest who survived 117 days of captivity by the extremists in Marawi City, said it will take years for him and others to overcome the hor-

ror of having lived through airstrikes and gunbattles that constantly threatened them day and night.

"I'm still very very far from a full recovery," Soganub said.

"If it takes long to rebuild and reconstruct, it's more difficult to deal with this psychological and psychiatric trauma."

The government has yet to finalize a rehabilitation plan to rebuild the most devastated commercial and residential districts, where the carcasses of pockmarked homes, buildings and mosques stand eerily, gathering weeds in an urban wasteland guarded by troops.

Marawi's journey back to normalcy may take years and at a huge cost, officials stressed.

Some officials warned that if the rehabilitation falters, the restiveness it would generate could be exploited by militants.

- With Alexis Romero, Delon Porcalla, John Unson, Pia Lee-Brago, Roel Pareño, Michael Pimongbayan, Rudy Santos, Marvin Sy, Elizabeth Marcelo, Mayen Jaymalin, AP, AFP



# 'Mop up Marawi now, rehab it later'

AN analyst on Wednesday said the government needs to resolve a number of issues including time and resources before it can embark on rebuilding Marawi City.

Ramon Casiple of the Institute

for Political and Electoral Reform said ongoing clearing operations by security forces would ensure the safe return of residents to their homes.

He warned that failure to account for unexploded ordnance and booby

traps left in Marawi City after the five-month fighting would spell disaster for the returnees.

Threat from the Maute group still exists, said Casiple.

► MarawiA2

## 'Mop up Marawi now, rehab it later'

Even if the bandit group were defeated, he said, factions could still regroup, recruit and execute another attack.

"Members of the Marawi group were from (the) area, [so] it would be easy for them to pretend as civilians and blend in with the residents," Casiple added.

He recommended "an effective screening process" for the returnees.

Casiple said the issue of land ownership also needs to be resolved by the government because many of the people living in Marawi City before the siege did not own land and were in fact informal settlers.

He noted that a huge part of the city was actually owned by the military and there could be land titles now possessed by more than one owner.

"This means that you need an orderly rehabilitation that is in compliance with the law and the needs of the people of Marawi and I think the approach being done by the government of not rushing things is a good move," Casiple said.

He added that it is wrong for the residents to expect to see the Marawi of old owing to the total destruction of the central and commercial areas.

Urban planning however, could transform the city into a modern one, according to Casiple.

"The government should not focus on just helping residents return to Marawi but to dependable livelihoods and livable

homes," he said.

The National Economic and Development Authority had said the rehabilitation of Marawi City will require an investment of more than P53 billion over the next five years to be able to fund more than 900 priority programs and projects.

Given the huge amount needed for reconstruction, Casiple said, the government needs outside help.

Several countries, including the United States, Japan and China, have sent financial aid to support the rebuilding.

The US government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has allocated an additional P330 million as a humanitarian response to populations made vulnerable by the siege.

The additional assistance brings the total US government contribution to Marawi City to nearly P1.2 billion (\$22.9 million).

It intends to enhance job skills of the youth sector for gainful employment later.

The USAID will also help restore public utilities, work with communities to jumpstart livelihoods, promote community dialogue and improve health and education.

Japan would provide the Philippine government a 2-billion yen (P970 million) grant to support the rehabilitation of Marawi.

The Philippines, represented by Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency repre-

sented by Yoshio Wada, recently signed an agreement for the grant.

The grant will be the fourth aid package provided by Japan to the Philippines on top of earlier grants that included heavy equipment that were formalized on November 12 last year.

Excavators, bulldozers and dump trucks were among the machines turned over to the Department of Public Works and Highways last March and have since been used in Marawi.

Japan has provided the Philippines an estimated \$36 million in assistance.

China recently turned over some 150 million renminbi (P1.23 billion) on top of the P85 million for troops wounded in the fighting with the Maute group and heavy equipment for the rebuilding.

Australia has pledged 24 million Australian dollars (P946.38 million) in humanitarian and recovery aid.

Casiple said the foreign aid should be welcomed by the government regardless of the country making the donation because the rehabilitation of Marawi City requires a huge amount.

He added that the government should not allow its critics to be an obstacle in the rehabilitation but should make sure that all contracts are above-board.

"Critics would place obstacles along the way [but] the important thing is for the government to stay focused," Casiple said.

**JEFFERSON ANTIPORDA**

# Govt yet to release P17-B Marawi rehab fund - OCD

BY LLANESCA T. PANTI AND BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

**T**HE government has yet to release the P17.2-billion budget for the reconstruction, repair and rehabilitation of Marawi City's most affected area (MAA), the Office of the Civil Defense informed lawmakers on Wednesday.

Assistant Secretary James Purisima of the Office of the Civil Defense, who also serves as the spokesman of Bangon Marawi Task Force, made the admission when he was questioned by Rep. Antonio Tinio during a briefing before the House Committee on Muslim Affairs.

"The budget for that [MAA] is yet to be funded, your honors," Purisima told lawmakers.

The revelation stunned Tinio. "You said you are awarding the projects [to contractors] next month and apparently you don't have fund-

ing source yet?" he asked.

Purisima said the MAA projects could be funded by the P10 billion allotted for the Marawi City rehabilitation under the 2018 budget.

"I think P5 billion [out of the P10 billion budget in 2018] has been released and is being used in the non-MAA areas. This budget can also be accessed for MAA, your honors," Purisima said.

But this did not sit well with Rep. Khalid Dimaporo of Lanao del Norte.

"The expectation of our people is very high, given the assurances

of the President [Rodrigo Duterte]. And their patience is running thin. We are appealing to you, Task Force Bangon Marawi, to bring something to table, bring something tangible already," Dimaporo said.

"What happened was a very painful experience for us. An Islamic City was destroyed, and the pace of your work has been painstakingly too slow," he added.

Dimaporo also took offense that Secretary Eduardo del Rosario of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, who heads Task Force Bangon Marawi, skipped the congressional briefing for the second time.

"Why is Secretary del Rosario not here? In the previous meeting, he already excused himself because he had to go to the Senate. I find it disrespectful that he is not making a courtesy call here in the Committee on Muslim Affairs and the representatives of Lanao provinces,"

Dimaporo added.

Lawmakers also learned that Task Force Bangon Marawi has yet to identify a resettlement area for Marawi residents who will be affected by the government's ambitious plan to build a market, promenade and cultural center in the Marawi City center.

"If you are in Marawi, there's no place for these [new] projects unless you take away the land of the people whose houses once stood there. You have a lot of proposed infrastructure projects here, but what will happen to the people? Where will they live? That [displacing them for your projects] is injustice," Rep. Mauryag Papandayan Jr. of Lanao del Sur said.

Purisima said the plan for the MAA was not yet final.

His statement failed to reassure Papandayan.

"You are unsure of your plan when the project is about to start on June 18? When will this be final? It has been a year. You have

been very slow on working on this," Papandayan said.

### **Compensation**

Meanwhile, Sen. Paolo Benigno Aquino 4th sought to provide "tax-free" monetary compensation to displaced Marawi City residents whose homes and commercial properties were destroyed during the Marawi siege.

"The Marawi crisis left thousands of Marawi residents without shelter, jobs and other means of livelihood. The attack also destroyed business establishments that served as source of income, livelihood and employment for many Marawi residents," Aquino said.

