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27 October 2018

Saturday



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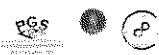
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'Welcome to a better Boracay'

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

World-renowned Boracay island yesterday reopened its doors to local and foreign tourists, delighting them with a rehabilitated beachfront that looked like what people fell in love with 30 years ago.

"As we welcome a better Boracay, the Department of Tourism (DOT) urges everyone to be responsible tourists. It is the key to the preservation of this national treasure," said Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat.

The reopening marks the end of the first phase of the island's two-year rehabilitation program after President Duterte ordered a total shutdown of the tourist attraction that he described as a

"cesspool" six months ago.

Puyat said the effort to clean up Boracay continues to gain interest from the international community as a model for sustainable tourism, adding that several international news organizations featured the Philippines as a country that is taking steps to protect its environment.

"Everybody is saying they are amazed by the Philippines. In fact, other countries are visiting us. We are really a model

for sustainable tourism.. (Boracay's rehabilitation) is just the beginning. We want all major tourism destinations to practice sustainable tourism," Puyat was quoted as saying in a CNN International report.

As the Boracay Interagency Task Force (BIATF) officially

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welcomed tourists to the island yesterday, Puyat urged visitors to respect and observe local regulations to help protect and preserve the tourist destination.

It created an oath that calls on the island's tourists to act more responsibly and be part of the efforts to make a "better Boracay." The oath reads: "I hereby solemnly swear, as a visitor of Boracay island, that I will, to the best of my ability, help ensure its preservation and sustainable development, and follow/observe environmental laws and regulations."

Puyat warned of strict enforcement of existing guidelines and policies that include the ordinance prohibiting drinking of alcohol and smoking in public places and partying within the no-build zone easement. She added that sand castle making will be regulated and the use of kerosene lamps or open fires at the beach area will be prohibited.

"The Boracay experience is the ultimate lesson in balancing development and protecting the environment. The lessons learned here are not for Boracay alone but also for the other island destinations around our beautiful country," Puyat said.

The BIATF will also limit the number of tourists allowed on the island on any given day at only 19,215 guests, based on the carrying capacity recommendation of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

According to the carrying capacity study, the island and its swimming areas can only support 55,757 people per day - broken down into 36,542

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residents and workers and only 19,215 tourists.

Eduardo Año, Interior and Local Government officer-in-charge, said the task force is also studying the possibility of closing the island for one month every year, specifically during the southwest monsoon season, to allow the island to heal itself.

Puyat promised that the DOT would continue to accredit compliant accommodation establishments that pass the standards.

"More rooms will be available as we continue with Phases 2 and 3 of Boracay's massive rehabilitation. We are making sure the task force requirements are 100 percent complied with," Puyat said.

As of Thursday, only 157 Boracay accommodation establishments, with a total of 7,308 rooms, were cleared to operate.

The BIATF earlier urged the public to avoid transacting with establishments that have not yet secured the necessary clearances, permits and/or accreditation from the DOT, DENR and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

"We are also strongly advising non-compliant establishments to delete or put on hold all online promotions and related collaterals until compliance with government regulations shall have been accomplished. The actions of these non-compliant establishments in soliciting and/or accepting booking reservations (despite the lack of clearance to open) may be considered deceptive and may subject them to civil liability/suits," the BIATF warned.

Prior to yesterday's opening, the DOT facilitated the training of 2,100 tourism frontline workers as well as conducted training sessions and seminars for porters, receptionists and front office staff.

At least 100 policemen will also be required to go through the Tourist-Oriented Police for Community Order and Protection Awareness Training before being deployed to Boracay.

Director General Oscar Albayalde, Philippine National Police chief, said they would strictly enforce the laws and prevent the island from becoming a

venue for illegal activities, like the use of drugs.

The police doubled their force on the island - from 200 to 400 - with an augmentation force from the military and Philippine Coast Guard.

Training courses in community local guiding for Mabuhay hosts are also being rolled out.

Año swore in after yesterday's opening program Vice Mayor Abram Sualog as the acting mayor of Malay town in Aklan. Boracay island is part of Malay.

Mayor Ciceron Cawaling was a no-show at the program after the Office of the Ombudsman slapped him with a six-month preventive suspension last Oct. 23.

But Rowen Aguirre, executive assistant for Boracay affairs of Malay, questioned why only Cawaling was suspended when 17 were charged for neglect of duty, referring to the complaint the DILG filed last June 27. This neglect reportedly led to the island's degradation.

Also charged for gross neglect of duty, conduct unbecoming of a public officer, conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service and grave misconduct were Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores, Sualog and Jen Salsona, the Malay licensing officer.

Aside from those cases, Cawaling and several others were also accused of issuing permits to 20 establishments in Boracay from 2016 to 2018 without the requisite Fire Safety Inspection Certificate (FSIC) from the Bureau of Fire Protection.

"Even Gov. Miraflores and acting mayor Sualog were charged, why single him out? If they say that it was done for Mayor Cawaling not to influence the issuance of permits, they still had people who were charged but not suspended," he pointed out.

He added that Cawaling has been staying in Boracay and received the news calmly. Prior to the suspension, Aguirre said they received information that some people lobbied for the mayor's suspension.

"It was allegedly asked that the suspension order be handed down before the closure, if only to show that someone was held answerable for what happened," Aguirre claimed. - **Jennifer Rendon, Robertzon Ramirez, Emmanuel Tupas, Rhodina Villanueva, Paolo Romero**

DU30 TOLD: PROSECUTE, NOT PROMOTE, LAPENA

STORY BY MARLON RAMOS

Lawmakers say that by 'recycling' rather than punishing the customs chief for allowing 'shabu' to slip through the port of Manila during his watch, the President was rewarding incompetence and corruption. **A6**

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FROM A1

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

Opposition lawmakers rebuked President Duterte for promoting Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña to his Cabinet despite the alleged smuggling of billions of pesos worth of "shabu" (crystal meth) through the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

Months after insisting that no shabu had been concealed in four magnetic lifters that slipped through customs, Lapeña on Wednesday conceded that the equipment could have contained drugs, which the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) estimated to be about 1.6 tons and worth about P11 billion.

On Thursday, Mr. Duterte announced Lapeña's new assignment as the head of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda), a Cabinet post, a move that surprised the customs chief himself.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo on Friday said Mr. Duterte had long been thinking of Lapeña's appointment to Tesda and this was just "hastened ahead of schedule, because the President wants to spare him from intrigue because he is being relentlessly criticized."

ACT Teachers Rep. France Castro said Lapeña should face criminal charges for his failure to prevent the shabu shipment from entering the country and slipping through customs.

Akbayan Rep. Tom Villarin said Lapeña's new appointment shows the President's "musical chair policy" intended to make the public believe that the government was trying to stem corruption "but ultimately, nothing comes out of it."

"While his order is to instantly kill ordinary drug users, his aides and friends get second and third chances. They are even promoted," Villarin said.

Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, however, quickly came to the defense of Mr. Duterte, saying the "President knows what he's doing."

"Let me just say that I've been (a) President and I know more or less that the President has to consider so many things when he makes his decision. So I'm not going to be a part of the peanut gallery making comments on his actions," Arroyo told reporters in Pampanga.

Arroyo also supported Mr. Duterte's decision to replace Lapeña with another retired general, Rey Leonardo Guerrero, a former Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff.

"They are literally good soldiers," she said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Lapeña's appointment as Tesda head was "definitely a demotion in trust and confidence."

"It's a pity because save for the big shabu shipment that got away, apparently due to collusion between the drug syndicate and some low-level customs officials, he was doing a good job proven by consistently exceeding the bureau's target collections," Lacson said in a text message.

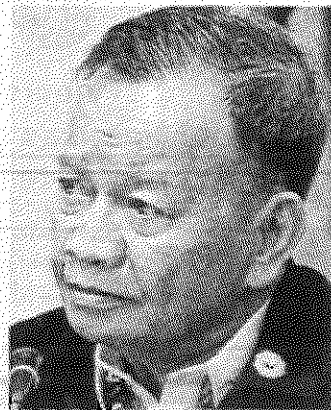
Motive questioned

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV questioned Mr. Duterte's motives for promoting Lapeña.

"If he's good and trusted, why remove him from Customs? Now, if he screwed up or was involved in drug smuggling, why promote him?" Trillanes said.

According to Trillanes, the only explanation is that the President was rewarding Lapeña's "loyalty and guarantee his silence and continued cooperation, much like what he did to (Nic-anor) Faeldon. Both ex-customs commissioners surely know the true masterminds behind those huge shabu shipments."

Sen. Francis Pangilinan believes that Lapeña's promotion casts doubts on the administration's sincerity in fighting corruption and illegal drugs.



Isidro Lapeña

"When incompetence or corruption go unpunished and those linked to irregularities are rewarded with other top-level posts, then both incompetence and corruption will just get worse," Pangilinan said.

Sen. Grace Poe said she was shocked by the President's decision.

'Shocking' speed

"I don't understand that. It may be true that Commissioner Lapeña was not aware of what was happening on the ground, but of course there is command responsibility. Now, I was shocked by the speed of his turnover," she told reporters in Tacloban City.

"What can he accomplish in Tesda? Maybe he has the skills, we don't know, but it is shocking," Poe said.

After announcing Lapeña's new assignment, Mr. Duterte defended his preference for retired military and police personnel to head some civilian agencies.

Civilians, according to the President, tend to ask questions and hold meetings that add to the bureaucratic red tape.

"I have nothing against the bureaucracy. But if you want something done and done fast, per your order, you get a military man," Mr. Duterte said on Thursday.

As a lawyer, he assured his

appointees that he would not give them illegal orders.

Several retired military and police officials are currently serving in high government positions.

They include retired Army chief Rolando Bautista, the new social welfare secretary; former Chief of Staff Roy Cimatu, the environment secretary; and Eduardo Año, another former military chief, who is interior secretary.

Retired Gen. Eduardo del Rosario is housing secretary and Task Force Bangon Marawi chair and another former general, Glorioso Miranda, is a board member of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority.

'Recycled'

The administration has also "recycled" several presidential appointees who had been fired or had resigned.

Among the more prominent ones is Faeldon, who resigned following the smuggling of P6.4 billion worth of shabu last year. He was named deputy administrator of the Office of Civil Defense last year and then Bureau of Corrections director this year.

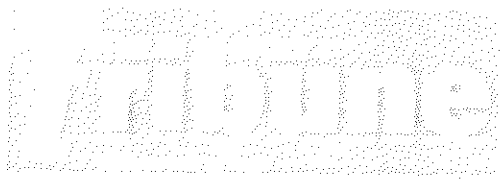
Another is Ernesto Abella, former presidential spokesperson, who is now a foreign undersecretary.

Tourism Undersecretary Jose Gabriel "Pompee" La Viña, was sacked from the Social Security System for alleged questionable activities.

Martin Difo lost his post as chair of Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority due to a leadership dispute but appointed interior undersecretary.

Manuel Serra Jr., fired from the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor for making too many foreign trips, is now a board member of the Philippine Coconut Authority. —

REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, DJ YAP, JOE GABIETA, PATRICIA ANN V. ROXAS, MAILA AGER AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ



Wang holds visit, in Davao City

By Mario J. Mallari

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will be in Davao City starting Sunday for his two-day official visit to the country to meet with senior officials of the government and to pave the way for Chinese President Xi Jinping's historic visit to the country next month.

Apart from his scheduled expanded bilateral **Turn to page 6**

Wang holds visit, in Davao City

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meeting with his counterpart Foreign Affairs Secretary Teddy Boy Locsin on Monday. Wang will also meet with the administration's economic managers.

According to an advisory issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) yesterday, Locsin and Wang will have a joint press conference after the bilateral meeting at the Marco Polo Hotel in Davao City.

