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06 November 2018

Tuesday



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www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

P25 PAY HIKE: LABOR, BUSINESS UNHAPPY

STORY BY JOVIC YEE AND ROY STEPHEN C. CANIVEL

Workers denounce the minimum wage increase in Metro Manila as mere alms, while employers grumble it will increase the cost of doing business in the country and harm its competitiveness.

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FROM A1

By Jovic Yee and Roy Stephen C. Canivel @Team_Inquirer

The Department of Labor and Employment (Dole) announced on Monday a P25 increase in the minimum daily wage of workers in Metro Manila, an amount that labor groups called mere "crumbs."

Employers also grumbled, saying the amount would increase the cost of doing business in the Philippines and harm the country's competitiveness.

The Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) said the government's failure to grant a significant wage hike could result in an increase in the number of strikes.

ALU-TUCP spokesperson Alan Tanjusay said administration candidates may suffer in next year's midterm elections.

Under Wage Order No. NCR-22, the new minimum daily wage in Metro Manila will be P537 for workers in the nonagriculture sector, and P500 for those in the agriculture sector and those in retail, service and manufacturing establishments that have less than 10 workers.

The order, expected to take ef-

fect as early as Nov. 21, integrates the existing P10 cost of living allowance, which employers have the discretion to give to workers.

Pack of instant noodles

"It would appear that the actual wage increase is only P15. What P15 can buy is a single purchase of instant noodles. Ecop (Employers' Confederation of the Philippines) and Dole are heartless," Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao said.

Partido Manggagawa chair Renato Magtubo said the wage adjustment was mere "alms" to at least 3 million "overworked" minimum wage earners.

"The P25 [increase] cannot compensate for the runaway inflation in Metro Manila and the stagnation of the real wage, despite the 50-percent productivity growth from 2001 to 2016," he said.

Like Partido Manggagawa, wage petitioner ALU-TUCP said the wage increase was "too small" that it "has no impact to lift workers and their families out of poverty."

ALU-TUCP sought a P320 wage increase in June, which it increased to P344 last month to help workers recover their purchasing power as inflation continued to rise.

The inflation rate hit a nine-year high of 6.7 percent

in September.

Maria Criselda Sy, head of the National Wages and Productivity Commission, defended the adjustment set by the Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board (RTWPB).

Supported by simulations

Sy said the P25 was "backed up by simulations."

Any amount higher than that "could be a potential source of secondary inflationary effects," she said.

It was the same line taken by

ment of consumers," Yap said.

Edgardo Lacson, acting president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the increase should have only been P20 per day, based on the fluctuation of the consumer price index.

Exemption

"Employers will comply but those who cannot afford can file for a one-year exemption," said Lacson, who is also chair of Ecop.

Malacañang will respect the P25 wage increase, according to presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III confirmed on Monday that minimum wage earners in Metro Manila would receive a P25 adjustment in their daily pay as earlier revealed by Ecop.

Balancing act

Bello said the seven-member RTWPB in Metro Manila arrived at P25 by "balancing the needs of workers and their families with the capacity of enterprises to pay the additional labor costs without impairing business."

For labor group Sentro, the adjustment given by the RTWPB did not come as a surprise as it pointed out that the board had always followed the government's "cheap labor policy."

Magtubo favored abolishing the regional wage boards for their failure to look after the workers' welfare. —WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE

M. AURELIO, LEILA B. SALAVERRIA AND VINCE F. NONATO. INQ

IN THE KNOW

What can you buy with P25?

Any of the following:

- One bar of detergent soap
- Two 350-ml bottles of vinegar or soy sauce
- One 60-gram bath soap
- One 150-g canned meat loaf or one 150-g canned sardine
- Four to five sticks of cigarettes
- Three 55-g Lucky Me instant noodles
- One fine-tech ball pen or two ordinary ball pens
- GoUnli25 for unlimited calls to Globe network, unlimited texts to all networks and free Facebook for one day
- ALLOUT20 for 20 minutes calls to Smart network, unlimited texts to all networks, 150-mb data and free Facebook for one day
- One Grade 1 writing pad paper
- Around four sachets of 3-in-1 coffee
- One Nissin cup noodles

Sources: DTI, Smart website, Globe website, Office Warehouse

the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), which said the wage increase would add pressure to the already high inflation.

Eduardo Yap, chair of MAP's national issues committee, said the increase would also harm the competitiveness of the country.

"Raising wages will provide only temporary relief, whatever the amount. Manufacturers and traders will soon raise prices in response to higher cost, and inflation will continue to rise in a never-ending cycle to the detri-

MM workers minimum get P25 wage hike

By MAYEN JAYMALIN

While minimum wage earners in Metro Manila will enjoy higher pay and a more substantial 13th month pay, labor groups are unhappy with the new hike, which is way below their demand of an increase of P334 a day.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III yesterday announced that the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board (RTWPB) granted a P25 pay hike as well as ordered the integration of the existing P10 cost of living allowance (COLA) to the daily basic pay for workers in Metro Manila.

"Upon the effectivity of the new wage order, the daily minimum wage in Metro Manila will be P537 from the current P512 a day," Bello said.

National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) executive director Criselda Sy noted that the current Metro Manila minimum pay of P512 includes the P10 COLA.

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Sy explained that COLA is not part of the basic pay and is not included in the computation of overtime pay as well as 13th month pay.

"Under the new wage order, the P10 is integrated in the basic pay. It is now included in the computation of overtime pay and (so) workers will enjoy bigger take home pay," she said.

Sy said the NWPC will affirm the new wage order once it verifies that the RTWBPB has complied with all the procedures of wage fixing.

After the affirmation, Sy added, the NWPC will return the wage order to the RTWBPB for its publication. The order will take effect 15 days after it is published in a national newspaper.

Sy, however, clarified that the amount

granted by the RTWBPB was a balance between the need of workers and the capacity of enterprises to pay additional labor cost.

Sy warned that a higher wage adjustment could lead to another round of inflation if the economy is unable to absorb the impact of the pay increase.

Since more than 90 percent of commercial establishments in Metro Manila are micro-enterprises, Sy said, they cannot afford a higher amount.

Workers may appeal the RTWBPB decision within 10 days of its publication, but no wage order has ever been reversed, Sy noted.

NWPC said compliance with the existing minimum wage rate in Metro Manila is 87 percent.

Malacañang said the wage hike could still be adjusted "depending on the economic conditions."

"Perhaps. Presently, that is what they found out, that's enough. But I guess it's always subject to change, depending on the economic conditions," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said, when asked if he thinks the increase would be enough for workers to cope with rising prices.

For its part, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said the wage hike in the National Capital Region (NCR) has been factored in its latest inflation forecasts.

BSP deputy governor Diwa Guinigundo said monetary authorities already assumed a P25 increase for minimum wage earners instead of only P18.

"It is true that we considered only an P18 daily adjustment in minimum wage but that was in our old set of forecasts. Given the reports we received on the amount of the petitions in many regions, we decided to adjust our assumption from P18 to P25 daily minimum wage adjustment," he said.

Guinigundo added that the wage hike was reflected in BSP's September forecasts of 5.2 percent for 2018, 4.3 percent for 2019 and 3.2 percent for 2020.

Inflation is expected to remain elevated, exceeding the BSP's two to four percent target for 2018 and 2019 due to higher oil and food prices, weak peso and the impact of the implementation of Republic Act 10963 or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law.

The consumer price index leapt to a near-decade high of 6.7 percent in September from 6.4 percent in August, bringing the average to five percent for the first nine months of the year.

This prompted the BSP to raise benchmark rates by 150 basis points this year to curb rising inflationary pressures and boost the weakening peso.

But Guinigundo said the passage of the rice tariffication bill would help tame inflation back to the two to four percent target next year.

"Note that if the rice tariffication bill is approved by Congress and implemented in 2019, we expect this to reduce 2019 inflation by 0.7 percentage point from 4.3 percent to 3.6 percent, within the target

range of two to four percent," he said.

Meanwhile, the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) said they respect the decision of the RTWBPB.

ECOP acting president Sergio Ortiz-Luis assured the public that employers can comply with the new wage hike.

Not enough

Senators, labor groups and church leaders insisted that the wage hike is unlikely to offer any relief to financially suffering workers.

Senators found the P25 wage hike for the NCR insufficient and pressed the government to also cut taxes, including the value-added tax (VAT) and excise tax on fuel.

Sen. Joel Villanueva, chairman of the Senate committee on labor, said the wage hike was "inadequate considering the continuous increase in the prices of goods."

Villanueva lauded the suspension of excise taxes on gasoline and diesel, but he added that "even if we suspend the tax on fuel this January, prices will continue to increase because of other factors contributing to inflation."

"The most sensible solution for this is to lower the VAT rate from 12 percent to 10 percent. This will have a better effect than a wage increase of P25," Villanueva said.

Sen. Paolo Benigno Aquino IV, who was one of the senators who voted against the TRAIN law, made the same call, noting the hardest hit are the poor and minimum wage earners.

"I hope Congress prioritizes the passage of the Bawas Presyo bill to fix the TRAIN law and ease the burden of Filipinos," Aquino said.

Aquino filed Senate Bill 1798 or the Bawas Presyo sa Petrolyo bill in May to add a safeguard to the TRAIN law that allows for the suspension in the collection of excise tax on fuel should the inflation rate surpass the country's predicted target for three consecutive months.

Aquino added that reducing the cost of petroleum products would not only affect fare prices but also have an indirect effect on prices of food and other goods in the market.

"(A P25 increase) is alms (and) not relief to (the) overworked yet underpaid NCR workers," Partido ng Manggagawa said in a statement.

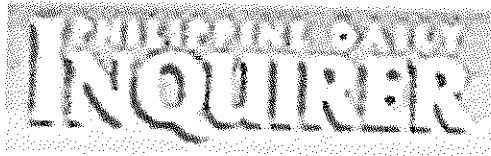
Two Catholic bishops yesterday agreed with the labor groups, insisting that wage workers of Metro Manila should get more than a P25 increase in their salaries.

Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo, chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Episcopal Commission on the Laity, said "P25 is really a measly amount" that cannot cover the rising cost of commodities and services.

