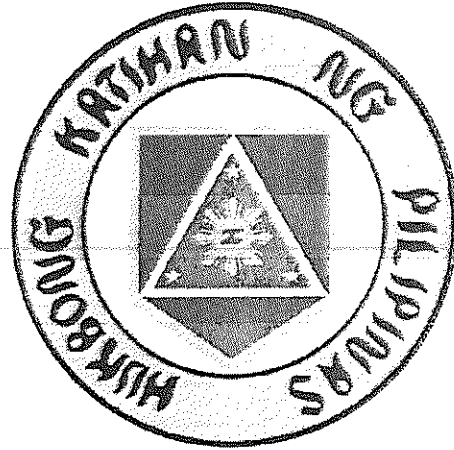


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# NEWS CLIPPINGS

31 May 2018

Thursday



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*Honor. Patriotism. Duty*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

31 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>		
1-2	Sereno appeals ouster from SC	Phil Star p.1
3	Sereno appeals to SC: Do what is right, just	PDI p.A1
<b>AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS</b>		
4	Benham R & D to be multi-agency effort	Phil Star p.B6
5	Mattis: US to continue operations in disputed sea	PDI p.A11
6	Lawmakers probe PH inaction China	PDI p.A11
7-8	DFA chief on SCS protest: We'll do it quietly	Phil Star p.1
9-10	DFA: 100 protests filed vs China; PH keen on UN ruling	Mla Standard p.A1
11	US to keep confronting Beijing in SCS	Phil Star p.2
12	US to keep confronting Beijing in S. SHina Sea – Mattis	Mla Bulletin p.4
13-14	Esperon, Cayetano assure gov't protecting territory, sovereign rights	Mla Bulletin p.1
15-16	Senators wants DFA to file diplomatic protest vs China	Mla Times p.A1
17-18	Rody to make full use of PCA ruling	Daily Tribune p.1
19-20	Esperon: PH ready for war if Pinoys in SCS are harmed	Malaya p.B1
21-22	CA confirms appointments of 3 Cabinet members, 5 AFP officials	Mla Bulletin p.1
23	CA confirms Guevarra, Castriciones, AFP's Galvez	Mla Standard p.A6
24	Duterte: AFP best armed forces in entire world	Daily Tribune p.4
25	Interim peace deal with NDF eyed	Phil Star p.A21
26	Military strikes rebel lair in Zambo Sur	PDI p.A16
27	NPA leader nabbed in Negros	Phil Star p.A21
28	Ka Jinggoy turned over to Davao police	Mla Bulletin p.11
29	House OKs BBL bill, Senate but introduces 'contentious' changes	PDI p.A3
30-31	Malacañang-backed BBL approved	Mla Bulletin p.1
32	House passes BBL	Mla Times p.A3
33	House okays BBL; Senate takes turn	Mla Standard p.A1
34-35	House passes BBL on 3 <sup>rd</sup> reading	Daily Tribune p.1
36	House passes BBL	Malaya p.B1
37	BIFF gun 'factory' seized	Phil Star p.A21
38	Military troops raid BIFF lair	Mla Bulletin p.11
39	Soldiers seized BIOFF arms factory	Mla Times p.A7
40	Zamboanga mayor vows justice for siege victims	Mla Times p.A7

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## **EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY**

41-42	An 11-car pile-up on the Fernan Bridge	Phil Star p.11
43-44	Dansalan College to rise from the rubble	Phil Star p.11
45	Muted, underrated dynamics in territorial disputes	PDI p.A14
46	HB 6457 Bangsamoro government	Mla Bulletin p.8
47-48	Asia's nukes: The Kim, Trump, Xi showdown	Mla Times p.A1
49	Our country's 'Red Queen' strategy	Mla Times p.A1
50-51	Calida must resign	Mla Standard p.A4
52	Rody draws the line	Daily Tribune p.6
53-54	Grave of Chief Justice Marked	Malaya p.B4

## **ONLINE NEWS**

55	BBL hurdles second reading at Senate	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
56	Senate OKs proposed BBL on final reading	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
57	230 Zamboanga del Sur villagers flee as AFP steps up assault vs NPA rebels	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
58	Duterte assures Joma Sison: No 'Aquino-style' assassination if you come home	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
59-60	Drilon: BBL must withstand judicial review	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
61	Air Force chopper makes emergency landing in Zamboanga	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>
62	2 alleged NPA rebels fall, yield in Bicol	<a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a>

# Sereno appeals ouster from SC

By EDU PUNAY

Ousted chief justice Maria Lourdes Sereno yesterday appealed the Supreme Court decision removing her through a mere quo warranto petition, noting that the SC violated her constitutional right to due process and overstepped its power.

In a 205-page motion filed minutes before the deadline, the ousted chief magistrate asked the SC to reconsider its ruling on May 11 that abruptly ended her unprecedented 18-year term by granting the quo warranto petition of the solicitor general to invalidate her appointment in 2012.

Sereno likewise urged the court to reverse the decision of six associate justices she accused of bias against her – Teresita Leonardo-Castro, Diosdado Peralta, Lucas Bersamin, Francis Jardeleza, Noel Tijam and Samuel Martires – not to inhibit from the case.

“More than its numerous legal and factual errors, the decision proves that in meting out justice, an impartial tribunal is crucial and indispensable. The decision illustrates vividly the dire and far-reaching consequences of a denial of due process,” she argued.

Sereno insisted that the SC has no authority to remove her from office because under the Constitution, the chief justice can be ousted only through an impeachment process.

“The indisputable intent of the Constitution is that impeachable officers, save for the President and Vice President, can be removed from office only by impeachment,” read the motion.

She reiterated that the issue on her statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs) cannot be the basis for adjudging her supposed lack of integrity and dishonesty.

Turn to Page 8

# Sereno

From Page 1

"This Honorable Court erred in ruling that the Respondent 'chronically failed to file her SALNs...' The filing per se of a SALN neither proves nor negates a person's integrity," she argued.

Sereno likewise insisted that the quo warranto petition should not have been granted because it already went beyond the one-year prescription period from appointment.

The ousted SC chief added the decision made baseless conclusions that are unsupported by the evidence, such as her alleged tax fraud when there was no evidence to support it.

"The matters that were never raised by either party are actually mere allegations or charges raised in the impeachment complaint before the House of Representatives, all of which have yet to be proven. Since the allegations stated therein are nothing more than mere charges, they cannot be taken as evidence against the Chief Justice," she stressed.

Sereno also told The Chiefs in an interview aired Tuesday night on Cignal TV's *One News* that her ordeal continues after her ouster as the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has launched an investigation against her, which she said is "illegal" and part of "persecution" by the Duterte administration.

She said the six justices should have been required by the Court to inhibit from the case due to actual biases.

"The justices' testimonies and actuations in the hearings before the House committee on justice (and in the oral argument, in the case of Justice Martires) are clear and convincing evidence of actual bias," Sereno explained.

"The justices' statements, and the emotional implications that are attached to the same, are evidence of actual bias. Actual bias is anchored not simply on their participation in the proceedings, but rather, on the substance of their statements," she added.

The SC voted 8-6 to declare

the chief justice position vacant and ordered the Judicial and Bar Council to start the search for Sereno's replacement.

Apart from Sereno's ouster, the SC also issued a show cause order requiring her to show why she should not be penalized for supposedly violating the Code of Professional Responsibility and the Code of Judicial Conduct "for transgressing the sub judice rule and for casting aspersions and ill motives to the members of the Supreme Court."

Those in the majority were Associate Justices De Castro, Peralta, Bersamin, Jardeleza, Tijam, Martires, Andres Reyes Jr. and Alexander Gesmundo.

Senior Associate Antonio Carpio and Associate Justices Presbitero Velasco Jr., Mariano del Castillo, Estela Bernabe, Marvic Leonen and Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa dissented from the ruling.

## Tax probe

Sereno likewise revealed that the tax bureau has started looking into her tax records, sent her letters demanding that

she surrender her books of account and conducted preliminary conference the other day.

"This is a clear message to everybody - you don't mess with this administration because we will file charges against you, we will have tax audit and you will have all these kind of difficulties," Sereno told The Chiefs.

She said the BIR probe is illegal because she was being asked to submit her records from as early as 2004, which supposedly could no longer be investigated.

"The prescriptive period (for whatever possible tax evasion committed 14 years ago) has already lapsed. It's really unjust; it's illegal," the ousted chief justice stressed.

Sereno believed that the BIR probe is part of harassment against her by the administration of President Duterte, whom she has publicly criticized and accused of being behind her ouster from the top judicial post.

She claimed she has paid her taxes correctly and also has not hidden any wealth.

"My house is sitting on a

205-square-meter property. Of the vehicles I own, the most expensive is a P900,000 Innova. You've seen my clothes and jewelry. Nothing in my life is hidden," she pointed out.

"Many people commented on my way of living - it's very modest. So this is not a lifestyle check; it's persecution," she alleged.

The ousted chief justice also revealed for the first time that she was asked by an emissary as early as July or August last year to resign from her post.

"It would be politically smart, according to them, and it would have spared me of difficulties, pain and persecution. But I said if a public official who is ready to face her accusers will just resign and give up, then nothing will be left of our institutions," she said.

In the same interview, Sereno welcomed the recent Senate resolution signed by 14 senators calling for review of the SC ruling that granted the quo warranto petition of the solicitor general and invalidated the appointment of the chief justice in 2012.

"That was a very pleasant

surprise... I was very pleased that they are fighting for their constitutional role of being the sole impeachment court," she commented.

Sereno said newly elected Senate President Vicente Sotto III should not ignore the resolution and prove himself a leader by listening to the 14 senators.

She said the Senate resolution gives her hope of pursuing her fight for rule of law and protection of democracy against abuses by those in power.

Sereno revealed that she has been meeting supporters from all walks of life in her speaking events, especially the youth, who shared their sentiments against the administration on issues involving extrajudicial killings, closure of Boracay island and the policy towards China.

"I tell them we have to fight to defend democracy and have an independent judiciary," she stressed.

The ousted SC chief believed that the justice system is "in ICU (intensive care unit) stage" and the Constitution is in danger because the President does not respect it.

# SERENO APPEALS TO SC: DO WHAT IS RIGHT, JUST

STORY BY MARLON RAMOS

In her motion for reconsideration, the ousted Chief Justice points out to the Supreme Court that its May 11 majority ruling set aside constitutional and legal rules and principles, and settled judicial precedents.

A2

## FROM A1

By Marlon Ramos  
@MRamosINQ

Maria Lourdes Sereno voiced hopes that all wasn't lost in the motion for reconsideration she filed on Wednesday, urging her colleagues on the Supreme Court to invalidate their decision booting her out as Chief Justice.

In an unprecedented ruling on May 11, the high court voted 8-6 in finding Sereno "guilty of unlawfully holding and exercising the Office of the Chief Justice."

Sereno, who drew President Duterte's ire for defending judges on his "narcolist," said the decision was replete with "legal and factual errors."

The ruling, which granted the quo warranto petition brought against her by Solicitor General Jose Calida, "illustrates vividly the dire and far-reaching consequences of a denial of due process," she said in her motion.

A quo warranto is a challenge to an official's qualifications for the post.

### Do what's right

"This is essentially a plea to the honorable court to do what is right and just," Sereno said in the motion her lawyers filed.

"Basic, fundamental and longstanding constitutional and legal rules and principles, and settled judicial precedents were ignored, set aside and reversed by the majority decision to achieve one end—the disqualification and ouster of the Chief Justice," she said.

Calida, the government's primary lawyer, initiated the quo warranto proceedings for Sereno's failure to submit all her statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs) to the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) when she applied for the top judicial post in 2012.

The JBC vets all candidates for jobs in the judiciary.

The majority ruling, penned by Associate Justice Noel Tijam, said Sereno flouted the Constitution and the Code of Judicial Conduct when she did not submit all her SALNs.

It said Sereno should have been disqualified at the outset, adding that a "member of the judiciary who commits such violations cannot be deemed to be a person of integrity."

### Not inherently immoral

Sereno said the majority ruling explicitly stated that her failure to submit all her SALNs should be considered "not inherently immoral."

"And since this honorable court has essentially held that the nonfiling of a SALN is not 'inherently immoral,' this purported offense should not have negated the Chief Justice's 'integrity,'" she argued.

Moreover, she pointed out that the decision was rendered "null and void" after Tijam and five other associate justices refused to recuse themselves from the deliberations on Calida's petition despite their palpable bias against her and in violation of her right to due process.

The five associate justices are Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Diosdado Peralta, Lucas Bersamin, Samuel Martires and Francis Jardeleza. Except for Martires, the justices testified in the impeachment proceedings against her in the House of Representatives.

Said Sereno: "This honorable court has required [the] inhibition of trial court judges for far lesser reasons. Established jurisprudence on the inhibition of judges should be equally applied in this case."

### Only by impeachment

She said the disqualification of the six justices "is mandatory, grounded on actual bias and not mere participation in the hearings held by the

House committee on justice."

Sereno stressed that Section 2, Article XI of the 1987 Constitution mandates that "impeachable officials like the Chief Justice can be removed only by impeachment and not by any other means."

"The proverbial path to perdition, which the majority of this court has taken, that is paved mainly with the intention of removing the Chief Justice by any means, can lead only to the destruction of judicial independence and the separation of powers," she said.

"That is a consequence, unintended as it may be, that the respondent earnestly asks this court to veer away from," she added. "The independence of the judiciary turns on this court's adherence to this rule."

According to Sereno, her colleagues' decision is unconstitutional since they have no authority to unseat a member of the high tribunal outside of the impeachment process.

"Textually, impeachment is the only method for removal of appointive constitutional officers permitted under the Constitution," she said.

### Expedient procedure

Sereno said a difficult process deliberately chosen by the Constitution could not be substituted with an expedient procedure.

The majority decision said the quo warranto could proceed simultaneously with impeachment as the petition was a remedy for challenging an appointed official's qualifications while impeachment was for acts made after appointment.

In the impeachment complaint, Sereno was accused of, among other charges, failing to declare her real wealth, buying a luxury car with government funds and making questionable decisions without consulting her fellow magistrates. INQ

# Benham R&D to be multi-agency effort

By RAINIER ALLAN RONDA

Malacañang's recent send-off of a team of scientists and researchers to the Philippine Rise signalled a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary effort for research and development on the vast undersea plateau.

Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato dela Peña said the department had been conducting a mostly lonely R&D effort on the former Benham Rise with some vessel support from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

"Many are becoming interested," Dela Peña told reporters.

"DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) has already taken the initiative to declare parts of Benham Rise as marine protected areas," he noted.

Dela Peña said that the DOST has poured resources for R&D on the undersea plateau after the United Nations declared it as part of the country's continental shelf.

"We are sometimes always late on things. We already have information on the resources available there, we have obtained the necessary... legal rights to manage the area. I think we should not dilly-dally," Dela Peña said.

"Because, as we have experienced in other cases, non-action

has put us at a disadvantage," he added. "I'm happy the President has given priority to this, not only to show to the world that this is our territory, but also to be able to come up with the appropriate plans to manage and protect the resources."

The DOST has allocated P38 million this year for R&D of Philippine Rise, Dela Peña said.

According to Dela Peña, the DOST had spent P39 million for the first exploration activities through its attached agencies Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development, and the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic, and Natural Resources Research and Development in 2016 to 2017.

"This had three components: one of them is to look at the physical configuration, the exact measurement of the physical features," he said, pointing out the undersea landmass measured 13.6 million hectares.

"Second, there was research to build a database of marine resource

information. Third, a survey of the benthic resources that included taking a look at the marine life and that's when we saw the different species of not only fish, there was also algae and corals," he said.

The National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCF) had sent three of its members to the expedition last week.

Doralyn Dalisay, a marine scientist from the University of San Agustin, said that the vast resources underneath can be a source of new drugs: antibiotics, anti-cancer compounds, anti-dengue and anti-malaria.

"We could find something new here that we could exploit for drug discovery," she said.

Gil Jacinto, representing the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute, said that aside from the rich marine biodiversity, the importance of Philippine Rise is seen in fisheries, oceanography and meteorology, and hoped for the continued support of the government in their research activities.

"Research will not only be done in two years but decades for future generations," he said.

Clarita Carlos, a member of the NRCF governing board, was also in the contingent. by

CHINA MILITARIZATION OF ISLANDS

MATTIS: US TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS IN DISPUTED SEA

ABOARD A US MILITARY AIRCRAFT—US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on Tuesday that the United States would continue to confront what Washington sees as China's militarization of islands in the South China Sea, despite drawing condemnation from Beijing for an operation in the region over the weekend.

Reuters first reported that two US Navy warships sailed near South China Sea islands claimed by China on Sunday, even as US President Donald Trump seeks Chinese cooperation on North Korea.

The operation, known as "freedom of navigation," was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing's efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters, where Chinese, Japanese and some Southeast Asian navies operate.

China expressed its anger, saying it had sent ships and aircraft to warn the US warships to leave.

International waters

"You'll notice there is only one country that seems to take active steps to rebuff them or state their resentment [to] them, but it's international waters and a lot of nations want to see freedom of navigation," Mattis told reporters while en-route to Hawaii, where he would oversee a change of command for US Pacific Command.

While the Sunday operation had been planned months in advance, and similar operations have become routine, it comes at a particularly sensitive time and just days after the Pentagon disinvented China from a major US-hosted naval drill.



Jim Mattis —AP

Critics have said these US operations have little impact on Chinese behavior and are largely symbolic.

Pentagon officials have long complained that China has not been candid enough about its rapid military buildup and using South China Sea islands to gather intelligence.