Wang will also meet with the Duterte administration's "Build, Build, Build" team.

China has been very supportive of the Duterte administration's massive infrastructure efforts under "Build, Build, Build" program, particularly in the rehabilitation of the war-torn Marawi City.

Help in rehab efforts

Several Chinese construction companies have expressed interest in joining the reconstruction efforts in Marawi City, for instance.

Apart from the reconstruction projects, Manila and Beijing are also in the middle of discussion of the framework agreement on the planned joint exploration in the disputed West Philippine Sea.

Locsin and Wang will have a joint press conference after the bilateral meeting at the Marco Polo Hotel in Davao City.

Former Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano previously announced that the negotiations for the framework were looking good.

The official visit was postponed last month due to typhoon "Ompong." Wang was originally scheduled to be in Manila last 16 to 18 September.

Wang's visit was expected to produce an approved draft on the joint exploration in the South China Sea.

However, the trip was suspended after typhoon "Mangkut" tore through the

Philippines before hitting Hong Kong on the day of his trip.

Strengthened ties eyed

Xi will visit the country next month after his scheduled attendance at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Papua New Guinea.

The meeting between the two leaders will seek stronger economic ties between both countries, an official from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China said.

Economic and Commercial Counselor of the Chinese Embassy Jin Yuan said the two Asian nations are expected to further explore their bilateral relations with the visit of Xi.

"This year will be the exploration of our bilateral relations," Jin said, adding more Chinese investors are expected to come to the Philippines in the coming years.

He said the two governments are expected to sign a framework agreement on establishing Chinese industrial zones during the visit. Construction of industrial parks is expected to commence next year, he added.

"These industrial zones are not limited to one. That means Chinese government will encourage the interested Chinese companies to invest in industrial parks or industrial zones in the Philippines," he said.

Earlier, Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua had mentioned China will put up its first industrial park in the country which will be larger than the eight industrial parks in Southeast Asia.

"China and Philippines are very good friends. You have a strong, big market in China," Jin added.

Pompeo calls Locsin, reaffirms PH-US alliance

By Elmer N. Manuel

United States Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on Friday assured the Philippines of Washington's commitment to its long-standing alliance with Manila even as he congratulated newly designated Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on his appointment as the country's top diplomat.

"The Secretary reaffirmed the longstanding US-Philippines alliance and recognized the Philippines' important role in the Indo-Pacific region," the State Department said in a statement, adding that Pompeo spoke by phone with Locsin.

"Pompeo and Locsin also discussed ongoing efforts to address regional issues such as North Korea, the South China Sea and counterterrorism," it added.

Locsin, a former journalist, lawmaker and a lawyer, replaced Alan Peter Cayetano who is seeking a congressional seat in 2019.

He was the Philippines' Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York prior to his appointment to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The US State Department's move came amid President Rodrigo Duterte's foreign policy pivot towards China.

Duterte's "closeness" toward China and his harsh criticisms of the US have raised questions about the trajectory of the 67-year-old Mutual Defense

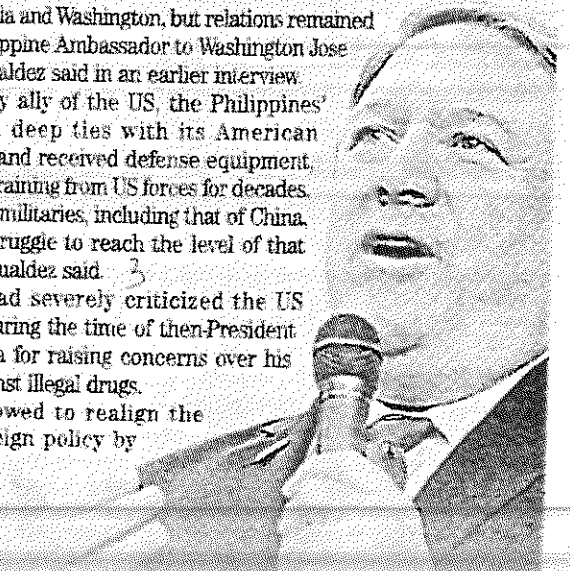
Treaty of Manila and Washington, but relations remained steadfast Philippine Ambassador to Washington Jose Manuel Romualdez said in an earlier interview.

As a treaty ally of the US, the Philippines' military had deep ties with its American counterparts and received defense equipment, weapons and training from US forces for decades.

"Any other militaries, including that of China, will have to struggle to reach the level of that alliance," Romualdez said.

Duterte had severely criticized the US government during the time of then-President Barack Obama for raising concerns over his campaign against illegal drugs.

He also vowed to realign the country's foreign policy by befriending China and Russia and stepping back on military engagements with the US.



POMPEO

China opens consulate in Davao City

DAVAO CITY - China will open tomorrow its consulate in this city in a bid to foster closer ties with the Philippines.

Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. and Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio are among those expected to attend the opening of the consulate along Acacia street at Juna subdivision.

Governors, mayors, regional directors of various government agencies and military officials in Mindanao as well as members of the diplomatic

corps were also invited.

The opening of the consulate in this city was among those agreed upon during President Duterte's state visit to China in October 2016.

"Proper arrangements for the diplomatic premises in both countries will be made in the spirit of the 1975 joint communique on the basis of international practice and reciprocity, with priority for the most immediate concerns," the Philippines and China said in a joint statement at the end of Duterte's state visit.

15 - Edith Regalado

'PRACTICALITY' ALIEN TO CONSTITUTION

GABRIELA SLAMS MARTIAL LAW EXTENSION TALK

By Vince F. Nonato
@VinceNonatoINQ

The Gabriela Women's Party has questioned the recent statement of Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Carlito Galvez that it is "still practical" to extend martial law in Mindanao into 2019 because of the coming midterm elections.

In a statement, the party-list group said citing practicality as the basis for a third extension of martial law would be "nothing but a desecration of the Constitution, which this administration is so fond of doing."

The group pointed out that the Constitution did not provide for "practicality" as a ground for declaring martial law. Section 18, Article VII of the 1987 Constitution only provided

for martial law to be an option in cases of invasion or rebellion.

"What the AFP really wants is their continued power-tripping and abuse of authority blanketed by Duterte's martial law," Gabriela said.

'Vote-buying persisted'

It claimed that the military "failed to curtail vote-buying and election-related violence" during the May 2018 barangay elections.

"For elections to be successful in Mindanao, the region and its people should be free. Lift martial law, free Mindanao..." Gabriela said.

At a press conference on Wednesday, Galvez said he planned to visit Mindanao next week to see if it was possible to recommend the extension of martial law in the region.

Galvez said he was happy that Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian, the Philippine National Police and even the religious sector were recommending extension.

"We had the most peaceful barangay elections because of martial law and even in Marawi [City], [it was the] first time that there is no failure of elections," he said.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros said martial law had not stopped lawless violence in Mindanao.

"The continued injury and loss of life, this time of both civilians and police personnel, proves that a martial law-centric approach to curb violence and promote peace has failed to achieve its purpose," she said.

—WITH REPORTS FROM JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE, JULIE M. AURELIO AND LEILA B. SALAVERRIA INQ

Customs appointment catches Guerrero by surprise

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) director Key Leonardo Guerrero disclosed last Thursday night that he was surprised by President Duterte's appointment of him as commissioner of the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

Guerrero said the job of BOC chief is a new avenue and an unfamiliar duty for him.

"It's really a surprise... the announcement. I came to know of the information during the announcement itself," Guerrero told GMA-7.

Guerrero said President Duterte's marching order is for him to do the job.

"His marching order is simple. Like when I assumed in MARINA and as chief of staff (of the Armed Forces of the Philippines). It's a challenge and it's another thing that I have to overcome," Guerrero

said.

Duterte suddenly announced Guerrero's appointment as BOC chief during the anniversary celebration of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) last Thursday night.

"General (Isidro) Lapeña you are to move to TESDA. I will promote you to a Cabinet position. General Jagger Guerrero, you are to move to the Bureau of Customs. I know that you are happy there. So, I've heard. But demand for honest men requires your presence there," Duterte said.

For his part, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency director general Aaron Aquino welcomed Guerrero's appointment as BOC chief.

Guerrero replaced Lapeña, who will be transferred to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), amid the controversy over the alleged smuggling of

P11 billion worth of shabu into the country.

Aquino told radio station dzBB yesterday that Guerrero is "not new" to them, and that PDEA had a good working relationship with MARINA under Guerrero's term.

"Definitely we will have a better, a good collaboration and partnership, especially now that we need to concentrate and charge those involved in illegal drugs," Aquino said.

"Both of us will hit the international drug syndicates involved," Aquino added.

Aquino said under Guerrero's term, MARINA inked a memorandum of agreement with PDEA allowing anti-drug agents to conduct inspections on vessels and on private and public ports.

He also said he was in constant communication with Guerrero.

Presidential spokesman

Salvador Panelo said the President has ordered Guerrero to ensure that corruption is minimized, if not eradicated, at least under his watch.

"Get rid of corruption there. Do something about it," Panelo said.

Panelo pushed for internal transformation after Duterte named Guerrero to replace Lapeña in a bid to take the heat off the former police general who has been embroiled in controversy over the big haul of shabu that slipped past the BOC recently.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, chairman of the Senate committee on public order and dangerous drugs, said Guerrero faces a daunting task in cleaning up the BOC and hopes that he will not suffer the same fate as his predecessor — With Michael Punongbayan, Christina Mendez, Paolo Romero, Jaime Laude 7

Lawmakers hit, defend militarization of bureaucracy

By JESS DIAZ

Leftist and opposition congressmen yesterday denounced what they described as "expanding militarization" of the bureaucracy.

They made the denunciation a day after President Duterte transferred Bureau of Customs chief Isidro Lapeña to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and named Leonardo Guerrero as his replacement.

Lapeña is a former ranking police officer whose rank was equivalent to a general in the military. Guerrero is a retired general.

While her colleagues in the House of Representatives criticize the appointment of police and military retirees, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said these appointees have an advantage over others.

"They are literally good soldiers," she said.

Arroyo said the President knows what he is doing in shuffling retired police and military appointees.

"Let me just say that I've been president and I know more or less that the

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Lawmakers

From Page 1

President has to consider so many things when he makes his decision, so I'm not going to be a part of the peanut gallery making comments on his actions," she added.

Rep. Carlos Zarate of Bayan Muna said Guerrero "is the 61st military appointee of President Duterte to the civil government and strengthens the de facto military junta now in place in the country."

"This militarization of the bureaucracy is dangerous to civil servants and the general populace because the appointees are trained to just follow orders, without question. This style of pampering the military is also prone to incompetence and waste of the people's money because they are not suited for the jobs they are rewarded with," he said.

Rep. Antonio Tinio of Alliance of Concerned Teachers said Duterte, by shuffling his police and military loyalists, "is engaging in theatrics rather than in actually rooting out corruption and stemming the flow of illegal drugs from abroad."

In the face of continued smuggling of illegal drugs, Tinio said the President reassigns his appointees "while refusing to hold anyone accountable." "It's becoming clear that Duterte's vaunted war on drugs is a scam meant to protect the drug smugglers at the cost of the lives of thousands of drug users," he said.

Lapeña to new BOC chief: Improve counter-Intel

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

As he prepares for his new job as chief of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), outgoing Bureau of Customs (BOC) commissioner Isidro Lapeña is advising his successor Rey Leonardo Guerrero – former Armed Forces chief – to set in place improved counter-intelligence measures as some personnel in the bureau are engaged in illegal activities and are determined to block reforms.

Lapeña met with Guerrero at his office yesterday to discuss plans for the leadership turnover scheduled on Tuesday. Lapeña said he told Guerrero that his management style was “leadership by example.”