"I believe our ordinary workers deserve to receive more. I hope and pray that our government agencies and officials will reconsider the possibility of a bigger increase," Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco said. — **With Lawrence Agcaoli, Alexis Romero, Paolo Romero, Evelyn Macairan**

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Damaged frigate undergoes combat systems upgrade

The Philippine Navy frigate BRP Gregorio del Pilar, which ran aground in the West Philippine Sea on Aug. 29 and suffered damage to its hull and propeller, is undergoing a combat systems upgrade while being repaired in Subic Bay. The frigate is one of three former US Coast Guard Hamilton-class cutters acquired in 2011 under the US Excess Defense Articles and the Foreign Assistance Act. According to Navy spokesperson Cmdr. Jonathan Zata, the Del Pilar would have a systems upgrade while in drydock. The frigate was extricated from her grounding at Hasa-Hasa (Half-Moon) Shoal on Sept. 3 and towed to Subic Bay. Zata said the frigate's damaged propeller and other mechanical parts had been shipped to the United States for repairs. —JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE

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'Protest Chinese weather stations on PH reefs'

By Jeannette I. Andrade
@jlandrade|INQ

A maritime law expert on Monday urged the government to question China's weather observation stations on three Philippine-claimed reefs in the Spratly archipelago, saying the installations could be used for military purposes.

Jay Batongbacal, director of the University of the Philippines Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, voiced doubt about China's claim that the stations would be used to "provide public service" to nations in the region.

The Hong Kong daily newspaper South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported on Thursday that China had opened weather observation stations on Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief reefs in the middle of the South China Sea.

The three maritime features are claimed by the Philippines, where they are known as Kagitingan, Zamora and Panganiban reefs, respectively, but China has seized them and converted them into artificial islands.

For military use

"Weather stations on military bases also serve the purpose of the military base," Batongbacal told the Inquirer by phone on Monday.

All military bases in the world have weather stations, he said.

China does not deny that the weather stations could be used for military purposes, but SCMP quoted Lu Kang, spokesperson

for China's foreign ministry, as telling a press briefing in Beijing that the posts would mainly be used to ensure navigational safety in the South China Sea.

Data collected by the stations will be used to provide more precise weather forecasts for the crews of fishing vessels and other ships in the region, the SCMP report said.

Batongbacal was skeptical.

He said claiming the weather stations were for the public good was China's way of masking the military purpose of its building artificial islands in the South China Sea.

Charm offensive

"It's China's charm offensive. It is trying to present to the region a softer face, a softer China," Batongbacal said.

The Philippines should question the establishment of the weather stations, he said.

"For the common good is only incidental," he said, "and a way for [China] to avoid protests and opposition from other countries."

Beijing claims nearly the entire South China Sea, one of the world's busiest waterways where \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year.

Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan dispute China's claim and have overlapping stakes in the South China Sea.

Arbitral ruling

The Philippines won a challenge to China's sweeping claim in the UN-backed Perma-

nent Court of Arbitration in The Hague on July 12, 2016.

The court declared China's claim invalid and ruled that it had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights to fish and explore for resources in the West Philippine Sea, waters within the country's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea.

China ignored the ruling and proceeded to build artificial islands on seven Philippine-claimed reefs in the Spratlys where it later built bases from which to project its military might across the region.

President Duterte, who came to office two weeks before the decision came down, set aside the arbitral ruling in exchange for aid, loans and investments from China.

Malacanang, however, said on Monday that the "right time" would come for Mr. Duterte to raise the ruling with China.

"We will have to leave it to the President's judgment on when and where the perfect time would be made," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said. **INQ**

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said on Monday that it would "verify the reported establishment" of weather observation stations on Philippine-claimed reefs.

"The department will take the appropriate action should these reports be validated," the DFA said in a statement. —**WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, DONA Z. PAZZIBUGAN AND SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST INQ**

06

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Manila mulls protest vs China

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

THE Philippines is considering taking diplomatic action against China over reports that Beijing had started operating weather monitoring stations on its artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea), Malacañang said on Monday.

Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) would take the necessary action once the report was confirmed.

"Certainly, the DFA will do its work and make the necessary diplomatic protest," Panelo told reporters.

"Again, these are news

► Protest A2

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■ PROTEST FROM A1

Manila

reports. We have not validated it. But if they are validated, I'm sure the new Secretary of Foreign Affairs (Teodoro Locsin Jr.) will do his job," he added.

On November 1, Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* published a report titled "Beijing opens weather stations on artificial islands in South China Sea."

The report quoted Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang confirming that Beijing had started operating a maritime observation center, a meteorological observatory and a national environmental and air quality monitoring station on the Spratly Islands.

China had conducted land reclamation projects on several reefs in the resource-rich sea. Military and civilian facilities were built on its artificial islands including airports, docks for large ships, solar power stations, water desalination plants, and hospitals among others.

Panelo, however, downplayed the effect of Chinese activities in the disputed sea even after an

international tribunal ruled in favor of the Philippines in its case against China.

"It can never be too late when you protest on a particular thing, especially when the award is yours," Panelo said, as he defended anew President Rodrigo Duterte's soft stance on China's reclamation projects.

"We'll have to leave it to the President's judgment on when and where the perfect time would be made. He has six years to do it," he added.

Since assuming the presidency, Duterte has sought to downplay Manila's maritime dispute with Beijing in exchange for improved ties with the world's second-largest economy.

Duterte has also refused to flaunt the Philippines' victory against China in 2016 when a United Nations-backed tribunal invalidated Beijing's expansive claims to disputed waters.

The President said he would bring up the arbitration ruling at the proper time.

Beijing has refused to recognize the ruling, insisting that it has "indisputable sovereignty" over 90 percent of the waters.

PH eyes diplomatic protest over China weather stations

The government is considering filing a diplomatic protest if reports that China has established weather monitoring stations in the disputed South China Sea are proven true.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the latest report would still be verified by authorities, adding it was up to the Department of Foreign Affairs to take the appropriate action. "We have to get confirmation of that since that is merely a news report," he said.

Panelo said the government will file an objection if proven true. "Certainly, the DFA will do its work and make the necessary diplomatic protest."

China has reportedly started operating weather monitoring stations on

three artificial islands in the disputed region.

The stations, located on Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reefs, will reportedly be used to ensure navigational safety in the South China Sea, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Panelo said they are not alarmed about the latest movement of China. "These are news reports. We have not validated that. But if they are validated, I'm sure the new Secretary of Foreign Affairs will do his job."

Panelo said he doesn't want to preempt the DFA on the possibility of filing a protest against China. "We will have to ask the DFA Secretary. I would not want to preempt." **(Genelyn D. Kabiling)**

Swift action if WPS raps proven

By Mario J. Mallari

The government will take appropriate action if the reported establishment of Chinese weather observation stations in the disputed West Philippine Sea (WPS) is validated, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

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In a statement, the DFA said that coordination with other concerned Philippine government agencies is now ongoing for proper action.

"The department is coordinating with concerned agencies of the Philippine government and with the Philippine Embassy in Beijing to verify the reported establishment of these facilities," DFA Assistant Secretary Elmer Cato said in a statement.

A South China Morning Post report said China has installed weather stations on the disputed Kagitingan (Fiery Cross), Zamora (Subi) and Panganiban (Mischief) Reefs.

"The department will take the appropriate action should these reports be validated," he added.

On 12 July 2016, the Hague-based Permanent Court Arbitration released its decision, nullifying China's nine-dash line map which covers nearly the whole of WPS.

The DFA was reacting to news reports quoting officials of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs that weather observation stations were established on three features in the WPS.

The three areas are among the territories being claimed by the Philippines under the Kalayaan Islands Group or the Spratlys but currently occupied by China.

Apart from the Philippines and China, other countries claiming areas in the West Philippine Sea are Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Validate first

Malacañang took it a step further by saying a necessary diplomatic protest will be undertaken by the DFA if the report is true.

"Certainly, the DFA will do its work and make the necessary diplomatic protest," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

"These are news reports. We have not validated that. But if they are validated, I'm sure the new Secretary of Foreign Affairs (Teodoro Locsin) will do his job," Panelo said.

"We will have to ask the DFA Secretary. I would not want to preempt," he added.

Asked about the international arbitration's ruling on WPS, Panelo said it would be up to Duterte to decide if he will assert the Philippines' victory when Chinese President Xi Jinping visits Manila this month.

"We'll have to leave it to the President's judgment on when and where the perfect time would be made. He has six years within which to do it," he said.

On 12 July 2016, the Hague-based Permanent Court Arbitration (PCA) released its decision, nullifying China's nine-dash line map which covers nearly the whole of WPS.

Many options open

China had rejected the ruling, prompting Duterte to shelve it for now to allow peaceful and friendly dialogues that eventually revived China-Philippines relations. Duterte, however, said he would assert the PCA's verdict before his six-year term ends 2022.

Panelo said he believes it would not be too late for the Philippines to assert "because the arbitral award will be there forever."

Duterte biding time on sea issue — Palace

By Efren Montano

MALACANANG yesterday insisted that "it can never be too late" to bring up Manila's arbitration victory against China over the South China Sea, as it defended anew President Rodrigo Duterte's soft stance towards Beijing on the territorial dispute.

"We will have to leave it to the President's judgment. He has 6 years," Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a press briefing yesterday.

"It can never be too late when you protest a particular thing, especially when the award is yours."

Panelo also downplayed the effect of Chinese activities in the disputed sea and its man-made islands there on the arbitration award, which he said "will be there forever."

Panelo said this when

asked to react on Beijing's admission that it has started operating a maritime observation center, a meteorological observatory and a national environmental and air quality monitoring station on its man-made islands in the South China Sea.

The South China Morning Post said the marine observation centers are located at Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief reefs.

Since assuming the presidency, Duterte has sought to downplay Manila's maritime dispute with Beijing in exchange for improved ties with the world's second-largest economy.

Diplomatic protest

The Philippine government will only lodge a diplomatic protest with China if proven that Beijing has opened three weather observation stations on its

artificial islands in the disputed South China Sea, Malacanang said yesterday.

Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post earlier reported that China's weather observation stations are located on Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief reefs.

The observation facilities would be used for military purposes and to ensure navigational safety in the South China Sea, according to the report, quoting Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang.

"We have to get a confirmation of that since that is merely a news report," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said at a press briefing in Malacanang.

Panelo added the Department of Foreign Affairs will file the necessary protest once the information on the weather stations has been validated.

Palace defends Rody's 'soft' sea issue stance

By **EFREN MONTANO**

MALACANANG yesterday insisted that "it can never be too late" to bring up Manila's arbitration victory against China over the South China Sea, as it defended anew President Rodrigo Duterte's soft stance towards Beijing regarding the issue.

"We will have to leave it to the President's judgment. He has 6 years," Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a press briefing yesterday.

"It can never be too late when you protest a particular thing, especially when the award is yours."

Panelo also downplayed the effect of Chinese activities in the disputed sea and its man-made islands there on the arbitration award, which he said "will be there forever."

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Since assuming the presidency, Duterte has sought

to downplay Manila's maritime dispute with Beijing in exchange for improved ties with the world's second-largest economy.

Duterte has also refused to flaunt the Philippines' victory against China, a United Nations-backed arbitration court in 2016 which invalidated Beijing's expansive claims to the waters.

The President said he will bring up the arbitration ruling at the proper time.

China's admission of the start of the operation of the new weather stations comes ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to the Philippines this month.

Fighting corruption is BOC chief's priority

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

The campaign against corruption is newly appointed Bureau of Customs (BOC) Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero's top priority.

Guerrero attended his first flag-raising ceremony yesterday morning and told BOC employees that he is bent on implementing reforms and would be working hard toward addressing the corruption problem in the agency.

"First of all, I want to announce that there would be reforms in the agency and we would intensify our efforts to become better public servants," Guerrero said.

"But the fight against corruption and cleansing of the BOC of corrupt officials will be my top priority as your commissioner. For this reason, it is ordered that we put a stop to the *tara* (bribe per container) system and other means of soliciting or receiving (bribe) money for transactions in the bureau," he added.

Guerrero issued the order at a time the agency is gripped by its latest controversy involving 1.6 tons of shabu, estimated to be worth P11 billion, which allegedly passed through the Manila International Container Port (MICP) undetected last July 14.

He pointed out that there have been many commissioners who entered the doors of the bureau but they failed in their mission to rid the agency of corruption.

"Painful it may be to accept, but our agency is again at the center of another big controversy. When will we start fixing our agency? There have been many commissioners who came to the BOC but up to now, we have not yet fixed the system," he said.

Guerrero, who previously served as Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff, told BOC officials and personnel to always remember the vow they make before the Philippine flag every Monday morning to work to the best of their ability and to faithfully serve the people.

"Illegal activities have no place in the Bureau of Customs, and all the more that illegal activities and employees engaged in illegal acts have no place in any government agency.

Let us serve with honesty and integrity. Let us keep the dignity and nobility of public service," the new Customs commissioner said.

Guerrero warned them that he would not hesitate to use the authority and powers as commis-

sioner in order for him to accomplish his mission.

For more than 30 years of serving the country, Guerrero has protected his name and reputation because he believes that this is a treasure he will leave his family.

He also said he would not allow the good name of the agency and reputation of many of the Customs employees to be tarnished by the illegal activities of a few employees.

Guerrero reminded his subordinates to be one with the agency and that the successes and failures of the agency are also the successes and failures of everyone in the bureau.

"In this regard, concerns and transactions in the bureau should follow official channels and the regular process. Everything should be documented, reported and transparent," he said.

Guerrero also mentioned that he did not authorize anyone to use his name to conduct any legal or illegal transactions at the BOC, and that anyone illegally using his name should be immediately reported to the proper agencies.

Meanwhile, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Public Affairs Committee (CBCP-PAC) executive secretary Fr. Jerome Secillano was open to the suggestion of Senate President Vicente Sotto III to place "graduates of seminaries" at the BOC.

It was reported

that Sotto was not convinced that sending soldiers to take over the BOC was the best solution and instead proposed that the

corruption-ridden agency be privatized. He also made passing mention of putting graduates of seminaries in the BOC.

IMPROVED PEACE AND ORDER

PNP BACKS MARTIAL LAW EXTENSION IN MINDANAO

By Jaymee T. Gamil @GamilINQ

The Philippine National Police supports another extension of martial law in Mindanao to preserve the huge improvement in peace and order in the region. PNP Director General Oscar Albayalde said.

"If ever the President decides to extend martial law, we [will] fully support that because what we see here is the improvement in the peace and order," Albayalde said at a press conference at Camp Crame in Quezon City on Monday.

Martial law, he said, has caused the reduction of the av-

erage monthly crime rate in Mindanao from 8.79 in 2017 to 5.92 this year.

Crime rate refers to the number of victims of crime for every 100,000 of the population.

"We can attribute that basically to the imposition of martial law," Albayalde said.

Checkpoints

Increased checkpoints and military operations have helped lessen criminal activities while putting terrorist groups in check, he said.

Albayalde claimed that even the people of Mindanao wanted an extension of martial law.

"There's no oppression go-

ing on there as some people [have] alleged ... There is no curtailment of freedom. Not even [suspension of] habeas corpus," he said.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said last week that the President was still waiting for the recommendation of the police and the military before deciding whether to extend martial law in Mindanao.

"The Armed Forces will use the month of November ... to go around Mindanao and ask the people there, the local governments, the businesses, the church what their feeling is on the extension or lifting of martial law," Lorenzana said. INQ



Mindanao wants longer ML

By Mario J. Maliani

An era of peace had prompted strong support for martial law in Mindanao and a clamor for its extension, Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde said yesterday.

Residents of Mindanao have stated their overwhelming support to a longer martial law term which, based on actual data culled by the PNP, resulted in lower crime rate and an improved security environment.

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Mindanao wants longer ML

From page 1

At a press briefing in Camp Crame, Albayalde said "based on our statistics, in 2017 the average monthly crime rate in Mindanao was at 8.79 percent. Now, from January to September alone, it went down to 5.02 percent."

"So, we can attribute that basically to the imposition of martial law," he added.

The favorable view on President Duterte's martial law by the people of Mindanao clearly indicated there was no abuse committed by government security forces, he said.

"Based on public feedback, residents like martial law in Mindanao. They want it extended," Albayalde said.

"If ever the President decides to extend it, we fully support that because what we see here is the improvement on peace and order," he added.

The final say on the proposed martial law extension was given to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (EC-NSC) which Mr. Duterte convened last week.

"Taking into account the lingering terrorist and communist threats, the EC-NSC committed to put into study the possible lifting or further extension of martial law," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

Panelo said among the factors initially considered during the EC-NSC meeting was the outlook of the people of Mindanao, an overwhelming majority of whom support martial law "in view of the present situation they are in."

He said the facilitation that martial law extension will bring to the Marawi rehabilitation, as well as regaining normalcy in Mindanao and indispensable constitutional and legal factors have also been considered by the panel.

Public order improved

Albayalde cited latest data gathered by the PNP showing the improvement in overall peace and order situation in the southern Philippines since the President declared martial law in May 2017.

Both the PNP and the AFP are currently assessing the situation in Mindanao to help Duterte determine whether to seek a martial law extension.

He stressed the proper implementation of martial law by the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) won the support of Mindanaoans.

"There's no oppression going on there as some people alleged... there is no curtailment of freedom, nothing," Albayalde said.

Both the PNP and the AFP are currently assessing the situation in Mindanao to help Duterte determine whether to seek a martial law extension.

Earlier, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the AFP will conduct ground investigation during the whole of November before coming up with a recommendation.

Lorenzana, however, hinted on what could be the military recommendation citing two major activities in Mindanao next year which are the January plebiscite for the Bangsamoro Organic Law and the mid-term elections in May.

2019 factored in

Albayalde echoed Lorenzana's sentiments regarding the upcoming polls next year.

"We will support the extension (of martial law) especially with the incoming elections. It will be better," he said. Duterte

declared martial law on 23 May 2017 hours after elements of the Islamic State (IS)-inspired Maute terrorist groups laid siege on Marawi City – taking dozens of civilians as hostages.

The President's decisiveness allowed government security forces to quell the terrorists, led by Abu Sayyaf commander Isnilon Hapilon who was the designated emir of leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in Southeast Asia.

More than 1,000 terrorists, government troops and civilians were killed during the five-month conflict.

Initially, the martial law declaration was only for six months but Congress approved a one-year extension of the rule which will expire on 31 December. The President said he will await the recommendation of the PNP and AFP.

Left-wing group charged

Albayalde added the Sagay City Police in Negros Occidental had filed abduction charges against left-wing group Karapatan for taking custody of a 14-year-old witness in the massacre of nine farmers in Sagay City, Negros Occidental.

He said the group took custody of the minor illegally since none of the members of the group is a relative.

"According to the report of the DO (Directorate for Operations), kidnapping charges were filed against members of Karapatan," he said at a press briefing.

The PNP earlier filed multiple murder cases against suspects who recruited the nine farmers to join the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW).

The police earlier said that the group is a legal front of the New People's Army but the NFSW has denied this claim.

PNP chief supports martial law extension

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

The PNP will support any move by Malacañang to extend martial law in Mindanao because its imposition has greatly contributed to the improvement of peace and order in the region, Director General Oscar Albayalde said yesterday.

Albayalde said reports reaching him show the people of Mindanao are in favor of placing the region

under martial law because it is helping maintain peace and order.

He said PNP records show the average monthly crime rate in Mindanao was 8.79 incidents per population of 100,000 each month in 2017, and this went down to 5.92 incidents per 100,000 population per month from January to September this year.

"So, we can attribute that basically to the imposition of martial law...

it's (martial law) just strengthening the peace and order operations like the checkpoints," he said.

President Duterte placed the entire Mindanao under martial law after the terrorist group Maute, aided the Abu Sayyaf group, attacked Marawi City on May 2017. Martial law should have ended six months after but Congress granted Duterte's requests for extension, which will be until the end of this year.