He filed Senate Bill 1816 or the Marawi Siege Victims Compensation Act of 2018, which aims to grant Marawi residents with money to rebuild their homes and/or commercial properties destroyed during the armed conflict between government forces and the Maute group. *AP*

# Marawi rehab: Mayor insists on bomb-clearing operations

By Maricel V. Cruz, Joel E. Zurbano and Sara Susanne D. Fabunan

REHABILITATION work on ground zero in the battle for Marawi City has yet to begin one year after the siege began, but could start next month after clearing operations are completed, the city's mayor said Wednesday.

In an interview with radio dzBB, Marawi City Mayor Majul Gandamra said the lives of his constituents were slowly returning to normal except for 24 barangays that were at the center of the battle in which gov-

ernment troops fought to oust Maute group rebels.

There, troops were still clearing the area of explosives and materiel, Gandamra said.

Gandamra was at the rites to mark the first anniversary of the Marawi siege that began May 23, 2017, and that ended five months later, on Oct. 23, 2017.

He said he hoped rehabilitation could begin in the main battle area by early June.

In Congress, Linao del Sur Rep. Mannyag Papandayan Jr., chairman of the House committee on Muslim affairs, criticized the Force Bangon Marawi for its "vague" rehabilitation plan. *Next page*

## Marawi...

From A1

Papandayan could not hide his ire when TFBM spokesman and Civil Defense Deputy Administrator Kristoffer James Purisma presented the rehabilitation plan before the House panel Wednesday.

While the plan sounds good, Papandayan said it was not clear as to where the new infrastructure within the so-called "most-affected area"—such as market, promenade, and cultural center—would be built.

The lawmaker particularly voiced concern over the possible displacement of local residents that the construction might cause.

"Now if you are in Marawi, there are no vacant spaces there for these infrastructure unless you take the land of the people whose homes were destroyed," said Papandayan.

Purisma said the task force has discussed its plans with stakeholders and determined there would be minimal disruption to private property.

"If there is a need to expand certain roads, for example, then we would undertake a process for that. But this is done in consultation with the stakeholders," he said.

Papandayan said widening roads is easy compared to finding actual spots for the planned market, promenade, and cultural center under the rehabilitation plan.

Leftist lawmakers, meanwhile, called for the lifting of martial law and reparations for the

people of Marawi.

"Today [May 23] marks the first anniversary of the declaration of martial law in Mindanao and the Marawi siege. Within this one year, we have seen and received numerous accounts of people and communities in Mindanao being targeted for grave human rights violations," ACT Party-list Rep. Antonio Tinio said.

ACT Teachers Party-list Rep. France Castro said schools are not free from harm in the declaration of martial law in Mindanao, saying that volunteer teachers in lumad schools, their students and the parents are alleged victims of harassment, threats, illegal arrests with trumped up charges and killings by the military.

Citing data from the Save Ours Schools Network, Castro said 56 lumad schools have already been forced to cease operations due to intense militarization in their area.

In the Palace, Special Assistant to the President Christopher Go said President Rodrigo Duterte would not be at rites to mark the first anniversary of the Marawi siege, and would rather attend the anniversary of the city's liberation from extremists in October.

In May last year, Maute group militants attacked Camp Ranao and occupied several buildings in the city, including Marawi City Hall, Mindanao State University, hospital and the city jail. They also occupied the main street and set fire to Saint Mary's Cathedral, Ninoy Aquino School and Dansalan College. They also took a priest and several churchgoers hostage. **With Vito Barcelo**

MARAWI SIEGE

# A year after, thousands remain displaced

**BY VICTOR REYES  
AND JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR**

A YEAR after the bloody Marawi City conflict broke out, at least 40,000 families, or about 210,000 individuals, remain housed in evacuation centers.

This is because of the massive destruction in the city which was attacked by the Maute terror group that battled government forces for five months.

The number of evacuees peaked at around 50,000 families at the early stage of the crisis, according to Myrna To Henry, information officer of the Humanitarian

Emergency Action Response and Response of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

A family is composed of four to five members, on the average, said Edgar Posadas, spokesman of the Office of the Civil Defense.

He also said it may take time before the 42,252 families will be able to return because reconstruction and rehabilitation of the city is ongoing.

The remaining internally displaced persons are mostly residents of 24 barangays which the military considered as the "main battle area."

Posadas called the 24 barangays as "most affected areas (MAAs)."

Authorities began allowing displaced residents to go back to their homes outside the most-affected areas in November or weeks after the fighting ended. Residents have been allowed to see their destroyed homes but were not allowed to stay.

Asked when the internally-displaced persons (IDPs) will be able to return, Posadas said, "Inside the MAAs, it may take time because the rehabilitation is just about to start."

Posadas said the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council is in charge of the rehabilitation and reconstruction inside the MAAs while the Office of Civil Defense is leading the rehabilita-

tion in 72 other Marawi barangays that are outside the MAAs, using a P10-billion fund allocated to them by the national government.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which is helping in the ongoing relief operations, said around 250,000 people remain displaced and in need of support.

"Efforts to rehabilitate Marawi and assist its people must be stepped up to reduce the suffering of thousands of those who were displaced over the past year," said Pascal Panchet, head of the ICRC delegation in the Philippines.

"The efforts are there, but these

See A YEAR > Page B6

## A YEAR

must match the growing needs of those who face prolonged displacement and are close to despair," he added.

### NO MAGIC FORMULA

Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza, during a briefing held in Marawi City, said government is doing all it can to hasten the rehabilitation and bring normalcy back to Marawi.

He urged residents and other stakeholders to be more patient and supportive of the administrative actions.

He said the government understands the impatience of the communities but said there is no "magic formula" that could solve everything overnight.

"We are working, government is doing its best to restore as much as possible what was destroyed and I think we are on the road. But we'd like to call on all those who had gone through suffering to please be patient. There is no magic formula here. There is no reconstruction that will happen overnight," Dureza said.

He added there are a lot of challenges and not everybody would agree to the plans presented or ideas suggested, which is why government continues to hear the sentiments of those directly affected on the ground.

Zia Alonto Adiong, ARMM assemblyman, said in the same briefing the impatience and frustration of some residents, especially those who are staying in evacuation centers and temporary shelters, come from the fear of expulsion and of not knowing what will happen to them.

He said the local government has been working with the national government agencies to accomplish the five priorities of Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM) at the soonest time possible. These priority are reconstruction, education, livelihood and business, security and peace and order, and social services including medical services.

### WHO'S TO BLAME?

Eduardo Año, officer in charge of the interior department, blamed local government officials and Marawi residents for the Maute siege.

He said May 23 serves as a reminder to all "that this kind of crisis should not have happened at all if everyone has been doing its share in our fight against terror."

Año said "a lot of information" did not reach the Armed Forces because local government officials and residents "probably ignored it."

He also surmised that this also has to do with the culture of people not wanting to meddle or getting involved in an issue.

"If the information from the residents, even barangay officials, even local government officials, reached us, we could have prepared," said Año, who was Armed Forces chief during the siege.

"We need information, we need continuing feedback from people. The Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police are well-trained, prepared to fight. But if you don't have enough information, we're like a blindfolded boxer who keeps on punching out of luck, with no specific target," said Año.

Año said hundreds of Maute-ISIS entered the city but not a single information from the local officials and residents about the terrorist

presence was reported to authorities.

"Imagine, 600 members of an armed group entered (the city). It's too impossible they didn't see that. Also, this did not happen in just one day," he said.

The Maute-ISIS Group lost 974 men in the fighting, including Isnilon Hapilon, the supposed ISIS leader in Southeast Asia, and Maute leaders Omar Maute and Abdullah Maute. Also, 168 soldiers and policemen and 47 civilians died in the crisis.