“There are people (at the BOC) into illegal activities so he should improve his counter-intelligence effort,” he said when asked what his advice was to Guerrero, outgoing administrator of the Maritime Industry Authority.

“We talked about the immediate things that he has to know first, the turnover and then what have been my plans and programs such that maybe the incoming commissioner would like to do, such as those that led to the good results of

our revenue collection and encouraging more personnel to get on board in the reform program,” Lapeña said.

Other military officials had occupied the top BOC post in the past – former Air Force commanding general Ramon Farolan from 1977 to 1986; former Navy commander Guillermo Parayno Jr. from 1992 to 1998; and Marine Captain Nicanor Faeldon from July 2016 to August 2017.

Lapeña was Davao City police chief when Duterte was mayor.

Lapeña’s transfer to TESDA came amid the controversy over the entry of 1.6 tons of shabu worth some P11 billion in July through the Manila International Container Port (MICP). Magnetic lifters that allegedly continued the contraband was later found abandoned in a warehouse in General Mariano Alvarez in Cavite.

After denying that a large drug shipment had slipped past the BOC, Lapeña later admitted there may have been some lapses in the implementation of procedures – hence the need to upgrade equipment particularly x-ray machines.

At a committee hearing in Congress, it was learned that

the magnetic lifters supposedly used to hide the drug shipment had been modified to prevent x-ray machines from detecting what’s inside them.

But he said the magnetic lifters issue was not taken up with Guerrero as an investigation on the matter is ongoing.

In his 14-month stay at the BOC, Lapeña said he was able to meet and even surpass the monthly collection targets for eight consecutive months.

Help offered

Also not discussed with Guerrero, he said, was President Duterte’s sacking of all deputy commissioners and department heads.

“Of course that is a transition. We will help him in the transition. It is important he starts well. He asked for my help since he is new in the bureau and that he would consult me every now and then,” he maintained.

He stressed there will be no disruption in services despite the leadership change.

“I am still the commissioner until today and until such time we have taken oath so the papers that would be sent to me, they would be acted (upon), especially the payroll,” he stressed.

He said he is grateful to the

President for his new Cabinet job. "I took it as another opportunity, an honor to serve. To serve our people will be an honor and I will always do my best," he said.

For presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo, Lapeña was a victim of a smear campaign perpetrated by drug syndicates and their protectors at the bureau.

"We maintain that drug syndicates, in cahoots with the bureau's corrupt officials and employees, are behind the ongoing vilification campaign against Mr. Isidro Lapeña," Panelo said.

"Notwithstanding the nefarious practices which besiege the bureau, Mr. Lapeña managed it untainted and instituted several reform initiatives resulting in a substantial increase in its revenue collection that even surpassed its given targets," he said.

"Presidential appointments, as we all know, fall under the prerogative of the appointing authority, who happens to be the President," he added.

Lapeña's reassignment to TESDA, meanwhile, drew mixed reactions from senators.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said Lapeña "will no longer be in the line of fire" with his new posting at

TESDA.

"What the BOC needs is a complete overhaul," Sotto said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who chairs the committee on public order and dangerous drugs, said he felt sorry to learn about Lapeña's relief from BOC. With Lapeña at the helm, the BOC was able to exceed its collection target, according to Lacson.

He said the outgoing BOC chief's only black mark was the smuggling of some P11 billion worth of shabu "due to the apparent collusion" between "some of his people at the lower echelon of the bureau" and drug syndicates. He said Lapeña's relief showed Duterte's zero tolerance for illegal drugs.

Sen. Grace Poe said she could imagine Duterte's frustration in fighting illegal drugs as she expressed belief Lapeña was clueless about what was happening below him.

Lack of accountability

Sen. Joel Villanueva, however, said Lapeña's transfer to TESDA appears to indicate a lack of accountability among officials of the administration.

"We will not be able to address our drug problem if we will not curtail the supply of

drugs. Tons of drugs entered the country under their watch. They should be made accountable, not promoted," he said.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV questioned Duterte's motive for transferring Lapeña.

"If he (Lapeña) failed or was in cahoots with those who smuggled the drugs, why will he (Duterte) promote him?" Trillanes said.

He said the only possible explanation was that Duterte was rewarding Lapeña for his "loyalty and guarantee his silence and continued cooperation, much like what he did to former Customs commissioner Nicanor Faeldon."

He said both Faeldon and Lapeña know the "true masterminds" of the huge drug shipments.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan warned that "when incompetence or corruption go unpunished and those linked to irregularities are rewarded with other top-level posts, then both incompetence and corruption will just get worse."

"It (Lapeña's promotion) also places in doubt the sincerity and seriousness of the administration in its campaigns against corruption and illegal drugs," Pangilinan said.

- With Paolo Romero, Christina Mendez

Watchdog opposes Lapeña's promotion

A PRIVATE-SECTOR anti-corruption group urged President Rodrigo Duterte on Friday to shelve the "promotion" of former Bureau of Customs (BoC) commissioner Isidro Lapeña to director general of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda).

►OpposesA2

■ OPPOSES FROM A1

Watchdog

The Coalition Against Corruption (CAC), in a news conference, said it was "premature" that Lapeña should be rewarded with a promotion to a Cabinet-level rank while investigations into his alleged role in the smuggling of P11 billion worth of shabu in August (not P6.8 billion as previously estimated), were in progress.

"In fact, Lapeña's reassignment and promotion, without first being cleared of culpability, undermines the President's avowed policies of 'zero tolerance' and 'not even a whiff' in the war on drugs and corruption. Illegal drugs and other syndicated crimes can only flourish in an environment of unmitigated corruption," it said.

Partnering with the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission in the war on corruption from discovery to prosecution and conviction of corrupt officials, it encouraged whistleblowers to surface to help prosecute crooks in the government.

In the news conference on Thursday, Lourdes Manaoang, who had blown the whistle on Lapeña, accused the sacked BoC commissioner of incompetence.

The National Bureau of Investigation, the Senate and the House of Representatives are separately investigating Lapeña's supposed role in the smuggling of the P11-billion shabu in August.

Lapeña, a former military officer, has accepted his appointment as the new Tesda chief.

"Yes of course [he has accepted it]. As the President said, he's transferring General Lapeña to Tesda," BoC spokesman and Port of Manila Collector Erastus Sandino Austria said in a text message to *The Manila Times*.

He confirmed that the President and Lapeña had a private talk but did not elaborate on what transpired during the meeting.

Lapeña was replaced by Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) Administrator Leonardo Guerrero, a retired Armed Forces chief.

The President announced Lapeña's transfer to Tesda a day after he admitted before a joint hearing of the House Committees on Dangerous Drugs and of Good Government that he was now inclined to believe that magnetic lifters found in Cavite nearly two months ago contained shabu.

Earlier on Thursday or before Duterte's pronouncement, Mangaoang, former chief of the X-ray Inspection Project of the BoC and now Customs deputy collector, accused Lapeña of being a member of a drug syndicate that brought in billions of pesos worth of shabu hidden in four magnetic lifters.

Lapeña denied a cover-up, saying earlier evidence had shown that the lifters found in General Mariano Alvarez (GMA) in Cavite did not hold shabu.

As Lapeña has instructed, the bureau will pursue charges against former Customs intelligence officer Jimmy Guban and assist the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in dismantling the "drug syndicate that pervades the government."

The BoC will also file cases against Gorgonio Necessario and Joseph Dimayuga.

Perjury cases will be filed against Miguela "Meg" Santos and the proprietor of SMYD, Marina Signapan.

Signapan and Santos and broker Katrina Grace Cuasay will face charges for illegal importation.

Shield vs intrigue

The Palace said on Friday the Pres-

ident appointed Lapeña to Tesda because he wanted to spare the ex-Customs chief from "intrigue." In a radio interview, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said Duterte had been planning the reassignment of Lapeña but made the sudden announcement because the latter's reputation had been besmirched amid controversies plaguing the BoC.

Lapeña will fill up the post vacated by former Tesda chief Gulling Mamondiong, who stepped down to run for governor of Lanao del Sur in the 2019 mid-term elections. The decision to transfer the BoC chief also came just a day after the President expressed belief in the integrity of Lapeña, who had served him while he was mayor of Davao City in southern Mindanao.

The President also ordered the "freezing" of all section, department and unit heads at the BoC amid the multi-billion-peso drug smuggling scandal.

'Militarization' hit

Lapeña's reassignment was criticized by some lawmakers.

Bayan Muna Rep. Carlo Zarate said that not only did the transfer "foster incompetence," it also showed that Duterte's "militarization" of the Cabinet was expanding.

Party-list Representatives Antonio Tinio and France Castro also hit Lapeña's reassignment and promotion.

"It looks like Lapeña was given a reward for a job well done, for letting P11 billion worth of

shabu enter the country. But what can a former military official do in an education-related agency (Tesda)?" Castro asked in Filipino.

Akbayan Rep. Tom Villarin also questioned Duterte's decision and compared it to victims of extrajudicial killings who were linked to illegal drugs in the country.

"When it's an ordinary Filipino, the command is to kill him immediately, but when it is a friend, he is given a second or third chance and is even promoted. Public office no longer becomes a public trust," he said.

Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she agreed with the appointment of military men as they have an advantage under the Duterte Cabinet.

"They are literally good soldiers, that's why," she told reporters in a chance interview in Sasmuan, Pampanga.

Arroyo refused to comment on the new leadership at the BoC.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson also on Friday expressed hope that Guerrero would "not suffer the same fate" of Lapeña.

Opposition Senators Antonio Trillanes 4th and Francis Pangilinan questioned the President's motive in "promoting" Lapeña.

Pangilinan said "When incompetence or corruption go unpunished and those linked with irregularities are rewarded with other top-level posts, then both incompetence and corruption will just get worse."

**WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL,
CATHERINE S. VALENTE,
BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO
AND GLEE JALEA**

Paglilipat kay Lapeña matagal nang plano - Palasyo

Matagal ng plano na lipat si outgoing BOC Commissioner Isidro Lapeña mula sa Customs papunta sa ibang ahensiya.

Ito ang ibinunyag kahapon ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo kasunod ng anunsyo ni Pangulong Duterte na lipat si Lapeña sa TESDA.

Ayon kay Panelo sa susunod na linggo na sana ang anunsyo tungkol sa ngoson pero napadal dahil sa ilang mga rason. Ilan dito ay upang maisalpa na rin si Lapeña sa napakaraming intriga sa Customs.

Anya, sobra na rin ang paninira kay Lapeña dahil upang pasiyahan ng Chief Executive ang agerang paglilipat nito sa TESDA at paitan siya n' dating AFP chief Leonardo Guerrero na galing naman ng MARINA.

Kaya nga mismong sina Guerrero at Lapeña ay ikinabigla din ang announcement ng Presidente patungkol sa paglilipat kay Lapeña naanya'y isang promotion. *(Rudy Andal)*

Paglipat kay Lapeña matagal nang nakaplano-Palasyo

Matagal na umanong nakaplano ang paglipat kay outgoing BOC Commissioner Isidro Lapeña papunta sa TESDA.

Ito ang ibinunyag kahapon ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo kasunod ng anunsyo ng Pangulong Duterte na inilipat si Lapeña sa nasabing ahensiya.

Ayon kay Panelo, sa

susunod na linggo pa sana ang anunsyo tungkol sa rigodon pero napadali dahil sa ilang mga rason.

Sabi ni Sec. Panelo, ilan dito ay upang maisalba na rin si Lapeña sa napakaraming intriga sa Customs.