Albayalde said no atrocity was reported, either by the police or the military, since martial law was imposed.

"There's no oppression going on... There is no curtailment of freedom, nothing... if they ask the opinion of the PNP, if ever that they will ask for the agency's position, we will support the extension especially with the incoming (mid-term) elections," he said.

**AFP awards
 11 soldiers,
 3 civilian
 employees**

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Cairito Galvez Jr. awarded yesterday 11 soldiers and three civilian employees at the General Headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. Awarded the Gold Cross Medal were one Military Officer and four Enlisted Personnel who fought against Maute-ISIS Terrorists during the five-month battle in Marawi City in 2017. They are 1st Lt. Loui Logarda, Pfc Ericson Sinfuego, Pfc Rodel Camar and Pfc Christian Napita all 4 from the 2nd Infantry Division, Philippine Army (PA), and Corporal Benjie Ortizano from 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion, First Scout Ranger Regiment, PA. The Distinguished Navy Cross was awarded to Lt. Ruel Casiple who was part of various naval operations under Joint Task Force Trident's Naval Task Unit Marawi. Awarded with the Meritorious Achievement Medal were Major Alwin Manaja from the Civil Relations Service and Ms. Maria Shirley Bautista. The AFP Commendation Medal and Ribbon was awarded to Major Van Donald Almonte, Lieutenant Ryan Octaviano, Major Jessie Bergonia and Ms. Jessica Dimaya. The Gawad sa Kaunlaran awards were given to Master Sergeant Romeo Cammayo from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, OCS, and Ms. Maricel De Gutman. (Francis T. Wakefield)

Earthquake, tsunami drills in Lobo, Batangas

S. LYKA MANALO

LOBO, Batangas - The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) Region IV-A through the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council spearheaded the observance of World Tsunami Awareness Day and nationwide simultaneous earthquake drill for the fourth quarter this year on Monday in Barangay Malabrigo here.

The tsunami and earthquake

drills were participated in by some 400 community residents, students and teachers of Malabrigo National High School which was designated as the evacuation center in the said barangay

OCD training officer Kelvin John Reyes said they are conducting community mobilization to inform residents in coastal and non coastal barangays about what to do, where to go and whom to ask assistance from in case of an earthquake and

or tsunami and to establish a community-based early warning system

He said it is important to observe the gap between the warning and the response of the people with the aid of government agencies in all levels.

One of the participants, Cecile Cay, a high school teacher, said the activity was a great opportunity for everyone to be familiar with emergency responses.

She cited some barangays in Lobo were affected by flash floods in 2012 when the town was placed under state of calamity.

Malabrigo resident Susan Patag, 55, said being alone in the house, she needs to be alert and ready to go thus she carried her plastic gallon packed with foods and personal things.

The activity was supported by the Region 4A and Batangas Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction

and Management Council, Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Army, Philippine Red Cross and municipal and barangay based disaster committees.

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MILITARIZATION GO FOR IT, MR. PRESIDENT

BY DR. DANTE A. ANG
Chairman Emeritus

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte is being accused by his detractors of "militarizing" the Bureau of Customs. The President's order is being blown out of proportion. There is no disagreement on the principle of civilian supremacy over the military — it is enshrined in our Constitution.

On one hand, Article XVI, Section 5 (4), reads, "No member of the armed forces in the active service shall, at any time, be appointed or designated in any capacity to a civilian position in the Government, including government-owned or controlled corporations or any of their subsidiaries."

► Mr. President **A8**

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MILITARIZATION?

On the other, there is also a law that allows the civilian government's use of all military and civilian personnel when national security is under threat. Article II, Section 3, says "Civilian authority is, at all times, supreme over the military. The Armed Forces of the Philippines is the protector of the people and the State. Its goal is to secure the sovereignty of the State and the integrity of the national territory (under Declaration of Principles and State Policies).

This takes root from The National Defense Act of the Commonwealth Act of 1935, Article I (National Defense Policy) Section 2(d), which states: "The civil authority shall always be supreme. The President of the Philippines as the Commander-in-Chief of all military forces, shall be responsible that mobilization measures are prepared at all times."

Under the same Act, Article II (Employment of Persons and Resources, which later became the basis of the creation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines), Section

5 says, "During a national mobilization the Government of the Philippines, acting through the appropriate governmental department, or by delegated authority, shall have the right to secure by mutual agreement or by requisition all such resources, tangible and intangible, and all such services and all other assets or possessions, public or private, as may be necessary for national defense."

Now the question: Does the pervasive smuggling, especially of illegal drugs, at the Bureau of Customs constitute an assault on national security?

Smuggling, a national security concern

Not being a lawyer, I will argue that the uncontrolled smuggling of illegal drugs, petroleum, consumer items, liquors and other merchandise, through the Bureau of Customs is a matter of national security. Smuggling impoverishes the people. It deprives the government of the much-needed revenues for infrastructure and social services

such as medical care and education, among other critical national concerns. Smuggling corrupts our values and sense of decency.

On illegal drugs, not only do they literally kill people — young and old, rich and poor — it debases our values, renders the rule of law inutile and paralyzes us into a state of hopelessness and despair.

Short of declaring martial law, what else can the President do to rid the Customs bureau of crooks?

Cleansing an Augean stable such as the Customs is like shooting for the moon. We should not be blindsided by reports of high collection revenues by the bureau. Here is why: an erstwhile high customs official told me that each time the bureau found itself in a hot spot because of a smuggling incident the bureau would enter into some kind of a cosmetic arrangement with the smugglers under which the required payment of taxes was increased, or their smuggling activities were suspended — yes, suspended, not stopped, until the public outrage had cooled down or public attention had turned to a new scandal.

The recently reported P11 billion shabu shipment that passed through Customs was not a product of igno-

rance or incompetence, on the part of former Customs chief Isidro Lapena. There was a surplus of compelling evidence that weakened Lapena's defense of ignorance or "nalusutan" thread. Ignorance, as they say, is the refuge of the scoundrels.

Where I was born and grew up in the barangay in Las Pinas City, the otherwise happy, friendly, cheerful atmosphere has vanished like a morning dew. The place seems to have suffered a social blight and turned its residents into a gloomy, suspicious group of individuals. Its alleys are unkempt, with shady characters openly indulging in shabu from their favorite suppliers or pushers. But that was then, before President Duterte was elected into office in 2016.

Things have changed. Yes, illegal drugs are still very much around, but one good thing is that the numbers of users and pushers have dropped, while those able to escape the police dragnet have gone underground - for now. Some of the characters have been "eliminated," with extreme prejudice. Still others come out of their foxholes only when they think it is safe for them to resume their illicit trade under the protection of their

"friends" in government.

War vs illegal drugs not between Duterte and drug lords

The war on illegal drugs is not between President Duterte and the drug lords and their venomous tentacles in and out of government. Neither is it a fight between the police and the criminals.

The fight is between the forces of good and evil: between hope and hopelessness or despair, between heaven and hell. At stake is the very future of our country and our people, characterized by love, prosperity and peace.

Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that sending in members of the military to the Customs bureau would "militarize" the bureaucracy, what is the alternative? These Customs employees are protected by the civil service laws and can only be removed for cause. How in heavens name can we prosecute them successfully when high Customs officials, the Customs police, the investigators, the fiscals and the judges are in cahoots with the smugglers?

What about the 2,000 missing container vans?

At the risk of being repetitive, take the case of the 2,000 missing container vans that vanished in thin air on their way to Batangas, ostensibly for release to their consignee during the early weeks of the erstwhile President Noynoy's administration. What happened to that? What was the result of the investigation? Was anybody charged?

How can it be possible for the P11 billion smuggled shabu shipment to pass the gates of the bureau and into the market without anyone getting aware of it? A shipment that size would require active (some say, passive) participation of and close coordination between high and low government officials at the Bureau of Customs, including the police, the intelligence group and the smugglers.

Militarization of the Bureau of Customs? I'd say, go for it Mr. President, and for that matter, send in the Marines as well to the other government institutions, such as the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the government-owned and controlled corporations, where corruption has become a way of life.

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Navy flagship gets major upgrades

The Philippine Navy (PN) yesterday said its flagship *BRP Gregorio del Pilar* will undergo various communications, weapons and fire-control upgrades while undergoing repair for the damages sustained when it was grounded at *Hasa-Hasa* (Half-Moon) Shoal last 29 August.

"*Del Pilar* is still undergoing bottom hull repairs and will be undocked as soon as repairs have been completed. Propellers and related underwater appendages will be shipped to the US for repairs," Navy spokesman Commander Jonathan Zata said.

"While awaiting the completion of those repairs, she will undergo communications and weapon and fire control upgrades in order to optimize

her downtime period," he added.

Zata said the frigate will be back in operation shortly after the new equipment, sourced abroad, have arrived.

She will undergo communications and weapon and fire control upgrades in order to optimize her downtime period.

The warship was conducting a patrol mission when its starboard side hit a submerged feature in *Hasa-Hasa* Shoal, some 60 miles off Bataraza town in Palawan.

It was eventually pulled clear from *Hasa-Hasa* Shoal last 3 September and towed to

Subic Bay, Zambales, arriving there on 7 September.

The *BRP Gregorio del Pilar* is one of three Hamilton-class cutters the PN acquired from the United States Coast Guard and converted into frigates.

These ships have a gross tonnage of 3,250 tons, a length of 378 feet, beam of 43 feet and draft of 15 feet while its propulsion systems consist of two diesel engines and two gas turbine engines, giving it a top speed of 29 knots.

With a cruising range of 14,000 miles, these types of vessels have a sea and loiter time of 45 days and armed with a 76mm Oto Melara automatic cannon, 25mm and 20mm light cannons and .50-caliber machineguns.

EWB

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Reds raid Negros AFP detachment; soldier slain

BACOLOD CITY – An Army soldier was killed when suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels attacked a military detachment in Sitio Casingan, Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan, Negros Oriental on Sunday.

Cpl. Rex Derramas died at the scene.

The communist guerrillas also took the gun, wallet and cellular phone of Derramas before they escaped, according to Superintendent Mario Baguran, Guihulngan police chief.

