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NEWS CLIPPINGS

21 October 2018

Sunday



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

21 OCTOBER 2018

Weather Forecast- http://pagasa.dost.gov.ph/weather/daily-weather-forecast		
Page Nr.	Title	Source
NATIONAL NEWS		
1-2	DENR: No total ban on Boracay parties	P Star-1
3-5	BOC exec: early 'shabu' smuggling intel ignored	PDI-A1
AFP/ SECURITY RELATED NEWS		
6	Asean, US holding maritime exercise in 2019	P Star-5
7	Asean, US to hold joint maritime drill in 2019	M Times-A1
8	Martial law in Mindanao has reduced crimes, says archbishop	P Star-1
9	Palace changes tune on P16-B frigates deal-Alejano	P Star-11
10-11	Comelec urged to release information on party-list groups	P Star-7
12	Gov't treating dissent as crime-Colmenares	PDI-A11
13	PH Marine meets mysterious death inside cab in Pandacan	P Tonight-10
14	Duterte clarifies South Korean frigate issue	P Journal-2
15-16	Reds: PNP leak helped in ambush	PDI-A7
17	Up to Duterte to resume peace talks with Reds-Joma	P Star-5
18-19	'Peace Talks 5.0' likely	D tribune-1
20	Du30 renews offer to NPA: new houses	PDI-A7
21	Du30 offers houses, jobs to NPA	M Standard-A2
22	Bahay, trabaho sa susukong NPA	PM-2
23	Bahay, trabaho ibibigay sa mga susukong NPA rebels	Ngayon-2
24	Surrender, I don't want to kill you, Duterte tells NPAs	M Bulletin-5
25	Du30 to Reds: I don't want to kill you	P Journal-3
26	Duterte sa NPA: I don't want to kill you	Balita-3
27-28	Duterte urges NPA anew to surrender	M Times-A1
29	Rody renews NPA surrender call	Tempo-2
30	7 NPA rebs yield in CV	P Tonight-12
31	Bangsamoro plebiscite: Voters to answer up to 12 questions	P Star-15
32	3 Abus arrested in Sulu	P Star-15
33	3 Abus apprehended in Sulu	M Bulletin-17
34	Troops capture three ASG bandits	M Standard-A3
35	3 Abu Sayyaf, timbog	Balita-5
36	3 Abu Sayyaf timbog sa engkuwentro	Ngayon-6
37	3 Maute men surrender in Lanao Sur	P Star-15
38	3 pro-IS fighters yield in Lanao del Sur	M Times-A7
39	3 pro-IS fighters yield in Lanao	P Journal-13
40	3 more Maute men yield	Tempo-11

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41	3 Maute group men give up	P Tonight-12
42	SE Asia boosts fight vs 'real, present threat	M Standard-A2
EDITORIAL/OPINION/COMMENTARY		
43	AFP budget: The biggest ever	P Star-12
44	Ownership immaterial in case of illegal possession of firearm	M Times-A3
45	The man who said, 'You shall not kill'	M Times-A4



DENR: No total ban on Boracay parties

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Tourists may still enjoy parties and other beach activities in Boracay, provided these are done indoors or in areas away from the shore, an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said yesterday.

Undersecretary Sherwin Rigor said several prohibitions proposed as policies for the reopening of the world-famous resort island will be imposed only in beachfront areas.

"The prohibitions on certain activities and structures were meant to protect the shore and maintain the pristine quality of the sand, which is Boracay's top selling feature," he said.

Among those prohibited are the construction of stage or platform for entertainment purposes and setting up of tables, chairs, massage beds, beach umbrellas, souvenir shops and food stalls.

Electrical fixtures, such as lights and wirings, will also be removed from the beachfront vegetation area.

"These structures will be banned at all times within the 25+5 (meter) easement area, which is a 'no-build zone,' and within the beach vegetation

Turn to Page 2

DENR From Page 1

area," Rigor said.

These prohibitions would apply to White Beach Stations

1, 2 and 3, as well as Puka, Iligan and Bulabog beaches, he added.

Meanwhile, DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda disputed an item in an infographic called "New Boracay Do's and Don'ts" circulating online, which states that grilling of meats would be prohibited.

"This is not true. The task force does not prohibit such," Antiporda said, referring to the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force headed by DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu.

"We can grill meat, but not along the beachfront," he added.

The task force is also looking into setting up design-

nated zones where ambulant vendors can sell their goods instead of approaching and possibly disturbing tourists.

Another measure proposed is the banning of parties at the beachfront and within the easement area without valid permits for the holding of special events.

To avoid noise pollution, Rigor said commercial establishments like bars and restaurants will also be encouraged to adopt noise or music insulation systems.

Rigor added that part of the rehabilitation of the beach

ecosystem was to require establishments to obtain permits to plant balled coconut palms and other endemic species along the beach fronting their respective properties.

Antiporda, on the other hand, clarified that water sports, para-sailing and other related activities are only temporarily suspended while the government, led by the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau, and partner organizations are conducting an assessment of the marine ecosystems in Boracay.

Antiporda said results of the assessment should be out

before the island resort fully opens on Oct. 26.

While Boracay would reopen by Friday next week, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said it would complete the rehabilitation of the 4.1-kilometer main road Boracay Circumferential Road by December, DPWH Secretary Mark Villar said.

Villar said their men are working 24/7 to finish the first phase of the circumferential road and flood control project by Oct. 26 when Boracay reopens.

- With Evelyn Macairan

BOC EXEC: EARLY 'SHABU' SMUGGLING INTEL IGNORED

STORY BY JOVIC YEE

Lawyer Ma. Lourdes Mangaoang says customs and drug enforcement officers were working together as early as May on building a case against possible drug shipments from four Asian countries, defying claims that the Bureau of Customs had no prior information about a plan to smuggle 'shabu' (crystal meth) into the country.

FROM A1

By Jovic Yee
@jovicyeelNQ

Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña knew as early as May that drug syndicates were planning to slip in illegal drugs through the ports but did not take immediate action then, which allowed six magnetic lifters that contained billions of pesos worth of "shabu" (crystal meth) to enter the country, according to a Customs official.

Two of the lifters that arrived in June were abandoned at the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT). They were opened on Aug. 7 and found to contain P3.4 billion worth of shabu. Four identical lifters that arrived in July were found in a warehouse in Cavite province on Aug. 8 already empty of their contents—an estimated P6.8 billion worth of shabu.

An Aug. 6 letter from Customs Deputy Commissioner Ricardo Quinto to Lapeña indicated that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) had been working together since May on an intelligence operation regarding the possible importation of illegal drugs from Malaysia, Vietnam, Hong Kong and China.

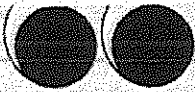
Customs Deputy Collector Ma. Lourdes Mangaoang said the letter contradicted Lapeña's earlier statement that the BOC could have halted the release from the MICT of the four magnetic lifters if it had received "timely" information from the PDEA.

No alert order

Mangaoang, who earlier alleged that Lapeña could be involved in a cover-up of the smuggling, wondered why the Customs chief did not issue any alert order on suspicious shipments from the four countries earlier.

The two magnetic lifters seized by the BOC originated from Malaysia, while the four emptied-out lifters found by the PDEA in a warehouse in Cavite province came from Vietnam. Both shipments passed through Taiwan before heading to Manila.

Lapeña could not be reached for comment on Mangaoang's allegations, but in a statement on Friday, he said that he had



**In truth I'm really afraid. I don't
want to pick a fight with my boss...
But I won't wait for me to be held
in contempt [by the Senate]**

Ma. Lourdes Mangaoang
Customs deputy collector

ordered an investigation after the first two magnetic lifters were discovered to contain shabu. He also said that the four other magnetic lifters found in Cavite "went through proper Customs clearance."

He added that all X-ray images were submitted to the House and the Senate committees investigating the shabu smuggling.

Mangaoang, however, said Lapeña and other Customs officials showed darkened images of the magnetic lifters, different from the pictures she showed to the Inquirer on Saturday that clearly outlined their hollow parts that were packed with "something."

Customs standard operating procedures require a physical inspection of shipments of hollow objects, which she said wasn't done with the lifters.

The BOC had claimed that without prior intelligence information from the PDEA, it was "impossible" for their person-

nel to determine whether the magnetic lifters contained any contraband.

Mangaoang, who headed the Customs X-ray inspection project (XIP) for five years until 2013, dismissed the claim.

She said that in the past they were able to apprehend close to P17 billion worth of contraband "through X-ray alone and with no intelligence information."

'Meant to deceive'

Mangaoang alleged that the darkened X-ray images that Lapeña and other BOC officials showed to the public and lawmakers were "meant to deceive."

Days after the four magnetic lifters were discovered, Lapeña ordered the relief of MICT district collector Vener Baquiran. Mangaoang, however, wondered why Lapeña spared XIP chief Zsae de Guzman.

Mangaoang also questioned why Lapeña needed to rely on the PDEA for intelligence support on interdicting drugs con-

sidering that he had all the manpower he needed and "hundreds of millions in intelligence funds."

"He has a deputy commissioner for intelligence, a Customs intelligence and investigation service director, a division chief for intelligence, 300 intelligence agents, a Customs anti-illegal drugs task force. Why didn't he activate them? Why rely on PDEA when it is the BOC which has access to information of importations," she said.

PDEA Director General Aaron Aquino told the Inquirer that BOC intelligence officer Jimmy Guban was involved in the case buildup from the start.

Guban told lawmakers in a hearing that he had coordinated with then PDEA National Capital Region Director Ismael Fajardo Jr. and then Senior Supt. Eduardo Acierito of the Philippine National Police Civil Security Group regarding the shipment.

"Since the start and till the end, they were the three people working on that case," Aquino said. "So if [the BOC] needed intelligence information, they should have gotten it from Guban, who was with their intelligence unit."

"If there was an intelligence gap, the problem must have been because it was not relayed by Guban," Aquino added.

Order to coordinate

He said Fajardo had first texted him about the shipment from Malaysia arriving at the MICT as early as March 21. He then directed Fajardo to coordinate with the BOC, but "I assume that at the time of the text, it's likely they [Fajardo, Guban and Acierito] already talked about it."