"We got information (from other sources) that armed men went inside though there's no information where they exactly went. They went there, including Hapilon, and they didn't bother to report," added Año.

Told that it was the military's job to monitor the enemy, Año said. "Well, it's the job of the military, that's why we have our intelligence units. But then we could not get all the information," he said, noting that most of these information come from the population themselves.

Año also acknowledged military lapses, leading to the five-month conflict.

"The problem in Marawi occurred the day we're in Moscow. So we have to admit we have a lapse there because if there was proper assessment, we could have postponed the Moscow trip but even then, the President handled the situation very professionally," he said.

### MARTIAL LAW

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said martial law would only be lifted once there is no longer need for it.

President Duterte place the entire Mindanao under martial law hours after the Maute attacked Marawi City on May 23 last year.

"Wala pong gusto na magkaroon ng [No one wants] martial law beyond the necessity of martial law. So the Palace would like to assure the public that the moment that need for martial law (ceases), it will be lifted. Exactly one year after the siege, the time for lifting martial law is not yet here," he said.

Roque also defended the absence of President Duterte in Marawi yesterday, saying what was commemorated was the attack.

Special Assistant to the President Christopher "Bong" Go echoed Roque's statement.

"The start of the Marawi siege is something that is not worth celebrating. And for being such, the President is not keen on visiting Marawi a year after it was desecrated by members of the ISIS-Maute group," Go said.

He added that the President prefers to join the residents of Marawi during the celebration of its liberation in October.

### COMPENSATION

Adiong stressed the need for a separate compensation package for Marawi's speedy rehabilitation and to provide more assistance the communities affected.

Lanao del Sur Rep. Ansarrudin Adiong on May 16 filed a bill seeking provision of assistance and compensation to the residents affected by the siege. If passed, this will serve as a legal basis for reparations for the people of Marawi.

TFBM field office manager and civil defense assistant secretary Felix Castro said the government hopes to start the main rehabilitation and reconstruction work by middle of June.



### *Laban sa Maute-ISIS terrorists*

## **AFP todo bantay pa rin sa Marawi**

Isang taon maiapos ang madugong Marawi City siege na tumagal ng limang buwan lodo bantay pa rin ang tropa ng mga sundalo ng Armed Forces of the Philippines sa isinagsagawang rehabilitasyon sa lungsod kaugnay na rin ng posibleng banta ng terorismo ng naitalabi pang miyembro ng Maute-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Nitong Miyerkules ay ginunita ng mga opisyal at ng mga residente sa lungsod ang ika-isang taon sa naganap na krisis sa Marawi City sa pamamagitan ng Idinac na program na nagsimula noong Mayo 23 na tumagal ng limang buwan noong nakalipas na taon.

Nakatakda namang bumisita si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa lungsod ng Marawi ngayong

Mayo 24 upang makisa sa celebrasyon sa paglaya ng lungsod sa terorismo ng dulo ng Maute-ISIS.

Sinabi ni Col. Edgard Arevalo Spokesman ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na patuloy na nakikipagkoordinasyon ang militar sa lokal na pamahalaan upang matiyak na hindi na muling mauulit pa ang Marawi City siege (Joy Santos) ✓

**MARAWI SIEGE SURVIVOR**
**ABU DAR EMERGES AS NEW  
MAUTE GROUP LEADER—AFP**

DAVAO CITY—Owayda Benito Marohombsar is not your typical battle-hardened militant, but the military suspects he now leads the Islamic State (IS)-inspired Maute group, which plotted the siege of Marawi City a year ago.

A native of Pagayawan, a fifth-class town of 13,000 in Lanao del Sur province, Marohombsar saw action only in skirmishes with government forces in the province's Butig town before the Marawi siege.

At the height of the siege, Marohombsar—known as Abu Dar—escaped with dozens of Maute gunmen and has since been active in recruiting new members using millions of pesos they allegedly looted from the local Landbank branch and abandoned homes of wealthy families.

Marohombsar and his men failed to reenter the city because of the tight military cordon, said Col. Romeo Brawner Jr., deputy commander of Joint Task Force Ranao.

**Spiritual adviser**

Little is known about Marohombsar, who also goes by the alias Humam. Various government sources say he is a relative of the Maute brothers—Abdullah, Omar and Madie—who were killed during the five-month battle for Marawi.

Marohombsar is also related to Moro National Liberation Front leader Faizal Marohombsar, who was involved in the kidnapping of five Chinese engineers in Carmen town, North Cotabato province in 2001.

The sources, who declined to be identified, said Marohombsar served as spiritual adviser to the Maute brothers.

One of the sources said Marohombsar was a "learned" Islamic



Owayda Benito Marohombsar aka Abu Dar

scholar but unsure about where he finished his Islamic studies.

Brawner said Marohombsar was now acting as head of the group and carried a P3-million bounty on his head.

**Lone survivor**

He said Marohombsar was the only survivor among the plotters of the Marawi siege, including the Maute brothers and IS emir for Southeast Asia Isnilon Hapilon, who were seen in a photo and video seized from slain militants planning the assault.

Brawner said the new Maute group leader was reportedly moving between the towns of Pagayawan, Piagapo, Tubaran and Marantao and nearby areas as government forces pursued him.

Lanao del Sur Rep. Mauryag Papandayan, however, believes the military was not bent on capturing Marohombsar as the militant freely entered Barangay Malaganding in Tuburan town where he shot dead a village official a day before the barangay elections.

A regional police report said barangay chair reelectionist Hadji Ansary was killed by unidentified gunmen inside his home.

—ALLAN NAWAL INQ

## Slain Abu Sayyaf leader's henchman captured in Sulu

By **MARTIN A. SADDONGDONG**

An alleged trusted aide of slain Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leader Isnilon Hapilon has been arrested by the authorities, the Philippine National Police (PNP) announced Tuesday afternoon.

PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde identified the apprehended ASG sub-leader as Hashim Abtaib alias Abu Imam.

Abtaib was nabbed in Barangay Walled City, Jolo, Sulu on May 19 in a joint operation conducted by composite teams from the PNP led by the Intelligence Group (IG) in Region 9 and backed by elements of PNP Special Action Force (SAF), Sulu Provincial Office, and the Philippine Army's 501st Brigade.

Albayalde said Abtaib was accused of seven separate criminal cases of kidnapping and serious illegal detention.

The alleged ASG sub-leader was

tagged in the abduction of 50 workers of Golden Harvest Plantation and the beheading of an Army soldier both in Basilan in 2001 and another one in a resort in Sipadan, Malaysia, Albayalde added.

"The [Department of the Interior and Local Government] and PNP has offered a P600,000-reward for any information leading to his arrest. He was positively identified by one of his victims in the Golden Harvest plantation incident," Albayalde said.

Albayalde could not confirm whether the suspect had a hand in the infamous Marawi City siege, which first year anniversary was commemorated yesterday (May 23).

Albayalde said the suspect was transferred from Jolo, Sulu to Zamboanga City to undergo tactical debriefing and custodial investigation prior to presentation in court.

## Abu Sayyaf member nabbed in Zamboanga

SECURITY forces arrested an Abu Sayyaf bandit in Zamboanga City yesterday.

Chief Insp. Helen Galvez, Western Mindanao police regional spokesman, identified the suspect as Amin Aklam aka Amin, who has a warrant of arrest for kidnapping, frustrated murder, and murder issued by Judge Bettie-J Baraquis, of the 9th Judicial Region, Jolo, Sulu.