Ten bullet shells for a caliber .45 pistol were recovered at the scene.

The NPA's Leonardo Panaligan Command had earlier claimed responsibility for the raids

on police detachments in Barangays Hinakpan and Baiogo on Oct. 30 that left a police officer wounded and the murders of retired soldier Celso Pedochino in Barangay Masulog, Canlaon on Oct. 13 and militiaman Lando Soreno in Trinidad, Guihulngan on Oct. 5.

- Gilbert Bayoran

NPA kills 2 Army soldiers in Negros Or, Quezon

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG AND DEMPSEY REYES

THE New People's Army (NPA) killed two Army soldiers in separate incidents on Sunday after the communist rebels attacked a military detachment in Negros Oriental while another group engaged troops in twin clashes in Quezon province.

In Negros Oriental, suspected NPA assassins struck again killing Corporal Rex Derramas in Sitio Casingan of Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City.

Guihulngan City police chief Supt. Mario Baquiran said Derramas, assistant detachment commander in Barangay Trinidad, died from multiple gunshot wounds and a fatal injury in the head.

About three to five suspects, believed to be members of the NPA Special Partisan Unit, attacked the

Army detachment and also took the gun, wallet and cellular phone of Derramas before fleeing.

Ten empty shells of .45 caliber pistol were recovered at the crime scene.

Baquiran said Derramas was the latest victim of a series of liquidation activities of the NPA in central Negros.

Earlier, the NPA Leonardo Panaligan Command (LPC) claimed responsibility for the simultaneous harassment of two police detachments in the villages of Hinakpan

and Balogo in Guihulngan City that wounded Police Officer 1 Elvis John Lucasan on October 30; the killing of retired Army MSgt. Celso Pedochino on October 13 in Barangay Masulog, Canalaon City; and the assassination of civilian auxiliary brigade member Lando Soreno, also in Barangay Trinidad on October 5.

The rebel group also claimed responsibility for the killing of Rusty Caminade, a government worker-Civil Defense member of Moises Padilla town, Negros Occidental.

In a separate incident, another Army soldier was killed in one of twin encounters with NPA members in General Nakar, Quezon.

Lt. Col. Christopher Diaz, commanding officer of the Army's 92nd Infantry Battalion, said soldiers were conducting focused-military operations in Barangay Umiray, General Nakar after an intelligence report and tip off from civilians that a group of armed

NPA rebels were extorting rice and money from the Dumagats.

Diaz said the first encounter happened at about 10:40 a.m. on Sunday when soldiers chanced upon an undetermined number of communist rebels under the Platoon 4A2, Cuerrilla front Cesar of the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee.

The 20-minute firefight resulted in the death of Private James Lanes, 24, from Sultan Kudarat.

Diaz also claimed there was an undetermined number of casualties from the rebels' side "due to the heavy blood stains in their position."

The second encounter, at about 11:45 a.m. in Sitio Madaraki, lasted for about 15 minutes but there was no casualty from the government side.

Meanwhile Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno, the Army's 2nd Infantry Division commander, extended his condolences to the Lanes family.

**WITH A REPORT
FROM ROSELLE R. AQUINO**

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Soldier killed in Quezon clash with NPA rebels

By DANNY ESTACIO

GEN. NAKAR, Quezon- A soldier was killed when the Philippine Army's 92nd Infantry Battalion (92IB) clashed twice against suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Sitio Dadyangao and Sitio Madaraki in Barangay Umiray, General Nakar, Quezon on Sunday.

Lieutenant Colonel Christopher M. Diaz, commanding officer of the 92IB said that the soldiers were in the area after an intelligence report and tip-off from civilians indicated that a group of armed rebels were extorting rice and money from the Dumagats.

The soldiers clashed with the rebels at around 10:40 a.m.

After the 20 minute skirmish, Private James Lanes, 24, from Sultan Kudarat lay dead.

The military said the rebels likely suffered heavy casualties as well due to heavy blood stains spotted in their position during the encounter.

An hour later, the soldiers again

clashed with the rebels in Sitio Madaraki, where blood stains were also spotted in the rebels' position before retreating.

"They are now running out of ammunition with the recent two encounters: they are now tired and they have wounded comrades. We will pursue these NPA remnants until they are destroyed," Brigadier General Arnulfo Marcelo B. Burgos Jr. commander of the 202nd Brigade said.

Major General Rhoderick M. Parayno, the Philippine Army's Second Division commander extended his condolences to the family of the slain soldier.

"Rest assured that his bravery and heroism will be treasured and will never be forgotten. His example and sacrifice will continue to inspire us to strive more in our mission of protecting the people against all NPA threats and coercion especially of the Dumagat IP in Quezon", Parayno added.

Pursuit operations against the rebels are ongoing.

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Soldier killed in skirmish with Reds

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

The Philippine military clashed with New People's Army (NPA) rebels twice in Quezon Province last Sunday.

One soldier was confirmed dead while an undetermined number of casualties were reported on the rebels' side.

According to Lt. Col. Christopher Diaz, commanding officer of 92nd Infantry Battalion, the troops were conducting a Focus Military Operation when they first encountered an unspecified number of NPA men around 10:40 in the morning.

The firefight lasted for 20 minutes and resulted in the death of a soldier from Sultan Kudarat identified as Private James Lanes.

At around 11:45 a.m., a second firefight ensued after the government troops conducted a pursuit operation against the rebels.

The second clash lasted 15 minutes with no casualties on both sides.

Maj. Gen. Rhoderick Parayno of Philippine Army's 2nd Infantry Division cited the heroism of Lanes.

"Resi assured that his bravery and heroism will be treasured and will never be forgotten," Parayno said.

"His example of sacrifice will continue to inspire us to strive more in our mission to protect the people against all NPA threats and coercion especially of the Dumagat IP in Quezon (province)," he added.

One soldier was confirmed dead while an undetermined number of casualties were reported on the rebels' side.

The military troops have set up checkpoints together with local police to hunt down the NPA.

Soldier, NPA killed in Quezon clash

A SOLDIER and a New People's Army rebel were killed while four other communist rebels were injured in a firefight in General Nakar town in Quezon on Sunday, the military said yesterday.

Capt. Patrick Jay Retumban, spokesman of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division based in Camp Capinpin in Rizal, named the fatality as Pvt. James Lanes, 24, assigned

with the 92nd Infantry Battalion.

Retumban said forces from the 92nd IB were deployed to Sitio Madaraki, Barangay Umiray after the military received reports that an undetermined number of NPA rebels were extorting rice and money from indigenous people living in the area.

The soldiers exchanged gunfire with the rebels belonging to the

NPA's Platoon 4-A2 of the Guerrilla Front Cesar of the Southern Tagalong Regional Party Committee for about 20 minutes. *BL*

Retumban said soldiers followed traces of blood during pursuit operations, leading to another firefight in the same sitio at around 11:45 a.m., also on Sunday. No one was reported killed. — *Victor Reyes*

Soldier killed in Quezon clash

A soldier was killed following two separate clashes against Communist New People's Army Terrorists (CNTs) in Quezon province over the weekend, the military Monday disclosed.

Troops of the Army's 92nd Infantry (TANGLAW-DIWA) Battalion (92nd IB) clashed twice against CNTs in Sitio Dadyangao and Sitio Madaraki both of Brgy. Umiray, General Nakar, Quezon on Sunday.

Lieutenant Colonel Christopher M. Diaz, Commanding Officer of the 92nd IB said that the soldiers were conducting Focus Military Operation (FMO) in the area after an intelligence report and tips from civilians that a group of armed NPAs were extorting rice and money from the Dumagat Indigeneous People (IP).

The first encounter transpired around 10:40 a.m. when the troops chanced upon an undetermined number of NPAs belonging to Platoon 4A2, Guerilla Front Cesar of the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee (STRPC).

The firefight lasted for 20 minutes that led to the death of one soldier later identified as Private James Lanes, 24, from Sultan Kudarat.

It is believed there were undetermined number of casualties on the NPA's side due to the heavy blood stains in their position. The enemies brought along their wounded comrades when they scampered away

according to the troops.

Meanwhile, the second clash occurred at around 11:45 a.m. at Sitio Madaraki when the encountered troops conducted pursuit operations following the traces of blood of the retreating enemies. #

There were no reported casualties from both sides following the 15-minute firefight.

Brigadier General Arnulfo Marcelo B. Burgos Jr., the Commander of the 202nd Brigade who has operational jurisdiction over CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) said troops were on tracked against the NPA in the area.

"They are now running out of ammunitions with the recent two encounters, they are now tired and they have wounded comrades. We will pursue these NPA remnants until they are destroyed," he said.

Major General Rhoderick M. Parayno, the Commander of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division (2ID), extended his condolences to the family of the slain soldier.

"Rest assured that his bravery and heroism will be treasured and will never be forgotten. His example of sacrifice will continue to inspire us to strive more on our mission of protecting the people against all NPA threats and coercion especially of the Dumagat IP in Quezon," Parayno said. (Francis T. Wakefield)

Soldier dies in clash with Reds

CAMP Brig. Gen. Vicente Lim, Bgy. Canlubang, Calamba City, Laguna - A soldier was killed during a firefight between New People's Army (NPA) and government troopers in Gen. Nakar, Quezon last Sunday morning.

Police said an unknown number of terrorists stumbled on the Army's 92nd Infantry Battalion who were conducting monitoring patrol in Sitio Dadvangao, Bgy. Umiray, Gen. Nakar at 10 a.m.

The encounter that lasted for 20 minutes left Private James J. Lanes dead. The rebels retreated to the Sierra Madre mountains, bringing their wounded comrades as shown by blood stains found on their escape trail.

Meanwhile in Sariaya, Quezon, a certain Allan Abueva, a butcher, was shot dead by an unidentified suspect at 3:30 a.m. last Sunday.

The victim was outside his house when the suspect arrived and shot him at close range. The suspect escaped.