On Oct. 10, the day Mangaoang testified in the Senate, Malacañang released a "special report" alleging that Guban, Fajardo and Acierito were members of a drug syndicate. Fajardo had already been dismissed from the PDEA.

In a statement on Saturday, the PDEA said large amounts of shabu seized across the country from July to October had the same "synthetic impurities" and "production method" as those intercepted at the MICT. This has led the agency to believe these were the shabu that slipped out of Customs and hauled out of the four magnetic lifters found in Cavite.

This finding also supported Aquino's claim that shabu is "flooding" the streets as indicated by the sudden drop in the price, from P6,800 in July to P1,400 per gram in October.

Mangaoang said she had hesitated speaking out about what she knew, until she was called by the Senate.

"In truth I'm really afraid. I don't want to pick a fight with my boss," she said. "But I won't wait for me to be held in contempt."

Asked what she hoped to get out of her "exposé," Mangaoang said she only wanted to get the truth out and did not care what happened to Lapeña.

"And the truth is [the magnetic lifters] contained shabu and there is physical evidence, documentary and testimonial evidence which will prove that," she said.

Mangaoang stressed that despite all that was happening in the BOC, she still believed in President Duterte's campaign to eradicate the illegal drug trade.

"But he can't do that with Lapeña, because Lapeña and his people are either incompetent or they are in collusion," she said. —WITH A REPORT FROM JAYMEET GAMIL INQ

Asean, US holding maritime exercise in 2019

By JAIME LAUDE

Viewed as a confidence-building measure that enhances cooperation among regional navies, defense ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the US have agreed to conduct a joint maritime exercise next year.

"During the (ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting or ADMM-Plus Informal Meeting), the defense ministers welcomed the US's strong and sustained engagement of ASEAN and the region and recognized the importance of US-China relationship, which has implications on regional peace and stability," said ADMM, through the Singapore Defense Ministry, in a statement.

These mounting regional security concerns include the growing menace of terrorism and other forms of transnational crimes as well as shaky economic and military relations.

One of these challenges is the continuing militarization of man-made islands in the disputed Spratlys archipelago.

Aside from Taiwan and China that claim the entire Spratlys, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have

overlapping maritime and territorial claims in the disputed archipelago.

But other defense observers viewed the ASEAN-US maritime drill as Washington's answer to the Beijing-sponsored ASEAN-China Maritime Field Training Exercises scheduled to open on Wednesday outside the untested waters in the South China Sea.

In February, China proposed in Singapore, as ASEAN chair this year, the holding of the Maritime Field Training Exercises. ASEAN member-states approved the proposal, provided that the training will be held outside contested waters.

It was agreed on by ASEAN and China that the joint maritime field training drill will be held off the coast of Zhangjiang.

A Philippine Navy supply and logistic ship, *BRP Dagupan City*, with 300 sailors and Marines, is now on its way to join the training that includes maritime interdiction and unplanned encounters.

The US Navy is expected to monitor the drill as one of its aircraft carriers, *USS Ronald Reagan*, coming from a naval engagement in South Korea, is reportedly steaming for an undisclosed mission to the South China Sea.

Meanwhile, in a press statement, the Singapore defense ministry said next year's ASEAN-US training was approved during the

ASEAN-US Defense Ministers' Informal Meeting on Friday between Singapore's Minister for Defense Ng Eng Hen and US Defense Secretary James Mattis.

Mattis, who chaired the ADMM-Plus meeting with Ng, reaffirmed his support for ASEAN.

Mattis said the focus areas the ASEAN and US must explore include high-level dialogues and exchanges; maritime security; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; capacity building in other fields such as international law; peacekeeping operations; chemical, biological and radiological threats and cyber security.

China, on the other hand, came up with a three-point proposal during its co-host-

ing of the ADMM-Plus meeting.

Chinese State Councilor and Minister of National Defense Gen. Wei Fenghe said his country wants to deepen defense engagements with the ASEAN member-states as he proposed the establishment of an ASEAN-China direct communication hotline, think-tank exchanges and a young leaders' exchange program.

"The ASEAN defense ministers supported these proposals, which would help forge mutual trust, confidence and friendships between the militaries and defense establishments of ASEAN member-states and China," the ADMM statement released by the Singapore defense ministry said.

✂ - With Pia Lee-Brago

21

A1

Asean, US to hold joint maritime drill in 2019

SOUTHEAST Asian nations and the United States will be holding joint maritime drill in 2019 as a way of enhancing their relationship.

In a joint declaration, defense ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) said they welcome the exercise with the US, as well as an ongoing joint drill with China in Zhanjiang.

"[We] welcome the conduct of the Asean-China Maritime Exercise in 2018, and intention to conduct the Asean-United States Maritime Exercise in 2019, which will enhance friendship and confidence between Asean member states' navies and the People's Liberation Army Navy and the United States Navy," the declaration read.

The Asean defense chiefs were all gathered in Singapore for the 12th Asean Defense Ministers' Meeting and the Asean Plus Defense Ministers' Meeting, which will be attended by defense heads from the US, Russia, China, Australia, Japan,

➤ **Maritime A2**

■ MARITIME FROM A1

Asean

South Korea, New Zealand and India.

In a separate statement, the Singapore Defense Ministry said Singapore's Minister for Defense Ng Eng Hen and US Defense Secretary James Mattis held an informal meeting among Asean defense chiefs.

The exercise, it added, was in conjunction with the US' Exercise Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (Seacat), with Ng and Mattis also welcoming it as a "useful" confidence-building measure that would "build the capacity of

and enhance cooperation between regional navies."

The Asean defense ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to abide by laws and regulations that would observe the order and avoid incidents within the seas surrounding Southeast Asia.

In the joint declaration, the Asean defense ministers pointed out the commitment to "fully and effectively" implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in disputed waters of the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea).

They reiterated the importance of the freedom of navigation within the contested waters.

"[The exercise of this freedom calls for] confidence-building

measures and, through practical maritime cooperation, [promotion of] peace and stability," the declaration said.

"[We] reaffirm the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, safety and freedom of navigation in and oversight above the South China Sea," it added, noting that the resolution should be in accordance with international laws, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos).

The defense chiefs adopted guidelines for air military encounters and the operational annexes on observing existing aviation conventions and rules, among others.

The guidelines, drafts of which

were provided to reporters, recognize the safety and security of air lanes as "important" for the growth and prosperity of countries in the Asean region.

They stressed the "safe and smooth" conduct of encounters between the Asean militaries' aircraft.

The defense ministers also welcomed positive developments in the Korean Peninsula such as the inter-Korean summits and the recent summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

"[We also reiterate] our support for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the declaration further read.

DEMPSEY REYES

Martial law in Mindanao has reduced crimes, says archbishop

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

Ozamiz Archbishop Martin Jumoad is not opposing the possible extension of martial law in Mindanao as he said it has helped restore peace and order

in the region.

Jumoad said that crime incidents in Mindanao have gone down since martial law was enforced. "In my experience, martial law in Mindanao has lessened crimes and is able to enforce

discipline among people in this place. Many have voluntarily surrendered their guns but still there is still a lot to do," said Jumoad, who has been serving in Mindanao since he became a priest in 1983. He was named bishop

of Isabela in 2002 and archbishop of Ozamiz in 2016.

"Our men and women in uniform here are professionals and very respectful," he said.

Turn to Page 3

Martial From Page 1

The prelate did not rule out the possibility of some soldiers committing abuses as he urged people

to stay vigilant and report these atrocities.

"Let us just be vigilant and point out human rights violations. There is still freedom of the press and we can still ventilate our opinions,"

Jumoad said, reacting to presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo's statement that the government might again extend martial law in Mindanao.

President Duterte first ordered

martial law in Mindanao on May 23, 2017, after the Maute terrorists laid siege on Marawi City.

Duterte has asked Congress to extend martial law until the end of this year.

Palace changes tune on P16-B frigates deal — Alejano

By JESS DIAZ

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano yesterday accused Malacañang of changing its tune on the controversial P16-billion frigates procurement by the Philippine Navy.

"When the Navy frigate anomaly first broke, Malacañang was quick to deny its involvement, to the point of saying that it was merely fake news. Now, President Duterte admitted that he personally acted upon the matter," he said.

Alejano said the admission was different from the statements the President and his former special assistant Christopher "Bong" Go made when the Senate was investigating the deal.

"They were trying to make

it appear that the President had no knowledge on the matter. This information (admission) was also not disclosed during the Senate hearing, considering its implications on the whole context. It turns out that the President himself acted on the white paper of Hyundai Heavy Industries," Alejano said.

He added Malacañang misled the public on an issue involving corruption.

It was Alejano who had exposed a document in which Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana had a marginal note asking then Navy chief Ronald Mercado to prepare a response to issues raised about the frigates procurement.

The note partly stated: "This was given to me by Bong Go. Go over it and prepare a

report/rebuttal to be submitted to the President."

Lorenzana "unceremoniously" relieved Mercado for his alleged lack of cooperation in the procurement process.

The then Navy chief wanted a combat system for the two frigates different from what the Department of National Defense (DND) was proposing. He also questioned DND's choice of a combat system supplier.

"This admission of the President on his personal involvement on the Navy frigate anomaly is a vindication of what I have been saying," Alejano, a former Marine captain, said.

He said Lorenzana and Go did not act promptly on the corruption issues surround-

ing the transaction without instruction from the President.

"Secretary Go's defense that he was merely acting on a simple complaint out of the thousands that they receive would already be difficult to believe when the President himself actually dipped his hands into it," he said.

Alejano added that he has been pursuing his inquiry into the Navy frigates procurement. "Despite the consummation of the project, my office continues to act on this matter and to seek the truth. We have been trying to secure more relevant documents, but to no avail. It's now clear why they are refusing to give us documents," he lamented.

Nonetheless, Alejano vowed to pursue his investigation.

Comelec urged to release information on party-list groups

By **RHODINA VILLANUEVA**
and **SHEILA CRISOSTOMO**

An election watchdog yesterday urged the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to immediately release pertinent information on the party-list organizations that filed their Certificates of Nomination and Acceptance (CONA) for the May 2019 midterm elections.