Recent satellite photographs showed China appeared to have deployed truck-mounted surface-to-air missiles or antiship cruise missiles on Woody Island in the Paracel archipelago.

Earlier this month, China's People's Liberation Army Air Force landed bombers on disputed islands and reefs in the South China Sea as part of a training exercise in the region.

Opaque things

"When they (Chinese) do things that are opaque to the rest of us, then we cannot cooperate in areas that we would otherwise cooperate in," Mattis said.

He said US diplomats were engaged on the issue, and he had heard concerns about Chinese actions not just from within the United States government, but also from regional allies. —REUTERS



# Lawmakers probe PH inaction on China

By Vince F. Nonato  
@VinceNonatoINQ

Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano on Wednesday denied doing nothing while China continued to build up its defenses in the South China Sea as lawmakers questioned the Duterte administration's "seeming lack of response" to Beijing's militarization of the strategic waterway.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. also parried suggestions of a cop-out, telling a news forum in Manila that President Duterte was ready to go to war if the Chinese harmed Filipino troops manning the Philippines' outposts in the Spratly archipelago.

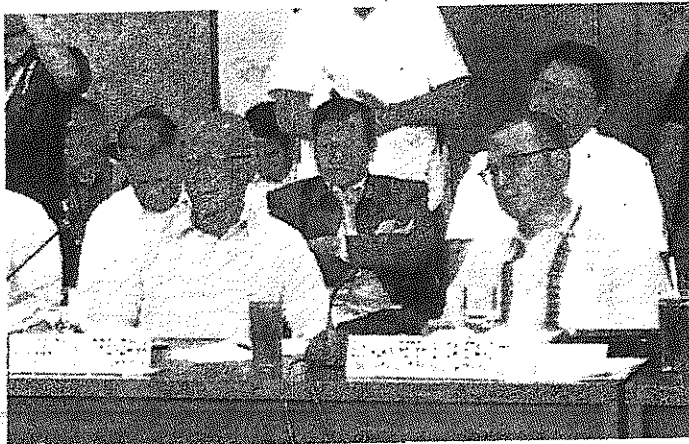
"The other night, the President said if his troops are harmed, that could be his red line," Esperon said.

Following Malacañang's line, however, Esperon played down China's landing of long-range bombers on Woody Island in the Paracel archipelago, saying the island was not located in Philippine territory.

## 'Are we the target?'

He also brushed aside reports that China had deployed antiship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems on three reefs claimed by the Philippines—Kagitingan (internationally known as Fiery Cross Reef), Zamora (Subi) and Panganiban (Mischief)—saying they posed no danger to the country.

"Are we the target? Should we be alarmed? I don't think so, because we are not at war with China," said Esperon, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.



**GRILLED ON GOV'T INACTION** Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano and other officials are questioned by Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano on the government's alleged inaction on China's military buildup in the West Philippine Sea during a House committee briefing on Wednesday. —VINCE F. NONATO

"So [should we protest] that? I don't think so," he added.

President Duterte has taken flak in recent weeks for not confronting Beijing following news of the landing of H-6K bombers on Woody Island and the deployment of weapons on Philippine territory, with opposition lawmakers outraged by his saying he did not want to go to war with a far superior China.

On Wednesday, during a hearing called by the West Philippine Sea special committee of the House of Representatives headed by Rep. Feliciano Belmonte, Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano took Cayetano to task for refusing to file a diplomatic protest against China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea.

Although congressional inquiries into national security issues are usually held behind closed doors, the hearing called

by Belmonte's committee on Wednesday was open to the public for three hours.

## Diplomatic action

Responding to Alejano, Cayetano claimed the Department of Foreign Affairs had taken diplomatic action. "Several dozens, maybe 50, 100—I'll have to count it—over the past two years," he said.

Cayetano, however, loosely used the term "diplomatic protest" to refer to any expression of disagreement.

"When we file a note verbale, that's a protest... If we list down everything that's a protest. If we list down 10 things, then we 'protest' 10 things. It's the content," Cayetano said. "If I get the microphone and I say, 'China, what you're doing is wrong,' that's a protest."

"We are not asking you to

trust us blindly," he added. "We have been filing a diplomatic protest, but the critics want us to announce it loudly. That is not conducive to the ongoing talks."

Cayetano repeated this notion several times during the hearing as he fielded questions from the lawmakers.

At one point, Cayetano described confronting China in the court of public opinion as "the Aquino way, the Del Rosario, the Carpio-or-whatever-you-want-to-call-it way."

He was referring to former President Benigno Aquino III, Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario, and acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio, who had been prodding the Duterte administration to protest China's aggressive moves lest its silence be taken for acquiescence.

Cayetano described the administration's approach as "prudent, patient and pragmatic" and characterized it as "the traditional building of trust through diplomacy."

## Not a shouting match

Alejano, however, said "filing a diplomatic protest is not a shouting match."

"We are now submitting ourselves because we want to appease China on what they want," he said, warning that China would eventually establish this as the "norm" that it would refuse to change.

Alejano also called out Cayetano for "always pinning the blame on President Aquino," when the Duterte administration has already been in power for some time. —WITH A REPORT FROM JAYMEE T. GAMIL AND REUTERS INQ AT

# DFA chief on SCS protest: We'll do it quietly

By DELON PORCALLA

Trust your government. Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano yesterday asked members of the House of Representatives to trust the foreign policy of President Duterte with

regard to China, assuring them that the government is doing its

*US to keep confronting Beijing in SCS. Story on Page 2.*

job through diplomatic means without fanfare.

"We are not asking you to trust

us blindly. We have been filing diplomatic protests, but our critics want us to shout loudly," Cayetano said, addressing Rep. Gary Alejano of Magdalo party-list.

*"Nanggaling tayo sa past administration na walang fishing, na*

**Turn to Page 8**

## DFA From Page 1

*pag nagsu-supply tayo sa Ayungin nagpapatintero tayo. Ngayon puwede na (We came from the previous administration when we couldn't even fish, and when we re-supplied our troops in Ayungin Shoal, we had to dodge. Now we are able to...) because we did it quietly, the situation improved,"*

Cayetano told the former Philippine Marine Corps captain.

"We're not saying it's perfect. But we are not doing it like the (former president Benigno Aquino III) or (acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio) way na through media at sigawan (shouting). We are doing it through diplomacy," the

Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) chief said in a briefing held for the House special committee on the West Philippine Sea.

Former House speaker and now Quezon City Rep. Feliciano Belmonte Jr. heads the panel.

"We have to erase doubts from the members of Congress that we are not doing anything. It's not true that we are the ones who are always nakikiu-

sap (asking favors) to China," the former Taguig congressman and senator stressed.

"As the President said, we are not slaves to anyone," Cayetano told Parafaque Rep. Gus Tambunting, who was among the legislators present, and who asked if it was right to "fight for what is ours."

"*Tama po. Pero walang* (That's correct. But there's no) enforcement mechanism. It's as if there's no sheriff," Cayetano explained.

"We are protecting the gains of the past, rectifying the mistakes, protecting our national territory and pursuing our sovereign rights to the fullest. This we are doing in a manner where we do not lose our soul in the process," the DFA chief reassured the House members.

"Yes, we have differences with (China), but we have made gains. We are not willing to do the Aquino approach. It would be against our national interest to return to that," he said, referring to Aquino's vocal stance on the issue.

Cayetano lamented that what has been coming out in mainstream media, and in practically all platforms, "are mere highlights that do not necessarily reflect the entirety of the President's statement."

"We have a problem too with Malaysia and Vietnam but we don't consider that aggressive because we have always been talking to them. *Ang sinasabi ni Presidente huwag tayong makigulo sa away ng mga higante, ang unahin natin iyung interest natin* (What the President said was for us not to meddle in the fight of the powerful, instead to focus on our interests)," he said.

### **Upgrade and patrol**

For his part, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. insisted that the Duterte administration "does not and will not abandon the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the South China Sea disputes."

"This is merely set aside in the meantime, in line with the efforts of government at promoting peace, stability and cordial relations among claimant countries in the region," the former armed forces chief maintained.

"At the proper time, we will take full advantage of the tribunal ruling, even as China refuses to recognize this, to serve as basis for the country's exercise of sovereignty and jurisdiction over features that are in Philippine territorial waters," Esperon added.

With regard to Beijing's militarization of the artificial islands it built in the disputed waters, he said "the Philippine government has not been remiss in undertaking diplomatic actions against any nation."

"We note with serious concern the growing militarization in the area, such as the deployment of military assets especially on features near the Philippine territory," Esperon said.

"In particular, the DFA had been raising such issues and concerns at the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism between China and the Philippines," he said in a statement sent to the media.

Esperon added that sending a bomber to Woody Island, which was not aimed at the Philippines, was just part of China's military training.

"Are we the target? Should we be alarmed? I don't think so because we are not at war with China. We are not at war with (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)," Esperon said.

"Shall we lodge a protest against that? Shall we? I don't think so," he said, explaining that Woody is about 958 kilometers from Manila and is not within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. — With Alexis Romero, Jaime Laude

## DFA: 100 protests filed vs China; PH keen on UN ruling

By Maricel V. Cruz, Nathaniel A. Mariano and Vito Barcelo

FOREIGN Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said Wednesday the Philippines has filed close to 100 diplomatic protests against Chinese actions in the West Philippine Sea in two years even as National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. insisted that the country is not abandoning the favorable ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

In a briefing with the House special committee on West Philippine Sea, Cayetano said the Philippines has been filing diplomatic protests for two years already, but they chose not to announce these regularly.

"The critics want us to announce it loudly and to confront China each and every time to the media. That is not conducive [to] the ongoing talks," he said.

He also said he has assured acting Chief Justice Antonio Carpio—an outspoken

*Next page*

## DFA:...

From A1

critic of the administration's West Philippine Sea policies—that the department is fighting for the country's interests, without making a fuss over it.

During the meeting, Cayetano also fended off a call from Magdalo Party-list Rep. Gary Alejano that he resign, for constantly appeasing the Chinese.

"We're not asking you to trust us blindly. We're asking you to trust us because that is the work of diplomats," Cayetano said. "If you assign someone in your organization, may it be Magdalo, to do the negotiation, if you don't trust him, replace him. But we're in a democracy. We elected President Duterte, he was transparent that he will be going bilateral [in his approach to the South China Sea dispute]. And we have been reporting to you and the public," he added.

At the same meeting, Cayetano said any missiles China has deployed on three Philippine reefs in the West Philippine Sea form "a defensive system and it is not against the Philippines."

He said he had assurances from Beijing that the missiles deployed at Fierly Cross (Kalayaan), Subi and Mischief reefs are aimed at China's potential enemies and not at the Philippines.

"China also assured us with our good relationship that we are not their enemy," he said.

Since he assumed office in June 2016, President Duterte has sought to strengthen ties between Manila and Beijing that were strained by the maritime dispute.

Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino III, questioned China's claims before a United Nations-backed arbitration court. The Philippines won, but the verdict was handed down during Duterte's term.

Esperon on Wednesday assured the country that the administration has not abandoned the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in favor of the Philippines in the South China Sea dispute.

"This administration does not and will not abandon the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the South China Sea disputes. This is merely set aside in

the meantime, in line with the efforts of government at promoting peace, stability, and cordial relations among claimant countries in the region," Esperon said in a statement sent to media Wednesday.

In order for the country to exercise its sovereignty and jurisdiction over Philippine territorial waters, Esperon said the country will take full advantage of the tribunal ruling "at the proper time."

Esperon also clarified that Duterte administration still observes the actions of the various claimants in the disputed South China Sea.

"We note with serious concern the growing militarization in the area, such as the deployment of military assets especially on features near the Philippine territory," said Esperon, saying that the Philippine government is not neglectful in undertaking diplomatic actions against any nation.

The government has started the construction of five lighthouses on its claimed features in the disputed region in the West Philippine Sea or South China Sea to ensure safety navigation not only to Filipino ships but and other foreign vessels that might pass near the islands, according to National Security Esperon.

In a forum held in Manila, the NSA chief said the government is building lighthouses on Pag-asa, Likas, Parola, Patag, and Kota islands, all part of the Kalayaan Group of Islands, at an estimated cost P10 million.

"Lighthouses are also now being constructed on features held by the Philippines to ensure safety of navigation," Esperon said.

He said the government is also upgrading its military facilities on Pagasa Island, the largest of nine features the Philippines occupies in the West Philippine Sea.

"This is necessary for trade, the preservation of the livelihood of the fisherfolk, and the timely delivery of basic necessities of the community in the municipality of Pag-asa," he said.

"The upgrading of the Pag-asa runway would also allow the government to send regular supplies to troops guarding the territory and its residents. "What is more important is upgrading facilities for the comfort of our people," he said. **With AFP**

# US to keep confronting Beijing in SCS

HONOLULU - The United States will continue to confront China's militarization of man-made islands in the South China Sea, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Tuesday, arguing that Beijing hasn't abided by its promise not to put weapons on the Spratly Islands.

Mattis said American ships are maintaining a "steady drumbeat" of naval operations around the disputed islands, adding that "only one country" seems to be bothered by the vessels' routine activities.

"We are going out of our way to cooperate with Pacific nations, that's the way we do business in the world," Mattis told reporters traveling with him to a national security conference in Singapore. "But we are also going to confront what we believe is out of step with international law, out of step with international tribunals that

have spoken on the issue."

The US has long been critical of China's sweeping sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, disputed by several neighboring governments.

On Sunday, two US warships sailed close to the Paracel Islands, which lie north of the Spratlys, the latest freedom of navigation operation designed to challenge Beijing's claims. China protested the maneuver.

But the latest spat comes amid unusual tension between the US and China on trade and as President Donald Trump eyes a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to discuss Pyongyang's nuclear program.

China is North Korea's traditional ally and is wary of any shift in the balance of power on the Korean Peninsula. After North Korea threatened to withdraw from the summit last week,

Trump attributed the "change in attitude" to the influence of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who recently met with Kim. However, by Tuesday the summit appeared back on track again, with Kim dispatching a top aide for talks with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in New York.

According to the US, the freedom of navigation missions are meant to underscore the rights of the US and others to operate in international waters and airspace and to block efforts by any nation to unlawfully extend their boundaries or territorial rights.

But Washington has signaled its displeasure in other ways, last week withdrawing an invitation for Beijing to participate in a large, multinational naval exercise in the Pacific later this summer. China had participated in the exercise known as Rim of the Pacific in 2014 and 2016.

The Pentagon said the decision to disinvite the Chinese Navy was triggered by what it called strong evidence that China has deployed anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missile systems and electronic jammers to contested areas in the Spratly Islands. It called on China to remove the systems.

China says it is within its rights to build up defenses on islands in the South China Sea that it believes are its sovereign territory.

Mattis said other nations in the region are concerned about the "weaponization" of the islands and reefs, and they want to see continued freedom of navigation operations in the international waters.

"If you notice, there's only one country that seems to take active steps to rebuff them or state their resentment of them," Mattis said, referring to China.

In recent years, the US had sought

to stabilize military relations with China, but the militarization of the islands has been a persistent point of conflict. Many nations fear that Beijing will use the construction on the islands to extend its military reach and potentially try to restrict navigation in the South China Sea.

The revocation of the exercise invitation, however, could undermine historical arguments the US has made urging China not to hold the two nations' military relationship hostage to other broader issues - such as differences over Taiwan. Ousting China from the exercise could signal that joint activities, or the military relationship as a whole, are a reward.

Mattis is stopping in Hawaii on his way to the Singapore meeting so that he can attend the ceremony marking the change in leadership at US Pacific Command. - AP, Jaime Larde

# US to keep confronting Beijing in S. China Sea – Mattis

**A**BOARD A US MILITARY AIRCRAFT (AFP) - Defense Secretary Jim Mattis vowed Tuesday that the US would keep confronting China over its territorial claims in the South China Sea, where Beijing has established a significant military presence on contested islands.

Mattis's remarks came after Beijing voiced "strong dissatisfaction" Sunday after two US warships sailed by an island in the disputed Paracel Island chain.

"You'll notice there's only one country that seems to take active steps to rebuff (such operations) or state their resentment of them, but it's international waters and a lot

of nations want to see freedom of navigation, so we will continue that," Mattis told reporters as he flew to Hawaii.

The US Navy periodically conducts "freedom of navigation" operations in the contested waterway, where it sails close to island features China has built into military facilities as a way of showing it rejects any territorial claims.

"We are going out of our way to cooperate with Pacific nations, that's the way we do business in the world, but we are also going to confront what we believe is out of step with international law," Mattis said.

Sunday's operation was conducted just over a week after Beijing flew

nuclear-capable bombers to a disputed island, drawing immediate criticism from the US.

Last week, the Pentagon pulled its invitation to China to join maritime exercises in the Pacific over Beijing's "continued militarization" of the South China Sea.

Beijing has been building artificial islands to reinforce its claim over most of the resource-rich South China Sea, despite protests from Southeast Asian countries.

Its neighbors, particularly some of those involved in maritime disputes over the waters, have expressed fears China could eventually restrict freedom of navigation and overflight.

"Our diplomats are robustly en-

gaged on this," Mattis said.

"The concerns have come to me not just from American government circles, but also from foreign nations that are concerned, very concerned about this continued militarization of features in the South China Sea."

Mattis was heading to Hawaii to attend a change-of-command ceremony for the US military's Pacific Command.

The current head, Admiral Harry Harris, has been nominated to be the new ambassador to South Korea. He will be replaced by Admiral Philip Davidson.

Mattis is then due to attend a regional security conference in Singapore. 4

## Esperon, Cayetano assure gov't protecting territory, sovereign rights

By GENALYN D. KABILING

The government has not been remiss in taking diplomatic actions against China's

militarization in the South China Sea, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. assured Wednesday.