Aniya, sobra na din ang paninira kay Lapeña dahil sa upang pagpasiyahan ng chief executive ang

agarang paglipat dito sa TESDA at palitan siya ni dating AFP chief Leonardo Guerrero na galing naman ng MARINA.

Kaya nga mismong

sina Guerrero at Lapeña ay ikinabigla din ang announcement kahapon ng Presidente patungkol sa lipatan na isang promotion. *-Rudy Andal-*

Dismissed cop in P6.8-B shabu case faces arrest

By JESS DIAZ

Dismissed police officer Eduardo Acierto will face arrest if he fails to show up at the next hearing of the House of Representatives on the case of the P6.8-billion missing shabu.

Surigao del Norte Rep. Robert Ace Barbers, chairman of the committee on dangerous drugs, said yesterday his panel and the committee on good government and public accountability have decided to recommend to the House leadership to use the chamber's "coercive powers" on Acierto, a former police superintendent.

"These powers include the issuance of a subpoena and in

case a subpoena is ignored, the next step is to issue an arrest order," he said.

Barbers said an arrest order usually results in the apprehension of a wanted witness, as in the case of Ronnie Dayan, who went into hiding but was eventually caught and testified against Sen. Leila de Lima when the House looked into her supposed involvement in illegal drugs.

Aside from Acierto, other public officials and private persons who have snubbed the joint inquiry of the dangerous drugs and good government committees would face arrest, he added.

Barbers pointed out that among these individuals is

a certain Meg Santos, whom Customs intelligence officer Jaime Guban has described as an "operator" or one who facilitates the importation and release of cargo and contraband at the port area in Manila.

Acierto and Santos have so far evaded the joint inquiry, he said.

On Thursday, Barbers asked Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Oscar Albayalde to exert all efforts to locate Acierto. "We need to talk to this guy because he is a key figure in the entry here of this huge shipment of shabu," he said.

Barbers said he had asked the PNP more than a month ago

to search for Acierto, but so far the police organization has not found him.

"I cannot believe that they cannot find one of their own," he said.

The Office of the Ombudsman has ordered the dismissal of Acierto and several high-ranking PNP officers in connection with the questionable licensing of hundreds of assault rifles, many of which were later seized by soldiers from New People's Army rebels.

Acierto was formerly with the PNP anti-drug special operations task force.

Barbers said Acierto, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) deputy director Ismael

Fajardo and Guban are the three "prominent figures" behind the P6.8-billion shabu shipment.

He said the three handled the supposed intelligence information on the arrival at the Manila port of two magnetic lifters containing more than 300 kilos of shabu, which Customs and PDEA agents seized on Aug. 7.

He said it was Guban who provided Customs and PDEA details on the shipment, including the number of the container van and the port of arrival, claiming Acierto provided these to him.

What was suspicious is that the alleged cooperation among Guban, Acierto and Fajardo was not reported beforehand to their

superiors, he added.

Barbers pointed out PDEA director general Aaron Aquino and outgoing Customs commissioner Isidro Lapena have confirmed the prior non-reporting of the supposed collaboration among the three "prominent figures."

The reporting "was just FYI (for your information) after the fact," Aquino told congressmen on Wednesday.

Barbers said another suspicious thing is Guban's testimony that Acierto asked him to look for a "consignee-for-hire" for a second shipment of four magnetic lifters PDEA seized in a warehouse in General Mariano Alvarez in Cavite on Aug. 9.

Former-Army man yields ₱1.3 M shabu

By MARTIN A. MADONONG

A former military man and two other cohorts were arrested following a drug buy-bust operation in Parañaque City Thursday afternoon.

National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Director Guillermo Eleazar identified the arrested suspects as Johnven Arnaiz alias "Toto" and "Bossing," 40, a former member of the Philippine Army, Valentine Arnaiz, 52 and Joseph Gabalbat, 37.

Operatives of NCRPO's Regional Drug Enforcement Unit (RDEU), Regional Special Operations Unit (RSOU), and Parañaque City

Police apprehended the three suspects in a buy-bust operation conducted at the parking area of a shopping mall in BF Homes, Parañaque City at around 5 p.m.

The trio yielded an estimated ₱1.36 million worth of methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu.

They will be charged with violation of Republic Act 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.

Eleazar said it was Arnaiz who allegedly sold four heat-sealed plastic sachets, each containing 50 grams of suspected shabu, to a police poseur-buyer. The deal was closed at ₱440,000 in exchange of the said items.

Trillanes confident inciting to sedition charge will be junked

By **GHIO ONG**

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, a critic of President Duterte, has asked the Pasay City Prosecutor's Office to dismiss the charges of inciting to sedition and conspiracy or proposal to commit coup d'etat against him for being baseless and a "no-brainer."

"*Madali ito* (This is easy)... this would be a no-brainer for any objective and fair-minded prosecutor," Trillanes said in an interview on Thursday as he submitted his counter-affidavit.

According to Trillanes, the complaint was filed by his accusers "to harass me and to show their loyalty to Duterte."

The prosecution is set to file its reply to Trillanes' counter-affidavit on Nov. 8.

In his 35-page counter-affidavit, Trillanes asserted his parliamentary immunity as the complainants accused him of using foul language against President Duterte, who issued Proclamation 572 that invalidated the amnesty granted to the senator by the past administration.

Complainants included Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Undersecretary Jacinto Paras, Presidential Anti-Corruption

Commission (PACC) commissioner Manuelito Luna and lawyers Nasser Marohomsalic, Alvaro Bernabe Lazaro and Eligio Mallari.

"The alleged offensive words/language of (Trillanes), if any, are covered by his parliamentary immunity as a senator as expressly provided by the 1987 Constitution," the senator's counter-affidavit read.

The complaint against Trillanes contained "mishmashed, rambling and incoherent collection of barely related articles thrown together without much thought to try to come up with a semblance of a complaint," it added.

Trillanes also cited a portion of the complaint containing a story released by *The Associated Press* wherein he said, "Duterte will not be there for long, please do not do anything illegal or unconstitutional."

"He (Trillanes) never actually called on the military not to follow the President's order but only cautioned them from doing anything illegal or unconstitutional," Trillanes' counter-affidavit, prepared by his lawyers Reynaldo Robles and Dustin Garvida, further read.

The senator's lawyers also said that "newspapers and online articles" were not only "hearsay" but "double hearsay" and could not

reasonably establish what a person did or did not say.

Trillanes also asserted that he is covered by parliamentary immunity and the right to free speech, "since the alleged utterances indubitably took place at the Senate" ahead of his committee hearing.

Trillanes also pointed out in his counter-affidavit that complainants failed to provide sufficient bases for them to prove that the senator committed inciting to sedition and conspiracy or proposal to commit coup d'etat through his statements.

The complainants filed the charges against Trillanes in mid-September due to the statements he allegedly made against President Duterte after issuing Proclamation No. 572, all done inside the Senate where he confined himself while awaiting resolutions from Makati City courts on the Department of Justice's petition to issue an arrest warrant and hold departure order (HDO) against him following the revocation of his amnesty.

The Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 148 dismissed the DOJ's petition against Trillanes while RTC Branch 150 issued an arrest warrant and HDO against the senator but allowed him to post bail.

Justice dept files MR in Trillanes coup case

THE Department of Justice (DoJ) has formally filed a motion for reconsideration before the Makati regional trial court seeking to reconsider its ruling junking the government's motion for the issuance of a warrant of arrest against Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV for the crime of coup d'etat.

The motion for reconsideration was filed before Branch 148 Judge Andres Soriano last Thursday.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra stressed the DoJ wants Judge Soriano to reconsider his ruling that Trillanes applied for amnesty, and that he admitted his guilt.

In his recent decision, Judge Soriano stressed he dismissed the DoJ motion for the issuance of an arrest warrant because the same court in 2011 had already dismissed Trillanes' coup d'etat charges, and such decision "has become final and executory."

The judge said that he just merely accommodated

the Supreme Court order to review the case.

Trillanes, a former naval officer, was involved in the Oakwood mutiny in July 2003, the Marines standoff in February 2006, and the Manila Peninsula incident in 2007 -- which were all

against then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Trillanes and fellow Magdalo soldiers were jailed but walked free when they were granted amnesty by former president Benigno Aquino III.

Hector Lawas

• Maguindanao blasts

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao (PNA) - Two explosions rocked the town of Ampatuan, Maguindanao on Friday morning, but no one was reported injured, the military here said. Maj. Arvin John Encinas, spokesperson of the Sixth Infantry Division (6ID), said the bombs were separately placed by the roadside near the Poblacion of Ampatuan town. "Our troops in the area said the bombs were fashioned out from 81-mm mortar explosives concealed in sacks along the highway," Encinas said. He said the explosions took place at about 9 a.m. as three military trucks were passing by the area. "The blast site is actually very proximate to the town center," Encinas said, adding that it was just fortunate that no one was hurt in the incident.

Firearms destroyed

COTABATO CITY - The Sixth Infantry Division (6ID) destroyed thousands of loose firearms it had collected in Central Mindanao under the Duterte administration's intensified "Balik Baril" program that is meant to stabilize peace and security in Southern Philippines.

Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega, head of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), led the symbolic disposal of the undocumented assorted firearms on Wednesday to coincide with the 6ID's 31st founding anniversary in its headquarters in Camp Siongco, Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat town in Maguindanao.

Dela Vega, who once headed the 6ID before assuming the WestMinCom leadership early this year, was joined in the event by his successor Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobujana and Maguindanao Gov. Esmaruel Mangudadatu. Defense Sec. Delfin Lorenzana, born in North Cotabato and raised in nearby Maguindanao, also graced the occasion as keynote speaker and guest of honor. (Ali G. Macablang)

You want things done fast? Get a military man – PRRD

BY GENALYN D. KABILING

President Duterte declared he would never issue "illegal orders" to his appointees, including former

military officials now working in his administration.

At the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) anniversary celebration Thursday, the President said in issuing ▶ **6**

You want things...

...marching orders, he simply wants his team to "do it and do it fast."

"I have nothing against the bureaucracy but if you want something done and done fast per your order, you get a military man," Duterte declared.

And if there are some misgivings about any orders coming from me, rest assured that I'm a lawyer, that I do not give illegal orders. You can be very sure that when I say 'do it and do it fast' do it because that is what is utterly lacking in this country," he added.

The former Davao City mayor said he only has a six-year term and it was imperative to "move fast" in implementing programs

"Wala akong ano sa bureaucracy [I have nothing against the bureaucracy] They are bright, Civil Service eligibles. Some of them have finished their PhD. But unfortunately the six years term is not just really enough. You have to move fast," he said.

"I could cite to you the Maranao siege. I needed houses immediately and we had a corresponding funding. But had I left it to the bureaucracy, it's either it's not being done until now or without being offensive to anyone, sometimes the fundings are lost along the way," he said.

Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) chair

◀ **1**

Eduardo del Rosario, a former Task Force Davao commander chairs the Bangon Marawi Task Force.

The President issued the remarks after announcing the appointment of Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) Administrator Rey Leonardo Guerrero as the new head of the Bureau of Customs (BOC). Guerrero previously served as Armed Forces Chief of Staff.

He will replace Customs chief Isidro Lapeña who has been transferred to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The major revamp in the customs bureau that also called for the placing of all commissioners on "floating status" stemmed from the alleged smuggling of ₱11 billion worth of shabu into the country that slipped through customs.

Over 400 cops beef up security in Boracay

By MARTIN A. SABONGDONG

The Philippine National Police (PNP) deployed over 400 policemen to secure the world-famous Boracay, which reopened Friday.

"From more than 200 organic personnel of Boracay Island, we made it more than 400 to ensure the security of the island," said PNP Chief Director General Oscar Albayalde.