In a statement, Kontra Daya said while the Comelec is expected to begin posting the tentative list of candidates on Nov. 5 as provided for in Resolution No. 10429 promulgated last Oct. 1, it is important for the public to screen this early the qualifications of the organizations, particularly their list of nominees and programs of action.

"Releasing this information online, for all the world to see and scrutinize, would show Comelec's adherence to transparency and accountability," the group said.

Kontra Daya added that doing so would also help bolster Comelec's commitment in making the elections clean and honest.

"Even if there had been news organizations that have reported on the nominees of some party-list groups, the media, election monitoring groups and the public could benefit from more exhaustive information coming from the Comelec itself, particularly if readily accessible from its website," Kontra Daya convenor Danilo Arao said.

Being transparent with information on party-list groups, according to Kontra Daya, is consistent with enhancing the 2019 elections, a promise that was made by Sheriff Abas when he was confirmed by the Commission on Appointments as Comelec chairman last May 23.

A total of 185 party-list have filed CONA to participate in next year's elections. Each of them submitted at least five names of nominees.

Kontra Daya has been advocating against the use of the party-list system by the rich and the powerful, at the expense of the marginalized sectors for whom the law was made.

National Citizen's Movement for Free Elections secretary general Eric Alvia said the party-list system has already been "bastardized" by people who wanted to

enter Congress through the back door.

In an earlier interview, he said that the list of nominees are dominated by people from affluent and influential families, and those who have retired from government, including the police and the military.

Alvia added that the public should be vigilant against party-list groups that allow themselves to be used for purposes other than serving marginalized Filipinos.

Amendment

Meanwhile, Gabriela party-list Rep. Emmi de Jesus yesterday welcomed Comelec Commissioner Rowena Guanzon's statement seeking an amendment to Republic Act 7941 or the Party-list System Act to prevent politicians from taking advantage of positions that should belong to marginalized sectors.

De Jesus said it is about time that a review be done as political dynasties have used

the party-list system to keep themselves in power.

She lamented the poor and marginalized sectors of society have been sidelined by politicians who have created their own party-list groups.

"The marginalized have been eased out of Congress," she said in a news forum at the University of the Philippines Hotel in Quezon City.

Guanzon lamented that the intention to provide truly marginalized sectors representation at the House of Representatives has been wasted by politicians who are using the party-list system to be able to run for elective posts after their terms have expired.

It also has become an option for other members of political clans to run in the elections.

"People elect them. The Comelec cannot say, 'Do not elect these party-list groups,'" she said.

Of the 46 party-list groups in the lower house, De Jesus noted that only less than half

truly represent marginalized sectors.

"It's an injustice to our countrymen because these politicians are earning salaries," she said.

Former Bayan Muna party-list representative and senatorial aspirant Neri Colmenares said these types of party-list representatives can easily be intimidated by the administration on several issues.

He cited his experience where only a few members from party-list groups supported his bill to increase the pension for Social Security System members.

"I even had more supporters from district congressmen," Colmenares said at the same forum.

Asked how he felt about working in the Lower House with these type of politicians, Colmenares said he had to adjust.

"Otherwise, you feel like hell going to work every day," he said.

- With Eva Visperas, Marvin Sy

21

Gov't treating dissent as crime—Colmenares

By Consuelo Marquez
@CMarquezINQ

Bayan Muna chair Neri Colmenares accused the Duterte administration of treating dissent as a crime, denouncing the arrest of nine members of militant groups in a series of operations by the military last week.

At a forum on Saturday at UP Hotel, Colmenares said members of Gabriela, Anakpawis and Bayan Muna were arrested in separate military operations.

"Activists are being treated as

criminals," he said at the forum.

"This is not just a threat to activists but also for ordinary citizens, who protest increases in prices," he added.

Colmenares, a senatorial candidate, also denounced Malacañang for a crackdown on activists, which included a plan to form a task force to end insurgency by the end of 2018.

Communist tag

He said the military had branded those protesting high prices and abuses as communists.

"That is the mind set of the military," Colmenares said. "That is the thinking" of President Duterte, he added.

"Malacañang is the mastermind of the crackdown on political dissent," he said.

Gabriela Rep. Emmi de Jesus agreed with Colmenares, saying the treatment of activists as criminals showed the tyrannical rule of the Duterte administration.

"We can now feel how tyrannical this government is," she said at the same forum. INQ

PH Marine meets mysterious death inside cab in Pandacan

By **ITCHIE CABAYAN**

A MEMBER of the Philippine Marines died of still unknown reason while inside a cab that he boarded in Nagtahan, Pandacan, Manila the other day.

The victim was identified as Sgt. Rowel Oandasan, assigned at the Philippine Marines Corps in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, and residing at Sta. Teresita Cagayan Valley.

Det. Joseph Kabigting of the Manila Police District-homicide

section said at around 1:30 p.m., the victim was aboard a Riemelyn taxi (ABG-9737) and cruising along the northbound lane of Nagtahan Bridge in Pandacan when cab driver Johnny Enosa noticed that the victim was not feeling good.

Enosa said the victim flagged him down in Fort Bonifacio in Taguig and asked to be taken to the Florida Bus Station terminal in Sampaloc.

As they neared the bus station, he saw Oandasan slumped, so that he decided to go straight to the nearest

hospital but the victim did not make it alive.

The victim bore no signs that he had been harmed or killed.

Meanwhile, PO1 Armando Modesto, Jr., a rookie cop, is slated to be summoned by the Manila Police District-General Assignment Investigation Section after he was accused by a 36-year-old woman of cussing at her when she ordered her nephew to get out of a computer shop called, 'piso net' in Tondo, Manila yesterday.

The complainant was identified as Maryjane Agustin.

10



Duterte clarifies South Korean frigate issue

By Efren Montano

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has bared that he personally acted on the complaint of South Korean firm Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) regarding the Philippine Navy's multi-billion-peso frigate system deal.

"Anybody who is complaining about graft and corruption, I will give you an audience any time," he said in his Thursday speech at the 44th Philippine Business Conference and Expo in Manila.

"And that's what happened, 'yung frigate ng Armed Forces. There was this Korean who represented this - 'yung nagpabili sir - and he was complaining why there has yet no order to

deliver na nanalo sila," Duterte said.

Duterte said he gave the letter to his top aide Bong Go and asked him to "give it to legal."

Lawyers then referred the letter to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

"So legal referred it to Lorenzana. So ang nagsulat si Lorenzana," the president said.

Go has been accused of intervening in the selection of the combat management system (CMS) for the two HHI-built frigates of the Philippine Navy.

Go, Lorenzana, and Malacañang have all denied there was an anomaly in the selection of the CMS.

The frigate acquisition project started during the time of former President Benigno Aquino III and continued un-

der the Duterte administration, which signed the notice of award to HHI on August 18, 2016.

Controversy marred the big-ticket project after it was reported that Go, who serves as the former Special Assistant to the President, allegedly intervened in the selection of the CMS for the two frigates.

Go allegedly favored another South Korean firm, Hanwha Systems, to provide the CMS for the warships.

In February 2018, Duterte already said the government merely addressed the complaint of HHI.

The allegation that Go intervened in the selection of the CMS started after it was reported that he forwarded a white paper from HHI to the Department of National Defense.

Reds: PNP leak helped in ambush

NAGA CITY—Communist rebels owned up to the attack on a government convoy in Camarines Sur that killed three policemen, claiming that information from police helped them set the ambush up.

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the umbrella organization of underground rebel groups, said Nela Charade Puno, head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) who was in the convoy, was not the target of the ambush.

Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Albayalde expressed belief the attack could be a failure of intelligence on the part of police in the area.

The NDFP, in its statement, said Albayalde was "right when he said there were lapses when it comes to intelligence."

Leak from PNP

The rebel group said "tactical information" about the convoy came from the PNP, although it did not say whether rebels had a spy inside the police force.

The NDFP said the ambush was in retaliation for President Duterte's decision to abandon peace talks and wage a war of attrition against rebels, which led to abuses.

The group added that it was also in response to summary killings of rebel suspects justi-



PNP HEROES—The wake of three policemen killed in an ambush on a convoy carrying Food and Drugs Administration chief Nela Charade Puno. —STEPHANIE FLORIDA

fied by the supposed "Red October" plot to oust Mr. Duterte led by rebels.

Albayalde was at the wake of the three slain policemen on Friday—SPO1 Percival Rafael, PO3 Carlito Navarroza and PO1 Ralph Jason Vida.

They were among a group of policemen providing security to Puno in Daet town, Camarines Sur.

"There were shortcomings

in the intelligence," Albayalde told reporters, citing a briefing given by police in the area.

'Public knowledge'

The PNP chief earlier said there might have been a leak of information on security plans for Puno.

The Army, however, said the information about the route taken by the security convoy for Puno was "public knowledge"

15

he added.

Chief Insp. Maria Luisa Calubaquib, spokesperson for the Bicol police, said the regional police had yet to determine if there was, indeed, a leak of intelligence and its source.

'Hearsay'

Without saying if she was referring to Albayalde's theory about a leak, Calubaquib said "it's hard to believe in hearsay."

"We need basis," Calubaquib said.

Albayalde, however, said one question that popped up as a result of the ambush was why the policemen were not "given reinforcement immediately."

"We are not looking for failures on the part of our local police," he, however, added.

Some relatives expressed dismay at Puno for failing to reach out to families of the slain policemen who were protecting her.

"My husband died escorting her," said Grace Rafael, widow of SPO1 Rafael.

"Where is she now? We didn't even hear a thing from her," she said.

Albayalde said the policemen "died fighting." "They fought and sacrificed their lives," Albayalde said. "They are real heroes."

—REPORTS FROM STEPHANIE M. FLORIDA, MA, APRIL MIER AND REV ANTHONY OSTRIA INQ *AF*

because the FDA chief was headed to an event in Daet.

Col. Ferozaldo Paul Regencia, spokesperson for the Army's 9th Infantry Division, said even without an intelligence leak, police would be targeted because they used marked vehicles.

"The rebels can make some calculations of the time of arrival of the convoy," Regencia said.

"I think this is very logical."

Up to Duterte to resume peace talks with Reds – Joma

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) founding chairman Jose Ma. Sison yesterday said it is up to President Duterte to end his position of terminating peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

In a statement posted on NDFP's website, Sison said the standing policy of the NDFP is to negotiate with the government anytime Duterte is ready to resume the peace negotiations.