"The Philippine government con- ▶ 6

## Esperon, Cayetano assure... ◀ 1

tinuously monitors the actions of the various claimants in the SCS/WPS (South China Sea/West Philippine Sea). We note with serious concern the growing militarization in the area, such as the deployment of military assets especially on features near the Philippine territory," Esperon said.

"In response to these actions, the Philippine Government has not been remiss in undertaking diplomatic actions against any nation. In particular, the Department of Foreign Affairs had been raising such issues and concerns at the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM) between China and the Philippines," he added.

Esperon made the remarks after some groups criticized the government for not doing enough to protest China's increased militarization in the South China Sea.

Recently, China deployed military aircraft and installed missile systems on some islands in the disputed region. The deployment of the nuclear-capable bomber on Woody Island was

reportedly part of its military training exercises.

Esperon maintained there is no need to file a diplomatic protest against China over the deployment of its bombers on Woody Island in the South China Sea because it is beyond the Philippine exclusive economic zone.

He likewise does not believe China was targeting the Philippines because of the improved relations between the two countries.

### Proper time

Amid accusations that the Philippines was not taking advantage of an arbitral ruling that upheld Philippine sovereign rights over disputed territories in the West Philippine Sea, Esperon said, "This Administration does not and will not abandon the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the South China Sea disputes. This is merely set aside in the meantime, in line with the efforts of government at promoting peace, stability, and cordial relations among claimant countries in the region,"

Esperon said in a statement.

"At the proper time, we will take full advantage of the tribunal ruling, even as China refuses to recognize this, to serve as basis for the country's exercise of sovereignty and jurisdiction over features that are in the Philippine territorial waters," he added.

For his part, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano maintained that government is protecting the national territory and sovereign rights "to the fullest" and will not in any way engage in a shouting match with China.

"The Duterte approach is prudent, patient and pragmatic," he said at the briefing of the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea at the Lower House yesterday.

The briefing was held after the House Special Committee on the West Philippine Sea, chaired by former Speaker and Quezon City Rep. Feliciano Belmonte Jr. asked officials concerned to discuss implications of recent developments in the West Philippine Sea and the supposed government's inaction on China's aggression.

"We have to erase doubts from the members of Congress that we are not



doing anything. It's not true that we are the ones who are always 'nakikiusap' (plead) to China," Cayetano said. "As the President said, we are not slaves to anyone," he pointed out.

He assured that government is not sitting on the China's supposed aggressive actions in the disputed West Philippine Sea and has filed "several dozens of diplomatic protests."

"We are not asking you to trust us blindly. We have been filing diplomatic protests but our critics want us to shout loudly," Cayetano said.

"Yes, we have differences with them (China), but we have made gains. We are not willing to do the Aquino approach," he noted. "The Philippines is a peaceful nation. The Philippines renounces war as an instrument of national policy," he added.

Cayetano said China has assured that the deployment of missiles in three reefs claimed by the Philippines as well as the testing and landing of Chinese bombers in Woody Island in the Paracels is "purely for defensive purpose and not directed against the Philippines."

#### Five lighthouses

Esperon did not discount the fact

that "there is threat" and batted for more funding for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) program.

"We are not saying we should beef up our defenses to prepare for war but it is incumbent upon a nation to strengthen its defenses. I don't want to blame Congress, you must have your own reasons for not giving us ₱30 billion annually," he added.

Esperon reported that five lighthouses have been built on Pag-asa, Likas, Parola, Patag and Kota islands — all part of the Kalayaan Group of Islands "to ensure safety of navigation, along our responsibility under the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) to provide navigational safety for all international vessels transiting the West Philippine Sea."

Esperon said the government was also upgrading the port and airstrip facilities in Pag-asa Island as part of its efforts to promote the welfare of Filipinos living in the area.

"This is necessary for trade, the preservation of the livelihood of the fisherfolk, and the timely delivery of basic necessities of the community in the Municipality of Pag-asa," he added. (With a report from Charissa L. Atienza)

# Senators want DFA to file diplomatic protest vs China

SENATORS from the majority and minority blocs have filed a resolution expressing grave concern over the increasing militarization by China in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea).

Eight senators signed Senate

Resolution 761 that also urged the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to file a diplomatic protest against China for its recent actions in the disputed waters.

Those who signed the resolution were Senators Francis Pangilinan,

Ralph Recto, Franklin Drilon, Joseph Victor Ejercito, Paolo Benigno Aquino 4th, Antonio Trillanes 4th, Risa Hontiveros and Leila de Lima.

In their resolution, the senators cited United States intelligence sources regarding China's installation of anti-

ship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems in Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) reef, Zamora (Subi) Reef, and Panganiban (Mischief) Reef in the Spratly Islands, over which the Philippines has sovereign rights based on

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15

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# Senators

the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

"It must not allow the People Republic of China (PRC) to continue posing a threat to Philippine interest in the WPS and the security of the region," the resolution stated.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. declared on Wednesday the Philippines may use force if Filipino soldiers and civilians based in areas in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) are harmed by China.

He revealed plans to build lighthouses on several islands in those territories.

He echoed President Rodrigo Duterte's remarks that the Philippines would not go to war against China.

But if deemed necessary, Esperon said, the Philippines will look into the option of fighting back if China will coerce or hurt Filipino troops and civilians based on the islands located in disputed areas.

"We can discuss about [the West Philippine Sea] to prevent any of our soldiers and Filipino civilians from being hurt but if one soldier or civilian will get hurt, that will change, so, that is our bottomline there [since] it will always be the well-being of the Filipino that we will prioritize," he said in a news forum in Manila.

Esperon added that war would be the "last option," pointing out Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano's statement that Manila will brace for war if there will be provocative actions from China.

Esperon added that there are no islands occupied by China under the Duterte administration, despite the softened stance of the President over the hotly-contested waters.

Five lighthouses on five islands in the Spratlys - Pag-asa Island, Likas (West York) Island, Parola (North-east Cay) Island, Kota (Loaita) Island and Patag (Flat) Island - will be built, Esperon said.

The lighthouses will cost P10 million and would be manned by personnel from the Philippine Coast Guard.

The five islands are outside the

exclusive economic zone of the Philippines and are more than 100 kilometers from the three reefs that allegedly have been militarized by China.

Esperon downplayed threats brought by Chinese aircraft bombers recently landing on and taking off from Woody Island, which is on the Paracel Islands claimed by Vietnam.

## Agreements

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said the Duterte administration has agreed to China's request that the Philippines stop extracting resources in the West Philippine Sea.

While the 1987 Charter allows the Philippines to enter into a co-production, joint venture, or production-sharing agreements, such agreements should only be entered with private companies at least 60 percent owned by Filipino citizens.

Despite this constitutional restriction, the President has pushed a joint exploration deal with China, a position shared by Cayetano.

"We are now working hard for a framework that would not go against the Constitution for the exploration of natural resources. We would not accept a deal lesser than what we have in Malampaya," Cayetano said, referring to the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power Project.

During the briefing, Rep. Gary Alejano revealed that members of the Philippine Navy were being harassed by the Chinese Coast Guard in the West Philippine Sea.

Alejano said the Armed Forces has filed a complaint before the DFA.

"During a reprovisioning mission for our troops in Ayungin, LS507 of the Philippine Navy was challenged and harassed by the Coast Guard and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) of China. When the Philippine Navy ship launched a rubber boat to resupply BRP Sierra Madre, a chopper of PLAN hovered in a close and dangerous distance. The PLAN chopper was so close that sea water splash entered the rubber boat," Alejano, a former Marine captain, said.

**DEMPSEY REYES  
AND LLANESCA PANTI**

## Rody to make full use of PCA ruling

By Gerry Baldo

President Duterte intends to take full advantage of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) award that invalidated the nine-dash line claim over the South China Sea, "at the proper time", despite China's refusal to recognize the ruling, National Security Adviser Secretary Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said.

Esperon said the Duterte administration has not abandoned the 2016 United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)'s decision nullifying China's 9-dash line map which covers nearly the whole of South China Sea (SCS) contrary to what his critics claim.

"This administration does not and will not abandon the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the South China Sea disputes," Esperon said in

a press statement.

He said Duterte has decided to temporarily shelve the tribunal ruling "in line with the efforts of government at promoting peace, stability, and cordial relations among claimant countries in the region".

"At the proper time, we will take full advantage of the tribunal ruling, even as China refuses to recognize this, to serve as basis for the country's exercise of sovereignty and jurisdiction over features that are in the Philippine territorial waters," Esperon said.

He said the government "continuously" monitors China's deployment of missiles in the three artificial islands within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

In a House briefing, the top security adviser said filing a

*Turn to page 3*

From page 1

diplomatic protest against China for its landing of bombers on Woody Island in the Paracels being claimed by Vietnam, but not by the Philippines, was unnecessary.

He said the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) had been raising China's militarization and other WPS concerns at the Bilateral Consultative Mechanism (BCM) between China and the Philippines.

"The Philippine government has not been remiss in undertaking diplomatic actions against any nation," Esperon said.

Duterte had repeatedly said he won't take "violent" action in asserting the country's sovereignty in the WPS, explaining that war against China would mean great losses for Filipino soldiers and for the country.

The Filipino leader, however, had told Chinese leader Xi Jinping in one of their previous bilateral meetings that he would bring up the PCA ruling again before he steps down in 2022.

Esperon also confirmed that the government is presently upgrading port and airstrip facilities in Pag-asa Island to promote the welfare of Filipinos living in the 32.2-hectare island.

"This is necessary for trade, the preservation of the livelihood of the fisher folk, and the timely delivery of basic necessities of the community in the municipality of Pag-asa," Esperon said.

He said lighthouses are being constructed as part of the country's responsibility under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to provide navigational safety for all international vessels transiting the WPS.

#### Alejano claims Chinese harassment anew

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano, meanwhile, said the Philippine Navy was harassed anew by the Chinese Coast Guard.

"According to my sources in the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Armed Forces of the Philippines has lodged a complaint to the DFA regarding a recent case of harassment by Chinese forces, this time in Ayungin Shoal. On May 11, during a reprovisioning mission for our troops in Ayungin, LS507 of the Philippine Navy was challenged and harassed by the Coast Guard and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) of China," Alejano, a former Marine officer, said.

Ayungin Shoal lies 105 nautical miles from Palawan. It is well within Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone and is also part of the continental shelf. There are also Philippine troops stationed in the area.

"Despite all these, China still claims Ayungin Shoal," Alejano said.

"When the Philippine Navy ship launched a rubber boat to resupply BRP Sierra Madre, a chopper of PLAN hovered in a close and dangerous distance. The PLAN

chopper was so close that sea water splash entered the rubber boat," Alejano narrated.

The Magdalo lawmaker further disclosed that the Chinese forces were aboard Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) with bow number 3368 and PLAN ship with bow number 549.

"Before, it was only CCG that was challenging and harassing our troops. Now, the CCG was already accompanied by the PLAN. This is a clear threat to our security forces by no less than the Chinese Coast Guard and Navy which obviously requires condemnation from our end," he noted.

The former Marine officer then took a swipe at Secretary Cayetano's recent pronouncements defending the Duterte administration's non-filing of diplomatic protest against China's illegal actions.

"Secretary Cayetano speaks as if he is not receiving verified information on various cases of harassment by Chinese forces against our own troops and fishermen. If I myself, was able to know that the government already has detailed and verified information regarding actions of China in the West Philippine Sea, what more the Foreign Affairs Secretary? Secretary Cayetano should not feign ignorance and act clueless as if his office is not receiving pertinent information," he said.

#### Cayetano: Gov't on top of situation

During the hearing of the House Special Committee on the West Philippine Sea yesterday, Cayetano admitted the said incident in Ayungin Shoal.

Cayetano was at a congressional briefing by the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS), chaired by Rep. Feliciano Belmonte Jr. (LP, Quezon City), Cayetano told lawmakers that the government remains on top of the situation in the face of China's intensified militarization of the area.

"We came from a time in the previous administration when we could not even fish. We had to play 'patintero' whenever we send supplies to the Ayungin Shoal (or the Second Thomas Shoal) but now we can do it (and) because we did it quietly, the situation improved," he said.

While the administration's approach is not perfect, "we're not doing it like the Aquino or Carpio way which was through the media, confrontational. We are doing it through diplomacy," he said.

The foreign affairs secretary was referring to former president Benigno Aquino and Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, who has been criticizing the administration's position on Chinese incursions.

"We are not asking you to trust us blindly. We have been filing diplomatic protests but our critics want us to shout loudly," he said.

Cayetano refused to accept criticisms that the administration has been totally subservient to Beijing.

#### US operations continue

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis also vowed that the US would keep confronting China over its territorial claims in the South China Sea, where Beijing has established a significant military presence on contested islands.

Mattis's remarks came after Beijing voiced "strong dissatisfaction" Sunday after two US warships sailed by an island in the disputed Paracel Island chain.

"You'll notice there's only one country that seems to take active steps to rebuff (such operations) or state their resentment of them, but it's international waters and a lot of nations want to see freedom of navigation, so we will continue that," Mattis told reporters as he flew to Hawaii.

The US Navy periodically conducts "freedom of navigation" operations in the contested waterway, where it sails close to island features China has built into military facilities as a way of showing it rejects any territorial claims.

"We are going out of our way to cooperate with Pacific nations, that's the way we do business in the world, but we are also going to confront what we believe is out of step with international law," Mattis said.

Sunday's operation was conducted just over a week after Beijing flew nuclear-capable bombers to a disputed island, drawing immediate criticism from the US.

Last week, the Pentagon pulled its invitation to China to join maritime exercises in the Pacific over Beijing's "continued militarization" of the South China Sea.

Beijing has been building artificial islands to reinforce its claim over most of the resource-rich South China Sea, despite protests from Southeast Asian countries.

Its neighbors, particularly some of those involved in maritime disputes over the waters, have expressed fears China could eventually restrict freedom of navigation and overflight.

"Our diplomats are robustly engaged on this," Mattis said.

"The concerns have come to me not just from American government circles, but also from foreign nations that are concerned, very concerned about this continued militarization of features in the South China Sea."

Mattis was heading to Hawaii to attend a change-of-command ceremony for the US military's Pacific Command.

The current head, Admiral Harry Harris, has been nominated to be the new ambassador to South Korea. He will be replaced by Admiral Philip Davidson.

Mattis is then due to attend a regional security conference in Singapore.

AFP

# Esperon: PH ready for war if Pinoys in SCS are harmed

BY VICTOR REYES

NATIONAL Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. yesterday hinted government will use force if China will harm Filipino civilians and soldiers in Philippine-held areas in the South China Sea (SCS) or the West Philippine Sea.

"The other night, the President said, 'If our troops will be harmed, that will be my red line,' or if civil-

ians will be harmed there in Pagasa Island," Esperon told reporters at a forum in Manila.

Esperon, also chairman of the National Task Force on the West Philippine Sea, said the disputed areas in the South China Sea are "very important" to the administration of President Duterte.

"We are not saying we are going to war but if we are forced, if they oppress us, we are not going

allow ourselves to be oppressed there (in the South China Sea)," said Esperon, a former Armed Forces chief.

Esperon said China is superior militarily, with lots of ships and aircraft. Many of these assets have been deployed recently to the reefs in the South China Sea, which China has transformed into

See ESPERON > Page B2

## ESPERON

military and air bases.

"Are we in a position to wage war? Of course not. But shall we not go to war if provoked and if unnecessarily aggrieved? Of course, we are going to defend our country... War remains to be the last option. It's but necessary to defend yourself," he said.

"We are not at war nor do we intend to make war the primary instrument of handling the West Philippine Sea (dispute)... If soldiers or civilians are harmed, the (situation) changes. The bottom line is it's always the well-being of the Filipino," he also said.

He said the Duterte administration wants the dispute resolved through diplomatic means, adding that Philippine relations with China do not start and end with the South China Sea.

The Philippines, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have overlapping claims over the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG), also known as the Spratly Islands. Filipino troops are occupying nine areas, the largest of which is Pag-asa

Island which hosts hundreds of civilians.

China and Philippines are also locked in a territorial dispute over Panatag Shoal, or Scarborough Shoal, off Zambales. Chinese ships gained control of the shoal in 2012 following a standoff with their Filipino counterpart.

On the landing of H-6K Chinese bomber planes on Woody Island in the Paracels group of islands, also in the South China, Esperon said the government is not inclined to lodge a protest against China. The island is being claimed by China, Vietnam, and Taiwan.

Esperon noted that Woody island, which is not being claimed by the Philippines, is about 1,000 km from Pag-asa Island which in turn is 280 nautical miles (450 km) from Puerto Princesa. Pag-asa is the farthest among the nine Philippine-held areas.

Esperon said Manila would still be within the 1,900-km range of the bombers even if they take off from Hong Kong. He said Manila is just 1,200 km from Hong Kong.

"Are we the target? Should be alarmed? I do not think so because we are not at

war with China and we are not at war of course with ASEAN... So shall we lodge a protest against that? I don't think so," said Esperon.

On Chinese militarization of the South China Sea, Esperon said it was expected of China to put defense systems, including anti-submarine, anti-aircraft, and anti-ship to defend their islands. He said some of the armament are capable of reaching Philippines.

"The question is, are these weapons aimed at the Philippines? No. Can they be aimed at the Philippines in the future? Possible, if we are at war with China," he said.

Esperon also disclosed that lighthouses are being put up in five of the nine Philippine-held areas -- Pag-asa, Parola, Likas, Patag and Kota islands -- for navigational purposes. The four other Philippine-held areas are Ayungin shoal, Lawak island, Rizal reef and Panata island.