Aside from the more than 400 cops, over 200 augmentation forces from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) were also tasked to keep Boracay free from lawless elements and the visitors safe from harm. All in all, a total of 667 uniformed personnel were deployed to the island.

They are expected to guard an estimated 6,000 visitors every day but the PNP said authorities are well-prepared

for any eventualities.

"We conducted a capability demonstration to ensure the public, the community and the tourists, both local and foreign, that they have nothing to worry about and we are ready to secure their properties and lives," Albayalde noted.

Aside from the increased police visibility, the PNP also beefed up the capabilities of the local police force in Boracay by equipping them with four brand-new police patrol cars.

The PNP also reminded tourists and other visitors to refrain from bringing prohibited items such as bladed and pointed weapons, guns, and prohibited drugs.

"The local community also has its own do's and don'ts so we will be implementing strictly the environmental ordinances together with other concerned agencies," Albayalde emphasized.

"What's good now is that we have

a task force in Boracay composed of PNP, AFP, PCG and non-government organizations (NGOs) so we are all involved in maintaining the cleanliness and peace and order here in the island," he concluded.

Boracay, famous for its white sand beaches, was ordered closed to tourists on April 26, 2018 by President Duterte. 2

Panelo says what Customs needs is spiritual cleansing

By ARGYLL CYRUS S. REDUCOS

As Halloween draws near, Malacañang said that, perhaps, what is required in the Bureau of Customs (BOC) is spiritual cleansing to purge the "corrupted spirits haunting the agency."

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo made the statement after President Duterte announced that he is assigning former Army chief Leonardo "Jagger" Guerrero to head the agency, and that he is axing all BOC executives following the shabu smuggling incident in August.

In a radio interview Friday, Panelo said that maybe a spiritual intervention is now necessary to change the attitude of the people inside the BOC.

"Ang problema kasi nasa tao eh. Siguro we have to... siguro kailangan mag-spiritual ang mga taong iyan (The problem is with the people. Perhaps, the people there need to undergo spiritual cleansing)," he said.

"I think everyone in this country needs internal transformation. Because

if you are spiritually transformed, you will think twice about doing something bad because you are your own enemy," he added in Filipino.

"Kasi kung aasahan mo lang iyong sistema, hindi na magbabago (Because if you will just rely on the system, nothing will change)," he continued.

Praises for Guerrero

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday heaped praises on Guerrero as he prepares to take on the reins of the BOC.

A graduate of Philippine Military Academy (PMA) Maharlika Class of 1984, Guerrero served as the 49th chief of staff of the AFP and administrator of the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) until the President announced his appointment as Customs chief last Thursday.

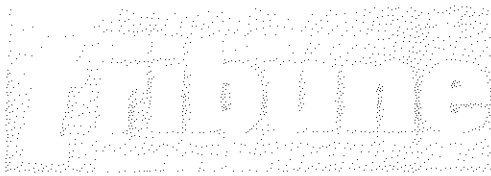
"I am very confident that he will do good. He is an honest, intelligent and very competent man," said AFP Chief of Staff General Carlito Galvez Jr. when asked about Guerrero's appointment at BOC.

Chief Superintendent Benigno Durana Jr., PNP spokesperson, also welcomed the appointment of Guerrero, a senior officer of PNP Chief Oscar Albayalde in the PMA.

"I'm sure his leadership and management skills coupled with his experience in security sector reform will help, in no small measure, in his monumental task of reforming the Bureau," Durana said.

For Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, he said he expects the retired general to do a great job even if he finds his hands full, given the corruption that has been institutionalized within the bureau.

"He would do a great job if given the leeway to do his job," Lorenzana said. "The problem in BOC, according to insiders, is the entrenched interest groups. Corruption, they said, is institutionalized within the bureau. If you play by their rules you last. If not, they will do something to ease you out like what happened to my classmate Sid Laperia." (With reports from Martin A. Sadongdong and Francis T. Wakefield)



Meralco, AFP energize northernmost isle using solar power

In line with its efforts to promote renewable energy, One Meralco Foundation (OMF), the corporate social responsibility arm of the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO), entered into a partnership with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to bring solar power to the Philippines' northernmost island.

Top officials of OMF and the AFP signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on Monday, September 24, for a solar electrification project on Mavulis Island in Batanes. The island is located more than 280 kilometers off the northern coast of Luzon mainland, and less than 150 km from the southern tip of Taiwan.

Although presently uninhabited, Mavulis is frequented by fishermen mostly from the municipality of Itbayat because of the rich marine life in the waters surrounding it.

Batanes lies along the path of majority of the typhoons that pass through the country, and the waters around it are notoriously erratic

posing danger to local fishermen.

With support from the local government and the private sector, the military is building a single-storey concrete shelter on the island where fishermen could seek refuge in times of bad weather. A lighthouse will also be constructed to provide navigational guidance to marine vessels passing by.

The AFP hopes that the project will eventually encourage fisherfolks to permanently settle on the country's northernmost outpost.

For its part, OMF will install a 1-kilowatt solar photovoltaic (PV) system to provide electricity to the shelter. It can generate enough power for lighting, charging of portable electronic devices, and vital communications equipment. The system will be installed such that it could easily be expanded as soon as the demand for power increases.

Prior to Mavulis, OMF has been installing between 1 and 8-kilowatt PV systems in off-grid public schools in remote mountain and island

communities throughout the country.

As of July, the foundation's school electrification advocacy program has already benefited 228 DepEd schools including one in the island of Laud Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi, which is the last island in the country's southwestern corner.

OMF is, by far, the only foundation in the Philippines to do solar electrification of off-grid schools on a nationwide scale.

"Just like our school electrification program, the Mavulis electrification project is part of Meralco's and One Meralco Foundation's commitment to support the use and development of renewable energy sources - in our case, solar photovoltaic technology. It also demonstrates how a strong partnership between the government and the private sector helps in addressing crucial challenges that affect the entire country, especially the underserved," said Jeffrey O. Tarayao, President of One Meralco Foundation. 12

Tarayao signed the agreement on behalf of OMF while NOLCOM Commander Lt. Gen. Emmanuel B. Salamat represented the AFP. Also present to witness the signing were Meralco Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan, Meralco President and CEO Oscar S. Reyes.

AFP vows to pay up

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) relented to government pleading that it update its payments yesterday to power distributors as it pledged to settle unpaid electricity bills of some P10.9 million, including penalties and surcharges.

Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi had pleaded with different government organizations, including the AFP, Philippine

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National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation, to clear some P17 million in electricity service bill debts.

The AFP owes the biggest amount which the military promises to pay provided it is given a grace period.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo sought an extension and a degree of understanding from power distributors.

Arevalo said it usually takes from a week to a month before it can release the first tranche of the check to pay its arrears.

The Daily Tribune came out with Cusi's reminder to government agencies to settle their electricity service payables last 24 October.

"The service providers of our electricity, the coops, give us only a week to settle our bills. And we can't comply because of the procedural requirement before paying," Arevalo said.

Cusi has taken state institutions with utility payables to task, saying the debts may affect the country as it may lead to a "weak and unstable operational performance" of different electricity coops in the country.

23 co-ops seek collections

Citing data from the National Electrification Administration (NEA),

Cusi said the amount was owed to 28 electric cooperatives across the country.

One cooperative is in the Ilocos region, five are in Southern Tagalog, two in Bicol, one in Western Visayas, three in Eastern Visayas, two in the Zamboanga Peninsula, one in Davao, five in Soccsksargen and three in Caraga.

In Zamboanga City, the Philippine Naval Station owed the local distributor some P4 million, followed by nearby Edwin Andrews Air Base, P3.5 million.

The PNP owed a total of P5.3 million, with the command in Zamboanga City accounting for P1.7 million.

The Coast Guard owes cooperatives close to P316,000 while the NBI is behind its payments by P315,000.

Debt affects gov't goals

"Being part of the government, we need to be earnest in pursuing energy resiliency and efficiency," Cusi said.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo sought an extension and a degree of understanding from power distributors.

For the government to attain its energy goals, agencies must be able to uphold their commitment "to our stakeholders and service providers."

"As we've been pushing massive electrification, energy efficiency and security of the country, I am pleading on behalf of the distribution utilities, including the electric cooperatives, to the concerned government institutions to settle their outstanding accounts," he said.

DUs and ECs collect revenue to generate cash flow that would enable them to provide efficient and sustainable services to the areas they serve, Cusi said.

On target Opposition Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV addresses reporters outside his Senate office in one of his more than regular briefings. The Department of Justice appealed yesterday a regional trial court ruling denying the request for an arrest warrant against him.

AP

End graft, 'Jagger' told

Customs is mired in corruption. Whoever you place there will have a hard time to succeed

By Kristina Maralit

An exasperated President Rodrigo Duterte issued a marching order to new Customs Commissioner Rey Leonardo "Jagger" Guerrero to "get rid" of corruption at the Bureau of Customs (BoC) a day after Mr. Duterte ordered a top-to-bottom

overhaul of the agency.

"Get rid of corruption there. Do something about it," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo quoted Mr. Duterte as telling Guerrero who was pulled from his post as Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) head.

Guerrero, a former chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), responded with a vow to institute reforms in the agency, saying he shared Mr. Duterte's order to do his job and bring back the integrity of the BoC by starting with the

firing of corrupt officials and employees.

"They have no place in government service. That's all I can say. There's no room for corrupt people in government service," Guerrero told reporters moments after the President made the announcement at the Philippine Coast Guard's 117th anniversary celebration on Thursday night.

"It's a new field like when I
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Subordinates will undermine you, that's what is happening there

From page 1

first joined MARINA. I'm not from the (maritime) industry and similarly with Customs. But it's a challenge and another thing I have to overcome," he added.

The Chief Executive likewise ordered key Customs personnel "down to the last man" to be put on floating status to give Guerrero a free hand to employ his own men to restructure and reorganize the BoC.

"That's the President's instruction and I am here to implement whatever reforms are needed in the bureau. It's really important that people inside Customs are trusted by the leader for him to be able to effectively implement those reforms," Guerrero said, adding although he has a tinge of apprehension, he feels "excited" to start his new mission.

With respect to Commissioner Lapeña, his transfer to TESDA has long been planned.

Mr. Duterte transferred the besieged former BoC head, Isidro Lapeña, to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) as its new head during a speech marking the 117th anniversary of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) last Thursday.

Asked if he thinks there is still hope in transforming the BoC, Guerrero's reply was a snappy and firm "of course."

Mr. Duterte's purging of the BoC came at a time when the agency is in the middle of a controversy after four empty magnetic lifters suspected to have contained crystal meth — also known as shabu — were found in a Cavite warehouse in August.

Controversy over lost drugs

Prior to that, the BoC and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) had just intercepted 500 kilos of the banned substance stashed in two other magnetic filters at the Manila International Container Port (MICP).

Lapeña initially refuted PDEA chief Aaron Aquino's claims of the magnetic filters found in Cavite contained billions of pesos' worth of shabu resulting in both officials' verbal tussle over the media.

His transfer from the BoC to TESDA amid a multibillion-peso drug smuggling controversy, however, is not a punishment but a "promotion," according to Malacañang.

Panelo said Duterte has been toying with the idea of naming Lapeña to replace the just-resigned Gullong Mamonding who already filed his candidacy for Lanao del Sur governor in next year's mid-term polls.

No sanction

"No. The President promoted Lapeña to a Cabinet position. He already had Lapeña in his mind," Panelo said in a text message.

"With respect to Commissioner Lapeña, his transfer to TESDA has long been planned. But the President wanted to spare him from intrigue that's why the President made an earlier announcement," he added.

"Customs is mired in corruption. Whoever you place there will have a hard time to succeed. Subordinates will undermine you, that's what is happening there," Panelo added.