Celso C. Lidol

Sundalo patay sa engkuwentro

Nagbuwis ng buhay ang isang sundalo sa pakikipagbarkaban sa mga rebeldeng New People's Army (NPA) sa Brgy. Umiray, General Nakar, Quezon kamakatawa. Kinilala ang napatay na sundalo na si Private James Lanes, 24, taga-Sultan Kudarat at kasapi ng 92nd Infantry Battalion (IB) ng Philippine Army. Sa report ni Lt. Col. Christopher Diaz, commanding officer ng 92nd IB, dalawang beses nakasagupa ng kanyang mga tauhan ang grupo ng mga rebeldeng komunista sa Sitio Dayangao at Sitio Madaraki, pampang sa Brgy. Umiray, General Nakar. Bandang alas-10:40 ng umaga nang mangyari ang unang barkaban sa Sitio Dayangao. Brgy. Umiray sa pagitan ng mga sundalo na nagsasagawa ng Focus Military Operation (FMO) at NPA rebels mula sa Guerilla Front Cesar ng Southern Tagalog Regional Committee. Tumagal ng 20 minuto ang barkaban na ikinasawi ni Lanes habang pinaninwalaang marami rin sa mga rebeldeng ang nasugatan base sa mga bakas ng dugo na nawan sa kanilang dinaanan. Nasundan pa ng engkuwentro na tumagal ng 15 minuto dakong alas-11:40 ng tanghali sa Sitio Madaraki, Brgy. Umiray habang papatakas ang mga kalabang rebelde. (Joy Cortes) 9

6 soldiers get medals for Marawi liberation

BY VICTOR REYES

SIX more soldiers were conferred medals yesterday for their role in the liberation of Marawi City from the hands of the Maute terror group last year.

Armed Forces chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. conferred the awards after flag-raising at the AFP general headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo.

The six were led by 1Lt Loui Legarde, of the 2nd Infantry Battalion, who received the Gold Cross Medal, the third highest military decoration for feat in combat.

Four other soldiers received the Gold Cross -- Privates First Class

Ericson Sinfuego, Rodel Camat and Christian Hapital, all of 2nd IB; and Cpl. Benjie Ortizano, of the 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion.

A Navy officer, Lt. Ruel Casiple, received the Distinguished Navy Cross.

"They were all part of the combat operations against the Maute-ISIS terrorists that resulted in the neutralization of enemies and recovery of various high-powered and low-powered firearms," said Col. Noel Detorato, chief of the AFP public affairs office.

Members of the Maute Group

See 6 SOLDIERS > Page B6

6 SOLDIERS

occupied several barangays in Marawi City on May 27 last year. The fighting ended five months later. Nearly 1,000 terrorists, 168 soldiers and policemen, and 47 civilians died in the conflict which also prompted President Duterte to place the entire Mindanao under martial law.

Galvez awarded eight other military personnel and civilian employees during the ceremony for achievements.

"We express our appreciation to every soldier and civilian human resource who gives more than what is required and who delivers more than what is expected," Galvez told the awardees.

"This is in keeping with our desire to continue advancing the morale and welfare of our personnel for they are the most valuable and most indispensable asset in our organization," Galvez also said.

Galvez urged soldiers to draw inspiration from the achievements of the awardees and work harder.

"Let their triumphs encourage all of us to work harder, not for the awards and recognition, but because of the fulfillment that a job well done brings to us," he said.

Dahil sa Martial Law

Krimen sa Mindanao bumaba

Bumaba ng 37 porsiyento ang kriminalidad sa Mindanao bunga ng maigting na implementasyon ng Martial Law sa buong rehiyon.

Sinabi ni Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief P/ Director General Albayalde, base sa istatistika noong 2017 ay nasa 8.79 ang average na buwanang crime rate sa buong Mindanao.

Gayunman, dahil sa mahigpit na implementasyon ng martial law mula Enero hanggang Setyembre 2018 ay bumaba ang kriminalidad na nasa 5.92 % na lamang sa kaparehong period ng nagdaang taon.

"So we can attribute that basically to the imposition of martial law at yung martial law naman doon it's just strengthening the peace and order operations like the checkpoints, yung sita natin (Opian Sita) yung operation ng military yun lang riaman ang basic," paliwanag ni Albayalde.

Idineklara ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang martial bunga ng Marawi City siege ng Maute-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) noong Mayo 23, 2017 na tumagal ng limang buwan.

Sabi pa ni Albayalde, nakakuha ang PNP ng mga impormasyon, hindi lamang mula sa mga survey kundi sa mga mamamayan ng Mindanao na mas nais ng mga ito na mapalawig pa ang martial law sa rehiyon.

"Yes, personally if they ask the opinion of the PNP if ever that they will ask for the agency's position, we will support the extension especially with the incoming elections mas maganda yan," ani Albayalde. *(Joy Santos)*

Krimen sa Mindanao Region bumaba ng 37%

Sanhi nang maiging na implementasyon ng martial law sa Mindanao Region ay bumaba ng 37 porsiyento ang kriminalidad.

Sinabi ni Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief P/Director General Oscar Albayalde, base sa istatistika noong 2017 ay nasa 8.79 ang average na buwanang crime rate sa buong Mindanao.

Subalit, dahilan sa mahigpit na implementasyon ng martial law mula Enero hanggang Setyembre 2018 ay bumaba ang kriminalidad sa rehiyon na nasa 5.92% na lamang sa kaparehong period ng nagdaang taon.

Ang martial law sa buong rehiyon ay idineklara ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte bunga ng Marawi City siege noong Mayo 23, 2017 matapos ang paghahasik ng terorismo ng Maute Islamic State of

Iraq and Syria (ISIS) na tumagal ng limang buwan.

Noong Hulyo 2017 sa pamamagitan ng botohan sa dalawang Kapulungan ng Kongreso ay pinalawig ang martial law sa Mindanao hanggang Disyembre 2017 at sumunod ay hanggang Disyembre

2018.

Inihayag pati Albayalde na nakakuha ang PNP ng mga impormasyon hindi lamang mula sa mga survey kundi sa mga mamamayan ng Mindanao na mas nais ng mga ito na mapalawig pa ang martial law sa rehiyon. *-Joy Santos-*

FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP AT CUSTOMS

WHAT has happened with the Bureau of Customs (BOC) over the past two years simply shows that President Duterte has been a complete failure.

Worse, his decision to put the BOC under the Armed Forces of the Philippines is in clear violation of the Constitution, which makes one wonder if he is really a lawyer who passed the bar.

Mr. Duterte appointed two highly incompetent persons who came from the military and the police. So what did we expect? Nicanor Faeldon is a discredited Marine captain whose only qualification was his involvement with the Oakwood mutiny in 2003 and the Manila Peninsula siege in 2007. He helped the former

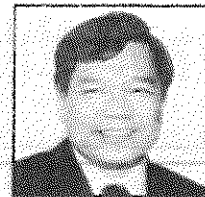
Davao City mayor in the 2016 presidential election and was rewarded with a top position as Customs commissioner. This is the first time in history that a former military captain, who is not even a Philippine Military Academy graduate, was appointed to a very high post in government, such as the head of the BOC. Previous military men appointed as Customs commissioners were retired AFP generals.

Faeldon was replaced by former Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency director general Isidro Lapeña, a retired police general, whose main qualification is being a "mistah" at the PMA (Class of 1973) of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Faeldon is now director of the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) under the Department of Justice. It is ironic that he is now in charge of the penal management, when he should be the one in jail for all his crimes in military adventurism. Just like with the BOC, this is the first time that a former captain is in charge of the BuCor. Previous heads of the BuCor were retired military and police generals.

By the way, there is no truth to the rumor that the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, with Lapeña as director general, now offers a new course on magnetic lifter fabrication.

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FINDING ANSWERS

Daunting setback

By **ATTY. JOEY D. LINA**
Former Senator

IT'S a daunting setback that strikes at the heart of President Rodrigo Duterte's campaign promise to stop corruption and end the proliferation of illegal drugs.

It can be very disturbing indeed that tons of shabu are believed to have slipped past the Bureau of Customs, resulting in the relief, one after the other, of retired PNP Chief Supt. Isidro Lapeña and former Marine Captain Nicanor Faeldon from the top BOC post.

The drug smuggling scandal involving the shipment of ₱11 billion worth of shabu concealed inside magnetic lifters has prompted President Duterte to call in the military to get involved in the BOC. In announcing the military involvement at the waterfront, the President gave the impression it was a military takeover wherein customs personnel would be on floating status while military men temporarily run BOC operations.

But many have raised a howl of protest against using the military for civilian work, citing Article 16, Section 5 (4) of the 1987 Constitution: "No member of the armed forces in the active service shall, at any time, be appointed or designated in any capacity to a civilian position in the Government including government-owned or controlled corporations or any of their subsidiaries."

Amid the backlash, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo explained Malacañang's move is in accordance with Article 7, Section 18 of the Constitution whereby the President, as commander-in-chief, may call out the Armed Forces "to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion, or rebellion."

"Lawless violence certainly would refer to what is happening in BOC... If you can bring in hundreds of kilos of drugs, then there must be some grave wrong in that area and there is state of lawlessness there... It endangers the security of our countrymen," Panelo said. "When you say lawless violence, it's not just physical violence. You do violence to the Constitution. You do violence to the law. It's a state of

lawlessness."

For one who was catapulted to power on a promise to rid the country of the drug menace, it is understandable why President Duterte, intent as he is on pursuing his commitment, has made the drug war a top priority of his administration. And it's certainly understandable, too, why his exasperation over this setback of big-time drug smuggling has prompted him to call in the military.

While some people think that the purpose of military involvement is merely to elicit shock and awe, it cannot be denied that there is mounting frustration over rampant corruption resulting in continued proliferation of illegal drugs. The situation calls for more drastic measures. If military involvement would be merely for supervision or "intimidation" of customs personnel to do their work properly and shun corrupt practices, it isn't clear yet.

But what seems clear is the mounting frustration of many Filipinos over seemingly unabated drug smuggling, leading many to doubt if the administration is really serious in its anti-drug campaign.

In the episode two weeks ago of DZMM's steleradyo program *Magpayo Nga Kayo* (9:30-10:30 am, Saturdays), which I co-host with broadcaster May Valle Ceniza, many callers expressed their doubts. They felt that there were no honest-to-goodness efforts to stop or minimize the supply of drugs if tons of shabu can enter the country through the waterfront.