"It is up to him (Duterte) to end his position of having terminated the peace negotiations with Proclamation 360. The standing policy of the NDFP is to negotiate with the (government) anytime he is ready to

resume the peace negotiations in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and further agreements," Sison said.

He added that Duterte may either be trying to "sound less hostile to the revolutionary movement or he is still hostile by trying to bribe the NPA (New People's Army) fighters to surrender."

"Duterte though is correct in saying that the NPA will continue to exist even after he and I are gone from the surface of the earth, if by implication he means that the root causes of the armed conflict must be addressed and solved by social, economic and political reforms," Sison said.

Sison was reacting to Duterte's statement issued on Friday softening in his stance on the communist rebels and

even credited them for helping him win the presidency.

"I would not be here in this position right now if not for the people of Davao, including the NPA," Duterte said in his speech during the inauguration of a shopping mall in Davao City on Friday. "I don't want to fight with you. I also don't want to kill you. We are friends."

The NPA, armed wing of the CPP, was declared by Duterte through an executive proclamation as a terror group in December 2017.

But on Friday, he said the government would give housing and job opportunities to rebels who would lay down their arms.

"Female rebels, you're better off here. We'll hug each other. I'll kiss you," Duterte

said.

In March 2018, he said female rebel fighters should not bear children because they "multiply the problem." He was also criticized by women and human rights groups over his remarks about shooting the "Amazonas" in their genitals.

However, in his latest speech, the President said he is resigned to the fact that the rebels would never go away.

"When I die, the NPA will still be here. When Joma Sison dies, the NPA will still be here," Duterte said.

Talks between the government and the communist rebels broke down in July 2017 after the government cited the NPA's continued attacks against state troops despite ongoing negotiations.

— With Edith Regalado

'Peace Talks

5.0' likely

But Joma out of gab

Drop the firearms, drop the gun and we will not have a problem

By Kristina Maralit

President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday said hope for holding another round of peace talks with the communist rebels flickers high, but without the involvement of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines' (CPP) top hierarchy.

The Chief Executive also said he is willing to sit down with the rebels "if they want to surrender," even asking them to "set down your arms" in anticipation of a positive response from

Turn to page 2

'Peace Talks 5.0' likely

We will not be just friends but Filipino brothers and sisters

From page 1

the combatants and their political leaders who may no longer want to be associated with the CPP and the New People's Army's (NPA) protracted war against the government.

The President's offer is coming amid the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) claim of the CPP-NPA having organized a Duterte-ouster plot through the so-called "Red October" which the military recently said had fizzled out even before it could take off.

But the AFP said the "Red October" is a moving plot and may even take place at yearend when the CPP celebrates its 50th anniversary on 26 December 2018.

"Set down your arms and we will not have a problem. If you wish to join politics, it's okay. Drop the firearms, drop the gun and we will not have a problem," Mr. Duterte said.

"We will not be just friends but Filipino brothers and sisters," Duterte added in the speech he delivered during the opening of a new shopping mall in Davao City on Friday night.

Although he had previously said that he would no longer talk to exiled CPP founder Jose Maria Sison, Mr. Duterte said the "other communists" can approach him or any government official if they wish to surrender.

"Sison and I will no longer talk but to the other communists, if you don't want Sison talk to me... surrender," Mr. Duterte said.

"The government has a program. You'll be given a house automatically," he stated, referring to the houses his daughter and Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio is setting up in Tagum City.

The President shared his experience talking to NPA members in their camps but slammed their insincerity given

the violence they've spewed against government forces and civilians alike.

Still, Duterte said he is willing to extend the olive branch and give assistance to rebels who will lay down their arms and give up to authorities.

The AFP said the "Red October" is a moving plot and may even take place at yearend when the CPP celebrates its 50th anniversary.

"I'm not going to stay here for long, but this should be an inspiration for the NPA. This isn't just for your sake but for your children as well. Have pity on them. They won't be able to move past just tilling land. But don't worry. I will give away all government-owned lands that are of no use to us," he said.

After four rounds of talks, government canceled peace negotiations with the Maoist rebels on 22 November 2017 with President Duterte citing "recent tragic and violent incidents all over the country committed by the communist rebels" as reasons for his termination of the peace process.

Duterte stressed that the only way for the peace talks to move forward is for the other parties to agree to his conditions. Among them is to hold the negotiations in the country, the signing and honoring of a ceasefire pact, stopping the collection of revolutionary taxes and that no coalition government will be forged if peace is sealed between the two parties.

The security cluster is also waiting for the President to issue an Executive Order (EO) regarding the guidelines in starting localized peace talks with insurgents.

Sison, meanwhile, said he is leaving the peace talks in the hands of President Duterte while noting the government leader's softening stance against communist rebels.

The President, in the same speech Friday, even credited the

communist rebels for helping him win the presidency in 2016.

"It is up to him to end his position of having terminated the peace negotiations with Proclamation 360," Sison said in a statement, citing the order signed by the President on 23 November last year.

The CPP leader stressed that they are ready to negotiate with the government peace panel "anytime" the President is ready to resume the botched peace talks.

"The standing policy of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) is to negotiate with the GRP (Philippine government) anytime Duterte is ready to resume the peace negotiations in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and further agreements," Sison said.

Sison, however, criticized Duterte's offer of housing and work to surrendering rebels, calling them as "bribe" while sounding "less hostile" against the rebels.

"Duterte is either trying to sound less hostile to the revolutionary movement or he is still hostile by trying to bribe the NPA fighters to surrender," Sison said.

Sison and I will no longer talk, but to the other communists, if you don't want Sison talk to me.

The former political science professor, however, said he agrees with the President's observation that the NPA will continue to exist even when both of them are gone.

"He is correct though in saying that the NPA will continue to exist even after he and I are gone from the surface of the earth, if by implication he means positively that the root causes of the armed conflict must be addressed and solved by social, economic and political reforms," Sison said.

Duterte and Sison have repeatedly traded barbs and allegations of falling health after

ties between them soured over the cancelation of the peace negotiations.

Fresh from his victory, President Duterte agreed to a first round of talks with the CPP-NPA-National Democratic Front on 22 to 26 August 2016 in Oslo, Norway.

The second round of talks was held on 6 to 10 October in the same year.

Both camps agreed to impose a ceasefire on armed hostilities during the third round of talks on 19 to 25 January in Rome, Italy. But the agreement did not hold for long with government ending its unilateral ceasefire on 8 February 2017 while the communists followed suit the following day.

The government has a program. You'll be given a house automatically.

The major personalities set free for the talks, including top-ranking communist leaders Benito and Wilma Tiamson, returned to the underground movement after government issued arrest warrants against them.

Backchannel talks, however, led to the fourth round of talks on 3 to 6 April 2017 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The scheduled fifth round of discussion was suspended following exchanges of harsh words from both Mr. Duterte and Sison while the NPA and the military have resumed intensified attacks against each other.

Meanwhile, troops from 89th Infantry Battalion of Philippine Army discovered high-powered firearms allegedly stacked by NPA in two nylon sacks in Barangay Batasan, Cotabato last Thursday.

A tipster relayed the information about three persons who unloaded sacks from a green multicab vehicle who immediately fled before reaching a checkpoint set up by operatives from Makilala Police Station.

Five high-powered firearms, a rifle grenade and an improvised explosive device were seized.

With Elmer N. Manuel and Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

21

October 2018

INQUIRER

Page: A7

SURRENDER GIFTS

DU30 RENEWS OFFER TO NPA: NEW HOUSES

DAVAO CITY—President Duterte reiterated his call to the communist New People's Army (NPA) to abandon its armed struggle and return to the folds of the law.

"Drop the gun, and there would be no problem," Mr. Duterte said at the opening of Gaisano Grand Citygate Mall in Buhangin District here.

"I'll give you houses and you can enter politics, there would be no problem," said the President, as he thanked the people of Davao, including NPA rebels, for supporting his campaign for the presidency.

"I would not be where I am now without the help of people of Davao, including the NPA, so help me find a way for all of us to live and to uplift our living conditions," Mr. Duterte said.

Lost cause

Mr. Duterte, who had ended peace negotiations with communist rebels, addressed himself to the NPA, saying rebels could approach councilors and express desire to surrender, and they would be welcomed by the government.

He said rebellion was a lost cause already.

"Your movement is a lost cause, but I'm ready to accept you, surrender your weapons to me," the President said in his speech.

"You will be training in Tesda (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority)," the President said.

"I will pay for your studies. I will give you new houses," he added. —FRINSTON LIM INQ

20

DU30 OFFERS HOUSES, JOBS TO NPA

By Vito Barcelo

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte softened his stance against the communist rebels and even offered members of the New People's Army good life by providing them houses and jobs.

In his brief remarks at the inauguration of Gaisano Grand Citygate Mall, the President also acknowledged the initial support the NPA had given him when he was running for the presidency.

"I will not be where I am today without the help of the people of Davao and the NPA. I'm thankful for that," he said.

In a related development:

• The Communist Party of the Philippines is willing to resume

peace negotiations with the government whenever President Duterte was ready.

In a statement posted on his Facebook page, founding chairman Jose Maria "Joma" Sison said it was up to the President to end his position of having terminated the peace negotiations through Proclamation 360.

"The standing policy of the NDFP is to negotiate with the GRP anytime he is ready to resume the peace negotiations in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration and further agreements," said Sison.

Duterte reiterated to them the significance of working with the government.

"And because you helped me, I am asking you to also help me find a way for all of us to live," Duterte said.

"I would not be here in this position right now if not for the people of Davao, including the NPA. I don't want to fight with you. I also don't want to kill you. We are friends," the President said.

The NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

The President, through an executive proclamation, declared the NPA as a terror group in December 2017.

"What we have to do in our generation—it behooves this generation to find the elusive peace," Duterte explained.

The Chief Executive also reassured the rebel returnees that jobs were waiting for them, especially in Davao, and they could avail themselves of livelihood training skills from the Technical Education and

Skills Development Authority.

"There are jobs here, and that makes me very happy. You NPAs sleep on it. Nobody else is closer to the NPAs here than the Davaoños," he said.