Reports said combined police and military operatives swooped down in a house in Barangay Buenavista and arrested Aklam who did not resist.

Aklam was brought to the PNP regional intelligence unit 9 for proper disposition.

Last Saturday, two Abu Sayyaf bandits were captured by government forces in separate operations in Zamboanga City and Sulu.

Arrested in Purok 1B, Barangay Recondo in Zamboanga City was Hadji Gahis, a resident of Sumisip, Basilan, who was under the leadership of slain bandit leader Isnilon Hapilon. He is wanted for kidnapping and serious illegal detention in connection with the Golden Harvest Plantation kidnapping in 2001.

In Sulu, combined police operatives arrested Hashim Abtaib aka Abu Imam in Serrantes street, Barangay Walled City in Jolo town on Saturday night.

Police said Abtaib was involved in the spate of kidnappings. —  
*Raymond Africa*

FIRST MUSLIM POLL CHIEF IS ALSO YOUNGEST EVER

# ABAS GETS CA NOD AS COMELEC CHAIR, VOWS TO INHIBIT SELF FROM BBL PLEBISCITE

The Commission on Appointments (CA) on Wednesday confirmed Commissioner Sheriff Abas as the new chair of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) almost six months after he was appointed by President Duterte.

The Comelec said Abas' confirmation came at a "most op-

portune time" as the poll body was preparing for the 2019 national and local elections.

"Chair Abas is eminently suited to take the helm at the commission considering the depth of his experience in directly managing critical aspects of both the 2016 national and local

elections and the [recent] Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections," Comelec spokesperson James Jimenez said.

### Unexpired term

The first Muslim and the youngest Comelec chair ever will serve the unfinished term

of resigned Chair Andres Bautista until Feb. 2, 2022.

Before his confirmation, Abas vowed to keep his hands off the plebiscite for the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). He is a nephew of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) leader Mohagher Iqbal.

"From the time I assumed

office, I inhibited myself from all proceedings of BBL, citing my relation to my uncle," said Abas, who was appointed commissioner in 2015 by former President Benigno Aquino III.

The proposed BBL will create a new self-governing region in Mindanao for Muslims.

Abas also told the CA that switching back to manual voting would be "bloody" and "full of controversy and scandal."

Even a hybrid system—manual voting and automated transmission and canvassing—will not be very efficient, he said.

—TINA G. SANTOS AND DJYAP INQ

# No to Bangsamoro police force – PNP

BY ROY D.R. NARRA

**P**HILIPPINE National Police (PNP) Chief Oscar Albayalde has thumbed down the idea of an independent police force for the proposed Bangsamoro region.

Uniformed troops should continue to be administered by the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines to prevent politicization and the absence of command and control, he insisted.

that it will be politicized because they have their own force and we cannot control our forces. Their [police] force should be under the PNP, even the recruitment,"

Albayalde said in Filipino.

The PNP therefore wants the

proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law amended to relegate the status of the Bangsamoro police to that of a regional command.

This was in line with the proposed amendment by Antipolo Rep. Romeo Acop, who opposes the BBL provision allowing the region to form its own uniformed services.

Albayalde attended the BBL hearing with the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and some government officials on May 22 to discuss the bill.

Under the House Bill (HB) 6475 of the Bangsamoro Basic

Law, the Bangsamoro region will have its own military and police forces, jail management and penology bureau, police commission, fire protection bureau and coast guard.

The bill however states that the police force will still be under the PNP.

HB 6475 calls for the abolition of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, to be replaced by the Bangsamoro region.

The Senate has asked President Rodrigo Duterte to certify the bill as urgent before the June congressional break.

## CA confirms Abas as Comelec chair

By **MARIO B. CASAYURAN** and **LESLIE ANN G. AQUINO**

The powerful 25-man Commission on Appointments (CA) confirmed yesterday the appointment of Sheriff Nanimbayan Abas as chairman of the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

Sen. Cynthia A. Villar, chairperson of the CA constitutional commissions and offices committee, recommended Abas'

confirmation during the plenary session of the CA presided by newly-installed Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III.

Villar asked her colleagues to confirm Abas' appointment to safeguard the supreme voice of the Filipino people.

"It is essential that it (CA) ►5

## CA confirms Abas...

ensures that the next chairman of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) must be a person not just for his excellence but more importantly of honor and untainted integrity," she said.

With this imprimatur from Villar, the CA confirmed the appointment of Abas as the CA chairman, replacing Andres J. Bautista, who resigned earlier this year.

Abas, a career government official and a former law professor, thus, became the first Comelec chairman to come from Mindanao, and was also the youngest to assume the post at 39.

His term expires on Feb. 2, 2022, a few months before the May 2022

presidential elections.

"I will not let the Commission down or the Filipino nation down," Abas told reporters after the confirmation proceedings at the Senate.

Villar said Abas oversaw the recent successful Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections described as very credible and peaceful with 96 percent of the election results known in 12 hours.

Comelec Spokesman James Jimenez said the agency welcomes the news of Abas' assumption as chairman, and said that it comes at a most opportune time when the poll body is preparing for the May 2019 National and Local Elections.

He said Abas was suited for the post citing the latter's experience in the last two polls.

"Chair Abas is eminently suited to take the helm at the Commission considering the depth of his experi-

ence in directly managing critical aspects of both the 2016 National and Local elections and the recently concluded 2018 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections," said Jimenez in a statement.

According to Jimenez, Abas' assumption of the chairmanship leaves two vacancies in the Comelec en-banc.

At present, the seven-member en-banc only has five members, namely: Commissioners Al Parreno, Rowena Guanzon, Luie Guia, Socorro Inting and Abas.

Newly installed Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III presided over the CA plenary session that confirmed Abas' confirmation. The Senate chief automatically becomes the CA chairman.

Sotto replaced Senator Aquilino Pimentel III as Senate president last Monday. Pimentel was installed as a new CA member vice Senator Emmanuel D. Pacquiao.

Pimentel took over Pacquiao's

chairmanship of the CA environment and natural resources committee and membership in various committees.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri and Rep. Joel Mayo Almario seconded Villar's motion seeking Abas' confirmation.

Zubiri, who is defending on the Senate floor the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) bill, said he was impressed by Abas' statement that he would inhibit himself when the BBL measure is submitted to a plebiscite to voters in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Abas is the nephew of Mohaquer Iqbal, a ranking official of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Zubiri said the CA's confirmation of Abas' appointment by President Duterte is a step leading to his reiteration for a long-lasting peace in troubled Mindanao.

"A lot is on Chairman Abas' shoulders," he said referring to shenanigans in the ARMM area and various problems plaguing the CA.

On Villar's suggestion that the Comelec adopt a hybrid election which would consist of "manual voting, electronic transmission" of the election result, Abas told the CA committee that the Comelec would be guided by the wisdom of Congress.

Abas stressed that the Comelec would study the Villar proposal carefully.

He, however, recalled that a hybrid election demonstration in Bacoor, Cavite in 2015 was a failure. That demonstration was hit by technical glitches, he explained.

Abas assured the senators and congressmen who are CA members that the coming 2019 mid-term elections would be credible as the Comelec en-banc and information technology (IT) department are busy putting in place reform measures.



# CA confirms Abas as chairman of Commission on Elections

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

THE powerful Commission on Appointments on Wednesday confirmed the appointment of Sheriff Abas as chairman of the Commission on Elections.