And some anti-smuggling experts like former military man and customs chief Ramon Farolan said that all the "confusing and contradictory statements" pertaining to military men at BOC has led him "to believe that there was no clear plan of action prior to Lapeña's ouster" on how to effectively combat drug smuggling. He said the move to call the military "appears to be a knee-jerk reaction."

But Farolan has a nice suggestion: "Why not appoint a career customs officer, preferably one who has the trust and confidence of the President to head the agency?"

He said there are experienced, knowledgeable, and dedicated BOC

personnel. "It will take time for an outsider, whether military or civilian, to learn the ropes and to bring in his own assistants. After a while they may be swallowed up by the system or after he is gone, any reform put in place on his watch will go down the drain," he explained.

And I would also like to respectfully suggest, Why not maximize the use of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) which really ought to be the overall leader in the government's drug war?

While the President is overall-in-charge for the execution of all laws, including those related to the anti-drug campaign, it is the DDB—which is directly under the Office of the President—that should be crafting the policies and strategies to control illegal drugs, and implementing them through the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

The DDB is a high-powered organization with brilliant minds. It is composed of 17 members, nine of whom are part of the President's Cabinet. Twelve of the 17 members are in an ex-officio capacity and these are the secretaries of the Departments of Justice, Health, National Defense, Finance, Labor and Employment, Interior and Local Government, Social Welfare and Development, Foreign Affairs, and Education. The other three members are the chairman of the Commission on Higher Education, the chairman of the National Youth Commission, and the PDEA director general.

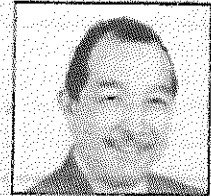
The law (RA 9165 the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002) empowers the DDB to "be the policy-making and strategy-formulating body in the planning and formulation of policies and programs on drug prevention and control." It is tasked to "formulate, develop, and establish a comprehensive, integrated, unified, and balanced national drug abuse prevention and control strategy."

With the DDB working to its fullest potential to overcome setbacks in the drug war, President Duterte's campaign promise would have more chances of reaping success.

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CHAFF FROM THE GRAIN

Where are we headed?



Dr. HECTOR R. VILLANUEVA

"The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding."

— Louis D. Brandeis

THE militarization of key civilian positions in the bureaucracy is not only a sad indictment of the inadequacy of civil servants and private sector executives but is also a perilously ominous trend towards a possible regime change.

First - in the mindset of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, it is anybody but Vice President Leni Robredo, or any come-backing "Yellow" from the Liberal Party to succeed him to the presidency.

This is a speculative scenario that ultimately depends on the health condition of Pres. Duterte.

If push comes to shove or a "force majeure" should ensue, a military "junta" would be preferable which,

in the long run, seldom succeeds, as a strong man inevitably emerges from the junta, and all its long-term consequences.

Moreover, it is condescending of PDU30 to readily recruit retired soldiers to civilian posts as "soldiers just obey orders" which is obliquely insulting, as retired officers have been educated and trained not only as leaders but also to be rational, decisive, and independent thinking.

Thus, in spite of his conspicuous pampering of the military and his penchant for playing soldier, Pres. Digong will never be accepted as one, as he has never been a soldier and will never be one.

In contrast, former President Fidel Valdez Ramos is idolized and lionized by every man in uniform as FVR spent all his life in active service until his retirement to enter politics.

Second - in the simplistic world of former Mayor Digong, what is right and good for Davao City must also be good for the Philippines.

Ipsa facto, so long as President Ro-

drigo Roa Duterte remains untainted by monetary corruption, his authoritarian actions and decisions will be popular, to the chagrin of hapless critics and exasperated lawmakers.

Third - in the meantime, where is the country headed?

Hence, during his watch, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte must lay down the framework and foundation of a long-term vision that will transcend his term for his successors and future generations to emulate and enhance.

As Prof. Jeffrey Sachs would put it, "The true drivers of economic development are government, geography and economic growth" which are not only attainable but also winnable.

However, President Duterte has to look at the backyard, and review his actuations, appointments, and policies to find out if he is doing right.

Otherwise, as the Roman Seneca admonished, if one does not know which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable.

You be the judge.

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06

A4

Abe visit to China: Two cheers for Japan-China relations

THE visit last month of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to China to mark the 40th anniversary of the signing of a treaty of peace and friendship between the two countries has been called a "historic turning point" heralding the beginning of a "new chapter" in the relationship. Maybe that's how it will turn out but, for now, it's too early to break out the champagne.

That's not to say that the visit didn't mark a notable step forward in Japan-China relations, it clearly did. For one thing, this was the first time for Abe to be invited to China on an official visit since he — and the Chinese leader Xi Jinping — assumed power in 2012.



FRANK CHING

Sino-Japanese relations hit rock bottom that year after the previous Japanese administration nationalized the Senkaku islands, which are also claimed by China as the Diaoyu, and anti-Japanese riots broke out across China.

Abe took advantage of his visit to announce the end of Japan's aid program for China, which coincidentally also lasted 40 years, even after China had in 2010 overtaken Japan as the world's second largest

economy. Japan is now China's partner, he announced, no longer its aid donor.

The Chinese were never keen to let their people know about the Japanese aid. So, a good sign is that China no longer tries to hide this. An article in *Global Times* detailed the infrastructural projects that the Japanese aid helped to bring about.

One factor in the current Sino-Japanese rapprochement is certainly Donald Trump. China and Japan both face an American president who is pressing them to make trade concessions. But while there is an important US factor, the warming of Japan-China relations goes beyond Washington. After all,

China is Japan's biggest trading partner and it would be unnatural — and dangerous — for Asia's top two economies to view each other as enemies.

On this visit, Abe proposed three principles for Japan-China relations: "Switching from competition to collaboration," a reversal of the dominant trend of the 2010s; "becoming partners instead of threats to each other," and "promoting free and fair trade." China seems receptive. This, again, is substantial progress if it is implemented.

But these principles don't deal with the central problem in the relationship, which is a territorial

Ching A5

CHING FROM A4

Abe visit to China

dispute: the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, which China calls the Diaoyus.

Interestingly, none of the four political documents that form the basis of the Sino-Japanese relationship mentions them.

This is because China in the 1970s gave priority to relations with Japan. Deng Xiaoping announced in 1978 that the question would be shelved so it was not mentioned in the peace treaty.

Up until a few years ago, there was an unwritten understanding that neither country would do

anything to upset the status quo. China left the islands in Japanese hands and the Japanese saw to it that they were not disturbed. Ordinary Japanese citizens were not allowed to land on them.

But after Japan nationalized the islands, all hell broke loose. The problem now is to put the genie back in the bottle.

The best solution is if China's leaders agree to re-shelve the issue indefinitely. If there is no agreement and China continues to send ships and planes into the area to challenge Japan's sovereignty, there can be no peace

between the neighbors.

Fortunately, the value of these islands has been significantly reduced. The decision in 2016 by a Hague arbitral tribunal on the South China Sea makes it clear that from the standpoint of the law of the sea, these rocks are not considered islands capable of sustaining human life. That means that they are not capable of generating a 200-mile exclusive economic zone but simply a 12-mile territorial sea.

This seriously discounts their value in terms of control over potential oil and gas reserves in the area, first identified by a UN agency in 1969.

With these islands now greatly devalued, a resolution may be

possible. It won't be easy, but at least everyone concerned should realize that the islands have little economic value and the dispute over ownership comes down largely to a question of face. Arbitration would be the best solution but China is unlikely to agree. That being the case, China will have to agree to go back to the status quo ante, leaving them in the care of Japan. Japan, for its part, would erect major constructions on the islands without China's consent. And the United States will continue to guarantee the security of the islands as part of Japan.

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FRONTLINE

Not a relevant political leader

“
Leni appears to be on the wrong track in her reasoning.”

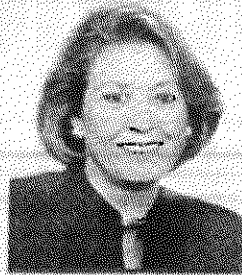
Almost daily and perhaps trying to keep herself politically relevant as an opposition leader – or so she seems to believe – Vice President Leni Robredo has something with which to criticize and slam President Duterte and his administration, the latest of which was scoring him for the militarization of his government.

This came about when Duterte, fed up with the non-stop corruption in the Bureau of Customs (BoC), where illegal drugs in the tens of billions of pesos are smuggled, decided to tap a retired military official and some active military personnel to take over while placing the Customs employees in the freezer.

Almost immediately, there went Leni, slamming this move, saying that “The Constitution prohibits this. The Constitution makes it clear we should have a civilian government. This is the reason the country is headed by a President. That’s why the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. This suggests that civilian government is higher than the military, so that it is what should prevail.”

That’s elementary and this is certainly no secret. However, Leni appears to be on the wrong track in her reasoning when she intimates that by placing the military in charge of Customs, the country is no longer run by a civilian government as it has been militarized.

Leni should start realizing that



FRONTLINE
Ninez Cacho-Olivares

a civilian in the person of Rodrigo Duterte.

The Palace has clarified that while soldiers will be tapped for the BoC job, what they will be doing is to keep an eye on the smuggling goings-on in the Customs, to ensure that such unbridled corruption is stopped, at most, or minimized, at the very least.

But that is not enough for Leni, as she also said last week that she believes “militarization is not the solution. We should examine why Customs is running the way it is,” adding that there are many reasons making this situation possible.

“
Promoting a retired military general to take over the running of the BoC does not equate to the military running the country.”

allowing such corruption to happen.”

Leni should be reminded that the same system and even more or less the same Customs personnel existed during the days her yellow patron, Noytoy Aquino, was president. How come we never heard a pip from her, even when she was still a congresswoman.

There was not even a time when Leni slammed her yellow patron placing retired generals in charge of civilian offices. Nor did Leni or even her late husband, who held the position of interior secretary, ever criticize their yellow president when smuggling in the BoC big time by way of smuggling in sports cars, guns, illegal drugs and a lot more was going on full blast when the Aquinos – both mother and son – were in power and position.