"As a matter of safety of life at sea, we are putting up lighthouses... That will aid navigation in the area," he said adding a funding of P10 million has been earmarked for the construction.

Esperon also confirmed reports that

the Philippine military has constructed a beaching ramp at Pag-asa island, preparatory to the improvement of the airstrip in the island.

"We are going to improve our airstrip there. That's been planned a long time ago and we are doing it (now). We have already finished the beaching ramp. The beaching ramp is needed for the hauling of construction materials," he said.

Esperon said facilities for soldiers and civilians in the island will likewise be improved.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Cayetano, at a House briefing, asked lawmakers to trust the administration's diplomatic strategy with China, reminding them that Filipinos can now fish in the West Philippine Sea because of President Duterte's closeness with the emerging superpower.

"We came from a time in the previous administration when we could not even fish. We had to play 'patintero' whenever we send supplies to the Ayungin Shoal (or the Second Thomas Shoal) but now we can do it (and) because we did it quietly, the situation improved," he said. — *With Wendell Vigilina*

## CA confirms appointments of 3 Cabinet members, 5 AFP officials

By **MARIO B. CASAYURAN** and **VANNE P. TERRAZOLA**

The powerful Commission on Appointments (CA) on Wednesday confirmed the appointments of three Cabinet members, five ranking Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and several other key government officials.

The three Cabinet members are Department of Justice (DOJ) Secretary Menardo Ilasco Guevarra; Department

of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat; and Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Secretary John Rualo Castriciones.

Their confirmation was made as the CA, the Senate, and the House of Representatives are scheduled to go on a sine die adjournment tomorrow.

Confirmed AFP officials were ► **5**



# CA confirms appointments of 3 Cabinet members...

◀1

Chief of Staff General Carlito G. Galvez Jr., Brigadier Generals Rolando R. Rodil, Joselito F. Maclan, and Nelson P. Collantes; and Colonel Emmanuel G. Galvez.

In Wednesday's CA plenary session presided over by Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III, the commission also confirmed the appointment of Socorro Balinghasay Inting as commissioner of the Commission on Elections (Comelec). It likewise confirmed the nominations of Sulpicio Miguel Confiado as Philippine Ambassador to the Egypt, with concurrent jurisdiction over Djibouti, Eritrea, and Sudan; and Akmad Atiah Sakkam as Philippine Ambassador to Jordan, with concurrent jurisdiction over Palestine.

Then Lt. Gen. Galvez was appointed to the top military post in April, replacing AFP chief General Rey Leonardo Guerrero, whose term had been extended by President Duterte last December.

Galvez, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class of 1985, was the chief of the AFP-Western Mindanao Command prior to his appointment as military chief.

Guevarra's appointment was unopposed in the CA. Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea even graced the confirmation hearing to show support for his former senior deputy executive secretary (SDES).

## Experience in law, public service

Citing Guevarra's experience in law and public service, having served under two presidents, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, chair of the CA Committee Justice and Judicial and Bar Council, recommended his confirmation after a hearing that lasted for more than an hour.

At the confirmation hearing Wednesday, Guevarra admitted he "politely declined" when the post was first offered to him.

"I said I was perfectly happy doing my work as senior deputy executive secretary at the Office of the President, and I said there are a lot more qualified people to perform the high-profile work of the SOJ," he said.

Guevarra, nonetheless, said he is "ready to face the challenges" at the DOJ, citing his 30 years of law practice and having served under two administrations.

Describing himself as a "sober, deliberative, and less politicized," Guevarra assured to maintain independence and uphold the rule of law in the DOJ, just as President Duterte supposedly instructed him.

His association with the President, he

added, is also not a factor in his disposition of charges.

"The President told me to follow the rule of law, and that is what I intend to do," he told the CA panel.

Guevarra also vowed to review high-profile drug cases that are being dismissed.

## Poster girl for tourism

Rep. Jerry P. Trenas, chairman of the CA Tourism and Economic Development Committee, had moved for the confirmation of Puyat's appointment.

Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph G. Recto said that at a time when the last and the least, and not the best and the brightest, are dumped on agencies, the DOT is fortunate to have Puyat. "It did not only get a manager, but an ad model as well."

"She is one Tourism secretary who can also be the national poster girl for tourism. As you can see, she has the face that could launch a thousand cruise ships. And I say that with authority, having been married to the original Eskinol girl," Recto said.

"Her two decades of government service is detailed in three pages of fine print in her CV (curriculum vitae).

While her longest stint has been with the Department of Agriculture, which spanned three administrations, what is not well known is that she had served in four dozens task forces, committees, advisory councils, and corporate boards," he said.

"Despite her punishing workload, at home and at work, she made time to teach fiscal policy for 20 years in that public school in Diliman," Recto added.

Recto said he believes that Puyat's background would serve her in good stead as she restores sense on how the billions of pesos allocated to DOT, both regular and off-budget, are spent.

The CA Committee on Agrarian Reform, chaired by Sen. Grace Poe, had earlier moved for Castricones' confirmation.

With 21 years of experience in the Judiciary, Inting, a former Court of Appeals justice, had said her focus would be on the speedy disposition of electoral cases.

Inting had earlier told the CA Constitutional Commissions and Offices Committee, chaired by Sen. Cynthia A. Villar, that she wanted to be installed as the head of an oversight committee to hasten the disposition of pending electoral cases.

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Nov 20 1985

Manila  
Standard

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# CA confirms Guevarra, Castriciones, AFP's Galvez

By Macon Ramos-Araneta  
and Vito Barcelo

THE powerful Commission on Appointments on Wednesday gave its nod on the interim appointments of Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra, Agrarian Reform Secretary John Castriciones and AFP chief of staff Carlito Galvez.

Senator Win Gatchalian, chairman of the CA Committee on Justice and Judicial and Bar Council, sponsored Guevarra's confirmation.

"Significantly, it seems that Secretary Guevarra is well aware of the challenges facing the DoJ after recent controversies, and is willing to face these challenges head-on.

He said Guevarra has pledged to reform the DoJ's image and transform the department into a "cornerstone of our justice system," to use his own words.

During his short time on the job so far, he said Guevarra has been pro-active in fulfilling this ambitious but worthy promise.

"I hope that the good Secretary will stay true to his word and pursue his vision for the Department of Justice with courage, perseverance, and integrity. Like I said earlier, the new Secretary of Justice has a difficult task ahead of him—but no challenge, no matter how daunting, should be able to stop a genuine public servant from achieving the change he seeks to create for the benefit of the people," said Gatchalian.

"In my humble estimation, it appears that Secretary Guevarra is more than capable of keeping his promise and making real change, as long as he stays the course he has set for himself," he added.

Guevarra was a deputy of Medialdea prior to his appointment to the DoJ to replace resigned Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II. He also served as Deputy Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs during the term of former President Benigno Aquino III. Guevarra had also been appointed commissioner at the Philippine Competition Commission.

He had worked for the National Economic and Development Authority, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, and was a former faculty member of the Ateneo de Manila University School of Law. He placed second in the 1985 Bar examinations.

Upon the confirmation of Castriciones, Poe, chairman of the CA Agrarian Reform committee, reminded him to address the longstanding woes of the country's farmers and landless tillers and to use government resources judiciously. *H/b*

# Duterte: AFP best armed forces in entire world

By Komfie Manalo

Describing the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as "the best armed forces in the entire world," President Duterte yesterday formally confirmed Col. Jose Eriel Niembra as the new commander of the Presidential Security Group (PSG), replacing outgoing Brig. Gen. Lope Dagoy who now heads the Army's 802nd Infantry Brigade in Leyte.



NIEMBRA

"I stand confident before you today as I perform my duties as your Commander-in-Chief, assured that the PSG shall be loyal not only to one person or family but only to the Constitution and our most cherished democratic institutions," Duterte said at the turn-over ceremonies held at the PSG group inside Malacanang.

Niembra is a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1991 and served as part of the Army-led Task Force Davao when Duterte was still mayor of the city.

Mr. Duterte also extended his best wishes to Dagot and thanked him for his services providing protection to 16 foreign and more than 900 local presidential engagements during

his stint with the PSG.

The President told Dagoy: "I wish you the best as you assume your new Command. Rest easy as you have initiated positive changes in the organization and inspired every personnel with your hard work and dedication. I am certain that the PSG that you will hand over is a workforce that is more motivated and dependable."

As expected, Mr. Duterte deviated from his speech and called on the members of the presidential protection to continue providing security to him as their commander-in-chief if they believe in his advocacies.

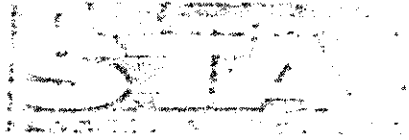
"If you do not like my advocacies, *sa Luneta ako magpapa-firing squad in front of Rizal* (I will go to Luneta for a firing squad)," he said.

The President explained to the men and women of the PSG that the reason he is seeking peace with the communist Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front, his stance in China and other armed rebel group is because his job as president is to preserve the nation and peace.

"My job is not to go to war," Mr. Duterte said. My job is not killing my countrymen. My job is to give peace to everybody. Maybe someday you will understand."

He added his position as the country's Chief Executive is not as powerful as everyone thought and hinted that his position sometimes does not give him many choices because "his job is to keep the Republic" safe.

Mr. Duterte told the crowd: "Our job is to protect the people. Preserving a nation is not go to war, Protecting the young from the havocs of illegal drugs." 4



## Interim peace deal with NDF eyed

BAGUIO CITY – The National Democratic Front (NDF) is confident that an interim peace agreement with the government will be signed soon.

Julie de Lima, chairperson of the NDF's Reciprocal Working Committee on Socio-Economic Reforms, said the possibility of signing the agreement "is a sign of movement in the stalled peace negotiations."

De Lima said the NDF maintains that social and economic reforms should be the cornerstone of any peace agreement.

She said both panels have agreed on the drafts of the agrarian reform and rural development and national industrialization and economic development provisions of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms, the second substantive agenda in the peace negotiations with communist rebels.

By Artemio Dumlao

## AIR, GROUND ASSAULT

# MILITARY STRIKES REBEL LAIR IN ZAMBO SUR

By Julie Alipala  
@alipalajulieINQ

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The military on Tuesday started a massive ground and air assault against communist rebels in the hinterlands of Dumingag town in Zamboanga del Sur province amid reports that New People's Army (NPA) fighters had been seen gathering there.

While the Dumingag operation continued, NPA rebels disarmed two policemen at Barangay Mauswagon in Godod town, Zamboanga del Norte province, on Wednesday morning. Godod is more than 100 kilometers from Dumingag.

Chief Supt. Edwin de Ocampo, Western Mindanao regional police's operations chief, said Senior Police Officer 1 Oscias Gomez and Police Officer 1 Rey Lismis of the Godod police were in a patrol car from Salug town when they were stopped by rebels who blocked the road at Sitio Rebe.

De Ocampo said three rifles and a handgun were taken from the policemen.

### Rebel sighting

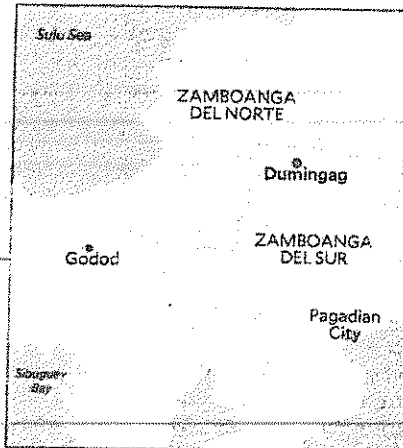
Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, commander of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said the assault and firefight in Dumingag was continuing as of Wednesday.

He, however, did not provide details of the operation or if there were casualties.

Sources from the police said an undetermined number of NPA rebels under the Western Mindanao regional party committee started massing up



DUMINGAG,  
ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR



at Barangay Saad in Dumingag on Tuesday.

Initially, soldiers from the 53rd Infantry Battalion and the 15th Division Reconnaissance Company, and policemen from Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte provinces were sent to Dumingag to engage the rebels. The military later sent four helicopters to pound the rebels' position.

### 'Punitive actions'

In a statement, the NPA in Western Mindanao confirmed that it had been launching "punitive actions" against government forces in three Zamboanga provinces.

The NPA said it was responsible for a road blockade at Barangay Lungsod in Godod, where a vehicle owned by a construction company, which was allegedly being used to transport soldiers and militiamen, was seized on May 16.

It said rebels, on May 18, also set off an explosive at Kalawit town in Zamboanga del Norte, wounding several

soldiers.

"The continued offensive was part of defensive efforts against military operations aimed at defeating the NPA," the rebel group said.

### Series of clashes

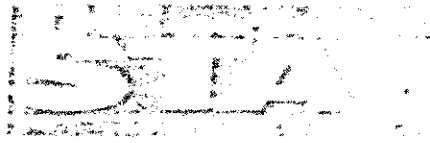
The assault came after a series of clashes between government troops and communist rebels in Southern Mindanao.

In Davao Oriental province, three soldiers were wounded in an hourlong firefight in Lupon town on Saturday, the police reported on Sunday.

Last week, five soldiers were also wounded in a land mine blast set off by NPA rebels at Mabini town in Compostela Valley province.

In Surigao del Sur province, three suspected rebels on board a motorcycle fired a rifle grenade launcher at the camp of the 36th Infantry Battalion on Friday. No one, however, was hurt in the attack.

—WITH REPORTS FROM  
LEAH AGONJOY, FRINSTON LIM AND  
CHRIS PANGANIBAN INQ A16



## ACROSS THE COUNTRY

### NPA leader nabbed in Negros

BACOLOD CITY – The alleged liaison officer of the Armando Sumayang Command of the New People's Army (NPA) was arrested in Ilog, Negros Occidental, the military reported yesterday.

Bobby Pedro, with aliases of Rey Mark Labrador and Recoy, yielded a 9mm pistol, various types of ammunition, a cell phone, subversive documents and P3,058 in cash, 1st Lt. Cesarin Manalon, 15th Infantry Battalion Civil Military Operation officer, said.

Pedro was about to enter the house of a certain Noe Castillo in Barangay Pinggot when he was collared. His companion escaped.

– Gilbert Bayoran

# 'Ka Jinggoy' turned over to Davao police

By YAS D. OCAMPO

**D**AVAO CITY - The New People's Army (NPA) commander, who was captured by authorities while he was recuperating in a hospital for a head injury, has been turned over to the Davao City Police Office (DCPO) and is set to face at least 12 charges of murder and arson.

The DCPO received custody of Elizalde Cañete, also known as Ka Jinggoy, after he was able to recover from a head injury while on hospital arrest in Bukidnon.

He was wounded in an encounter with the military last May 12 and had to be hospitalized for a head wound. But two days later, authorities caught up with him and arrested him in the hospital.

Cañete is said to be the new leader of the NPA in the region, replacing Leoncio "Ka Parago" Pitao as head of the Pulang Bagani Company. Pitao was killed in an encounter with authorities in Barangay Pañalum, Paquibato District here last June 28, 2015.

The NPA has demanded for Cañete's release, saying that the leader

could be considered as a "hors de combat," or out of action because of an injury, thereby, protecting him from arrest under international humanitarian laws.

But in an earlier interview, Eastern Mindanao Command (East-MinCom) Spokesperson Maj. Ezra Balagtey told The Manila Bulletin that the military adhered to all international humanitarian laws in the arrest and maintaining custody of prisoners of war.

Police said Cañete will be facing at least 12 cases in Davao City, where most of the cases against the rebel leader were filed.

Cañete reportedly led a band of NPA raiders who attacked a banana packing plant in Barangay Tigatto here last year.

A 31-year-old fish vendor, Larry Buenafe, was killed after a shrapnel of a command-detonated improvised explosive device hit him.

A Task Force Davao Simba Tank provided reinforcement to troops trying to repel the attack in May 2017. The NPA, meanwhile, anticipated the Simba attack and planted a command-detonated improvised explosive device that disabled it. ||

# House OKs BBL bill, but Senate introduces 'contentious' changes

By DJ Yap  
and Jerome Aning  
Team Inquirer

The Bangsamoro people shall be considered "citizens of the Republic of the Philippines," and their area in Mindanao shall be their "territorial jurisdiction," instead of their "core territory."

These were among the "contentious" changes introduced by the Senate to the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) during the period of amendments for the bill, which was

scheduled to be approved on Wednesday.

After President Duterte certified the bill as urgent, leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives assured him that the BBL would be submitted for his signature on July 23, the day he delivers his third State of the Nation Address.

The House beat the Senate to the draw on Wednesday and approved the proposed BBL on third and final reading.

Voting 226-11 with two absences, the House adopted

without amendments at 5 p.m. a substitute bill based on House Bill No. 6475, authored by Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez.

Two other key amendments to the Senate measure were the exclusion of Palawan from the islands identified as part of the Islamic historical range, and the designation of the Bangsamoro police force as a unit of the Philippine National Police.

"Most [of the original BBL provisions] were contentious," said Sen. Ralph Recto who, along with Senate Minority

Leader Franklin Drilon, introduced most of the amendments.

"[Its] framework to begin with is forming a state, which is unconstitutional, until we adopt a federal form of government," Recto said.

Drilon successfully moved for the inclusion of a provision reiterating "that the Bangsamoro people are citizens of the Republic of the Philippines." Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, the bill sponsor, said this was opposed by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission. INQ 13



# Malacañang-backed BBL approved

By BEN R. ROSARIO

The proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), a landmark measure expected to provide the key to a long lasting peace in Mindanao, breezed through second and third reading approvals in the House of Representatives

on Wednesday.