Facing the hearing by the CA committee on constitutional commissions and offices, Abas insisted on the credibility of the 2016 presidential elections, which elected President Rodrigo Duterte.

Abas also vowed that he would avoid the fate of Comelec chairpersons before him, such as Alfredo Benipayo, Jose Melo, and Andres Bautista, who failed to finish their terms for various reasons.

"I will try my best, your honor, that I will not be like them who did not finish their terms," said Abas as set to break many firsts in the Comelec.

At 39, he will become the youngest Comelec chair aside from the first Comelec chairperson from Mindanao. He will serve as the Philippines' first Muslim elections chief.

Also, Abas is the first Comelec commissioner to become Comelec chair.

Since he is a nephew of Moro Islamic Liberation Front chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal, Abas said he will inhibit in the event of a plebiscite for ratification of proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law.

A plebiscite would be held in the affected areas if Congress would pass the proposed measure that would create the Bangsamoro region.

Abas issued this statement after he was questioned by Senator Risa Hontiveros during the confirmation hearing.

"On BBL, citing my relation with my uncle, I will be totally hands off," said Abas, who happens to be the nephew of Moro Islamic Liberation Front chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal," said Abas.

## POSTSCRIPT

FEDERICO D. PASCUAL Jr.

### Du30 China policy has public support?

Plain folk reeling from such problems as rising prices, unemployment and corruption may feel detached from foreign affairs, but President Rodrigo Duterte's worrisome handling of relations with China may just affect his satisfaction rating in the next survey.

There is a growing concern that the President's timid (some say "traitorous") reaction to China's conversion into military outposts of hitherto uninhabitable features in the West Philippine Sea may lead to a security crisis or the eventual loss of territory.

Having pivoted to the left toward Beijing on the pretext of charting an independent foreign policy, Duterte appears to be falling for China's offer of massive aid, loans and investments to quicken his infrastructure-building program.

Duterte's pro-China inclination has been noted in mainstream and social media, with notable authorities and influencers weighing in with words of caution and suggestions to break out of his parochial box to find wider nonpartisan counsel.

Although the building of Chinese outposts in the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone was not yet being discussed prominently before March 23-27, when the last Social Weather Stations survey was conducted, a slip in Duterte's satisfaction rating has been noted.

The SWS survey found 70 percent of adult Filipinos satisfied, 17 percent undecided, and 14 percent dissatisfied, leaving a net satisfaction rating of +56 percent.

But Malacañang did not seem alarmed with a 10-point drop in Duterte's net trust rating from 75 percent (excellent) in December 2017 to 65 (very good) in the first quarter of 2018.

It would be interesting to see what the President's trust rating would be in the next survey considering that his deference to China could complicate the gut issues already bedeviling the population.

Of the last survey, public relations guru Charlie A. Agatep noted that while +56 percent was described by SWS as "very good," it did not say how many of the 70 percent satisfied are "somewhat" or "very" satisfied, nor does it give an inkling of how many of the 17 percent undecided would say they are satisfied or dissatisfied if the interviewer had probed a bit further.

The question asked the 1,200 adult interviewees was: "Please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the performance of (Duterte). Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, undecided if satisfied or dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, or you have not ever heard or read anything about (Duterte)?"

Agatep noted: "Duterte got the biggest drop in satisfaction rating during the two years tenure of every president. At one point Duterte had a steep drop to 45 percent. The satisfaction ratings show that Filipinos ay *nababa ang ka*.



*gaydhan* (easy to please). What we'd like to see are ratings for specific subjects like employment, generation, peace and order, poverty alleviation, foreign affairs."

It remains to be seen if the desultory handling of China's aggressiveness by President Duterte, as architect of foreign policy and its sole spokesman, would inspire confidence among Filipinos some of whom are already asking if they are being sold down the Yangtze river.

#### Clarifications from Star reader

Mano E. Valderrama, founder/first president (now president emeritus) of the Philippine Institute of Arbitrators, said in reaction to our Tuesday column titled "Full report needed on China intrusion."

The President (in his send-off speech re Philippine Rise researchers) made it known that he is aware of the distinction between sovereign economic rights over resources in the Philippine EEZ on one hand and sovereignty over the maritime zone where those resources are located on the other hand.

The first was granted to the Philippines by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the grant was confirmed by the arbitral tribunal at The Hague. The second was neither granted to the Philippines by UNCLOS nor by the arbitral tribunal.

In layman's terms, the Philippines has sovereign rights over the resources in its EEZ and continental shelf. But the Philippines neither owns the sea bed, the water column nor the air space below, in and above its EEZ.

As for the reefs (e.g. Mischief) they are parts of the sea and they cannot be owned by anybody. Unless if they are within a coastal country's territorial seas.

On the point, China's taking over of the reefs within the Philippine EEZ and its buildup of artificial islands hamper the exercise by the Philippines of its sovereign rights over resources. Hence, the need for consent by the Philippines. Needless to state, China had not previously secured the consent of the Philippines. So, China violated the maritime rights of the Philippines.

Still on the point, China's buildup is so massive that it may have also violated the high seas freedoms of other countries.

And, apparently, China's militarization threatens not only the Philippines but also other countries.

And so, why egg the Philippines to lead the fray against China? The Philippines is one of the weakest, if not the weakest, militarily in the region.

On another point, the Philippines had apparently tied up its hands when it agreed with China to (1) establish "red lines" that none of them may cross and (2) establish bilateral consultative meetings where issues and possible disputes are to be raised, discussed and, possibly, be resolved. Hence, the Philippines cannot publicly protest China's military activities for to do so would amount to a violation of the agreement.

A matter of concern here is that, while the DFA Secretary announced the Philippine "red lines," he still has to disclose China's red lines.

On still another point, the fact is that the United States also maintains a military presence in the region. So, should that not be also a matter of concern to us? Or, is this an issue of trust? We trust the US but not China?

Finally, I think that our real worry should be the possibility that the region may become an area of military conflict between the two superpowers.

ADVISORY: All *Postscripts* can be accessed at [manilamail.com](mailto:manilamail.com). Follow author on Twitter as @FDPascual. Email feedback to [fdp333@yahoo.com](mailto:fdp333@yahoo.com)

# What, me worry?

## COMMENTARY

MART DEL ROSARIO

A couple of dudes—statisticians, actually—got sick and tired of hearing people worrying about one thing or another and decided to look deeper into the matter. What do people commonly worry about? Are all they worry about worth worrying about? The dudes called their study “panicology,” a dead giveaway to what worrying generally brings: panic and anxiety. (Like what many now experience as they contemplate the senators’ latest funny antic—installing Tito “Fat Bulaga” Sotto as Senate president replacing Koko Pimentel. Tch.)

Humans are worrying creatures. They worry about almost everything, from simple matters like “Would my new haircut be a hit with the girls or be the object of giggles?” to really cerebral issues like “What if the Prez decides to hock to China not just those islets in the West Philippine Sea but the whole of beautiful Palawan?”

Of course you would say that’s too far-fetched an eventuality to worry about. But that’s exactly my point. People are so enamored of worrying that they worry even about things they know will never happen in their lifetime. For example:

During the campaign, the Prez declared: Get me a jet ski, I’ll cut the waves to the Spratlys and confront those (expletives) illegally claiming our islands. We all know that’s all PR acoustics—no way will he be able to do it. First, no one would lend him a jet ski; he’s liable to lose it to the waters. Second, he does not know a thing about jet-skiing; he’ll likely go no more than 10 yards from the shore and tumble. Yet despite the high improbability of him jet-skiing to anywhere, his declaration of a dubiously doable intent caused many to worry. About what?