Meanwhile, the President lauded the Gaisano Group for playing a vital role in the lives of the Davaoños, and for contributing to the overall progress of Davao City.

"I want to thank you a lot first because of the jobs. You have generated jobs for the people here," he said.

"You know, when I was still mayor, I told you that I would do my best to lift the economy here in Davao City so that we could provide more jobs. Now there are a lot of businesses," he added. *pa*

21

October 2018

Page:

2

Bahay, trabaho sa susukong NPA

"Bring your firearms, give it to me, and I will give you a house and a job."

Ito ang panghihikayat na pahayag ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) na sumuko sa pamahalaan at pangakong bibigyan niya ang mga ito ng bahay at trabaho.

Nangako rin ang Pangulo na pag-aaralin sa TESDA ang mga susukong NPA upang matuto ng bagong skills.

"Your underground movement will not amount to anything. But I am ready to accept you if you surrender. You can be sure of that. You will undergo training in TESDA, I'll send you to school, to study and learn new

skills," pahayag ng Pangulo sa salitang Bisaya sa inagurasyon ng Gaisano Grand City Gate Mall sa Davao City.

Ayon pa sa Pangulo, hindi na sila mag-ausap ni Joma Sison, founder ng Communist Party of the Philippines pero maaari siyang kausapin ng ibang komunist.

Tiniyak naman ng Pangulo na maaaring magtungo sa kanya ang mga NPA anumang oras at hindi niya sasaktan ang mga ito dahil na rin sa suportang ibinigay sa kanya.

Sa isang bahagi ng talumpati ng Pangulo, sinabi rin nito na hindi siya nakikipag-away sa mga NPA na itinuturing niyang mga kaibigan. *-Malou Escudero-2*

22

Alok ni Duterte

Bahay, trabaho ibibigay sa mga susukong

NPA rebels

Mismong si Pangulong Duterte ang humikayat sa mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) na sumuko na kasabay ang pangako na bibigyan niya ang mga ito ng bahay at trabaho.

Nangako rin ang Pangulo na pag-aaralin sa TESDA ang mga susukong rebelde upang matuto ng bagong skills.

"Your underground movement will not amount

to anything. But I am ready to accept you if you surrender. Bring your firearms, give it to me, and I will give you a house and a job. You can be sure of that. I will be able to give you that. You will undergo training in TESDA. I'll send you to school, but I will pay you to study and learn new skills," pahayag ng Pangulo sa salitang Bisaya sa inagurasyon ng Gaisano Grand City Gate

Mall sa Davao City.

Ayon pa sa Pangulo, hindi na sila mag-uusap ni Joma Sison, founder ng Communist Party of the Philippines, pero maaari siyang kausapin ng ibang komunista.

"Ewan ko kung kaya ko pero... Sison and I will no longer talk, but to the other communists, if you don't want Sison to talk to me, 'di kausapin niyo si' konsehal. Surrender,

NI MALOU ESCUDERO

The government has a program. You'll be given a house automatically," ani Duterte.

Ayon pa sa Pangulo maaaring magtungo sa

kanya ang mga NPA anumang oras at hindi niya sasaktan ang mga ito dahil na rin sa suportang ibinigay sa kanya.

Sinabi rin ng Pangulo na hindi maaaring magkaroon ng evolution sa pamamagitan ng pag-

patay.

Sa isang bahagi ng talumpati ng Pangulo, sinabi rin niya na hindi siya nakikipag-away sa mga NPA na itinuturing niyang mga kaibigan.

"Listen, NPAs. I'm not fighting with you and I don't want to kill you, but I don't know about you. But we are really friends, anang Pangulo sa salitang Bisaya

24

October 2018

Page: 5

Surrender, I don't want to kill you, Duterte tells NPAs

By ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

President Duterte renewed his desire for peace in the country as he urged members of the New People's Army (NPA) anew to surrender since he does not want to kill them.

"Pami... paminaw ra mong NPA. Wala

man ko'y away ninyo. Di... di ko gusto mupatay pud ninyo. Ambot og kamo. Kay amigo man gyud ta (Listen, NPAs. I'm not fighting with you and I don't want to kill you, but I don't know about you. But we are really friends)," Duterte said in Davao City Friday.

"Kanang inyong kalihukan,

wala na gyud na. Pero andam ko mudawat ninyo, musurrender lang mo, dad-a inyong armas, ihatag ka nako, tagaan ta mo og lugar ug balay ug trabaho (Your underground movement will not amount to anything. But I am ready to accept you if you surrender. Bring your firearms, give it to me, and I will give

you a house and a job)," he added.

Duterte then said that the NPA will get nothing from killing him, saying it would be better for them to just return to the folds of the law.

"Unsa ma'y madawat ninyo ana? Kamong mga NPA. What? Patyon ko ninyo? O pagka ugma unsa man mahitabo? Unsa'y mahitabo sa Pilipinas? Kamong mga Amazona, mas maayo pang muanhi mo ngari, mag-gakos ta, hagkan ta pa mo (What will you get from it? You NPAs. What? You're going to kill me? The next day what will happen? What will happen to the Philippines? You amazons are better off coming here. I'll even hug and kiss you)," he said.

"Karong panabuna nako makaduol mo basig unsang orasa. Dili ko manakit og tao kay dugay pud kong nagsilbi nga nahibaw ko nga inyo kong gisuportohan (During my term you can approach me anytime. I will not harm you because I have served for so long and I know that you supported me)," he added.

President Duterte earlier expressed doubt that the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) can be revived.

Talking to the enemies of the state was one of the pillars of Duterte's campaign during the election season last 2016.

Duterte had started talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF but scrapped the same in November last year, citing the rebels' insincerity to the formal negotiations and for breaching their own unilateral ceasefire.

In March this year, Duterte announced that he was willing to give the peace talks one last chance but said that it had to be done in the country.

But even after assuring CPP founder Jose Maria Sison's safety, the communist leader thumbed down Duterte's condition. ↵

24



DU30 to Reds: I don't want to kill you

"I'll kiss you," said President Rodrigo Duterte, referring to the communist rebels, notably the female rebel fighters (Amazon).

In fact, after calling for the neutralization of the Reds, the Chief Executive has softened his stance on the communist rebels, even crediting them with helping him win the presidency.

The President said that he would not be in his position right now if not for the people of Davao including the New People's Army (NPA).

(I would not be here in this position right now if not for the people of Davao, including the NPA.)

"Wala man koy away ninyo. Dili pud ko gusto mopatay ninyo. Amigo man gyud ta," he said.

(I don't want to fight with you. I also don't want to kill you. We are friends.)

The New People's Army (NPA) is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The President, through an executive proclamation, declared them as a terror group in December 2017.

Duterte on Friday said the government would give

housing and job opportunities to rebels who would lay down their arms.

"Kamong mga 'amazona', maayo pa moari mo diri. Maggakos ta ninyo. Hagkan tamo," he said.

(Female rebels, you're better off here. We'll hug each other. I'll kiss you.)

In March 2018, Duterte said that female rebel fighters should not bear children because they "multiply the problem."

He was also criticized by women and human rights groups over his remarks about shooting the "Amazonas" in their genitals.

But in his latest speech, Duterte said he is resigned to the fact that the rebels would never go away.

"Mamatay lang gihapon ko, naa ang NPA. Mamatay gihapon si Joma Sison, naa ang NPA," he said.

(When I die, the NPA will still be here. When Joma Sison dies, the NPA will still be here.)

Talks between the government and the communist rebels broke down in July 2017 after the government cited the NPA's continued attacks against state troops despite ongoing negotiations.

3 EMontano

Duterte sa NPA: I don't want to kill you

NI ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

Muling ipinahayag ni Pangulong Duterte ang kanyang hangarin na makamit ang kapayapaan sa bansa sa paghikayat niya sa mga miyembro ng New People's Army (NPA) na sumuko

dahil ayaw niyang patayin ang mga ito.

Ito ang ipinahayag ng Pangulo sa kanyang talumpati sa Davao City kung saan muli niyang sinabi na pagkakalooban ng pangkabuhayan ang mga miyembro ng NPA na susuko sa gobyerno, nitong

Biyernes.

"Listen, NPAs. I'm not fighting with you and I don't want to kill you, but I don't know about you. But we are really friends," pahayag ni Duterte.

"Your underground movement will not amount to anything. But

I am ready to accept you if you surrender. Bring your firearms, give it to me, and I will give you a house and a job," dagdag ni Duterte.

Sinabi rin ng Pangulo na walang mapapala ang NPA sa pagpatay sa kanya, sinabing mas makabubuti kung sumuko na lamang ang mga

ito.

"What will you get from it? You NPAs. What? You're going to kill me? O the next day what will happen? What will happen to the Philippines? You Amazonas are better off coming here. I'll hug and kiss you," anyya. 3

21

A1

Duterte urges NPA anew to surrender

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has made a fresh call to communist rebels to surrender, saying he wanted peace in the country and did not want any more bloodshed.

Duterte made the statement in remarks in Davao City on Friday, reiterating his willingness to offer jobs and houses to member of the New People's Army (NPA), who will submit themselves to authorities and lay down their arms.

"Listen, NPAs. I'm not fighting with you and I don't want to kill you, but I don't know about you. But we are really friends," Duterte said in the Visayan language.

"Your underground movement will

> NPA A2

27

Duterte urges NPA

not amount to anything. But I am ready to accept you if you surrender. Bring your firearms, give it to me, and I will give you a house and a job," he added.

The President said he wanted to return the favor to communist rebels in his home city of Davao who helped him win the presidency in 2016.

"I will not be where I am today without the help of the people of Davao and the NPA. I'm thankful for that. And because you helped me, I am asking you to also help me find a way for all of us to live. Not necessarily rich but..." Duterte said.

"During my term you can approach me anytime. I will not harm you because I have served for so long and I know that you supported me," he added.

The President made the fresh offer even after he expressed confidence that the communist insurgency would be over by next year.

The NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The President, through a proclamation, declared them a terror group in December 2017.

Duterte, a self-described left-leaning leader, told the NPA rebels they would get nothing from killing him, adding it would be better for them to just return to the fold of the law.