Smuggling of illegal drugs that happens in the BoC happened then and continues to happen now. Why was Leni so silent then despite the smuggling of drugs and other items during her yellow president’s term? She never even offered that suggestion of hers that it is the system that has to change as changing the personnel does not work at all?

Leni said that changes can be made in the BoC system by limiting face-to-face transactions in the agency and for the bureau to instead establish a computerized process.

“Too many face-to-face transactions allow corruption to start. We should limit such interaction at Customs. If almost all processes can be computerized, corruption can be lessened. So I think we should focus on assessing the system,” she reasoned.

Uh, Leni, who do you think man the computers? Robots?

In this day and age of digital information, there is no need for face-to-face transactions as the big-time smuggler and a corrupt BoC official/officer/employee can easily communicate with each other.

But that's not all Leni had to say about the smuggling in Customs. Not surprisingly, she brought up the issue of the Duterte drug war in which the political opposition has inflated the death toll almost weekly which is pretty easy to do, since figures the opposition come up with are plucked from thin air.

The last I read was that the drug war deaths have hit 27,000, which figure is now being quoted by the biased human rights groups, local and international.

"We have wasted so many lives in this fight against drugs. If Customs would allow so much drugs to enter, then that's what we should go after. Let's not waste effort going after the small dealers, because there would be no small dealers if we would not allow the big ones to get in," Leni stressed.

Nothing that Leni says yesterday, today and even in the future, would ever make her president, or for her to even become the able and competent leader of the political opposition.

She is as politically dead as the yellow opposition.



That's the Spirit

Dr. Ramon Ricardo A. Roque,
CESDI, Diplomat

The military factor

THE decision of President Rodrigo Duterte for the "military takeover" of the Bureau of Customs (BoC) says a lot about the gravity of corruption problem in the agency.

While it has been known by all Filipinos that the BoC is a graft-ridden agency, the "military takeover" is an expression that for the current administration, at least, civilian management of the agency cannot address the corruption problem in it.

The move of President Duterte also says a lot about his preference for military and police personnel for key roles in his administration. He has been clear about the reason for such preference – the attribute of uniformed men and women to follow orders and deliver the ordered results.

It now appears that the failure of the BoC chiefs in his administration – military/police lead-

ers Nicanor Faeldon and Isidro Lapena – to deliver the ordered eradication of corruption in the agency, pushed President Duterte to expand the application of his "military preference."

The failures of former BoC chiefs Faeldon and Lapena obviously did not make the President change his preference. The appointments of the former BoC chiefs to other government posts, including the promotion of Lapena to a Cabinet post, mean that the President does not believe that they were part of the corruption problem.

In his pronouncement, President Duterte in effect said that they should not be faulted, even in context of command responsibility, because the corruption system in the BoC is so strong that it will not allow even incorruptible chiefs to succeed.

This is clearly the reason why

President Duterte is pursuing the "military takeover" option. This is an option where the President's preferred military factor is used not just for the head but also for all personnel in the agency.

There are individuals and groups that are questioning the move of President Duterte. Their argument is simple – the corruption problem in the BoC is not among the reasons for a constitutionally-allowed military takeover. The issue on the constitutionality of the "military takeover" of BoC is something for the Supreme Court to decide.

Those who agree and even support the decision of President Duterte see the wisdom in the "military takeover" of BoC because no other plausible alternative solutions are available or are being offered.

Let us admit that the corruption problem in the BoC causes a lot of other problems in our society. It is a serious problem that requires a serious solution. Should we regard the "military takeover" of the BoC unconstitutional even if it is an effective means for the government to perform its fundamental constitutional mandate of serving and protecting the people? Just asking.



Militar bilang Customs labag sa Konstitusyon

SABI sa Konstitusyon, Artikulo XVI, Mga Tadhana ng Pangkalahatan, Seksyon 5 (4): "Ang sino mang kaanib ng sandatahang lakas na nasa aktibong paglilingkod ay hindi kailanman dapat hirangin o italaga sa alin mang tungkulin sa isang katungkulang sibilyan sa Pamahalaan gayon din sa mga korporasyong ari o kontrolado ng pamahalaan o sa alin mang mga sangay nila."

Dahil diyan, bawal ipasa-kamay ni Presidente Duterte sa sundalo ang Customs. Gaano man siya at ang mamamayan kaasiwa sa katiwalian sa ahensiya, ang pagdidis-

patse ng militar ay hindi solusyon. Mag-isip dapat agad ng iba pang pamamaraan. Kundi'y maaksaya ang panahon, kukuwestiyunin lang sa Korte Suprema ang utos ni Duterte. Makakapagpuslit ng tone-tonelada pang shabu sa pier, at mawawaldas sa "tara" ang dapat na kita ng gobyerno mula sa import duties.

Utos sa kasundaluhan na ipagtanggol ang Konstitusyon. Saad sa Artikulo XVI, Seksyon 5 (1): "Ang lahat ng mga miyembro ng sandatahang lakas ay dapat manumpa nang tamtim o magpatotoo na ipagsasanggalang at ipagtatanggol ang Konstitusyong ito."

Pati ang Presidente ay obligadong itaguyod ito. Takda ng Artikulo VII, Kagawarang Tagapagpaganap, Seksyon 5: "Bago magsimula sa pagtupad ng kanilang katungkulan, ang Pangulo, ang Pangalawang Pangulo, o ang Nanunungkulang Pangulo ay dapat magsagawa ng sumusunod na panunumpa o pagpapatotoo:

"Mataimtim kong pinanunumpa (o pinatotohanan) na tutuparin ko nang buong katapatan at sigasig ang aking mga tungkulin bilang Pangulo (o Pangalawang Pangulo) (Sundan sa pahina 5)

SAPOL... Mula pahina 4

o Nanunungkulang Pangulo ng Pilipinas, pangangalagaan at ipagtatanggol ang kanyang Konstitusyon, ipatupad ang mga batas nito, magiging makatarungan sa bawat tao, at

(atalaga ang aking sarili sa paglilingkod sa Banse. Kasihan nawa ako ng Diyos (Kapag pagpapatotoo, ang huling pangungusap ay kaitasin.)

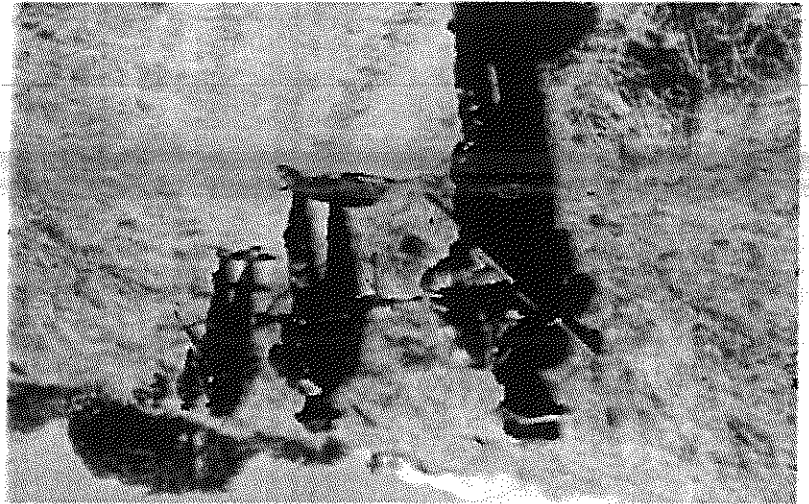
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ONLINE NEWS

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Soldier killed in clash with Reds in Quezon



PURSUIT OPERATIONS. Troops of the 92nd Infantry Battalion, in close coordination with the local police force, conduct pursuit operations following two encounters with New People's Army (NPA) rebels in the sub-villages of Dadyangao and Madaraki in Barangay Umiray in General Nakar town, Quezon Sunday (Nov. 4, 2018). (Photo courtesy of 2ID-DPAO)

CAMP GEN. CAPINPIN, Tanay, Rizal – A soldier was killed while an undetermined number of New People's Army rebels were seriously wounded in two armed encounters Sunday morning in two sub-villages in Quezon.

Reports reaching the Philippine Army's 2nd Infantry "Jungle Fighter" Division (2ID) camp here on Monday said the troops of the 92nd Infantry Battalion (92IB) twice clashed with NPA insurgents in Sitio Dadyangao and Sitio Madaraki in Barangay Umiray in General Nakar town, Quezon.

Lt. Col. Christopher M. Diaz, Commanding Officer of the 92IB, said the soldiers were conducting Focus Military Operation (FMO) in the area following intelligence report and tips from civilian residents that a group of armed NPAs were extorting rice and money from the Dumagat indigenous people (IP).

Diaz said the government troops first encountered around 10:40 a.m. an undetermined number of armed rebels who belong to the Platoon 4A2, Guerrilla Front Cesar of the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee.

He reported that one soldier identified as Pvt. James Lanes, 24, from Sultan Kudarat, was killed during the 20-minute firefight in Sitio Dadyangao.

The troops believed the rebels brought along their wounded comrades while retreating from the battle site.

Diaz also reported that the military troops engaged the state enemies in another 15-minute firefight, an hour later around 11:45 a.m. in another sub-village Sitio Madaraki where they conducted pursuit operations while tracking down traces of heavy blood stains left by the retreating rebels.

However, there were no reported casualties from the pursuing troops and the enemies during the 15-minute gun battle.

Brig. Gen. Arnulfo Marcelo B. Burgos Jr., Commander of the 202nd Brigade, who has operational jurisdiction over Calabarzon said the troops have sustained their tracking down operations against the NPAs in the area.

They are now running out of ammunitions with the recent two encounters; they are now tired and they have wounded comrades. We will pursue these NPA remnants until they are destroyed," Burgos vowed.

Meanwhile, Philippine Army 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) Commander, Maj. Gen. Rhoderick M. Parayno has extended his condolences to the family of the fallen soldier.

"Rest assured that his bravery and heroism will be treasured and will never be forgotten. His example of sacrifice will continue to inspire us to strive more on our mission of protecting the people against all NPA threats and coercion especially of the Dumagat IP in Quezon," Parayno said.