Worry that in a sudden impetuosity he may actually try to do it—and get sued or quowarrantoed for giving jet-skiing a bad name.

There are many inducements that impel worrying. The most common of late is worrying that fulfillment of an object of desire might not happen, and, conversely, worrying that losing an object of desire already nearly in your hand might happen. To illustrate: Let’s say the rumor that Jose Calida is eyeing a seat in the Supreme Court is not just a rumor but a fact. We must assume he must be tossing in his bed endlessly, worrying that the object of his dream might not happen. Conversely, let us imagine that the appointment of Larry Gadon as new ombudsman is just awaiting official announcement. We can also imagine him wearing the soles of his *chinelas* thin, pacing the floor in his bedroom and worrying that something unexpected would abort the already-in-the-bag appointment.

Is there a cure to worrying? I doubt it. American pseudopsychologists, the most successful of the world’s snake oil salesmen, come out every other year with books prescribing ways and methods to deal with worrying. Dale Carnegie, the original PR retainer-fee tactician, authored “How to Stop Worrying and Start Living.” Maybe the book is the real thing. He did stop worrying where he’d get the money for the mortgage of his house because his book sold in the millions.

Like I said, there are worriers worrying about a gamut of things from the absurd to the zany. One of them, my dear friend Kee Bin, is a Chicano (Chinese-Ilocano) originally from up North but now a well-loved and respected leader of a gated village in Quezon City. Kee Bin, like me, is a crazy lot-to-fan and he worries how he’d allocate his windfall when he hits the jackpot.

“Shouldn’t you worry first whether luck would smile at you before you worry which way you’d parcel out the loot? That’s the logical sequence,” I point out.

“Nah, that’s a waste of brain cells—worrying if you’ll get what you want,” Kee Bin says. “That’s negative thinking. The winning strategy is: Think positive. Assume that you’ll get what you’re aiming for.”

I’m afraid my friend has been completely convinced by another American snake oil salesman, the author of a book that also sold in the millions: “The Power of Positive Thinking.”

I decide not to argue and propose instead that we go to Quiapo and consult one of those *manghuhula* that practice their craft outside the church walls. The proposed question: Is the American formula the surest way we’ll get the best results from our worrying?

Very exciting object of research, right? When are we going?

We are not going, Kee Bin says after initially agreeing to my idea. He is seized as usual by a worry: that the Chief Justice’s quo warranto ouster would ignite street rallies and we’d be caught in traffic. *A13*

Mart del Rosario (martdelrosario@yahoo.com) is a retired advertising-PR consultant.

## FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

### Heroes

One year ago, fighting broke out in Marawi City after troops tried to serve a warrant of arrest on Isnilon Hapilon, the ISIS "emir" for all of Southeast Asia.

Hapilon, it turned out, infiltrated a small army of militants into the city with plans for its takeover. The militants had impressive firepower and enough ammunition to fight a long siege.

After the initial skirmish that saw government forces withdrawing in the face of superior numbers, the militants quickly occupied strategic points in the city. What followed was a siege that lasted over five months. The bloody battle for Marawi cost about 1,500 lives, nearly a thousand of them from the side of the Maute forces.

President Duterte, the other day, took responsibility for the obvious failure in intelligence. A small army of about a thousand militants managed to infiltrate the city under the military's nose, brought in heavy arms and ammunition, and stockpiled large amounts of food.

The military warns us about " sleeper " cells of ISIS-affiliated fighters. But a force as large as that assembled for occupying Marawi will be tough to replace. The Maute brothers invested years and a lot of money assembling that force and executing the deployment. The ISIS is now a depleted force globally and the counter-terrorism effort has vastly improved its methods.

Still, many inconvenient questions remain unanswered. How was it possible for such a substantial deployment of militants to happen without the neighbors noticing - and reporting the build-up to the authorities?

The fighting devastated a large swathe of Marawi. This is how urban warfare looks like. We have seen this sort of devastation elsewhere, in the great cities of Syria ruined by the civil war.

The most current estimate puts the cost of rehabilitating the damaged sections of Marawi at P88 billion. The team on the ground seems to be doing a good job at rebuilding the place. But they can never restore the city's charm. Its innocence lost, Marawi will never be the same.

One year after the onset of fighting, about 230,000 residents remain displaced. Pesky questions about who owns which piece of land will likely slow the rehabilitation effort. Marawi is notorious for its bad land documentation. It turns out, a large part of the battle area remains legally a part of the military reservation.

#### Anniversary

For purposes of unveiling the detailed designs for rebuilding the city, ceremonies were organized to



mark the first anniversary of the onset of hostilities. While some officials did gather in the city, President Duterte stayed in Manila.

Presidential Assistant Bong Go explained that the President sees no point in commemorating the onset of hostilities. He assured the President will be in the city on the first anniversary of its complete liberation from the militants. He has a point.

When the anniversary of the city's liberation comes around, we hope the focus of the ceremonies will be more on the heroes who sacrificed so much and less on the construction details of the rehabilitation plan.

About 150 members of our armed forces perished in that battle. Over 1,700 soldiers were wounded. Our army did its job bravely and paid the cost of war dearly.

Our people do appreciate the courage and professionalism of our fighting men. When the units deployed to Marawi returned to their home bases, people in the streets applauded them.

Five months from now, our Marawi heroes will hopefully be more fittingly honored. There are many more stories of valor, many more tales of selfless courage, needing to be told.

We look forward to the anniversary of the battle's end. The performance of our soldiers did us proud.

#### Misstated

Roque did make it sound that government might roll back excise taxes on fuel if international oil prices touch the \$80 per barrel mark. That creates so much unwarranted expectation. He should go back and closely read the letter of the TRAIN law.

This is how the law reads: "For the period 2018 to 2020, the scheduled increase in the excise tax on fuel as imposed in this Section shall be suspended when the average Dubai crude oil price based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) for three months prior to the scheduled increase of the month reaches or exceeds USD 80 per barrel."

Even that allowance on prospective escalation on the fuel excise tax is subject to some conditions. To wit: "Provided, that the Department of Finance shall perform an annual review of the implementation of the excise tax on fuel and shall, based on projections provided and recommendations of the Development Budget Coordination Committee, as reconciled from the conditions as provided above, recommend the implementation or suspension of the excise tax on fuel. Provided, further, that the recommendation shall be given on a yearly basis. Provided, finally, that any suspension of the increase in excise tax shall not result in any reduction of the excise tax being imposed at the time of the suspension."

That is an exhausting sentence. But Harry, being a lawyer, should be able to read and understand it.

He should not make people expect that the excise tax could be whimsically withdrawn once global oil prices touches \$80. The law provides that only future escalations in the excise tax could be suspended, not the excise tax rate already in effect.

Harry is fond of repeating that Roman aphorism: The law is harsh, but it is the law. He should do that now.

## SHOOTING STRAIGHT

BOBIT S. AVILA

### Marawi City: A year of valor and bravery

It was only a year ago that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) got thoroughly tested by the Maute Group led by Omar Maute and Isnilon Hapilon and a thousand men when a team of policemen and military went to Marawi City on May 23, 2017 based on information that these two militant leaders were holed out in that city to arrest them. It was then that all hell broke loose and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were taken by surprise that the Maute Group had prepared themselves for a long drawn fight all in the name of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIS).