As agreed upon during an all-party caucus called by Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, including many who remained skeptical about the constitutionality of certain provisions, majority supported the bill President Duterte certified as urgent on Tuesday.

Passed without amendments, the approved measure contained all the provisions that three House committees tasked to study the measure jointly approved.

The proposed BBL or House Bill 6475 has provisions that have previously been assailed during the ►6

# Malacañang-backed BBL... ◀1

16th Congress.

But these glaringly unconstitutional provisions will be taken out as soon as the bill reaches bicameral committee proceedings. This move was agreed upon in separate meetings between the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and Congress leaders; and between Congress leaders and President Duterte last Monday.

The approval of the measure came before Congress adjourned sine die on Wednesday. A total of 227 congressmen voted to approve the proposed BBL, with 11 solons rejecting it and two others abstaining.

As agreed upon during a Malacañang meeting of Congress leaders with Duterte, the bicameral conference committee will harmonize the Senate and House versions of the measure.

"Congress will resolve them in its bicam conference committee in collaboration with the Executive Department and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission. If we won't resolve them, we won't have a bill for the President to consider," stated House Majority Leader and Ilocos Norte Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas.

The executive-legislative consensus indicated that both legislative chambers will ratify the consolidated bill when the third session of the 17th Congress on July 25.

The signing of the bill is expected to provide a poignant drama for Duterte's third State-of-the-Nation Address in the afternoon of July 25.

Staunch supporters of the measure lauded Alvarez for providing the strong leadership that resulted in the swift passage of the measure.

Alvarez had never wavered in his vow to have the BBL proposal approved on second and third reading before the sine die adjournment and have it signed by Duterte during the SONA.

Alvarez, on the other hand, congratulated the House Committees on Local Government, on Muslim Affairs, and on Peace and Reconciliation for their painstaking efforts impursuing the measure.

The seven Makabayan bloc lawmakers were among those who thumbed down the measure.

Reps. Abdullah Dimaporo (NUP, Lanao del Norte) and Celso Lobregat (NP, Zamboanga City) abstained.

"I am all for giving our Muslim brothers and sisters a better deal. But to attain this, we must have truth, justice, and equality as the foundations for lasting peace. But there are still some provisions in the proposed Basic Law for the Bangsamoro (BBL) that need to be changed," said Senior Deputy Minority Leader and Buhay Party-list

Rep. Lito Atienza.

Minority Leader and Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez and members of his group pinned hopes on the vow of the House leadership to amend the objectionable provisions of the bill.

Assistant Minority Leader Eugene de Vera said the Supreme Court should be expected to strike down provisions that are opposed to the provisions of the 1987 Constitution.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, head of the Magnificent Seven minority bloc, rejected the measure as he objected to the "flawed and unconstitutional" process by which the bill was passed.

"The pertinent provisions of the 1987 Constitution under Article X elevate the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) to a constitutional entity similar to the Comelec, COA, Civil Service Commission, Office of the Ombudsman, and the Commission on Human Rights," he explained.

Lagman added: "Verily, the ARMM cannot be dismantled to give way to BBL without first amending the Constitution by abolishing ARMM and authorizing the Congress to enact the BBL in its place. We cannot place the cart before the horse."

Fariñas said Duterte rejected the grant of independent military and police forces to the new local government that will take the place of the ARMM.

"In fairness to the BTC, they agreed that such will just be a reserved power," the House officials stated.

But the opt-in provision that would allow the BBL to expand its jurisdiction through plebiscites will be resolved during the bicameral panel sessions that will be attended by representatives of the BTC and the executive department.

"We offered one (plebiscite) for the next 10 years which they accepted. But for some of the (House) members, especially those near the proposed autonomous region of Bangsamoro, are apprehensive about the creeping expansion of the proposed region," explained Fariñas.

According to Fariñas, one more possible option is to grant expansion of BBL territory if a law is passed by Congress for such move.

The House official said the BTC agreed not to touch the constitutional bodies such as the Commission on Elections (Comelec) and the Commission on Audit (COA).

Reacting to the second attempt by Congress to pass a BBL, Anak Mindanao Rep. Amihilda Sangecopan said the bill presents the future of peace in Mindanao as it "gives us the tools to build and sustain the peace we all pray for."

## House passes BBL

THE House of Representatives has approved House Bill 6475 or the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law on third and final reading via a 227-11 vote with two abstentions.

The vote came after the plenary adopted the motion made by Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas that replaced the initial version of the measure with a substitute bill that was hammered out after a caucus on Wednesday.

The proposed BBL abolishes the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and replaces it with a Bangsamoro Region that will enjoy fiscal autonomy and be governed by the Bangsamoro parliament.

Rep. Celso Lobregat, who opposed the measure, revealed that "substantial" amendments were accommodated by the substitute bill. One of these amendments is the opt-in provision that was changed to allow the contiguous areas of the ARMM to be included under the new Bangsamoro region on the condition that local government unit will pass a resolution or at least 10 percent of the registered voters ask for their inclusion.

"I am substantially satisfied, not fully, but substantially," Lobregat, who abstained from voting, said.

Rep. Bai Sandra Sema viewed the BBL as a blessing.

"BBL is a blessing for all of us, especially under a President who comes from Mindanao, who knows the situation on the ground. Let us choose life, use this opportunity to make things right," Sema said in her sponsorship speech.

Rep. Sherwin Tugna, chairman of the Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms, also backed the passage of the bill.

"It is just fitting that we put an end to strife in Mindanao. Our Bangsamoro fellowmen have long been longing for the recognition of their identity and their rights. Still, Bangsamoro will remain a part of our country, thus, the bill provides for the shared responsibility of the Bangsamoro government and the national government," Tugna said.

### Constitutional

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon on Wednesday urged fellow lawmakers to ensure that the BBL

will pass judicial scrutiny.

Drilon introduced several amendments to Senate Bill 1717 or the Senate version of the BBL, to ensure that it will not suffer the same fate as the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), which the Supreme Court declared as unconstitutional.

"We must avoid the constitutional issues that led to the downfall of the previous Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain in 2008," Drilon said.

"I want to make sure that the BBL that we will pass is 100 percent in conformity with the 1987 Constitution. All our amendments are designed to cleanse it of unconstitutional provisions so it can withstand judicial scrutiny. We cannot afford a repeat of what happened in the MOA-AD," he added. "It is imperative that we learn from the past and make sure that we avoid making the same deadly mistakes all over again. We must do it right this time in order that peace and stability in Mindanao will finally be realized."

Among the amendments Drilon introduced, "to strengthen the law's adherence to constitution" is the removal of the provision on "reserved powers" for the BAR.

Meanwhile, Ghazali Jaafar, chairman of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) that crafted the BBL, thanked President Rodrigo Duterte for fulfilling his promise to certify the measure as urgent.

"Nagpapasalamat kami ng lubos at ang mahal nating pangulo 'yung pangako niya sa mga Muslim at sa amin ay tinutupad niya to the last minute (We thank our beloved president for fulfilling his promise to Muslims and to us to the last minute)," he told The Manila Times in a chance interview.

"We are looking for a win-win solution that will eventually address the ongoing military warfare in the region of the Muslim Mindanao through the most peaceful and civilized way or means of resolving it. We believe that every senator and congressman knows the problem in our homeland," said Jaafar, also vice chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

LLANESCA T. PANTI AND  
BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

## House okays BBL; Senate takes turn

By Maricel V. Cruz, Macon  
Ramos-Araneta and  
Sara Susanne D. Fabunan

TRUE to their promise to President Rodrigo Duterte, congressmen on Wednesday approved on final reading the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law.

Voting 226-11-2, the House of Representatives, presided by Deputy Speaker and Batangas Rep. Raneo Abu, passed House Bill 6475 that was certified as urgent by Duterte.

Reps. Celso Lobregat of Zamboanga City and Abdullah Dimaporo of Lanao del Norte abstained from the voting. *Next page*

## House...

From A1

Before the third and final-reading approval, lawmakers voted overwhelmingly on the measure via voice voting.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon introduced several amendments to the Senate version of the proposed BBL to ensure that the measure will not suffer the same fate as the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain, which the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional.

Senator Migz Zubiri, chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Bangsamoro Basic Law, said they were on track with the BBL.

He said the landmark measure was being forged by senators across party lines. He said among the amendments tackled were

But Ozamis Archbishop Martin Jumoad on Wednesday said the proposed BBL was bound to fail if only one group would benefit from it.

He urged Congress to hold consultations with the different sectors of society.

"The BBL must not be exclusive and must give equal opportunities to everybody because a government that is exclusive is not a good government," Jumoad said.

"A government is for the people and for the people and when you only choose a sector, then it is destined to be a failure."

HB 6475, principally authored by Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, was sponsored in the plenary Tuesday night by Representatives Pedro Acharon of South Cotabato, chairman of the committee on local government; Maüyag Papandayan of Lanao del Sur, head of the committee on Muslim affairs; and Ruby Sahali of Tawi-Tawi, head of panel on peace, reconciliation and unity.



# House passes BBL on 3rd reading

**By Gerry Baldo**

In an overwhelming 227 to 11 vote, with two abstentions, the House of Representatives approved yesterday the Bangsamoro Basic Law on third and final reading.

The voting came after a motion made by House Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas of Ilocos Norte to replace the initial version of the measure with a substitute bill that was devoid of the contentious

provisions like the "opt-in" where contiguous provinces and cities would be allowed to join the region on a regular basis.

Rep. Celso Lobregat of Zamboanga City, who had been opposing the passage of the bill on constitutional questions, was now amenable to the substitute bill that was crafted during an all-member caucus.

Lobregat said "substantial" amendments were introduced in

the measure.

The proposed BBL would abolish the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). It will be replaced with a Bangsamoro Region.

Another contentious provision that is being questioned is the grant of P60 billion annually to the Bangsamoro Region which will be sourced out of the national government.

The existing budget of the

ARMM is around P33 billion.

Representative Bai Sandra Sema of Maguindanao, for her part, viewed the BBL as a blessing for all.

"BBL is a blessing for all of us, especially under a President who comes from Mindanao, who knows the situation on the ground. Let us choose life, use this opportunity to make things right," Sema said in her sponsorship speech.

*Turn to page 2*

# House passes BBL on 3rd reading

**From page 1**

Sangcopan said that the BBL is the only way now that would bring peace in Mindanao.

"The time has come for everybody to understand the stories of our people, instead of judging us based on stereotypes and misconceptions," Sangcopan added.

The proposal for the Bangsamoro region to have their own Commission on Elections, their own police and their own Commission on Audit had also been junked in the substitute bill.

**Senate version revised**

Meanwhile, at the Senate, Minority Leader Franklin Drilon has introduced several amendments to the chamber's version of the proposed BBL to make sure that the measure will not suffer the same fate as the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MoA-AD), which the Supreme Court declared as unconstitutional.

"We must avoid the constitutional issues that led to the downfall of the previous Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain in 2008," Drilon said, as he reiterates support for the measure.

"Considering the importance of the Bangsamoro Basic Law to attaining lasting and just peace in Muslim Mindanao, as legislators we must guarantee that every word in this law would survive judicial review," Drilon said.

Drilon said he expects that the

BBL will be elevated to the Supreme Court once enacted into law.

"I want to make sure that the BBL that we will pass in Congress is 100 percent in conformity with the 1987 Constitution," Drilon said.

"All our amendments are designed to cleanse it of unconstitutional provisions so it can withstand judicial scrutiny. We cannot afford a repeat of what happened in the MoA-AD," Drilon stressed.

The said agreement, signed by the administration of President Gloria Arroyo and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2008, was struck down by the Supreme Court in the landmark case Province of North Cotabato vs. the Government of the Republic of Philippines (GR. 183591), as the High Court said the agreement was unconstitutional and illegal, and the process through which it was commenced "whimsical, capricious, oppressive, arbitrary and despotic."

"It is imperative that we learn from the past and make sure that we avoid making the same deadly mistakes all over again," he said.

He added: "We must do it right this time in order that peace and stability in Mindanao will finally be realized."

Hence, Drilon made several substantial amendments during the hours-long deliberations of the Senate on Senate Bill No. 1717 on Tuesday that lasted 10 hours.

Among the important amendments he introduced "in order to strengthen the law's adherence to constitution" is to

delete the provision on "reserved powers" for the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, given that the Constitution already provides for the residual powers of the National Government vis-a-vis autonomous regions.

"We reiterate the Sec. 17, Art. 10 of the Constitution in this section," he added. Section 17 Art. X provides that "All powers, functions, and responsibilities not granted by this Constitution or by law to the autonomous regions shall be vested in the National Government."

Drilon sees this as among the contentious provisions when the Senate and House of Representatives pass their own versions and eventually meet in the bicameral conference committee.

"We did away with nomenclatures, used no specific name and simply mirrored the wording of the Constitution, and gave powers to the Bangsamoro government in keeping with the constitutional provisions on local autonomy," Drilon said.

Drilon noted that it was particularly the wording of the MoA-AD which led the Supreme Court to declare it as unconstitutional, since its provisions vested the proposed Bangsamoro entity the status of an associated state which is not recognized by the present Constitution.

Drilon also successfully moved for the inclusion of the provision reiterating "that the Bangsamoro people are citizens of the Republic

of the Philippines."

The Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) opposed the amendment, which puzzled Drilon, saying that his proposed amendment only reiterates the wordings of the Constitution on Philippine citizenship.

"This was introduced to prevent any misinterpretation that that there is a 'Bangsamoro citizenship', because we are all Filipinos and we are all citizens of the Philippines," Drilon emphasized.

The minority leader also moved to amend the bill to remove the province of Palawan from the list of areas considered as historically part of Bangsamoro territory. The amendment was put to a vote following opposition from the sponsor and the BTC. Drilon's amendment was carried.

The senator also encountered stiff opposition to his proposal to introduce an anti-political dynasty provision for the Bangsamoro government, which was meant to reinforce the country's efforts to address political dynasties and its effect to public governance. The matter was temporarily set aside, disappointing Drilon, who insisted that the policy of anti-political dynasty must be put across.

Drilon also lauded and supported efforts made by Senators Panfilo Lacson and Gregorio Honasan to ensure that the Bangsamoro police will be under the Philippine National Police in keeping with the Constitutional precept that there shall be one police force.

# House passes BBL

**BY WENDELL VIGILIA**

THE House of Representatives yesterday approved on final reading the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) amid constitutional issues hoarding some of the measure's provisions.

Congressmen voted 227-11 with two abstentions in favor of House Bill No. 6475 which seeks to replace the Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao with a new Bangsamoro autonomous region.

The approval came a day after President Duterte certified the

House and Senate bills as urgent measures. The Senate bill was undergoing amendments as of press time.

The two congressmen who abstained were Abdullah Dimaporo (PDP-Laban, Lanao del Norte) and Celso Lobregat (LDP, Zamboanga City) who expressed reservations over some of the provisions of the bill.

Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez said he also shares the reservations of some lawmakers who believe that the bill is unconstitutional because

See HOUSE > Page B2

## HOUSE

it seeks to abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

"The establishment of the ARMM is really in the Constitution," he said.

Alvarez said it would best to just leave the issue of constitutionality with the Supreme Court when the time comes.

The bill, which was principally authored by Alvarez, was approved on second reading at 4:30 p.m. yesterday and was put to a vote for passage on third and final reading shortly after 5 p.m.

Among the most contentious provisions is the "opt-in" provision which allows other areas to be part of the proposed autonomous region of Bangsamoro, which is being opposed by some congressmen.

Under the House bill, other areas can be part of the Bangsamoro region by submitting a resolution or petition of 10 percent of its registered voters. The petition can be filed every five years for a period of 25 years after the creation of the Bangsamoro.

As a compromise, lawmakers agreed that there will also be only one plebiscite for the opt-in provision.

The plebiscite will be held not earlier than 90 days or not later than 120 days after the bill becomes a law.

Another amendment was to retain the Bangsamoro police and military under the national government.

On the issue of fiscal autonomy, Lobregat said the block grant to the Bangsamoro region will remain "but it will be 5 percent of national

taxes including customs."

Some lawmakers are also proposing to form separate bodies to perform the functions of constitutional bodies such as the Commission on Elections and the Commission on Audit, in the Bangsamoro region but House leaders opposed it because of constitutional issues.

Majority leader Rodolfo Fariñas has said congressmen and senators will have to iron out their conflicting versions of the bill during the congressional break.

He said the bicameral report will then be submitted for ratification by the House and the Senate in their plenary sessions in the morning of July 23, with the President signing it into law in time for his state of the nation address at 4 p.m. on the same day.

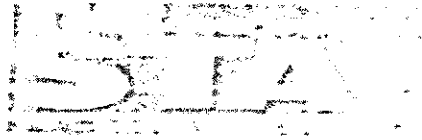
The BBL is seen as key to forging lasting peace with separatist rebels and thwarting the rise of Islamist extremism in Mindanao.

The bill is the result of a 2014 peace deal between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the government to end nearly 50 years of conflict that has killed more than 120,000 people and displaced 2 million.

It outlines the process to set up a self-administered territory in an area sometimes referred to as Bangsamoro.

The Senate has committed to Duterte to pass its counterpart version soon, before a panel of both houses combines both drafts in a version for the president's final approval.

The previous administration met numerous hurdles and failed to pass the bill, fuelling resentment and mistrust among many minority Muslims.



### **BIFF gun 'factory' seized**

SULTAN KUDARAT - Soldiers seized a suspected gun factory of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Barangay Tungol, Salipada Pindatum, Maguindanao yesterday.

Capt. Arvin Encinas, public affairs officer of the 6th Infantry Division, said 12 shotguns, a .45-caliber pistol, rocket launchers, grande projectiles, gun parts and gunsmith tools were recovered.