"What will you get from it? You NPAs. What? You're going to kill me? O the next day what will happen? What will happen to the Philippines? You *amazonas* (women fighters) are better off coming here. I'll hug and kiss you," he said.

Corruption, lawlessness

The President also said the country would never improve if corruption continued to exist and if law and order was not observed.

"I already told you — and remember this because I won't last long here on earth — that if there is no law and order or peace here in the Philippines and corruption is still rampant, our country will never prosper," he said.

Hopes were high that the communist insurgency in the Philippines, one of the longest-running in Asia, would be over under Duterte.

Duterte said he had leftist leanings, having been mentored by CPP leader Jose Maria "Joma" Sison.

But ties between Duterte and the Left soured amid continuous fighting between government troops and communist rebels.

Duterte had also dismissed the possibility of forging a coalition government with the communists, which he said was the goal of the communist movement which had been bent on toppling the government.

Peace talks were supposed to resume in late June this year, but the government decided to postpone it and opted to conduct more consultations with stakeholders.

The government also sought to just hold "localized peace talks" with communist rebels, a setup rejected by the communist group.

'Talk to LGUs'

On Friday, Duterte reiterated that he and Sison "will no longer talk," but urged "other communists" to talk peace with local government officials.

"But we will find a way because life is not a revolution. It will evolve by itself like a flower that will bloom on its own," he added.

Last week, Malacañang said President Duterte remained open to negotiating with the rebels, in reaction to a *The Manila Times* exclusive interview with Sison in the Netherlands.

In the interview with *The Times* Chairman Emeritus Dante Ang Sison accused members of the Cabinet security cluster of swaying Duterte into suspending the peace talks in favor of a "military solution."

The military however said Sison was lying, and explained that peace negotiations were terminated because of rampant recruitment and extortion by the NPA, as well as the need to review previous and proposed agreements and hold consultations with the public.

Rody renews NPA surrender call

President Duterte renewed his desire for peace in the country as he urged members of the New People's Army anew to surrender as he does not want to kill them.

Duterte, in a speech in Davao City Friday, reiterated that he will give livelihood to NPA members who will surrender to the government.

"Pami, paminaw ra mong NPA. Wala man ko'y away ninyo. Di, di ko gusto mupatay pud ninyo. Ambot og kamo.

Kay amigo man gyud ta," Duterte said.

"Kanang inyong kalihukan, wala na gyud na. Pero andam ko mudawat ninyo, musurrender lang mo, dad-a in-yong armas, ihatag kanako, tagaan ta mo og lugar ug balay ug trabaho," he added.

Duterte said that the NPA will get nothing from killing him, saying it would be better for them to just return to the fold of the law.

"Unsa ma'y madawat ninyo ana?

Kamong mga NPA. What? Patyon ko ninyo? O pagka ugma unsa man mahitabo? Unsa'y mahitabo sa Pilipinas? Kamong mga Amazona, mas maayo pang muanhi mo ngari, mag-gakos ta, hagkan ta pa mo," he said.

"Karong panahuna nako makaduol mo basig unsang orasa. Dili ko manakit og tao kay dugay pud kong nagsilbi nga nahibaw ko nga inyo kong gisupartohan," he added. (Argyll Geducos) 2

7 NPA rebs yield in CV

By **ZAIDA DELOS REYES**

SEVEN members of New Peoples Army (NPA) surrendered to government forces and turned over firearms, war materials and voluminous documents.

This was confirmed by 1Lt Darwin Gapay.

Gapay identified those who surrendered as alias Bert, member of the Yunit Propaganda platoon and alias Bryan of Sentro de Grahidad both of Guerilla Front 25 of sub-regional committee, Southern Mindanao Regional Committee.

The two surrendered to

Lt. Col. Palmer M. Parungao, Commander of the Battalion last Monday.

Bert and Bryan surrendered one improvised explosive device (IED), improvised 22 caliber long rifle, books, publications, notebooks, reference materials, placards and other documents of intelligence value.

Other war materiel given up by the two were IED blasting paraphernalia, 12 clips for garand rifle, WACOM V105 radio and one caliber 40 mm magazine.

Alias Dats, a former Komiteng Rebolusyonaryo sa Munisipalidad chairman facilitated the surrender of a political guide and organizer

of the Guerilla Front 25 identified as @Yummyboy.

They submitted themselves to the Commandant of the Battalion 1Lt Joy Maunahan.

They turned over one carbine rifle, magazines of .30 caliber rounds and ammunition.

On Friday, three political leaders of the dismantled Compostela Municipal Revolutionary Committee surrendered to Maj Ricky Dioneda bringing along one dual purpose IED, a blasting cap, one caliber 38 revolver, one Uzi 9mm pistol, one caliber 357 revolver, several ammunition and documents used in propa-

ganda and demonstrations.

One of those who surrendered revealed the cache of carbine rifles that recovered by government forces led by Dioneda.

On Saturday morning, alias RM, a member of Guerilla Front 15, sub-regional committee, Southern Mindanao Regional Committee, who was tasked by the communist terrorist group's higher organ to operate in Luzon from April 2015 as squad leader, with his caliber 45 pistol loaded with a magazine of ammunition surrendered to Lt. Col. Palmer M. Parungao, Battalion Commander of the 66th Infantry Battalion. 2

Bangsamoro plebiscite: Voters to answer up to 12 questions

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

Some voters who will participate in the plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) may have to answer up to 12 questions.

Under Commission on Elections (Comelec) Resolution 10425 issued on Sept. 26, voters in areas being considered for inclusion in the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) will have to answer different sets of questions.

There will be two questions for voters in Basilan, one of

which is if they are in favor of the inclusion of Isabela City in the BARMM.

In Midsayap, North Cotabato, voters will have to answer up to 12 questions.

Voters in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) will be asked only if they are in favor of the approval of Republic Act 11054

or the BOL.

Voters in other areas will have to answer two to 10 questions.

Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said this explains the various sizes of the ballots to be used in the plebiscite.

Jimenez said the poll body would conduct a simulation of the plebiscite to give them an idea how things will be.

"It's not a simple yes or no. We need to simulate to see how usable those ballots are," he said.

The plebiscite is set on Jan.

21 next year.

The plebiscite period is from Dec. 7 to Feb. 5 while the campaign period is from Dec. 7 to Jan. 19.

Aside from Maguindanao, Basilan, Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi, which compose the ARMM, six towns in Lanao del Norte - Balo-i, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan and Tangkal - and 39 barangays in Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Picgawayan and Pikit in North Cotabato will comprise the proposed BARMM.

3 Abus arrested in Sulu

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Three Abu Sayyaf bandits were arrested after an encounter with soldiers in Barangay Maligay, Patikul, Sulu on Thursday.

Gafur Albani Absari, Medzfar Mangabong and Madjid Mangabon were turned over to the 501st Infantry Brigade for disposition and filing of charges, Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) spokesman, said.

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Westmincom chief, said there is no letup in the offensives against Abu Sayyaf bandits by personnel of the Joint Task Force Sulu.

Dela Vega said the operations also aim to rescue two foreigners and eight Filipino captives. **R - Roel Pareño**

21

October 2018

Page:

17

3 Abus apprehended in Sulu

By **NONOY E LACSON**

ZAMBOANGA CITY - Government troops captured three Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) members in an encounter in Barangay Maligay, Patikul, Sulu last Thursday morning.

The military identified them as Gafur Albani Absari, Medzfar Mangabong, and Madjid Mangabong.

They were apprehended by troops of the Fifth Scout Ranger Battalion.

The three ASG fighters have been turned over to the 501st Brigade for

proper disposition and filing of charges in coordination with the Sulu Provincial Police Office.

"My congratulations to the troops of the Joint Task Force Sulu, headed by Brig Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo for the aggressive measures taken in order to ensure that criminals will never be free to roam in the province," said Lt. Gen. Arnel B. Dela Vega, West-MinCom Commander.

TROOPS CAPTURE THREE ASG BANDITS

GOVERNMENT troops have captured three Abu Sayyaf Group bandits as military operations continue in the hinterlands of Sulu province, an official said Saturday.

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Western Mindanao Command chief, said the three were captured following a clash with the Army's 5th Scout Ranger Battalion in Barangay Maligay, Patikul, Sulu at about 9:40 a.m. Thursday.

Dela Vega identified the captured ASG bandits as Gafur Albani Absari, Medzfar Mangkabong, and Madjid Mangkabong.

The three were turned over to the Army's 501st Infantry Brigade for proper disposition and filing of charges in coordination with the Sulu Provincial Police Office.

"My congratulations to the troops of the Joint Task Force Sulu, headed by Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo for the aggressive measures taken in order to ensure that criminals will never be free to roam in the province [of Sulu]," he said.

The military's operations in Sulu's hinterlands aim to rescue the 10 remaining ASG hostages, consisting of two foreigners—a Dutch and a Vietnamese—and eight Filipinos.

Meanwhile, three more members of the Islamic State-inspired Maute group have surrendered in Lanao del Sur, the military reported Saturday.

According to Major Gen. Roseller Murillo, commander of the Army's 1st Infantry Division, the three surrendered to troops of the 49th Infantry Battalion in Masiu, Lanao del Sur last Thursday.

Murillo said they turned over one rocket-propelled grenade launcher, a caliber .45 pistol and several rounds of ammunition.

He said the three, whose identities were withheld, were placed under debriefing.

Murillo said they surrendered to Lt. Col Edgar Villanueva, commander of the Army's 49th Infantry Battalion, through the efforts of Councilor Hamil Gubar, Liga ng mga Barangay president of Masiu, and Maliksaif Masjid, Afgani Deputy Base commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. PNA

13

3 Abu Sayyaf, timbog

ZAMBOANGA CITY

Nasakot ng militar ang umano'y tailong tauhan ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa naganap na sagupaan sa Barangay Maligay, Patikul, Sulu, kamakailan.

Sa datos ng Joint Task Force Sulu, kinilala ang mga naaresto na sina Gafur Albani Absari, Medzfar Mangabong, at Madjid Mangabong.

Dinakip ang mga ito ng 5th Scout Ranger Battalion.

Kaagad namang inilipat ang tatlo sa kustodiya ng 501st Infantry Brigade (IB) habang inihahanda ang kaso laban sa mga ito.