Actually, a couple of years earlier, we saw the Maute Terrorists raise the black ISIS flag somewhere in Mindanao and uploaded it on their Facebook page, but then Pres. Benigno "PNoy" Aquino III dismissed this report as not factual. Indeed, it is a matter of leadership. If Mr. Aquino ran after the Maute Group at that time, I doubt if they would have the time to stock arms and ammunition and food in strategic areas of Marawi. Call it a failure of intelligence and a failure of leadership by President Aquino.

A year ago, Pres. Rodrigo "Digong" Duterte had a planned meeting with Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin, which he had to cut short so he could be able to come home and be on top of the Marawi siege. In hindsight, we are so blessed to have Pres. Duterte as our Commander-in-Chief during the fight to regain Marawi City, which admittedly, our Intel group failed to inform the President that

the Maute was able to stock firearms, ammunition, food in many strategic areas within Marawi City. Hence, the battle of Marawi City has become the longest urban battle in the modern history of the Philippines.

The Maute group militants attacked Camp Ranau and occupied several buildings in the city, including Marawi City Hall, Mindanao State University, a hospital and the city jail. They also occupied the main street and set fire to Saint Mary's Cathedral and the Dansalan College, run by the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). The militants also took a priest and several churchgoers' hostages or used them as human shields.

The Philippine Air Force (PAF) went on unprecedented bombing raids within the heart of Marawi. Our air superiority gave the AFP a chance to dislodge the well-entrenched Maute Group. It really came to the point that the PAF expended most of their bombs, which the US military restocked with new bombs. It was the bombing campaign that took out many well-entrenched snipers holed out in many buildings in Marawi City.

All told, after five months of fighting, the Marawi siege claimed a total of a thousand lives, 700 plus were armed terrorists and 160 were government soldiers while 47 were civilians. The dead also included Omar Maute and Isnilon Hapilon, the leaders of the Maute Group that hoped to establish a Caliphate in Marawi City. At least now the ISIS know that the next time they try to take the Philippines, they will have to contend with our Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) who now have a great reputation of the best urban fighters and the most tested soldiers in South East Asia.

But no talk of Marawi would be complete without mentioning the exploits of 24-year old Private First Class Dhan Ryan Bayot. This incident happened on the next day that the Maute Group occupied Marawi City, exactly a year ago when he and his fellow soldiers were ambushed near the Mayor's house. That ambush killed five of his fellow soldiers and when

Turn to page 10

**AVILA** From page 9

he was cornered, Pvt First Class Bayot radioed his commander "Bomb my location." In the end, even the Maute terrorist surrounding them were killed.

Four days later, his father, Sgt. Larry Bayot of Division Reconnaissance Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division found his body but it bore no bullet wounds, but his head was bashed and his body bore marks of being slashed by a sword. Pvt. Bayot is without any doubt a true Filipino hero who fought and died for his country. Incidentally, the word "Bayot" in the Cebuano language connotes being "Gay." But this Bayot showed exemplary courage and valor! I hope that someday the AFP would erect a statue of this brave young Filipino soldier because he truly is the epitome of the Filipino soldier.

I heard that some 641 officers and soldiers who fought in Marawi were promoted to the next rank in a ceremony held in Fort Bonifacio, while four colonels who served as company commanders during the battle received their first star as brigadier generals. Thirty-six were promoted to master sergeant, 98 to technical sergeant, 103 to staff sergeants, 193 to sergeant and 211 to corporal. These are promotions for meritorious work in a combat zone. But all these are meaningless if we do not honor our soldiers who fought and died so that Marawi City would not become a caliphate, as ISIS would have wanted it to be. We are so proud of the Filipino soldiers!

Email: [vsbabito@gmail.com](mailto:vsbabito@gmail.com) ★

59

# A new deadline to wipe out Abu Sayyaf

**A**T the start of 2017, President Duterte, then just a few months in office, gave the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) six months to neutralize the Abu Sayyaf. The notorious group had just kidnapped a German yacht owner after killing his wife in the waters around Sulu and was now demanding ransom. Earlier in 2015, the Abu Sayyaf had kidnapped three foreigners and a Filipina in the Davao Gulf, then killed two of the foreigners, both Canadians. It was then said to be holding about 20 other hostages of various nationalities, all for ransom.

The deadline for the presidential order was June 30, 2017, but the AFP drive was overtaken by the siege of Marawi on May 23. On that day, forces of the Maute Group, supported by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), seized the city center in a war that was to rage in the next five months as the whole of Mindanao was placed under martial law.

Early this month, the Abu Sayyaf was again in the news. After kidnapping two policewomen in Patikul, Sulu, on April 29, the outlaw group reportedly released them in Talipao, Sulu. Their relatives paid ₱2.5 million for their release, down from an original demand of ₱5 million, according to one source, after negotiation by a leader of the Moro National Liberation Front.

Government forces in Sulu have now been given a new deadline to wipe out the Abu Sayyaf - December this year, seven months from now, Brig.

Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of Joint Task Force Sulu, said the deadline was issued by the new Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff Gen. Carlito Galvez at a command conference in Zamboanga City last Wednesday.

Ten Army battalions have been deployed in Sulu and an additional battalion is coming from Marawi. These forces, together with units of the Philippine National Police (PNP), now led by its new chief, Director General Oscar Albayalde, will mount the new campaign to wipe out the Abu Sayyaf.

Mindanao has long been a problem area for the government, with two major groups - the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) - having mass support. The Duterte administration is well on the way to ending age-old problems with them with the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

There are, however, many smaller outlaw groups which have been thriving in Mindanao. The Abu Sayyaf is perhaps the most notorious of them, with kidnapping for ransom as its forte. The initial effort of the Duterte administration to eliminate the Abu Sayyaf in 2017 was thwarted by the Marawi rebellion of the Maute Group.

But now, with that operation over and with the new chiefs of the AFP and the PNP government forces should be able to put an end to this group which has gained international notoriety because of its foreign kidnap victims, and carry out at long last President Duterte's order to wipe it out.

EDITORIAL

Besieged still

WEDNESDAY marked the first anniversary of the start of the Marawi siege, which claimed more than 1,000 lives, affected 24 villages in the city, reduced to rubble 250 hectares of land and displaced hundreds of thousands of residents.

It took the government a martial law declaration in Mindanao and five months to kill the leaders of the siege and quell the attack.

A year on, however, the people remain besieged. According to the Red Cross, food supply is dwindling as efforts move from emergency response to early

recovery. Transition houses are not enough and thousands continue to languish in dire circumstances, with poor water, power and sanitation. Livelihood opportunities have reached only a portion of the number who actually need them.

Worse, the threat lingers. The leaders of the siege may be dead but the possibility of new terrorists coming in, joining forces with local groups and recruiting impressionable and desperate young Muslims, remain present. Analysts warn that they can capitalize on the dissatisfaction of the people.

These threats have an implication on the safety of the rehabilitation workers as well.

Finally, how will those handling the funds—the national government has earmarked P72 billion for the a rehabilitation program and numerous groups have pledged support to rebuild Marawi—be made accountable should they misuse the much-needed money?

President Duterte said he did not go to Marawi on Wednesday because he did not wish to honor the terrorists. He would rather commemorate the liberation in October.

But remembering that liberation five months from now will be more meaningful if the people also were made free from the ills that still bring them down to this day. 44



24

May 2018

M

# Falling from grace



**DUTY CALLS**  
**FLORENCIO FIANZA**

IN THE old days, politics was synonymous to public service. That was at least what we were taught in school. But judging from what is going on not only in this country but other places as well, this may no longer be the case. There are still people who enter politics wanting to do good but there are others who look at politics as a vehicle to gain power and wealth.