BIFF militants operating the shop managed to escape.

"We targeted the firearms manufacturing capability of the BIFF. It is part of our ongoing efforts to degrade their firepower as we pressure them to surrender," Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, 33rd Infantry Battalion commander, said.

fj21 - John Unson, Jaime Laude



## Military troops raid BIFF lair

By ZEA CAPISTRANO

DAVAO CITY – The military raided an alleged lair of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Barangay Tonggol, General Salipada K. Pendatun, Maguindanao early morning on Tuesday, and discovered a gun factory and an assortment of weapons.

In a report sent to The Manila Bulletin on Wednesday, Lt. Col. Harold M. Cabunoc, commanding officer of the 33rd Infantry Battalion, said the troops' operation "specifically targeted the

firearms capability of the BIFF."

"It is part of our ongoing efforts in degrading their firepower as we pressure them to surrender," Cabunoc said.

The military said it seized a gunsmithing machine, a caliber .45 M1911 pistol, a 12-gauge shotgun, two rocket propelled grenade launchers, unfinished home-made guns, and assorted ammunition.

Cabunoc added that the operation was undertaken by different military units including the First Mechanized Infantry Battalion and the Seventh Field Artillery Battalion.

The military said they took custody of 15 persons for questioning, but they were later released to local government officials.

Lt. Col. Lauro Oliveros, the commanding officer of the 1st Mechanized Battalion said his unit provided maximum support to the maneuvering troops.

"The sight of the roaring heavily armed armored vehicles served as deterrence against the terrorists who mingle with civilians," Oliveros added.

The military said suspected members of the BIFF left behind their war materiel as police commandos executed the raid.

Meanwhile, BIFF spokesman Abu Misry Mama said they have yet to receive reports about the raid.

# Soldiers seize BIFF arms factory

BY JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

**S**HARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao: Combined elements of the Army and police commandos seized a terrorist firearms factory after storming the lair of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Maguindanao on Tuesday morning.

Lt. Col. Harold Cabunoc, the commanding officer of the 33rd Infantry (Makabayan) Battalion, said the target of the operations was the firearms factory of the terrorists in the area.

"We specifically targeted the firearms manufacturing capability of the BIFF. It is part of our ongoing efforts in degrading their

firepower as we pressure them to surrender," Cabunoc said.

The security forces seized a gunsmithing machine, two rocket-propelled grenades launcher, a cal .45 M1911 pistol, a 12-gauge shotgun, rifle grenades, unfinished homemade guns and assorted ammunition.

Fifteen people were held for questioning but they were

promptly released to local government officials.

Capt. Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the 6th Infantry Division (6th ID), the operation was participated in by different units of the Army, among them the 1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion and the 7th Field Artillery Battalion.

"To keep our winning edge against a highly adaptive enemy in a complex environment, we employed different capabilities to maximize combined arms effects. The synergized effort enables the police commandos to serve the warrants against the suspects," Cabunoc said.

Lt. Col. Lauro Oliveros, the commanding officer of the 1st-

Mechanized Battalion, said his unit is harnessing its ability to provide maximum support to the maneuvering troops.

"Our armored vehicles provide protection to the infantry during the assault on the houses which are located within a civilian community. The sight of the roaring heavily armed armored vehicles served as deterrence against the terrorists who mingle with civilians," Oliveros said.

Protected by the artillery assets, police commandos executed the raid on the specific houses that had been identified by informants.

The suspects fled in disarray, leaving behind some weapons and war materiel.

"With artillery support behind

us, we gained the confidence to execute the mission alongside our Army counterparts. The artillery had served as stern warning against those who dare to join the fray," according to Police Supt. Darwin Padla, the battalion commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Special Action Battalion who participated in the operations.

Brig. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, the newly installed 6th ID commander, commended the troops for the successful mission.

"You have accomplished the mission without any unnecessary casualties. Continue putting on the pressure against the remnants of the BIFF so that they will eventually surrender like the others," he said. A7

## Zamboanga mayor vows justice for siege victims

**ZAMBOANGA CITY:** Mayor Maria Isabelle Salazar vowed to seek justice for victims of the Moro rebels' siege of Zamboanga in 2013 after the release from jail of dozens of gunmen who participated in the attack.

The Pasig City Regional Trial Court Branch 158 recently ordered the release of 96 out of over 200 members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MILF) who were arrested or surrendered to security forces.

"The release was a result of the plea bargaining agreement entered into by the Department of Justice and some of the MNLF [rebels] accused over the objection of the city, which resulted in the lowering of the penalty imposed on the accused since their imprisonment had already exceeded the penalty agreed upon in the plea bargaining agreement," Salazar said.

"The city government is saddened by the release of the accused MNLF members but will continue to fight for justice despite the recent order of the Regional Trial Court," she added.

Salazar ordered police and military forces to tighten security in Zamboanga after the release of the rebels.

"As city mayor, I have ordered a thorough review of the security measures and directed the city police and military to closely coordinate with my office. I am still hoping that justice will be served to the victims of the Zamboanga siege and the remaining 100 MNLF accused shall be held accountable for the crimes committed," she said.

MNLF chief Nur Misuari is among those facing charges of rebellion and violation of the Philippine Act on Crimes against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity.

Some 300 of Misuari's loyal followers from Basilan and Sulu provinces arrived by boats in Zamboanga and then attacked several villages, sparking house-to-house fighting with rebels taking dozens of innocent civilians and holding them hostage and using them as shields against security forces.

One of his commanders, Usong Ugong, surrendered to Senior Supt. Jose Chiquito Malayo, then local police chief, in Barangay Mampang in exchange for a safe passage back to Basilan.

Ugong claimed that Misuari misled them into believing they would attend a peace rally in Zamboanga, but ended up hiding in the village when the fighting erupted.

Malayo was initially reported to have been taken hostage by Ugong's group, but this was denied by the police officer who admitted he went to the village to negotiate the surrender of the rebels.

Police also seized assorted weapons from Ugong's group.

More than 400 people were killed and wounded in the fighting that lasted three weeks and displaced over 120,000 residents.

Salazar previously said she will not allow the rebels to go unpunished.

In 2001, Misuari's loyal forces also attacked military bases in Zamboanga City and Jolo town in Sulu where over 100 people were killed.

Misuari, who signed a peace accord with Manila in 1996, then became governor in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, but was removed after losing in succeeding elections.

He also ran thrice as Sulu governor but lost each time.

Misuari then accused the Aquino administration of renegeing on their agreement that prompted him to attack Zamboanga City twice and Sulu once.

AL JACINTO



# SHOOTING STRAIGHT

BOBIT S. AVILA

## An 11-car pile-up on the Fernan Bridge

Last Monday, a terrible 11-vehicle accident happened on the Marcelo Fernan Bridge when these 11 vehicles piled up at the foot of the bridge in its steepest part. First of all, let me point out that vehicles that pile up the roadways are commonplace in areas like the United States, Canada or in Europe because of extreme weather conditions caused by merciless snowfalls that often block the sight of drivers who only get to see the stalled vehicles when it is already too late to stop. Hence a pile up of cars often happen. But last Monday in Mactan Island, the weather was perfect... therefore that road accident was something that didn't have to happen, but it did!



That Monday road incident happened simply because the majority of Cebuano drivers simply do not know how to drive their vehicles above 70 kilometers per hour. Worse, that accident happened at the steepest part of the Marcelo Fernan Bridge, which gives you an idea that we simply have too many inexperienced drivers in our roads. This only tells you that educating our drivers, which is the job of the Land Transportation Office (LTO), is seriously lacking.

Right now many truck drivers still drive at the left side of the road when all trucks and buses are expected to use only the rightmost side of the road. The same is true with multi-cab drivers who do not know how to drive more than 60 kph. Hence, I dare say that it is high time for LTO to conduct a random test of drivers to test their reaction when they drive on faster lanes. Also, the LTO must sit down with the International Truckers Groups to tell them about the need for drivers to conduct at the very least a weekly check on their vehicles, especially their braking systems.

\* \* \*

Gasoline prices have blown up sky high, not because of the Department of Finance (DOF) Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law, but because of the gravity of world prices governing petroleum products, initiated by the withdrawal of the US nuclear deal with Iran that former President Barack Obama signed, which at the end of this deal, would result in Iran having a nuclear capability.

That landmark deal signed in 2015 lifted sanctions on Iran that crippled its economy and cut its oil exports practically in half. However at the end of the day, nuclear inspections in Iran were limited rather than becoming an easier task, which in the end was a deal that Iran truly cherished, which makes us question why then Pres. Obama signed this deal with Iran? With US President Donald Trump getting out of that deal was a campaign promise he made and he has since gotten out of that bad deal.

With that withdrawal, it gives Iran the option of expelling inspectors and resuming their nuclear activities that supposedly it has agreed to suspend. So at this point, we cannot be sure whether the oil prices would continue at this very high rate, but certainly we can only hope that world oil prices could stabilize as soon as possible. More so if US Pres. Donald Trump would meet up with North Korea's Kim Jong Un on the 12th of June, then we hope for great things to happen on this very highly volatile world. We are positive that the Trump meeting with

11 Turn to page 12

**AVILA** From page 11

Kim Jong Un will result to a very positive meeting... so let's cross our fingers and wish us luck!

\* \* \*

Harry Roque, Presidential Spokesman said, "Now of course we would like to have BBL enacted before Congress goes into recess on June 2, but their promise really is they will do everything possible to pass BBL." Roque said that Pres. Duterte met with lawmakers and members of the Bangsamoro Transition Council Monday night to discuss ways to harmonize the BBL drafts.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III and Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri said the President personally told them during the meeting that he will issue the needed certification.

Mind you, the senators, particularly Senate President Vicente Sotto, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto and Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, were still writing amendments to the BBL. Sotto said after its approval both chambers will immediately form the bicameral conference committee on the BBL to reconcile the conflicting provisions of their respective versions of the measures.

Sotto said it was possible that Duterte will sign it imme-

diately to report the same in his State of the Nation Address on July 23. Of course there is no question that the BBL needs to be approved by both the House of Representatives and the Philippine Senate hopefully by next month. Thanks to then Pres. Aquino, his Mamasapano incident forced Congress to stop the BBL rather than approve it due to the 44 Special Action Force (SAF) men that were killed in that encounter in Mamasapano.

\* \* \*

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## FROM THE STANDS

DOMINI M. TORREVILLAS

### Dansalan College to rise from the rubble



On May 23, 2017, a security guard saw men in black identified as belonging to the Maute group of terrorists, throw bottles filled with gasoline and burned the buildings of Dansalan College Foundation Inc. in Marawi City.

Starting that day, and for five months, the once peaceful atmosphere was all hell and fire as government military forces tried to quell the terrorists, bombings shattered buildings into smithereens, snipers killed hundreds of human lives, and exchanges of bullets chased the living out of the city. The source of destruction has been driven out, but much of the city has been laid pitifully desolate, and surviving humans live in makeshift quarters angry, hungry, and sad, not knowing what the future will bring them.

The Marawi siege physically destroyed the Dansalan College Foundation Inc., an institution that has been a historical, educational, and social landmark in the city.

DCFI history began with the arrival in 1915 of Dr. Frank Laubach and his wife Effa Seely in Dansalan (former name of Marawi) to start a literacy program known worldwide as "Each One Teach One." In June 1941 the Madrasah High School was started with 23 students but it was closed in December 1941 because of World War II.

In 1950 Dansalan Junior College was launched by concerned Christians and Maranao Muslims. The property was donated by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission. The school was built on Carmelite Hill, with a breathtaking view of Lake Lanao.

The school offered secondary and tertiary education. In 1968 Dansalan Junior College earned a full college status. In 1967, Rev. Lloyd Van Vactor and his wife Maisie served as teachers. The missionary and college became national news in 1979, with the kidnapping and holding captive for 20 days of Rev. Van Vactor.

On June 1, 1981, Dansalan Junior College became incorporated as Dansalan College Foundation Inc. (DCFI) with Rev. Van Vactor as the first president followed by Dr. Eulalio Maturan from 1981-1989. Dr. Fedelina Tawagon became the first woman president in 1989 and holds the position until the present time.

Dr. Tawagon and Edna Orteza wrote in *The DCFI Story, A Continuing Faith Journey* that women contributed to the body of knowledge taught in the college. Maisie Van Vactor collected documents, materials and resources on Islam and Filipino Muslims, which contributed to the setting up of the Dansalan

Research Center. She also encouraged the promotion of Muslim weaving." The late highly regarded sociologist Dr. Peter Gowing, then director of the Dansalan Research Center, enriched the collections of Christian-Muslim literature and Maranao culture in Mindanao.

*The DCFI Story* notes that over the years members of the faculty and staff who were Christians and Muslims became "partners in development striving to provide quality education to the youth. They seek to unite Muslims and Christians in friendly relations, exemplify in their lives the best of their culture, commit themselves to ease the tension, and promote peace and development."

Christ's mission is shown in the college's mission statement: "To develop and nurture, a people of principle, virtue, faith, hope and health in a transcultural academic atmosphere of excellence and service."

During the period of the siege, the campus residents fled for safety with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. More than 20 faculty and staff were held hostage for five months, released or escaped at different period.

Dr. Tawagon said the Maute group led by their former student, Omar Maute, set up DCFI as their stronghold and because of their presence, the buildings became a target for military air strikes that further destroyed the entire campus. The mahogany trees were burned, the people inside the campus were filled with horror. On May 24, 2017, while the Maute group was having breakfast, people went out of hiding and women brought hijab, a head covering worn in public by Muslim women to put them on the teachers for safety. The Maranao women led them to their homes and gave them breakfast.

After over a month, DCFI was liberated by the military forces. The forces are now occupying the campus with the approval of the board of trustees and the president of the college.

During the five-month long siege, and with all the 18 Marawi campus buildings destroyed, classes continued to be held in the DCFI annex campus in Lambaguhon, San Roque, Iligan, for academic year 2017-2018, with the approval of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. An estimated 550 students will be attending this campus this school year. DCFI also celebrated its 67th Foundation Day on the theme, "Rising from the Rubble."

According to Dr. Tawagon, 99 percent of students enrolled in DCFI, a Christian educational institution, are Muslims. The graduates now occupy high positions in government and non-government organizations. Among

Turn to page 12

## TORREVILLAS From page 11

them are lawyer Majul Gandamra, current mayor of Marawi City; Assemblyman Fiat Macarambon and Zia Adiong of the first District of Lanao del Sur; Assemblyman Farouk Macarambon of the second district of Lanao del Sur, Mayor Nashiba Gandamra of Taraka, Lanao del Sur, and Director Zorahaya Tanggol Taha, Region 12, Department of Social Welfare and Development.

On May 17-20, 2018 – a year after the Marawi siege took place – two teams were sent by the CREATE-UCCP (Church-Related Educational Action Towards Empowerment-United Church of Christ in the Philippines) to visit three member schools. One school visited was DCFI. The team visit was headed by DCFI president Dr. Tawagon, Dr. Helen Tejero and Editha Andam who negotiated with the military for the UCCP visitors to enter ground zero in Marawi City.

The team visitors were the UCCP General Assembly chair and president of Pilgrim Christian College in Cagayan de Oro City, Dr. Pio Baconga, and Bishops Melzar Labuntog, Jaime Moriles and Joel Tendero. Rev. Rannieh Mercado represented UCCP General Secretary Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza.

The main organizers of the team visit were Dr. Edwin Balaki, president of Southern Christian College, and Edna Javate Orteza, president and executive director of CREATE-UCCP, respectively. Other member schools represented were Besben Maquiso, president of Gingoog Christian College, and Dobert Moriles, CREATE-UCCP treasurer.

Dr. Erlinda Nable Senturias, who sent me her report on the team visits, gave the keynote address on "Doing Christ's Mission in these Changing Times: Implications for Church Educational Institutions." Part of her team were Pastor Alvaro Senturias Jr., executive director of The Wednesday Forum, and Pastor Cora-

zon Tabing Reyes, chair of the Commission of Church Union and Unity of the UCCP.

Some members of the visiting team stayed at the new four-story DCFI annex building in Lambaguhon which was established by Dr. Tawagon from savings on the main campus. The Iligan campus houses the Peter Gowing Memorial Center, an impressive amphitheater, a chapel and various rooms initially intended for visitors' rooms now serve as school rooms.

The rebuilding of the Marawi campus is a gargantuan dream. Prayers, though they work wonders, will have to be supplemented with mountains of donations. But with the UCCP leadership, says Dr. Tawagon, "We will enable DCFI to do Christ's mission in these changing times in a relevant and appropriate way."

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## MUTED, UNDERRATED DYNAMICS IN TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

**A**re we really in a helpless stance in relation to China? There is more to the Philippines' involvement in the West Philippine Sea dispute than the interplay of long-standing claims for territorial entitlements among neighboring Asia-Pacific states, and rights over marine resources in the area, of which Filipinos (perhaps including some of our leaders) are not fully aware of.

A meaningful analysis of the situation would impel one to consider the following premises:

In the eyes of the United States, the Philippines has by far the most strategic location in the Asia-Pacific region. Uncle Sam constantly looks for ways in order to gain and combine economic and maritime advantages in the region where it could build its Navy and consequently enhance its regional presence and prowess. The area surrounding the West Philippine Sea, where the Philippines is considered to be the most "approachable" state, is as much suitable for blockade as it is for trade and economic

current. No wonder, for years, the United States continues its ties with the Philippines and constantly helps in the latter's affairs. Of course, if it could keep close ties with its foes, with more reason it would with its goal.