"My congratulations to the troops of the Joint Task Force Sulu, headed by Brigadier General Divino Rey Pabayo for the aggressive measures taken in order to ensure that criminals will never be free to roam in the province," pahayag ni Lieutenant General Arnel Dela Vega, ng Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom) commander.

5
Nonoy E. Lacson

3 Abu Sayyaf timbog sa engkuwentro

Umiskor ang mga sundalo nang masakote ang tatlong miyembro ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) matapos ang engkuwentro nang makomer sa isinagawang opensibe ng tropang gobyerno sa Brgy. Maligay, Patikul, Sulu kamakalawa ng umaga.

Kinilala ni AFP Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom) Spokesman Lt. Col. Gerry

Besana ang mga bandido na sina Gatut Albani Absari, Medzfar Mangabong at Madjid Mangabong.

Bandang alas-9:40 ng umaga nang masukol ng mga elemento ng 5th Scout Ranger Battalion ang tatlong miyembro ng ASG sa magubat na bahagi ng nasabing lugar.

Nauna rito, nakasagupa ng tropa ng militar ang grupo ng mga bandido na tumagal ng ilang minuto at nakomer ang

tatlo habang papatakas.

Nabatid na nagsasagawa ng Focused Military Operations (FMO) ang mga sundalo upang masagip ang nalalabipang mga hostages nang kanilang masabat ang ekstremistang grupo na nauwi sa bakbakan.

Nasa kustodya na ng 501st Infantry Brigade ng Phil Army ang tatlong ASG member para sa tactical interrogation. *(Joy Cantos)*

3 Maute men surrender in Lanao Sur

ZAMBOANGA CITY

– Three Maute militants surrendered in Masiu, Lanao del Sur on Thursday, an official said yesterday.

Capt. Clint Antipala, acting chief of the First Army Division, said the militants, whose identities were withheld for security reasons, surrendered to Lt. Col. Edgar Villanueva of the 49th Infantry Battalion.

Antipala said the surrender was facilitated by Alonto Gubar, Association of Barangay Council president; barangay chairman Hamil Gubar, and Maliksair Masjida Afgani, deputy base commander of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Antipala said the surrenderees turned over a

rocket propelled grenade, a caliber .45 pistol and various types of ammunition.

Villanueva said the arrested militants were recruited at the height of the siege in Marawi last year, but were not deployed in the main battle area.

Villanueva said one of the surrenderees was among those who clashed with soldiers in Pagawayan also in

Lanao del Sur last June.

Maj. Gen. Roseller Murillo of the Joint Task Force ZamPeLan commended local leaders, the MILF and soldiers for the surrender of the militants.

Last week, seven Maute men surrendered in Pagawayan. They turned over three M1 Garand rifles, a carbine, four caliber .45 pistols and a 9 mm.

– Roel Pareño

21

A7

3 pro-IS fighters yield in Lanao del Sur

ZAMBOANGA CITY: The Philippine Army said it has in its custody three pro-Islamic State (IS) bandits who surrendered to village officials in Lanao del Sur.

Capt. Clint Antipala, spokesman for the 1st Infantry Division (1stID), said the trio surrendered on Thursday in Masiu town and were taken into custody by Lt. Col. Edgar Villanueva, commander of the 49th Infantry Battalion (49IB). He said the bandits, who were members of the Maute Group, also yielded an anti-tank rocket launcher and a .45-caliber pistol.

Antipala said village leaders led by Alonto Gubar, Hamil Gubar and Maliksaif Masjida helped in the peaceful surrender. The custodial debriefing of

the trio is still ongoing," he said without identifying the pro-IS fighters, but sources told *The Manila Times* that one of them was Moamar Mocsir.

Villanueva also said that one of the captured was involved in fierce clashes with troops in Pagayawan town in June this year. "They were recruited during the Marawi siege last year, however, they were not able to penetrate the main battle area due to relentless security efforts and checkpoints around the lake."

A7
Maj. Gen. Roseller Murillo, the division commander, welcomed the surrender of the bandits and lauded those who helped convince them to return to the fold of law.

AL JACINTO

38

21

October 2018



Page: 13

3 pro-ISIS fighters yield in Lanao

THREE remnants of the ISIS-inspired Maute Terror Group on Thursday surrendered to government forces in Lanao del Sur.

Philippine Army's 1st Infantry Division spokesman Capt. Clint Antipala said the identities of the surrenderers were not disclosed for security reason.

Antipala said the three former terrorists yielded to the Joint Task Force Lanao in Masiu Lanao del Sur.

The three also turned over one rocket-propelled grenade, a cal. 45 pistol, some magazines and ammunition.

13

Zaida delos Reyes

34

21

October 2018



Page: 11

3 more Maute men yield

Three more members of the Islamic State-inspired Maute Group surrendered Thursday in Masiu, Lanao del Sur, the military reported yesterday.

Major Gen. Roseller Murillo, commander of the Army 1st Infantry Division, said they surrendered to troops of the 49th Infantry Battalion.

Murillo said they turned over one rocket-propelled grenade

launcher, a caliber .45 pistol, and several rounds of ammunition. He said the three, whose identities were withheld, were placed under debriefing.

Murillo said they surrendered to Lt. Col. Edgar Villanueva, commander of the Army 49th IB, through the efforts of Councilor Hamil Gubar, Liga ng mga Barangay president of Masiu, and Maliksaif Masjida, Afgani

deputy base commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

"They were recruited during the Marawi siege. However, they were not able to insert in the main battle area due to the relentless security efforts and checkpoints around Lanao Lake," Villanueva said. "One of them was involved in the Pagayawan clash last June," he added.

Murillo commended the troops, local officials, and the peace-inclined MILF member that facilitated the surrender of the three Maute remnants.

"We will continuously collaborate with different stakeholders and concerned citizens to encourage other Maute ISIS remnants to surrender and go back to mainstream society," he said. **(Bonita L. Ermac and PNA)**

40

3 Maute group men give up

THREE remnants of the ISIS inspired Maute Terror Group surrendered to government forces the other day in Lanao del Sur.

This was confirmed by Captain Clint Antipala, spokesman of Philippine Army's 1st Infantry Division.

Identities of those who surrendered were not disclosed for security reason.

Antipala said the three former terrorists surrendered to Joint Task Force Ranao in Masiu Lanao del Sur on Thursday.

He said they yielded to Lt. Col. Edgar Villanueva, 49th Infantry Battalion Commander, thru the efforts of Association of Barangay Captains (ABC) President Alonto Gubar, Bgy. Chairman Hamil Gubar of Sawir, Masiu and Maliksaif Masjid.

The three also surrendered one RPG, one caliber 45 pistol, magazines and ammunition.

The three, claimed they were recruited at the height of the Marawi siege.

12 Zaida Delos Reyes

SE ASIA BOOSTS FIGHT VS 'REAL, PRESENT' THREAT

SOUTHEAST Asian nations seeking to combat the threat of militancy have agreed to share intelligence, Singapore's defence minister said Saturday, as he warned of a "real and present" danger to the region.

More than a year after Islamic State-linked fighters seized the southern Philippine city of Marawi, the terrorist threat is as potent as ever, said Ng Eng Hen after hosting a meeting of defence ministers.

"Unfortunately even as the situation in Iraq and Syria improves, we are expecting more foreign fighters to come this way," he added.

Ng said all 18 ministers at the gathering in Singapore, from Southeast Asia and key partners outside the region, viewed "terrorism as a real and present threat."

The Southeast Asian delegates adopted an information-sharing platform called "Our Eyes" that will be used to share real-time intelligence that can immediately be acted upon, the minister added.

This came after the countries realised that they had underestimated the threat before the attack on Marawi, where the rebuilding effort could cost around \$1 billion, he said.

Proposed by Indonesia, the platform is based on an intelligence-sharing alliance set up by the United States, Britain and three other countries after World War II to monitor the former Soviet Union.

The weekend security meeting was attended by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis and their counterparts from countries including China, Australia, India and Russia.

In last year's assault on Marawi, hundreds of armed militants backed by foreign IS fighters attacked and took control of the largely Muslim city in a bid to establish a base in Southeast Asia.

Philippine troops, supported by sophisticated surveillance planes from the United States, dislodged the militants after five months of heavy fighting that left more than 1,000 people dead and the city in ruins.

Militants from other Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia, were involved in the fighting. AFP

Those at the meeting "felt that this must never happen again to any city within ASEAN," Ng said. AFP

BABE'S EYE VIEW

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ambassador B. ROMUALDEZ

AFP budget: The biggest ever

In the first few months after President Duterte took office, he promised our soldiers that he will modernize our Armed Forces and give them his full support.

AFP Vice Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Salvador Mison Jr. was in Washington, D.C. for the Chiefs of Defense Conference on countering violent extremist organizations hosted by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford. The conference gathered representatives from 83 countries including US combatant commanders as well as counter-terrorism operations commanders who engaged in a discussion on how to counter violent extremism all over the world. Gen. Dunford told his global counterparts "there is no room for complacency." The defense chiefs shared information, intelligence and best practices that would help them craft a more comprehensive solution to the problem of terrorism, with discussions also made on the fight in Afghanistan, the Sulu Sea and Southeast Asia.



General Mison was at the Philippine embassy in Washington with AFP Civil Relations Service Commander Maj. Gen. Bienvenido Datuin Jr. The generals presented me with a copy of "Marawi and Beyond: The Joint Task Force Marawi Story" which is actually a 28-volume series that tells of the heroism and sacrifices not only of the heroes of Marawi – but also the resilience, courage and unity shown by Filipinos in the face of terror.

I had a very good discussion with General Mison regarding the ongoing modernization program of the AFP. Passed in 2012, Republic Act 10349 or the Revised AFP Modernization Act amended RA 7898 – the "original" AFP Modernization Act of 1995 that set a 15-year period to upgrade and modernize the capability of the AFP with an initial budget of P50 billion for the first five years. However, the law expired in 2010 with not much modernization done especially in the purchase of equipment, aircraft and other assets, some of which date back to World War II.

The revised 15-year modernization program is divided into three phases known as "horizons": Horizon 1 covered 2013-2017, Horizon 2 runs from 2018 to 2022 and has a budget of P300 billion, while Horizon 3 is from 2023 to 2028.