On 15 October, Mr. Duterte said he offered before high-ranking military and police officials to resign because he can no longer deal with corruption, apparently referring to the BoC.

"It was a Cabinet meeting then after that a command conference, I told them 'I can no longer take it. I can't run after it. Every desk in this government, with a few exceptions, has a drawer for transactions,'" he added.

Apart from reassigning Lapeña, the President also ordered key BoC personnel — deputy commissioners, department heads and section chiefs — to be placed on floating status to give Guerrero the freedom to reorganize the bureau and institute the needed reforms to regain its integrity and the public's trust.

Move backed

Senators supported the President's order to "overhaul" the BoC amid the billions of pesos' worth of shabu shipment now being probed by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the President's move to promote Lapeña will spare the respected former police general from the rotten system of Customs.

"At least, General Lapeña will no longer be in the line of fire. What BoC needs is a complete overhaul," Sotto said.

Lapeña was not the first BoC chief to be relieved due to the smuggling of illegal drugs. His predecessor, former Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon, suffered a similar fate despite seizing P6.4 billion worth of shabu from a warehouse in Valenzuela City.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson also expressed disappointment over Lapeña's transfer but cited the latest development only showed the President's resolve to address the illegal drugs menace.

Doing a good job

"While I regret Commissioner Lapeña's relief as BoC Commissioner since he was doing a good job in consistently exceeding his target collections, save for the shabu shipment that got away due to apparent collusion with some of his people at the lower echelon of the bureau, I can only conclude that

PRRD (Mr. Duterte's initials) has once again shown his zero tolerance in his battle against illegal drugs.

"I hope retired General Guerrero can fill in the big boots left by Lapeña and will not suffer the same fate as he did," Laason, a former chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) said.

That's the President's instruction and I am here to implement whatever reforms are needed.

House committee on dangerous drugs chairman Robert Ace Barbers expressed hope "that the BoC and the PDEA can provide closure to the smuggled shabu issue.

"It is possible that there's shabu in the magnetic lifters that's why we will continue the hearing and we will find answers to the questions," Barbers vowed.

Former President and now Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo believed Duterte has appointed "good soldiers."

"They are literally good soldiers, that's why," Arroyo answered when asked if she agreed with Duterte's appointment of military officers.

She also affirmed that experience is an advantage for officials under the shuffle ordered by Mr. Duterte.

PNP, AFP laud posting

Both the PNP and the AFP expressed delight in the new role of Guerrero in government.

The AFP described the former chief of staff as a serious and strict person with a very good heart.

"I am confident that he will do good. He is an honest, intelligent and very competent man," AFP chief of staff Gen. Carlo Galvez Jr. said.

He was also congratulated by PNP that believes BoC will be in good hands.

"I'm sure his leadership and management skills coupled with his experience in security sector reform will help, in no small measure, his monumental task in reforming the Bureau," said Chief Supt. Benigno Durana, PNP spokesman.

Guerrero was a graduate of Philippine Military Academy class of 1984 and was the chief of staff of AFP from October 2017 up to April 2018. He was succeeded by Galvez who is the current AFP chief of staff.

After his retirement, he served as administrator of Maritime Industry Authority from April 2018 until he was recently appointed as the new BoC Commissioner succeeding Isidro Lapeña.

**With Mario J. Mallari,
Mananeel Bordey,
Kathleen Mae Bulquerin**

House leader sees ex-military men as assets to DU30 gov't

FORMER President now House Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expressed support to President Rodrigo Duterte for appointing ex-military officials to his Cabinet.

Arroyo said that having military men in the executive branch is an advantage for the administration.

"They are literally good soldiers, that's why," Arroyo said without much elaboration when asked if she agreed with the President's penchant for appointing military men.

Very recently, Duterte transferred Bureau of Customs Chief Isidro Lapena to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Lapena belongs to Philippine Military Academy Class Maagap of 1973. He served as Philippine National Police director for operations and acting chief of PNP Directorial Staff.

Lapena will be replaced

by another military officer, Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) administrator Rey Leonardo Guerrero.

Guerrero, a graduate of PMA class 1984, is the former Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Duterte also appointed as Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Philippine Army chief Major General Rolando Bautista.

Some of the ex-military and police officials in Duterte's Cabinet are Secretaries Roy Cimatu (Environment), Eduardo Año (Interior Undersecretary-OIC), Eduardo del Rosario (chair of Housing and Bangon Marawi Task Force), Commissioner Isidro Lapeña (Customs), and Glorioso Miranda (Bases Conversion and Development Authority).

Duterte in one of his speeches said he appoints

retired military and police officers because they are honest and competent.

But Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate said that with Gen. Guerrero now being assigned to the BoC and Gen. Lapena transferred to TESDA, Duterte's militarization of the bureaucracy is expanding.

"Guerrero would be the 61st military appointee to the civil government and strengthens the de facto military junta now in place in the country," the progressive solon said.

"Having no proven competence nor knowledge of the agencies they are assigned in, these former military men just follow orders from the top. Yet, they just remain silent when corruption is exposed in their department then they are reassigned to another agency like what happened to Faeldon and Lapena," he added. **JPM**

Rody's appointment of ex-military execs backed

By RYAN PONCE PACPACO

FORMER President-turned Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday backed President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte's appointment of ex-military officials to various government posts, explaining they are well trained and good soldiers.

Arroyo said the appointment of President Duterte to former Armed Forces chief and current Marina

Administration Administrator Leonardo Ray Guerrero, who was named to the post in April, as replacement of Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapena will work in favor of the government.

"They are literally good soldiers that's why [they are appointed]," Arroyo told reporters in an ambush interview during an inspection of retaining wall project in Sasmaun, Pampanga.

"Yes it will work favorably for the government," said Arroyo.

Arroyo also clarified that

President Duterte is well-guided in choosing new appointees because of his long-time experience in government.

"Let me just say that I've been President and I know more or less that the President has to consider so many things when he makes his decision, so I'm not going to be a part of the peanut gallery making comments on his actions," Arroyo pointed out.

"The President knows what he's doing," Arroyo added.



President Duterte sacked Lapena following the alleged shabu smuggling at the Bureau of Customs (BoC) using magnetic lifters which could be worth as much as P11 billion.

PH Navy nakipagtagisan sa ACMEX 2018

Hindi nagpahuli ang Philippine Navy BRP Dagupan City sa pagpapakitang-gilas at kandaan ng mga barkong pandigma at mga Navy personnels nito sa anumang hamon sa maritime security nang makipag-sabayang ito sa China at mga ASEAN member sa idinaraos na ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise (ACMEX).

Ayon sa Philippine Navy ang BRP Dagupan City (LS-551) kasama ang mga Navy personnels at officials nito ay kalahok sa Sea Sub-Phase ng ASEAN-China

Maritime Exercise (ACMEX) 2018 sa South China Sea.

"This specific phase of the exercise aims to execute all plans painstakingly drafted, deliberated and finalized in order to test the cohesiveness, effectiveness, and seamless communications among multi-lateral force partners in the conduct of various scenarios," pahayag ni Commander Sherwin Respeto, Commander ng Nava Task Group 68.

Ang ACMEX 2018 ay nagsimula noong Oktubre 22 at tatagal nang

isang linggo na isa na namang panibagong karanasan upang mahubog ang kasanayan ng Philippine Navy team.

Kabilang dito ang communications drills, ship group formations bukod pa sa joint search and rescue, cross helo-deck landings and replenishment at-sea approaches in accordance with the Code of Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES).

Nabatid na nakatakdang naniyang pangunahan ng Philippine Navy LS-551 ang replenishment-at-sea scenario. (Joy Carlos)

Duterte urged to prosecute suspects behind Sagay massacre

By GILBERT BAYORAN

BACOLOD CITY—Human rights advocates and cause-oriented groups yesterday called on President Duterte to give justice to the nine workers killed in Sagay City last Saturday.

This developed as groups led by the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), labor organizations and human rights groups formed a fact-finding team and commenced their joint investigation on last Saturday's massacre of nine farmers in Sagay City, Negros Occidental.

The representatives of the fact finding team also called on Duterte to order

the conduct of an impartial investigation, free from the involvement of local police, agencies and public officials in Negros island.

Participating in the probe are representatives of the NFSW, human rights group Karapatan, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura, Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, National Union of People's Lawyers, Promotion for Church People's Response, National Network of Agrarian Reform Advocates-Youth, Gabriela Women's Party, Gabriela Youth, Salinlahi, Children's Rehabilitation Center, Kabataan Party-list and Northern Negros

Alliance of Human Rights Advocates.

Initial findings of the team showed the nine farmers were gunned down by 10 to 15 armed men suspected to be state agents.

The initial report of the team said 43 members of the local chapter of the NFSW in Hacienda Nene, Barangay Bulanon, Sagay City, participated in a bungkalan, or land cultivation activity.

Before the bungkalan launch on Oct. 20, the report said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) had claimed the NFSW was a legal front of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

The group was supposedly tasked by the communists to grab private agricultural lands through force and coercion.

The report added that bungkalan operations directly threaten the control of landlords over their haciendas.

"Any dispute as to these victims' rights to the land did not warrant their murders, and the militancy of having farmers take their destinies into their hands by asserting these rights against landlords and warlords never, under any circumstance, justifies a massacre," the initial report said.

Karapatan, for its part, accused local officials in the province of maintaining pri-

ivate armies to protect their interests.

According to Karapatan secretary-general Cristina Palabay, Sagay Mayor Alfredo Marañon III, Negros Occidental Gov. Alfredo Marañon Jr and their relative Allan Simbingco are maintaining private armed groups known as Special Civilian Auxiliary Army (SCAA), composed mainly of paid mercenaries and former members of Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA).

Simbingco knew of the farmers' plan to conduct land cultivation activities in the hacienda, Palabay said.

Palabay also named a landowner she identified as Carmen Tolentino, whom she

said should be held accountable for the massacre.

"We also demand that the Philippine National Police (PNP), the AFP and the Marañons stop harassing the relatives of the victims and survivors of the massacre, as well as communities in Sagay in their dangerous efforts to cover up the real perpetrators of the massacre and spin their absurd conspiracies," Palabay said.

The Marañons earlier accused the NFSW of being a communist front and called on the government to conduct an investigation into their activities that led to the killing of the nine farmworkers last Saturday. — With Rhodina Villanueva

Massacre blamed on private army

By Jaymee T. Gamil
@jGamilINO

The National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) believes that the private army of a Negros landlord was behind the Oct. 20 massacre of nine NFSW members at Hacienda Nene in Sagay City, Negros Occidental.

In a statement on Friday, NFSW secretary general John Milton "Butch" Lozande supported the initial findings of a fact-finding mission conducted by human rights and leftist groups on the incident.

The groups linked Hacienda Nene "aryendador" (lessor) Allan Simbingco to the killing.

According to the NFSW, Simbingco is related to the province's Marañon political clan, which includes Sagay City Mayor Alfredo Marañon III and Gov. Alfredo Marañon Jr.

The NFSW, citing the find-

ings of the mission, alleged that the Marañons maintained a private army made up of former members of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army and active militia members of the Special Civilian Auxiliary Army (SCAA).

"The local SCAA [is] commonly known to protect haciendas in Negros and [is] under the control of the local government," the human rights group Karapatan claimed in a separate statement.

Same pattern

Karapatan was part of the fact-finding mission, along with peasant farmers' groups Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and Unyon ng mga Mangagawa sa Agrikultura, and human rights lawyers' group National Union of People's Lawyers, among others.

Lozande said the mission saw "the same pattern" in the

Sagay massacre and in the killings of NFSW Sagay chapter head Flora Jimola at Hacienda Susan in December last year and NFSW member Ronald Manlanat at Hacienda Jofred in January.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has denied the involvement of soldiers and militiamen in the massacre.