When this happens and the politician falls from grace, it is often painful, brutal and traumatic.

For example, we are now witnessing this unfold in Malaysia. Former Prime Minister Najib Razak, the son of the second Prime Minister of Malaysia who ruled the country for almost ten years, went down in a stunning defeat in the hands of coalition between his former mentor and ally Mahathir and jailed opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

*“ It is often painful, brutal and traumatic ”*

Now, there is a great possibility that he will go to jail amid allegations of corruption which also involves his wife, Rosmah Mansor. Both of course are denying any wrong doing but now that he is out of power, a lot of issues that were previously suppressed when Razak was in power about corruption and the murder of a Mongolian model rumored to be his mistress will now be investigated.

The most serious of the charges is a missing US\$4.5 billion allegedly laundered by 1Malaysia Development Berhad, a government unit set up by the Razak government in 2009. It has been alleged that a sizable portion of that amount found its way to the personal bank account of Razak. Razak's problems are compounded by the unpopularity of his wife who is apparently fond of signature bags, expensive suitcases and jewelry.

Razak's fall from grace was immediate. He and his wife were barred

from leaving the country and his residence and other apartments that he owns were raided by the police confiscating about 284 bags and suitcases, many filled with cash and jewelry. It is an unfolding political drama that has caught the imagination of many Malaysians.

If Malaysia does end up sending Razak to jail, Malaysia will be joining three other countries and territories in the region that have sent former leaders to jail. The first is South Korea which sent four of its former presidents to jail including its first female President. A former president, Roh Moo-hyun, jumped to his death when an investigation was opened against him thereby avoiding the ignominy of going to jail. The common denominator of all these presidents going to jail is corruption. Taiwan also has sent two of its former presidents to jail.

Thailand did sentence two former Prince Ministers to jail, the siblings Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra but both were able to leave the country before their sen-

tences could be carried out which the military probably preferred than both staying in the country where they can create political mischief. Both are now living in exile.

We here did send two of our former presidents to jail. Former President Benigno Aquino III is currently being investigated for various offenses which could still lead to his eventual detention but President Duterte does not seem so determined to send him to jail. Mr. Aquino will be one lucky fellow.

\*\*\*

Those who follow the developments in the South China Sea are in anguish due to the stance taken by the administration of President Duterte in relation to what China is doing.

In spite of the country's clear-cut victory in our arbitral case before the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the Duterte administration has not filed

## Falling...

From A4

any diplomatic protest of China's continuing militarization of the South China Sea. In the words of the current United States Pacific Commander in Chief Admiral Harry Harris, China is now for all intents and purposes in control of the whole of the South China Sea and there is a need for the US to increase its military capability to be able to deal with the situation more forcefully.

On our side, no one is more frustrated than Justice Antonio Carpio who has been urging the government to at least file a diplomatic protest to officially express our disagreement with

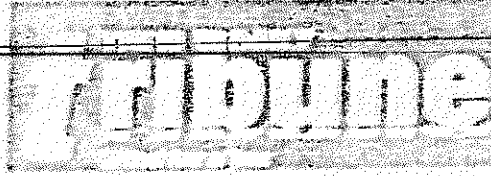
what China is doing and avoid the appearance of acquiescing to the activities of China which might affect any legal actions that future governments would want to take.

Another former official who is scratching his head is former National Security Adviser Roilo Golez, a former naval officer and a product of the US Naval Academy. He believes that the country is now in mortal danger due to the ability of China to threaten the whole country in a matter of minutes from its island bases in the South China Sea.

Unfortunately for all other critics, the one person who matters most in this country has a different take of the situation. The President honestly believes that officially protesting Chi-

na's actions might provoke a war that the country cannot win. Regardless of what we think with this argument, there is very little that anybody can do. No one in government is prepared to tell the President that this is not necessarily the case.

The question is, why this belief? Since the President has not elaborated why he believes that a diplomatic protest against China will trigger war, we can only speculate on the real reasons. Perhaps, he and President Xi have a secret agreement. If so, he should convene the National Security Council to discuss the issue. No matter how well-meaning the President is, sovereignty is bigger than any one person to be deciding all by himself without the benefit of informed counsel.



E · D · I · T · O · R · I · A · L

# Real threat remains

**T**he Australians are proving to be more committed even more than the Americans as partner against the Islamic State (IS) agenda on the Philippines for the practical reason that it does not want Muslim extremists setting up base near its shore.

As voices of concern continue to be raised against China, the IS remains the most potent threat in the region.

A so-called Operation Augury is underway in the country which is a buttoned-up Australian intelligence operations to determine the capability of the IS to stage another Marawi City siege.

Five months of bloody skirmishes between state forces and IS sympathizers were the result of the audacious IS effort in establishing a Southeast Asian caliphate.

Australia was most worried about the prospects of a Southeast Asian base of the IS and Australian media is now describing Augury as one of the most covert operations of its government in the war against terror.

Thus, news outfits have been recently questioning the costs of "Operation Augury — Philippines" since these "were blacked out for each of the next four years with the letters 'nfp' (not for publication) and a footnote explaining that this was 'due to national security issues'".

Australia's military top brass or national security coordinators name their deepest fears for regional security is on the Philippines.

"That's what keeps me awake at night," one senior officer admitted to Australian media last year.

According to Australian network ABC, the dread of a "Raqqa in South-East Asia" explains why Australia moved so quickly last year to support Philippines Defense Forces with land, sea and air support against IS fanatics led by the Maute group who laid siege to the city of Marawi.

Australian Defense Minister Marise Payne had publicly declared the rapid deployment of about 80 military trainers skilled at urban warfare in the Middle East to drill Filipino soldiers in the finer points of close range combat against the heavily armed militia, it said.

Last November, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visited barracks in Manila. "Australia and the Philippines are in the same fight", Turnbull said after watching a demonstration clearance of buildings mocked up on a parade ground.

By then, the task group which also comprised Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) P3 Orion surveillance crew and a small number of highly experienced Navy personnel had been given its name "Operation Augury — Philippines".

ABC reported that Augury then underwent a makeover that transformed it into something far more sensitive.

"The urban warfare soldiers were still there, but the Defense Media unit's coverage from 2017, complete with video handouts, abruptly stopped," according to ABC.

"In early 2018, Defense took a decision to complete Augury's slide into obscurity by extracting its costs from the budget, then in early stages of preparation," it added.

The Australian government apparently wanted the smallest information possible about the operations to keep the IS in the dark on the extent of the operations.

ABC said obvious sensitivity within the Philippines to foreign troops being based in their country was also responsible for the secrecy.

It said that a clue to the current operations in the Philippines was the visit of former Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) director-general Nick Warner to the Presidential Palace in Manila in August last year where his "fist pump" photo with Rody became controversial.

On several occasions, Rody said that the Philippine military's asset is mostly the courage of Filipino forces since the country remains without modern equipment against growingly sophisticated threats such as that posed by the IS.

The secret missions against the IS became more urgent after family suicide bombers attacked in Surabaya, Indonesia recently which elevated fears of a resurgent IS.

Rody had admitted that despite the liberation of Marawi City last year, the IS is far from defeated and worries about another attack remain.

The cooperative effort among countries in the region and of course, the Americans, is needed to make sure that threats to freedom and life as many know, do not prosper.