General Mison told me he has been in the service for over three decades and is up for retirement next year

– but he has never seen the unprecedented support given by President Duterte for the AFP's modernization program compared to the last 15 years. During the first two years alone of the current administration, P80 billion was already allocated for modernization compared to the P60 billion in the previous 15 years.

The AFP has an extensive shopping list, from individual weapons to ground mobility equipment, radars, multirole fighters, attack and combat utility choppers, assault boats, light tanks, multiple rocket launchers. Aside from big-ticket items, priority items intended for the Navy and the Air Force would be tactical and operational level unmanned aerial vehicles, night vision goggles, sniper rifles and tactical radios, among others.

President Duterte has been true to his word in pursuing the AFP modernization program to enhance the capability of our military in dealing with internal security challenges and upgrade our external defense capacity. Certainly, modernization provides the space for the Philippines and the United States to cooperate further because US military equipment continues to form the backbone of the Philippine government's modernization program.

But while the AFP is eager to pursue further cooperation with the US on this aspect and prefers American-made hardware, purchase decisions will depend on quality, cost and the speed of delivery. Under US law, the sale of US defense equipment and technology has to pass through the State Department – and there have been times when sales and deliveries were canceled due to sometimes unnecessary opposition from US legislators.

This is where President Duterte's independent foreign policy comes into play, because if the US cannot supply the needs of the AFP, then we have no choice but to look for other sources for key line items from other countries like Israel and South Korea. Beefing up our military will allow us to become a significant player in the Indo-Pacific region and in the fight against violent extremism.

I'm pleased to note that global private companies have also indicated their support for the AFP's modernization program with some willing to set up shop in the country – which will create jobs and be good for the economy. One of them is Saab whose JAS39 Gripen fighter is preferred by Philippine Air Force officials because it is easy to operate and maintain. Airbus Defence is also interested to participate in the AFP modernization program, saying they have a portfolio that could fit the future requirements of the Philippines for air transport and maritime security.

Private defense contractors are partnering with local manufacturers, like United Defense Manufacturing Corp. teaming up with South Korean firearms manufacturer S&T Motiv, and Armscor Global whose deal with Israeli weapons manufacturer EMTAN is seen to help the Philippines develop its own defense industry and make it less dependent on other countries for firearms and ammunition.

President Trump himself has expressed on many occasions that he envisions a world of strong, sovereign and independent nations – which falls in line with President Duterte's vision of a sovereign Philippines that can pursue relationships with other nations, and where alliances with other nations will not be one of dependency but of partnership borne of mutual respect.

As I told our friends time and again, we are not here in Washington, D.C. putting out our hand palm up to beg for aid – but extending a handshake as a commitment of our friendship.

49

Ownership immaterial in case of illegal possession of firearm

Dear PAO,

I was aboard a public utility bus when the police flagged it down as they were conducting a check point. They requested all male passengers to get off the bus while the inspection was going on. One policeman noticed a bag on my seat and lifted it. He found it to be heavy for its size, so he asked the bus conductor who the owner was. The conductor pointed at me; hence, I was requested to open the bag. Upon opening, the police saw a pistol with live ammunition inside the bag. I denied ownership of the firearm.

However, I was immediately placed under arrest because I was not able to present any license. Is there a violation of my right to privacy in this case?

Brant

Dear Brant,

For your information, you are

deemed to have violated Section 28 (a), Article V of Republic Act 10591, otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act," which states that:

"The unlawful acquisition, possession of firearms and ammunition shall be penalized as follows:

(a) The penalty of prison may or in its medium period shall be imposed upon any person who shall unlawfully acquire or possess a small arm;

xxxx

xxxx

xxxx

xxxx"

Ownership of the firearm is immaterial in the prosecution of the offense. In the case of *Jacaban vs People of the Philippines* (GR 184355, March 23, 2015), the Supreme Court, through Associate Justice Diosdado Peralta, stated:



DEAR PAO
PERSIDA
ACOSTA

"The essential elements in the prosecution for the crime of illegal possession of firearms and ammunitions are: (1) the existence of subject firearm; and, (2) the fact that the accused who possessed or owned the same does not have the corresponding license for it. The unvarying rule is that ownership is not an essential element of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition. What the law requires is merely possession, which includes not only actual physical possession, but also constructive possession or the subjection of the thing to one's control and management."

There is also no violation of your right to privacy. Please be guided by the decision of the court entitled *Saluday vs People of the Philippines* (GR 215305, April 3, 2018), where the Supreme Court, through Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, stated:

"Concededly, a bus, a hotel and beach resort, and a shopping mall are all private property whose owners have every right to exclude anyone from entering. At the same time, however, because these private premises are accessible to the public, the State, much like the owner, can impose non-intrusive security measures and filter those going in. The only difference in the imposition of security measures by an owner and the State is, the former emanates from the attributes of ownership under Article 429 of the Civil Code, while the latter is from the exercise of police power for the promotion of public safety.

Necessarily, a person's expectation of privacy is diminished whenever he or she enters private premises that are accessible to the public.

In view of the foregoing, the bus inspection conducted by Task Force Davao at a military checkpoint constitutes a reasonable search. Bus No. 66 of Davao Metro Shuttle was a vehicle of public transportation where passengers have a reduced expectation of privacy. Further, SCAA Bucu merely lifted petitioner's bag. This visual and minimally intrusive inspection was even less than the standard x-ray and physical inspections done at the airport and seaport terminals where passengers may further be required to open their bags and luggages (*sic*). Considering the reasonableness of the bus search, Section 2, Article III of the Constitution finds no application, thereby precluding the necessity

for a warrant."

Applying the decision cited above to your situation, the search conducted by the police on the bus was a reasonable search even if they did not have search warrant. A passenger in a public transportation has a reduced expectation of privacy and the search is an exercise of police power to promote public safety.

We find it necessary to mention that this opinion is solely based on the facts you have narrated and our appreciation of the same. Thus, the opinion may vary when the facts are changed or further elaborated. We hope that we were able to enlighten you on the matter. **A3**

Editor's note: Dear PAO is a daily column of the Public Attorney's Office. Questions for Chief Acosta may be sent to dearpao@manila-times.net

The man who said, 'You shall not kill'

HE was born the son of poor farm workers and grew up hungry and deprived. And, like the millions of poor, did not know the root causes of his rural poverty. The poor struggle to overcome those sufferings and hardships as they bury the pain within them and strive to forget and survive and find a better world for themselves and their children.

The corrupt leaders of family dynasties are the oppressors of the poor. They have always lived in sumptuous luxury and ignore the deprivations of the poor. The poor are the wretched of the earth. Oscar Romero was one of them. His parents saw the only chance for him to have an education and escape poverty was to send him to the seminary to be a priest in El Salvador. This was what Oscar Romero said about himself.

"I was born into a poor family. I've suffered hunger. I know what it's like to work from the time you're a little kid ... When I went to the seminary and started my studies, and they sent me to finish studying here in Rome, I spent years and years absorbed in my books, and I started to forget where I came from. I started creating another world. When I went back to El Salvador, they made me the bishop's secretary in San Miguel. I was a parish priest there for 23 years, but I was still buried in paperwork..."

As secretary to the bishop, he never met poor people or saw the reality of life in the cities or country-



REFLECTIONS

FR. SHAY CULLEN, SSC

side. He had suppressed the childhood memories of pain and hunger. He became an archconservative. He was considered a safe traditional priest who would disturb no one, and he was recommended by the Papal Nuncio to be made a bishop. When he was assigned as bishop to the rural diocese of Santiago de Maria he was exposed to the world of poverty and military and police oppression of the poor.

"...Then they sent me to Santiago de Maria, and I ran into extreme poverty again. Those children that were dying just because of the water they were drinking, those campesinos killing themselves in the harvests..." he said.

There was a massacre of peasant farmers in the village of Tres Calles that truly shocked him. He protested the killings to the president in a letter, who at the time was Col. Arturo Molina, who headed a military dictatorship. He lives on as a mass killer in historical disgrace and shame.

Bishop Romero wrote to the president: "...the way in which a "security force" had wrongfully acted, as if it had the right to mistreat and kill. ... [I went there] to console the families that had been attacked... by a squad of National Guardsmen. On the way to their homes,

I stopped to pray by the body of a still-unburied victim who had been shot in the head. His wife and mother were beside him, weeping. When I arrived at the houses that had been invaded by the armed forces, it broke my heart to hear the bitter laments of the widows and orphans who, sobbing inconsolably, told me about the attack."

It was then that his conscience and awareness of social truth began to slowly awaken. He came back to the capital and was still considered a very conservative bishop and was chosen to be elevated as archbishop of El Salvador. Most of the progressive socially committed clergy and Catholics were shocked and disgusted. They were unaware that Archbishop Romero was growing in knowledge of the social teachings of the gospel. He was evolving as he said, and he was beginning to apply it practically. He reconciled with the socially progressive Jesuit priests who he had previously criticized and asked them to start a diocesan radio program on human rights. He was realizing the extent of the human rights violations by the military that were oppressing the poor.

When his best friend father, Fr. Rutilio Grande, was brutally murdered by the military, it propelled him to speak out all the more forcefully against the killing of the poor and the defenseless. His conversion was complete. He had changed from a conservative to an activist archbishop. He spoke to protect the priests and religions and church lay

workers who were falsely branded and marked as communists and subversives plotting to overthrow the government. Several priests and sisters were murdered, which was a warning and threat to all the people and a ploy to justify the militarization of the country and maintain the rule of the elites and landlords.

Archbishop Oscar Romero was now the voice of the voiceless and he preached justice, spoke out against murder, and killing, taught the sacredness of life and the rights of the people. He stood against the aggression, violence, and murder that were all around El Salvador. He received death threats but ignored them. In one powerful homily that was broadcast, he told the police and soldiers they should not obey unjust orders to kill.

"Before an order to kill that a man may give, God's law must prevail: Thou shalt not kill! No soldier is obliged to obey an order contrary to the law of God. ... It is time to obey your consciences rather than the orders of sin. In the name of God, therefore, and in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!"

Two days later when he was celebrating Holy Mass, an assassin shot him dead as he held up the sacred cup. He died for his faith, and last week Pope Francis declared him a martyr and a saint.

21