On the other hand, China's interest over the Philippines and the West Philippine Sea is a mix of aspiration and self-preservation. The West Philippine Sea, an area known worldwide as the South and East China seas, is surrounded and comprised of islands running from Japan through Indonesia. This area has been regarded as a valuable route for trade and commerce. However, China's interest doesn't end here. Notably, the spacing of these islands poses risks upon China's maritime defense as this area tends to be a constrictive passage vulnerable to sea and air block off. When the going gets tough in this area, China can be easily sealed off without lifting even a single finger.

Finally, we may also observe that the US is bothered by the fact that China is a continuously

emerging state power in the Asia-Pacific region. But then, we cannot discount the reality that, due to its superior capability to impose restrictions and/or blockade upon unfavorable states, US causes China so much insecurity.

These are the muted, if not underrated, dynamics that actually make the Philippines a powerful bargaining entity, and which our fellow Filipinos must ponder on. We are in the position that could either make or break the aforementioned regional "superpowers." Our country holds the fulcrum, which can influence not only the status quo in the Pacific region, but the international state of affairs as a whole.

The Philippines' geographic and strategic location, as well as its stance in international law vis-à-vis the US and China, makes it a key player in its own right in the Asia-Pacific region. Currently, the Philippines may not just be China's viable option. It could be China's only hope.

So who's helpless now?

TINA SIUGAN <sup>M14</sup>



## METRO CORNER

# HB 6475 Bangsamoro government



By ERIK ESPINA

(Part 1)

**T**HE advent of another politically mandated myopia to abolish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to railroad the Bangsamoro Government (BG) with expanded territory, the introduction of a "wali," chief minister, parliament, etc., the configuration closely similar to the "unconstitutional and illegal" MOA-AD (Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain) by the Supreme Court (SC), October 14, 2008, requires the widest public disquisition, and transparency. The crafting process of MOA-AD was described by the SC then as – "whimsical, capricious, oppressive, arbitrary, and despotic."

Previously, I reiterated the alarm on whether a succeeding Congress has the power to establish a new ARMM. Or to abolish the latter and pass another regional structure of "Muslim" administration. The

late Senator Miriam Santiago in public hearings as chair of Constitutional Amendments with Senator Bong-Bong Marcos as vice-chair, consulted legal eagles and former justices as resource speakers on this issue. The consensus was in the negative (1987 Constitution, Art. X, Sec.19). On MOA-AD, Senator Miriam cited it as "creating a sub-state instead of an autonomous region."

While the present Charter under Sec. 18 (2nd paragraph) delimits the plebiscite to constituent units affected in the autonomous region, there are sectors pressing the holding of a nationwide plebiscite, on the creation of the Bangsamoro. The basis being: 1) "The annual block grant coming from the Central Government." This is equivalent to 6 percent of the net national internal revenue collection of the Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs. Note, the fund support via the block grant are funds coming from tax payers all over the Philippines. They have a right to be heard on matters that will affect national sovereignty,

territorial integrity, and the creation of public agencies where their monies are appropriated by government. 2) National government taxes, fees, and charges collected by the BG, other than tariff and customs duties, shall be shared 75 percent for BG and 25 percent to national government. However, for 10 years the BG shall retain the share of the latter. What of other LGUs?

A reading by provisions of the proposed House Bill

will be helpful for the entire Filipino people, regardless of origin and religion, to confront the clash of historical perspectives, peddled myths (e.g., Lapu-Lapu a Muslim etc.), shortness of memories (e.g., avoidance of our Sabah territory, Malaysia-MILF conspiracy etc.), and the sad codification into law of our tribal/cultural cleavages e.g. Filipinos, Moro, Indigenous Peoples).

(To be continued) 8

## Asia's nukes: The Kim, Trump and Xi Showdown

BY RICARDO SALUDO  
Columnist

Last of 2 parts

**I**n the first part, it was mooted that the United States would want a deal to rein in North Korea's nuclear and

ballistic ambitions, not only to protect the US from Kim Jong-un's nukes, but also to allow Washington to take a tougher line with Beijing once Chinese help is no longer so crucial to restrain Pyongyang.

► SaludoA5

Well, it looks like the Pentagon isn't even waiting for China to become less useful in Korea before upping the naval pressure. Last week, the People's Liberation Army was disinvented from the Rim of the Pacific naval exercises, the world's largest, hosted by the Seventh Fleet in Hawaii, with 24 nations, including the Philippines.

Now, no less than US Defense Secretary John Mattis declared that American forces will keep confronting the Chinese in military activities at disputed islands and waters in the South and East China Seas.

That means more freedom of navigation operations (fonops), with the US Navy sailing into waters that Washington believes are wrongly claimed by other nations, like the territorial waters claimed by Beijing around its man-made islands in the Spratlys.

(Interestingly, among the most frequent fonops are those in the Philippines. The US disputes our Constitution's claim that all waters within our territorial baselines, including the vast Sulu Sea between Palawan and Mindanao, are part of our archipelagic waters.)

### The quest to be king

How will China respond? Well,



REPUBLIC  
SERVICE

RICARDO  
SALUDO

before the how, the why. What are the overarching national interests driving Beijing's actions in its surrounding seas?

Among the many, three may be paramount. First and most important is to secure vital sea lanes, especially in the South China Sea, where four-fifths of Chinese oil imports pass. After Washington announced nearly a decade ago that it would move 60 percent of its naval assets to Asia, Beijing feared it would be even more hemmed in by its great naval challenge: the so-called First Island Chain — the Japanese, Philippine, and Indonesian archipelagos — all US allies through which Chinese naval and commercial vessels must pass.

Affirming China's fear of maritime interdiction was the 2016 US Army-sponsored study, "War With China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable," which urged as a

wartime strategy "denying access to seaborne supplies of oil and gas."

If only for that, China would want to assert control and boost defenses in the South China Sea, especially after the Aquino administration signed the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. EDCA would allow more US forces into the Philippines, with access to several military bases and within cruise missile range of not only shipping lanes in South and East China Seas, but also the Chinese mainland itself.

Since July 2016, China's EDCA fears have eased, after new President Rodrigo Duterte stalled implementation and mended fences with Beijing. But EDCA may still be moving ahead, with the first acknowledged US facility rising in a base in Central Luzon.

That location of Washington's first EDCA construction suggests that its top priority are support facilities close to potential flashpoints in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and in recent years, Vietnam, where the US is rapidly building defense ties, after the Philippines played down its alliance with America, while moving closer to China.

Besides securing vital sea lanes and preparing for potential war

in surrounding waters, China has a third reason to assert its power in the East and South China Seas: its rising global clout, much like the United States did with the 1823 Monroe Doctrine.

Then-President John Monroe declared that America would oppose European military action in the Western Hemisphere, where Latin American states were breaking free of Western colonialism. Washington's assertion of regional hegemony, which Europe largely did not contest due to the Napoleonic Wars, laid the foundation of America's global rise a century later, gradually displacing Britain, the top European power then.

Now, China is the upcoming world power, as the leading trade and financial source for most nations, as Britain and the US were during their ascendancy. Thus, Beijing wants to be the dominant Asian power, able to face down any threat in the region. For if they cannot even be king in their own backyard, how can the Chinese claim global influence?

Moreover, China needs to build strong ties with neighboring states as sources and channels of its mammoth material needs, most

especially food and industrial commodities. It cannot just stand by idly while the US, under its Pivot to Asia policy, enhances alliances with nations surrounding China, including the Philippines.

Indeed, that is the geopolitical and security imperative behind Beijing's Belt and Road projects to build new transport and trade links to West Asia, Europe and Africa. This vast network of roads, bridges, ports, and airports not only provide alternative routes for essential goods needed by China, but also deepens ties with Belt-and-Road states.

### **What Little Asia must do**

In this fast escalating confrontation between rising China and resisting America, which has fought six wars in Asia since its conquest of the Philippines at the end of the 19th century, what should the rest of Asia do?

Well, for starters, the region should oppose war, which would be devastating to all, even the superpowers. Fortunately, for all their aggressive frictions, even Washington and Beijing want to avoid war, hence their combined pressure on Pyongyang to wind down its

nuclear and missile programs.

The good news is, the two states in the middle of the most dangerous flashpoint, North and South Korea, are spearheading peace moves. Its leaders have met twice this year to advance peace and lay the groundwork for Kim's summit with US President Donald Trump. Despite its reported cancellation by the White House, top American and North Korean officials continue to hold meetings and make preparations for a June 12 meeting in Singapore.

Increasingly, like Seoul and Pyongyang, the lesser powers of Asia must advance their agenda for peace, even as the big boys brandish their sticks. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) should push forward a binding Code of Conduct with China. And the Philippines must resist becoming the platform for superpower rivalry, as it has done under President Duterte.

All Asia wants peace, and its nations, large and small, must assert this paramount goal against the centuries of armed intrusions by the West.

*(The first part was published last Tuesday, May 29.)*

## Our country's 'Red Queen' strategy

ONE is bound to give useless solutions to the South China Sea conflict if one doesn't take seriously how international relations work. A lot of our politicians aren't doing that.

Flowing from this sad fact are attempts to look good to our people by suggesting "solutions" — diplomatic protests, arbitration case, seek a UN General Assembly resolution. These "solutions" don't make us any different from the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland* who had to run faster just to remain in place. In other words, these "solutions" are mere attempts to look as if you're doing something that change things rather than just a spectacular display of activities that will not resolve the dispute.

I wonder how many of the current commentators on our dispute with China really read the arbitration decision. One of the things emphatically stressed in the decision on the jurisdiction of the case, released on October 29, 2015, is that the case will not resolve questions of territorial sovereignty.

So, if the arbitration proceedings wasn't about territorial sovereignty, what was it about?

Paragraph 1198 of the decision on the award released on July 12, 2016 is clear about this: "...the purpose of dispute resolution proceedings is to clarify the Parties' respective rights and obligations..."

That's it: An attempt to "clarify" the rights and obligations of China and the Philippines under UNCLOS, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

While the decision did find China in violation of some of our maritime rights, it didn't indicate what would be the remedy. It didn't say that China must leave the South China Sea, which the delusional #CHexit campaigners wanted. It didn't declare that we have "sovereignty" over the "West Philippine Sea," an area which the decision didn't even name as the subject of the dispute! It didn't order China to dismantle its artificial islands. And it didn't declare those artificial islands as "properties" of the Philippines. All the things that a lot of you wanted China to do weren't in the decision that the Philippines paid for to the tune of over a billion pesos. It's an expensive Red Queen strategy.

This could have been prevented if our decisionmakers took seriously how international relations work.

Some of them think that the international system is just like the domestic system, the system we have in our country.

The domestic system is a hierarchical order, with the government on top guaranteeing order in society by ensuring that the citizens are following the law. If any citizen violates the law and the judiciary finds him guilty, the legal decision has a force behind it that could compel obedience or bestow punishment. You don't have that in the international system.

The international system is anarchic. All states have equal sovereignty with no authority above them that could compel obedience. The UN Security Council (UNSC) acts like a

police force, or a "military junta" as one of my professors in international relations once said, but it only steps in if the situation already threatens international peace, security and stability. However, if the situation involves the interests of the five permanent members of the UNSC (China, United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom), expect no action from the UNSC. Citizens cannot veto the action of local courts if their decision are against their interests.

Most sources of international law are treaties; and they are constructed with so much ambiguity, States strive to have that ambiguity so that the treaty could be interpreted in such a way that it would accommodate their interests. States cannot become a party to a treaty without their consent. And they can withdraw that consent anytime they want. Some say that "legally," states cannot do this. But those who say that assume that the effects of legality in the domestic system is the same in the international system.

In the domestic system, our consent isn't relevant to the implementation of the decision of the courts against us. In the international system, it is. You cannot compel any country to do anything that it didn't consent to. Period.

So how can the Philippines override the lack of consent of China? Power.

Military power: Use force, which is simply a euphemism for war. Newsflash: Our military power versus China is laughable. To remedy that, they say we must form a military alliance. But then again, these folks forget that strong parties in an alliance will never let weak ones direct the alliance according to their wishes for the simple reason that the weak ones aren't the ones that would spend the most for the action the alliance would take.

Economic power: Perhaps trade sanctions against China. So, name any country willing to cut off their trade relations with China so that the Philippines will be happy.

Diplomatic power: This is closely tied to economic power. I checked *The World Fact Book* of the Central Intelligence Agency and found that China is a significant import and export partner of 167 and 88 countries, respectively. On the other hand, the Philippines is a significant export partner of two: Kiribati and Trinidad & Tobago; and significant import partner of Palau. AG

Since you don't have power to compel China to override its lack of consent, what's our only other option? Do what it has repeatedly given its consent to: negotiate bilaterally.

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# Calida must resign



TO THE POINT  
EMIL P. JURADO

THE country's workers may finally get some relief next month if we are to believe Secretary Silvestre Bello's words about regional wage boards coming out with recommendations on wage increases.

It is important that the Duterte administration alleviate the conditions of Filipinos given the effect of higher prices. The President must realize that wages are a gut issue—perhaps more than any other government concern.

History tells us that when people get hungry, they contemplate a revolution. I am not saying that a revolution is imminent. Still, listening to what workers have to say is urgent.

The coming wage increase may not satisfy the demands of all labor groups, but it would be at least a sign that the government is listening.

\*\*\*

As far as I am concerned, Solicitor General Jose Calida has found himself in a hole of his own making. He may not be able to extricate himself from this.

He admitted that he has yet to divest himself of his business interest in a private security agency that has snared more than P150 million in contracts from various government agencies.

Did he not know that what he was doing smacked of a clear conflict of interest? That was in violation of Section 30 (1) of Republic Act 6713, otherwise known as the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees. The law says there is conflict of interest when a public official is a member of the board or a substantial stakeholder of a public corporation or business or his rights or duties therein may be opposed to or affected by the faithful performance of his duty.

Isn't this clear enough?

The same law, in Section 4, also states that it is unlawful for any person having family or close personal relations with public officials to capitalize or exploit or take advantage of

such family or close personal relations by directly or indirectly requesting pecuniary advantage from other persons having some business, transaction, application, request or contract with the government.

On these alone, my *gulang*, Calida has no choice but to resign. That is, if he has any self-respect or delicadeza left.

Calida claims he has resigned as chairman and president of his security agency. But records show that he still owns 60 percent of that company—he still controls it even as his wife heads the firm with his sons having interest.

Calida now comes out with the cop-out that the law is either resign from management or divest.

But the bottom line is that he still owns the security firm that has contracts with at least three government agencies: The National Economic and Development Authority, the National Anti-Poverty Commission and the

National Parks Development Corp.

I had a good laugh when Calida said that as solicitor general, he is not covered by the ethics law since he is not a cabinet member.

Not a cabinet member when he holds a cabinet rank?

Calida's case will test the President's fight against graft and corruption.

\*\*\*

In yesterday's column, I sought the investigation of some government-owned and -controlled corporations. The Commission on Audit found that at least five lawyers of the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel had P621,000 in excess allowance.

The law is clear that while government corporate lawyers could receive allowances, these should not exceed half of their salaries.

But COA records shows that the five collectively received P372 million, when the 50-percent threshold should have been only P3.1 million.

Why do GOCCs give that much to their lawyers, exceeding what the law allows, if they are not holding something? Are they hiding excessive travels, hiring of consultants, great perks and other irregularities?

KU

Turn to A5

## Calida...

From A4

\*\*\*

After President Rodrigo Duterte certified the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law as urgent, there are hopes that both the Senate and House of Representatives will rush its passage.

But there are still unconstitutional provisions in the proposed BBL that should be threshed out. One of these is whether the Philippine National Police will still have control of the police under the BBL.

Another contentious provision is whether the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will be dissolved. This will entail the amendment of the

1987 Constitution.

There is no doubt that Mindanao needs the BBL, but it should not be enacted in haste.

\*\*

I fully support the President's war on corruption. Corruption is something that has been endemic in government. Other presidents have tried—but failed.

If there is anybody who can at least reduce corruption in government, it is President Duterte. He has the political capital. He has the resolve to do it.

Still, he must know that he must have some proof of the alleged wrongdoing before calling the officials out—or else their reputations get tarnished for good.

Once a person is cited for alleged corruption, he or she is condemned forever, guilty or not.

## EDITORIAL

# Rody draws the line

**C**hina's recent "militaristic" actions have been seized by critics of President Duterte as a sign that he is coddling the Asian giant in its aggressive moves in the disputed South China sea.

The Reds and yellows have slammed Duterte for not filing a diplomatic protest after the reported installation of missile defense systems on artificial islands.

Rody was also assailed for not demanding immediate Chinese compliance with a 2016 arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing's nine-dash line claims in the South China Sea and upheld the Philippines' sovereign rights to exploit resources inside its economic zone that included most of the contested areas.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said it is not so. Measures are being taken which are not necessarily made public but are firm moves to remind China of "red lines" that it should not cross.

Cayetano said such unacceptable acts would be the continued construction activities and extraction of oil and gas in the contested waters.

He added that a removal of the intentionally beached Philippine navy scrap called Sierra Madre used by Filipino marines as a detachment in Second Thomas Shoal would be another line not to cross for China.

"For those who keep saying, 'File a protest, file a protest,' what do we mean when we said, 'We are taking all diplomatic actions'?" Cayetano said.

To underline his claim, Cayetano said that critics will be proven wrong when the government decides to declassify the discussions with China "once we have achieved our purposes in the future."

Cayetano said as Rody makes an outward show of sidling up to China, thorny issues were taken up under the radar including actions that each deemed unacceptable.

"Filipino troops should not be harassed while on resupply missions or when repairing (facilities) like a runway," Cayetano said.

The government has started repairs of the runway on Pagasa Island in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) which Malacañang said is "consistent with our national sovereignty and jurisdiction."