"What will we gain from killing those people? It is the [Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, New People's Army], which [have] the grand design of having this situation worsen, so when something bad happens, they can magnify it," AFP chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said at a press briefing in Malacañang on Thursday.

Galvez claimed that the massacre was part of the insurgents' so-called "Red October" plot to oust President Duterte. **INQ**

Indigenous peoples protest killings by Reds

INDIGENOUS peoples (IP), accompanied by actor Robin Padilla, held a protest rally at Ayala Avenue in Makati City on Friday, calling for justice against the alleged exploitation and killings of tribal leaders in Mindanao by communist groups.

The Indigenous Alliance Against Terrorism, with the Liga Independencia Filipinas and Alliance for Truth, Integrity and Nationalism Coalition (ATIN), accused the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing the New People's Army (NPA) of killing more than a thousand "legitimate" IP leaders in Mindanao since 2001 for "resisting" communist recruitment efforts.

"We have recorded that almost 1,500 tribal leaders were killed by CPP-NPA," said Joel Unad, IP leader of alliance member Council of Leaders and Community.

Unad said he himself was recruited by the NPA, and claimed his group had witnesses who could "point" to who the "real killers" of

the IP leaders are.

The IP leader also noted that the IPs' condition were "pitiful" in some areas in Mindanao where the CPP-NPA were in control of their ancestral lands.

He called on the government to help IP leaders file a case against CPP founding chairman Jose Maria Sison and other rebel leaders for orchestrating the "massive summary killings."

ATIN founder Ricardo Penson called for an end to revolutionary tax collection, or money paid by companies to the communist rebels to avoid being attacked.

"It is illegal. And not a single centavo from the revolutionary tax would go to IPs," he said.

Penson said mining companies should redirect their efforts to helping IPs.

Penson also said the left had "taken over" some Department of Education-accredited Lumad schools from Agusan del Norte to Zamboanga, "indoctrinating" students about communism and

leaving IPs confused.

Padilla, who claimed he became part of the NPA in 1995, urged the CPP-NPA and miners to end the exploitation and abuse caused by guerilla warfare.

"I am not just complaining about the leftists, but also about businessmen. It is too much," Padilla, who is half-Igorot on his mother's side, said in Filipino.

The actor also hit the CPP-NPA for claiming the lands of indigenous cadres "in the name of rebellion."

The CPP-NPA has been engaging in an armed struggle since 1968 in a bid to overthrow what it claims is a tyrannical form of government and replace it with a new state to be led supposedly by the working class. *K2*

Former communications assistant secretary Margaux "Mocha" Uson was also present during the protest, urging President Rodrigo Duterte to declare the CPP-NPA "terrorists" as "they take advantage of our IPs."

CATHERINE A. MODESTO

CALIPHATE PLAN

FOREIGN JIHADI FIGHTERS FLOCK TO MINDANAO

COTABATO CITY—Foreign fighters of the Islamic State are flocking to Mindanao to help local jihadi groups establish a caliphate in Southeast Asia, two sources told the Inquirer on Friday.

Professor Rommel Bantaoi, chair of Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, said the foreign terrorist fighters monitored to have entered Mindanao came from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Morocco, Spain, France, Tunisia, Iraq, Somali, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Pakistan, Bangladesh and China.

But the bulk of the foreign fighters came from Indonesia and Malaysia, which both share maritime borders with the Philippines.

"The [foreign fighters] regard Mindanao as the new land of jihad, safe haven and alternative home base," Bantaoi said.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, spokesperson for the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Western Mindanao Command, said the Islamic State continued to inspire local sympathizers despite their failure to establish an Islamic territory in Marawi during their five-month siege of the Islamic city last year.

—BONGS. SARMIENTO INQ

7 Abus, 3 Marines slain in Sulu clash

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Seven Abu Sayyaf bandits and three Marines were killed in an encounter in Patikul, Sulu yesterday.

The military said three other soldiers were wounded in the encounter.

The identities of the slain soldiers were withheld pending notification of their immediate families. The wounded were brought to a hospital at Camp Teodulfo Bautista in Barangay Busbus, Jolo.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, West-

ern Mindanao Command spokesman, said soldiers who conducted pursuit operations recovered the body of one of the slain bandits as well as his M14 rifle and several rounds of ammunition.

"A number of severely wounded bandits... could have died due to loss of blood," Besana said.

He said soldiers of the 61st, 62nd and 64th Marine Companies clashed with the bandits led by Alrujar Ekii and Aldi Alun.

"Twelve persons for identification were apprehended amid the exchange of gunfire. They are being interro-

gated by the troops," Besana said.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said there is no letup in military offensives to neutralize Abu Sayyaf bandits and rescue the remaining hostages.

The Abu Sayyaf is still holding a Dutch man, a Vietnamese and eight Filipinos.

9 BIFF men surrender

In Maguindanao, nine members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) surrendered in Gen-

eral SK Pendatun town also yesterday.

The BIFF members led by Parido Balabagan, alias Banog, turned over assorted firearms, grenade and rocket launchers and two .50 caliber Barrett rifles to the 6th Infantry Division (ID), according to Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana.

More than 20 BIFF men have surrendered to the 6th ID in the past few months.

Sobejana said they expect more BIFF bandits to surrender with the intercession of local and military officials.

- With Michael Punongbayan, John Unson

3 Marines, 1 terrorist killed in Sulu encounter

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD
and NONOY E. LACSON

Three Marines and an Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorist were killed following a fierce encounter in Patikul, Sulu on Friday, the military disclosed.

A report from the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom), said three other Marines were slightly hurt as a result of the encounter.

It was learned that soldiers of the Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu, under Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, were conducting military operations in their area of responsibility (AOR) when they encountered an undetermined number of ASG fighters in Patikul, Sulu, Friday morning.

Troops of the 62nd, 61st and 64th Marine Companies engaged their enemies, which were believed to be led by Alnijar Ekit and Aldi Alun in Barangay Timpook, Patikul, Sulu.

Based on intelligence gathered, a number of severely wounded bandits could have died due to loss of blood.

While pursuing the enemies, troops recovered the body of the ASG fighter enemy with his M14 rifle and seven M14 magazines.

The names of the slain Marines were withheld pending notification of their families.

The wounded soldiers were promptly evacuated to the Kuta Heneral Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital for treatment. 12

3 soldiers, 7 Sayyaf killed in new Sulu clashes

BY AL JACINTO AND DEMPSEY REYES

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Three members of the Philippine Marine Corps and seven Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) members were killed in an encounter on Friday morning in Patikul, Sulu.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman for the military's Western Mindanao Command (WestMindCom), disclosed that three other Marine troops were wounded while 12 were arrested in the fighting that broke out in Baran-

gay Timpook during an assault on an ASG hideout.

Three Marine companies — 62nd, 61st, and 64th — engaged the pro-Islamic State bandits under Abu Sayyaf sub-leaders Alnijar Elit and Aldi Alun in a

running gun battle that also left a still undetermined number of enemies wounded.

"Based on human intelligence, initial results of the ongoing firefight include a number of severely wounded bandits who could probably have died due to loss of blood. And while pursuing the Abu Sayyaf, troops recovered one dead body of the enemy killed with his M14 rifle and seven magazines," said Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, commander of

the Joint Task Force-Sulu.

"On the government side, three marines were killed and three others incurred minor injuries," he added.

Besana said the ASG bandits were "forced" to withdraw and escape while pursuit operations were ongoing. **A7**

The Abu Sayyaf leaders have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and are fighting along with other extremist groups actively operating in the troubled region for the establishment of a caliphate.

Nine die in Sulu clash between soldiers, Abus

By Francisco Turay

ISKRA Abu Sayyaf bandits and three marine troops were killed while several others—terrorists and soldiers—were wounded as intense fighting erupted anew in the unchanneled ridges of Patikul, Sulu early Friday, military officials said.

The firefight erupted after security forces encountered some 50 terrorists in Barangay Timpok as the military commenced the relentless

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Ten die...

From A1

hunt against the terrorist group in its forested haven in Patikul.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana said soldiers of the Joint Task Force Sulu under Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabaya were on combat patrol in a suspected ASG lair when gunfire ripped the environment.

Besana said troops of the 62nd, 61st and 64th Marine Companies engaged the ASG

bandits under sub-leader Alnjar Ekit and Aldi Alun and was continuing after sundown.

Heavy exchange of fire rang out between the terrorist and the government troops but the bandits were overwhelmed by the firepower unleashed by government forces, forcing the ASG members to withdraw and flee, according to the military.

The chase by soldiers sparked renewed skirmishes, the military added.

As the troops battled the bandits, soldiers found one dead body of a militant along with an M14 rifle with seven M14 magazines

Besana said the firefight resulted in the death of six bandits on the basis of human intelligence accounts while the number of wounded terrorist has not been thus far determined.

He said three soldiers were killed while three others sustained minor injuries.

Twelve persons, apparently near the vicinity of the gunfight, were arrested and have since been subjected to proper identification.

Besana said government casualties were evacuated to Kuta Hencral Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital for treatment and post

mortem examination.

"We are sad to report that we lost three of our valiant marines," said Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, commander of the Western Mindanao Command.

"We ask for prayers from all peace-loving people of the country for their eternal repose and for the speedy recovery of the three others who were wounded during the encounter," he added.

The ASG were held at bay and have laid low after the military launched massive operations against the terrorists in Mindanao.

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3 Marines, 1 ASG killed in gun battle

By FRANCIS T. WAKEFIELD

The military disclosed that three soldiers from the Philippine Marines and an Abu Sayyaf terrorist were killed following a fierce encounter Friday in Patikul, Sulu.

A report from the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Western Mindanao Command (AFP-WestMinCom), said that three other Marines were slightly hurt as a result of the encounter.

It was learned that soldiers of the Joint Task (JTF) Sulu under Brigadier General Divino Rey Pabaya were conducting military operations in their area of responsibility when they encountered an undetermined number of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) terrorists in Patikul, Sulu Friday morning.

Troops of the 62nd, 61st, and 64th Marine Companies engaged in a gun

battle with the Abu Sayyaf under sub-leaders Alnjar Ekit and Aldi Alun in Barangay Timpook, Patikul, Sulu.

Based on human intelligence, initial results of the ongoing firefight include a number of severely wounded bandits who probably could have died due to loss of blood, the military said.

While pursuing the enemies, troops recovered the body of a rebel killed with his M14 rifle and 7 M14 magazines.

The names of the fatalities were withheld pending notification of their relatives.

The wounded soldiers were promptly evacuated to the Kuta Heneral Teodulfo Bautista Station Hospital for immediate medical attention.

Meantime the Sixth Infantry

Division (6ID) destroyed thousands of loose firearms it had collected in Central Mindanao under the Duterte administration's intensified "Balik Baril" program that is meant to stabilize peace and security in Southern Philippines.

Lt. Gen. Arriel Dela Vega, head of the AFP-WestMinCom led the symbolic disposal of the undocumented assorted firearms on Wednesday to coincide with the 6ID's 31st founding anniversary in its headquarters in Camp Siongco, Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat town in Maguindanao.

Defense Sec. Dejin Lorenzana born in North Cotabato and raised in nearby Maguindanao, graced the occasion as keynote speaker and guest of honor.

6ID covers Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat provinces and parts of Lanao del Sur where close to 3,000 loose firearms, machineguns, and launchers for 60 and 81-millimeter mortars and B-40 anti-tank rockets, were collected this year under the enhanced "Balik Baril" program of the government.

Operatives of three infantry brigades, a mechanized brigade and a Marines Brigade under the 6ID operational control had collected the assorted firearms in coordination with local police units, peace and order councils and field leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), according to Sobejana.