Cayetano was firm in saying that China crossing the demarcation may result in the degradation of harmonious relations.

"The president has declared this. If anyone gets the natural resources in the West Philippine Sea-South China Sea, he will go to war," Cayetano said.

Cayetano said both countries agreed "not to embarrass each other in front of all, in all multilaterals and bilaterals."

China has taken offense with the previous administration after sending the territorial dispute into arbitration with the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at the Hague.

China rejected the proceeding and said it does not recognize its award that invalidated its claim over most of South China Sea.

When he assumed the Presidency, Rody declared he would chart a foreign policy not highly oriented toward the United States and said he would set aside the arbitral ruling.

"It is not the policy of this administration to engage in megaphone or microphone diplomacy, and announce each and every action, unless announcing it is beneficial to us," Cayetano said.

Rody's pragmatic approach on the South China Sea friction resulted in Filipino fishermen regaining access to their traditional fishing grounds in Scarborough Shoal instead of being accosted by China in the past.

"The shoal's vast lagoon has been declared off limits to all fishermen to nurture fishery stocks, and a coast guard agreement now allows vessels to enter the lagoon for safety in stormy weather, Cayetano said.

Rody had said that China remains a trusted partner for economic development which provided the basis for an open line of communications between both countries.

A strong bond assures that the friendship stays despite the occasional disagreements.

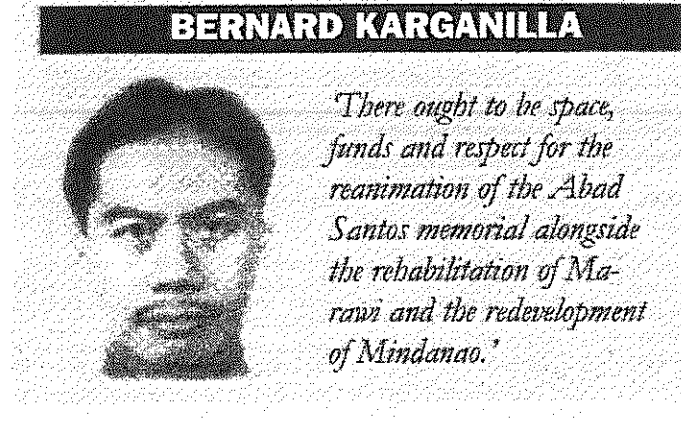
A Chinese proverb goes "when there is trust, no proof is necessary. when there is none, no proof is possible." 6

# Grave of Chief Justice marked

**T**HE grave of the Chief Justice of the Philippine Commonwealth was marked in the aftermath of the 21 October 1972 heinous attack by vandalistic Moro separatists against public property and institutions of the Philippine Republic in Lanao Del Sur's Marawi City.

The 10th Infantry Battalion (the maneuver unit of the 1st Infantry Tabak Division of the Philippine Army) was pulled out of Central Luzon and re-deployed to Mindanao, landing at Malabang where 30 years prior the imperialist Japanese invaders had immorally murdered one of the highest officials of the Philippine Commonwealth.

"Historical records reveal that the late Secretary Jose Abad Santos, who was left as Caretaker of the Government by President Quezon before he was evacuated to Australia, was arrested by the Japanese occupation forces because of his refusal to cooperate with the Japanese authorities and then transported to Malabang where he was beheaded. Eyewitnesses confirmed this account and the site where he was executed was located. I reported this finding to General Ramos who instructed me to spearhead the building of a memorial for the late hero. After completion of the project General Ramos, accompanied by former UP Law Secretary Vicente Abad Santos (the late hero's brother), arrived to officiate the dedication of the marker and



its turnover to the local officials. Secretary Abad Santos recognized me and remarked to General Ramos that when I had requested for an honorable dismissal from the UP College of Law in order to be a full-time military professional, I remarked as a justification for my request that 'There were already many lawyers but not one general from the UP College of Law' so he was surprised to see me in Malabang and still a colonel. General Ramos replied that there was no need to worry, as Colonel Magno will soon be a General. It still took me five more years in the field before the lone star fell on my shoulders." [Jose P. Magno Jr., My Life and Times with the 10th Infantry Battalion, 1972-1973]

Fidel V. Ramos was at that time the Chief of the PC/INP and Magno was the Battalion Commander of the 10th Infantry. Re-

markable that the records of three personalities in Philippine history (Abad Santos, Ramos, Magno) intersected at that place and time. Remarkable, too, that Marawi and Lanao had figured in at least three episodes in Philippine history: World War II (Japanese Occupation), Moro separatist wars (1972-1976), and the calamitous ISIS-Maute attempt to necromantically conjure an Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia in the Philippine summer of 2017.

There ought to be space, funds and respect for the reanimation of the Abad Santos memorial alongside the rehabilitation of Marawi and the re-development of Mindanao. People of Luzon as well as the Visayas deserve a safe visit to Malabang where they can salute the martyrdom of the Chief Justice who proclaimed his loyalty to the Philippines and his resistance to Japanese imperialism, paying

the ultimate price.

In a similar vein, the Americans and the Taiwanese engaged in recent commemorations.

Still on time for this year's Memorial Day, the Americans commemorated the successful Operation Landcrab - the 11-30 May 1943 Allied initiative to liberate Attu Island (off the coast of the U.S. Territory of Alaska) from Japanese invaders as part of the Aleutian Islands Campaign in both the American Theater and the Pacific Theaters of World War II. It was the only land battle of WW2 that was fought on an incorporated territory of the United States and the only land battle whereby the Japanese interlopers fought the Americans defending their homeland in Arctic conditions. "Two Canadian corvettes, HMCS Dawson and Vancouver, provided anti-submarine support. It took the Americans twenty days and nearly 4,000 casualties to eliminate the much smaller Japanese force, which fought to the death." [https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/operations/aleutian\_e.shtml]

"It was brutal: there were 549 U.S. deaths, and 2,351 Japanese deaths. Perhaps more telling of the fighting conditions on the island are the US casualty statistics: 3,829, 25% of the entire invading force, a proportion of casualties second only to the fighting on

B4 See GRAVE > Page B5

43



## GRAVE

Iwo Jima. On May 29, the battle ended with one of the largest banzai charges in the Pacific campaign by the remaining Japanese forces, many detonating grenades against their chests instead of facing surrender. Only 28 Japanese survived." [<https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2010/06/07/the-japanese-invasion-of-america/>]

In addition to remembering the heroes and casualties of this war, there are lessons that must be learned: "In this report of action on Attu, the successful application of the habitual methods and techniques acquired in training to actual combat situations again is emphasized. However, this narrative clearly indicates the limitations in the application of previ-

ously acquired techniques to all battle situations. On many occasions, actuality will differ greatly from preconceived ideas. Plans will go wrong, mistakes will be made, weather conditions will change, the terrain may be different than anticipated, and enemy actions may be confusing. Such was the situation on Attu. These difficulties were overcome not by blind adherence to preconceived plans, but by the individual initiative and resourcefulness of unit leaders who were able immediately to place new plans into operation." [<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/USA-InfCombat/index.html#attu>]

Attu Island is now part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. In another quadrant of Pacific Asia, a National Human Rights Museum was inaugu-

rated with a series of events last May 17-19 at Green Island White Terror Memorial Park in Taitung County, Taiwan, and Jing-Mei White Terror Memorial Park in New Taipei City. "Administered by the Ministry of Culture, the NHRM is the nation's primary facility for collecting and preserving historical documents and materials relating to human rights from the end of 50 years of Japanese colonial rule August 15, 1945, to the lifting of martial law five years after Taiwan proper in outlying Kinmen and Matsu islands November 7, 1992. It is also responsible for researching and revitalizing sites where significant rights violations occurred as well as managing the two memorial parks, located at former jails for political prisoners." [[https://taiwantoday.tw/news.](https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=18&post=134703)

<https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=18&post=134703>]

This new facility becomes part of our itinerary, with the National 228 Memorial Museum in Taipei City and the Taipei City-based National Palace Museum (the 13th most visited worldwide in 2017, according to the Theme Index and Museum Index released May 17 by U.S.-headquartered project management firm AECOM and nonprofit industry group Themed Entertainment Association). [[https://www.mofa.gov.tw/en/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1190C61E1C8A01A9&sms=1BC1E5C3DD8E7C26&cs=BE35B11AB2E7B225](https://www.mofa.gov.tw/en/News_Content.aspx?n=1190C61E1C8A01A9&sms=1BC1E5C3DD8E7C26&cs=BE35B11AB2E7B225)]

For the remainder of our summer excursion: the Abad Santos memorial in Mindanao, the three Taiwan museums, and even the Japan Louvre Sculpture Museum in Mie Prefecture.

# ONLINE NEWS

31 MAY 2018

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## **BBL hurdles second reading at Senate**

By: Anthony Q. Esguerra - Reporter / @AEsquerraINQ

INQUIRER.net / 12:57 AM May 31, 2018

The proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) hurdled the second reading at the Senate on Wednesday, a day after President Rodrigo Duterte certified the bill as urgent.

The proposed measure that will create the Bangsamoro region is also expected to be passed in the third and final readings on Wednesday's last session before the Congress goes into sine die adjournment.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque earlier announced that Duterte decided to certify the measure, a following the President's meeting with lawmakers and Muslim leaders at Malacañang.

"After much deliberation, the President has decided to make the House and Senate versions of the BBL as urgent and copy of it is on its way to both houses of Congress," Roque said in a statement.

"Once both chambers have reconciled and finalized the version, the President will sign the BBL," he added.

However, Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon on Wednesday said the Congress must ensure that the BBL can withstand judicial review as he expects that the would be law will be elevated to the Supreme Court.

"We must avoid the constitutional issues that led to the downfall of the previous Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain in 2008," Drilon said in a statement.

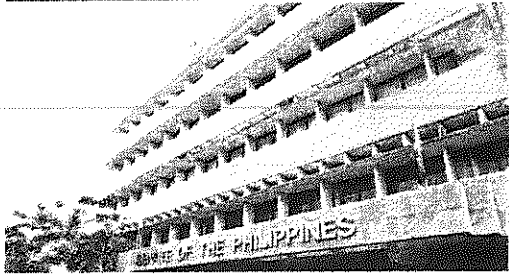
"I want to make sure that the BBL that we will pass in Congress is 100 percent in conformity with the 1987 Constitution," he added.

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## **Senate OKs proposed BBL on final reading**

By: Anthony Q. Esquerra - Reporter / @AEsquerraINQ

INQUIRER.net / 01:02 AM May 31, 2018



The Senate building at the GSIS Complex in Pasay City (Photo by LYN RILLON / Philippine Daily Inquirer)

After holding marathon sessions, the Senate finally approved on third and final reading the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

Around 1 a.m. on Thursday, twenty-one senators voted to approve Senate Bill 1717 or "An Act Providing for the Basic Law for the Bangsamoro and Abolishing the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao."

Senator Leila de Lima and Senator Manny Pacquiao were not present to cast their votes. De Lima is detained at Camp Crame and Pacquiao is training for his next fight.

The House of Representatives earlier passed its version of the measure, which was certified urgent by President Rodrigo Duterte.

The two chambers will then meet in a bicameral conference committee to reconcile their versions of the bill.

The final version of the measure will be sent back to both chambers for ratification before it can be transmitted to President Rodrigo Duterte for signature.

Congressional leaders expect the bill to be signed into law in time for Duterte's state of the nation address in July.

Malacañang has expressed confidence that the President will sign the proposed measure into law.

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## **230 Zamboanga del Sur villagers flee as AFP steps up assault vs NPA rebels**

By: [Leah Agonoy](#) - [@inquirendotnet](#)

PAGADIAN CITY – Around 230 individuals fled their homes in Barangay Saad in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur as the military intensified its operation against the New People's Army (NPA) rebels there.

The residents left their homes and their belongings behind as the military conducted air strikes against the rebels, said Dejhali Libradilla, the Dumingag social welfare officer.

The offensives started on Tuesday but no casualty had so far been reported.

Libradilla said a team from the town's social welfare office had been sent to the village, which was about four hours away by foot.

She said they have delivered basic needs such as food and other items and conducted stress debriefing sessions.

Majority of the people in Barangay Saad were Subanen lumad and this was the first time they experienced such operation.

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## Duterte assures Joma Sison: No 'Aquino-style' assassination if you come home

By: [Jhoanna Ballaran](#) - Reporter / [@JhoannaBINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 07:07 PM May 30, 2018

**Update (10:00 p.m.)**

President Rodrigo Duterte has once again asked Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founder Jose Maria Sison to come home to discuss peace with the government. He assured the rebel leader that there will be no "Aquino-style" assassination upon his return.

"Walang Aquino style na patayan na barilin ko sa likod. (There's no Aquino-style assassination where I'll shoot someone at the back). It's not my [style]..." Duterte said Wednesday in his speech during the Presidential Security Group change of command ceremony in Manila.

Duterte was apparently referring to the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., who was assassinated on August 21, 1983 upon his return to Manila after years of self-exile in the United States.

Aquino, one of the fiercest critics of late dictator President Ferdinand E. Marcos, was shot in the back seconds after he exited the China Airlines plane that took him home at the Manila International Airport.

Duterte assured Sison of his safety upon his return and even offered to allow members of the New People's Army (NPA) to secure him.

"Sabi ko, 'come home and talk, and as long as you do not ask a coalition government, which I cannot give and will never give, you can come home and talk to me and the others, and maybe in the fullness of God's time we can achieve peace in our land,'" Duterte said.

"He does not have to worry about his safety. I will provide his... I may call on maybe members of his command to protect him," he added.

Last week, Duterte threatened to kill Sison, his former professor, if the peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front fail.

Sison has been in exile in the Netherlands since 1987, when the late President Corazon Aquino released him from prison. /ee

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## **Drilon: BBL must withstand judicial review**

By: [Maila Ager](#) - Reporter / [@MAgerINQ](#)

[INQUIRER.net](#) / 05:20 PM May 30, 2018

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon said he has introduced several amendments to the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BLL), such as the removal of a provision that gives “reserved powers” to the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, so it can withstand judicial review.

Drilon said he expects that the BLL, once enacted into law, would be elevated to the Supreme Court.

“I want to make sure that the BBL that we will pass in Congress is 100 percent in conformity with the 1987 Constitution,” he said in a statement on Wednesday.

“All our amendments are designed to cleanse it of unconstitutional provisions so it can withstand judicial scrutiny. We cannot afford a repeat of what happened in the MOA-AD,” the senator added.

Drilon was referring to the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), signed by the administration of President Gloria Arroyo and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2008. The said agreement, however, was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

“It is imperative that we learn from the past and make sure that we avoid making the same deadly mistakes all over again,” he said, “We must do it right this time in order that peace and stability in Mindanao will finally be realized.”

Drilon said during the hours-long deliberations of the measure Tuesday that among his “substantial amendments” was the removal of “reserved powers” of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region “given that the Constitution already provides for the residual powers of the National Government vis-a-vis autonomous regions.”

This provision, he said, would be among the contentious provisions when the Senate and House of Representatives pass their own versions and meet in the bicameral conference committee.

“We did away with nomenclatures, used no specific name and simply mirrored the wording of the Constitution, and gave powers to the Bangsamoro government in keeping with the constitutional provisions on local autonomy,” Drilon said.

He said he also successfully moved for the inclusion of the provision reiterating “that the Bangsamoro people are citizens of the Republic of the Philippines”— an amendment that he said is being opposed by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC).

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But Drilon said his proposed amendment only reiterates the wordings of the Constitution on Philippine citizenship.

“This was introduced to prevent any misinterpretation that that there is a ‘Bangsamoro citizenship’, because we are all Filipinos and we are all citizens of the Philippines,” he stressed.

The senator said he also succeeded in removing the province of Palawan from the list of areas considered as historically part of Bangsamoro territory.

“The amendment was put on a vote following opposition from the sponsor and the BTC,” Drilon said.  
/ee

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## **Air Force chopper makes emergency landing in Zamboanga**

By: **Frances Mangosing** - Reporter / [@FMangosingINQ](#)

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A Philippine Air Force chopper made a precautionary landing on Tuesday afternoon in Zamboanga City.

The Huey (UH-1H) combat utility helicopter with tail number 504 encountered an in-flight emergency after it departed the Edwin Andrews Air Base past 3 p.m., said Air Force spokesperson Maj. Aristides Galang.

This prompted the pilots to make an emergency landing in Barangay Ayala.

"The aircraft incurred damage but the pilots and crew members were not injured. The PAF sent a team to conduct investigation," Galang said. /vvp



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## **2 alleged NPA rebels fall, yield in Bicol**

By: **Delfin T. Mallari Jr.** - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

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LUCENA CITY – Army soldiers captured one alleged New People’s Army (NPA) rebel in Albay province, while another surrendered in Camarines Norte province on Tuesday.

Soldiers led by a Lt. Tawantawan from Task Group Albay of the Army’s 902nd Infantry Brigade were conducting combat patrol when they encountered suspected rebel Lestino Rosero in Barangay Boldo, Guinobatan, Albay, said Col. Danilo Benavidez, Southern Luzon Command public information officer.

Rosero yielded one caliber .38 revolver, 150 rounds of caliber 7.62 mm and 5.56 mm ammunition, parts of anti-personnel improvised explosive devices and an M14 rifle.

Soldiers brought Rosero to the Guinobatan police station for filing of criminal charges.

The military also reported that a certain Armando Dor Panol alias “Ka Ding,” alleged member of an NPA unit operating in Camarines Norte, surrendered to the Army’s 9th Infantry Battalion based in Barangay Guisican in Labo town. Panol surrendered two M16 rifles and documents, the report said. /lb