"Many of the firearms (destroyed at the ceremony) were surrendered by feuding clans reconciled by the provincial government of Maguindanao," Dela Vega told reporters. **(With a report from Ali Macabalang)**

Sulu encounter: 6 Abu, 3 Marines utas!

Tatlong sundalo ng Philippine Marines at anim na miyembro ng mga bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) ang napaslang habang marami pa ang sugatan kabilang ang tatlong sundalo sa bakbakan sa Brgy. Timpook, Patikul, Sulu nitong Biyernes ng umaga.

Ayon kay Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman ng AFP Western Mindanao Com-

mand, dakong alas 5:20 ng umaga nang makasagupa ng tropa ng Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu sa ilalim ng pami-mundo ni Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo ang hindi pa madeterminang bilang ng mga bandido.

Ayon kay Besana, ang operasyon ng combat team ng 62nd at 61st Infantry Battalion (IB) at 64th Marine Companies ay upang malipol-

Nina JOY CANTOS at RHODERICK BEÑEZ

ang nalalab pang miyembro ng ekstremistang grupo at masagip ang nalalabi pang 10 hostages.

Sinabi ng opisyal na habang ginagalugad ng mga sundalo ang kagubatan ay nakasagupa nila ang hindi pa

madeterminang dami ng mga bandido sa ilalim nina Abu Sayyaf sub-leader Alnizar Eki at Aid. Alun.

Base sa intelligence reports, sinabi ni Besana na anim ang napatay na bandido na binibit ng kanilang mga

kasamahan habang marami pa ang sugatang nagsitakas.

Aniya isa sa mga bangkay ng mga kasaban ay nalita sa encounter site at narekober din ang isang M14 rifle at pitong M14 magazines habang patuloy pa ang clearing operations sa lugar. Tatlong Marines ang nalagas na pansa-

mantalang hindi muna tinukoy ang kanilang pagkakakilanlan habang nagpapatuloy ang pursuit operations laban sa mga terorista.

Kasalukuyan nang nilalapatan ng lunas sa Kuta Heneral Teodulfo Bautista (KHTEB) Hospital ang mga nasugatang sundalo.

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BAKBAKAN SA SULU: 9 PATAY

Patay ang tatlong tauhan ng Philippine Marines at anim na miyembro ng bandidong Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa naganap na bakhakan kahapon ng umaga sa Brgy Timpook, Patikul, Sulu.

Sinabi ni Lt. Col. Gerry Besana, Spokesman ng AFP Western Mindanao Command, dakong alas-5:20 ng umaga nang matasagupa ng tropa ng Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu ang tinatayang 50 armadong bandido sa ilalim ng pamumuno nina Abu Sayyaf Sub leader Almar Ekit at Aldi Alun.

Ang operasyon ng combat team ng 62nd at 61st Infantry Battalion (IB) at 64th Marine Companies ay upang malipol ang nalalabi pang miyembro ng ekstremistang grupo at masagip ang nalalabi pang sampung hostages.

Base sa intelligence report anim ang napatay na bandido na binitbit ng kanilang mga kasamahan habang marami pa ang sugatang nagsitakas.

Tatlo namang tauhan ng Philippine Marines ang nasawi na pansamantalang hindi muna tinukoy ng opisyal ang pagkakakilanlan dahil kailangan pang impormahan ang kanilang mga pamilya. - Joy Cantos, Rhoderick Beñez.

Agus-Pulangui hydro-plants to undergo rehab next year

DAVAO CITY – A full-scale rehabilitation of the Agus-Pulangui Hydroelectric Power Complex will commence next year that will increase the decades-old plants' capacity factor by more than 80 percent, Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) Executive Director Romeo Montenegro said on Wednesday.

Montenegro said the government was ruling out the possibility of the plants' privatization in the immediate term due to the objection of Mindanao lawmakers to the plan of Power Sector Assets Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM) to sell these off.

The plans for privatization have also been shelved because of the recent development in the signing of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARMM) since the future Bangsamoro government will have jurisdiction over the government's power assets that are located within the Bangsamoro territory, Montenegro added.

"The privatization may have to be determined later on because, as you may note, it was stipulated in one of the provisions that the assets that are allocated within the Bangsamoro, the Bangsam-

oro government will have preferential right to own – the Agus Complex. Therefore, PSALM cannot just unilaterally make any specific decision in terms of privatizing it without reckoning with the provisions of the BOL," he said.

He said what was more immediate was the major rehabilitation of the plants since they have been generating power at 589.26 megawatts (MW), or only 60 percent of the 982.1 MW installed capacity.

He said a mechanism will have to be arranged with the future Bangsamoro government if it would still push through with the privatization later on.

Majority of the hydro power source comes from the state-run Agus-Pulangui Hydroelectric Power Complex, comprising of seven hydroelectric plants, namely, Agus 1, Agus 2, Agus 4, Agus 5, Agus 6, and Agus 7 in the Lanao provinces, and Pulangui 4 in Bukidnon.

The rehabilitation would cost about \$1 billion or about P53.78 billion which will be sourced through foreign loans, Montenegro said.

Last August 2018, the Department of Finance identified the rehabilitation of the Agus-Pulangui Hydroelectric Power Plants of the National Power Corporation (Napocor) as one of the major government projects that will be funded through possible parallel financing arrangement between China and World Bank. 12

The actual rehabilitation works on the plants will start immediately after the six-month feasibility study will have been completed, Montenegro added. (Antonio L. Colina IV)

DILG STARTS FEDERALISM AWARENESS FORUM IN ARMM

COTABATO CITY: The roadshow aimed at raising public awareness on the proposed shift to a federal form of government has started in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as well as in the nearby province of Maguindanao. The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), which leads the drive, reiterated that "shifting to a federal form of government perfectly aligns with the Bangsamoro's hope for local autonomy." DILG Assistant Secretary Jonathan Malaya assured that federalism will not undo the developments of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), but would serve as necessary push and support the Bangsamoro people need for the autonomy they have been fighting for. Secretary Gary Olivar of the Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform, explained the proposed system — its principles and advantages — vis-a-vis the Bangsamoro Organic Law and the policy direction of President Rodrigo Duterte on shift to federal form of government are consistent with one another. Asked by the media on why most Filipinos are still not in favor of shifting to federalism, Professor Eddie Alih, a member of the Consultative Committee (ConCom) to Review the 1987 Constitution, said, "It is because they don't have a broad and deep idea on federalism that's why we are doing this information drive to build their understanding toward federalism." Alih, a former chancellor of the Mindanao State University in Tawi-Tawi, discussed the economic reforms and fiscal administration, political and social reforms, constitutional bodies and public accountability and transition provisions. Article XI of the ConCom's proposal, the federal republic will have 18 regions, 16 of which will be symmetrical. But the Bangsamoro and Cordilleras will have asymmetrical setups due to provisions of their autonomy, which recognizes ethnicity, culture, customs, traditions, language and distinct identities.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

DEPED-ARMM HIRES 2,458 NEW TEACHERS

COTABATO CITY: The Department of Education in the Autonomous Region in Mindanao (DepEd - ARMM) recently completed the installment hiring of 2,458 new public elementary and secondary school teachers for school year 2018-2019. DepEd - ARMM Secretary Rasol Mitnug Jr. said the new mentors are teachers board licensees and proportionately deployed to the region's five provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi. Maguindanao, being the region's biggest schools division, received the most number of new teachers with 435 for first district and 330 for second district. Mitnug said, adding that the new educators received their appointment orders and later attended a mass oath-taking ceremony at the DepEd-ARMM office here. Mitnug said the annual employment of new teachers is part of DepEd - ARMM's mission "to provide quality basic education for Bangsamoro school children. They were hired after passing "strict hiring process which includes Assessment and Competency Examination for Teachers in ARMM, an interview and a teaching demonstration." A7

ANTONIO P. RIMANDO

Twin blasts rock Ampatuan town

Camp SIONGCO, Maguindanao (PNA) – Twin explosions rocked the town of Ampatuan, Maguindanao on Friday morning but no one was reported injured, the military here said.

Major Arvin John Encinas, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the bombs were separately placed by the roadside near the Poblacion of Ampatuan town.

"Our troops in the area said the bombs were fashioned from 81-mm. mortar explosives concealed in sacks along the highway," said Encinas.

He said the explosions took place at about 9 a.m. as three military trucks were passing by the area.

"The blast site is actually very

proximate to the town center," Encinas said, adding that it was just fortunate that no one was hurt in the incident.

The highway has also been temporarily shut down, resulting in hundreds of vehicles from both sides stranded for almost two hours.

Encinas said the bombing bore the signature style of the Islamic State-inspired Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters that mainly operates in the so-called "SPMS box" in the province.

The SPMS box is a military term referring to the adjoining Maguindanao towns of Shariff Aguak-Pagatin (Datu Saudi), Mamasapano, and Datu Salibo.

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AT GROUND LEVEL

SATUR C. OCAMPO



Duterte's ominous stance on *bungkalan*, Sagay killings

Too bad, that even before the massacre of nine farm workers in Sagay, Negros Occidental has been thoroughly investigated, President Duterte is already echoing the military and police line. Landless farmers, he said, were seizing agricultural lands from the "original tenants after the [sugar] harvest... using violence and intimidation, backed up by the New People's Army (NPA)."

In a speech in Malacañang last Wednesday, Duterte warned the farm workers. "Please do not do it again. *Kasi* (because) the next time I hear a single incident, I will have you evicted." Emphasizing that "I'm addressing now the nation, the communists, and the Left," he added, ominously, "Please do not resist violently. I'm ready to do anything to establish order."

AFP chief Gen. Carlito Galvez, seated beside Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana in a televised press conference, even claimed that the Sagay massacre was part of their imaginary "Red October" plot to oust President Duterte. (Supposedly it was to have been carried out in September but has now been moved to December, to coincide with the 50th founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines.)

The CPP and the NPA have both categorically denied having had a hand in the Sagay killings, and blamed it on a paramilitary group of the AFP and goons hired by local landlords. They had earlier dismissed "Red October" as a scheme to justify the state security forces' intensified crackdown against progressive legal organizations and activists.

The fact is that the action taken by the slain farm workers – to cultivate (*bungkal*) a portion of Hacienda Nene in Barangay Bulanon by planting vegetables and other food crops – was nothing new.

There existed indeed such a "bungkalan" or "farmlet program," negotiated by the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) with some landowners starting in 1971, when the NFSW was formed. As a social-action program, *bungkalan* entailed encouraging sugar landlords to allocate small portions of their haciendas for the planting of foodcrops by the farm workers. This was done particularly during "tiempo muerto," the "dead season" between sugarcane harvest and the next planting season (May to September), when the landless, jobless peasants had no other income.

The *bungkalan* later evolved as an option for poor farmers across the country led by the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP), to take over idle lands for cultivation to feed their families.

With the repeated failures of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), *bungkalan* has become one of the modes employed by the peasants in pursuing their campaign to end land monopolization by a few big landlords and corporations. The end-goal, since CARP won't do it, is the dismantling of the feudal haciendas and other big landed estates.

Already thousands of hectares of former sugarlands in Negros island have become more productive under *bungkalan*, as can be gathered from a compilation of investigative reports by the media outfit *Bulatlat.com*. For instance, the reports say that in North and Central Negros, *bungkalan* exists in 80 haciendas, benefiting 3,156 farming families. In Central Negros, 20 percent of *bungkalan* is done through communal farming, while 80 percent is under individual or family

tillage.

In commemoration of the 13th year of the Hacienda Luisita massacre of striking farmworkers in November 2004, a book, titled *Bungkalan, Manual sa Organisadong Pagsasaka*, was published last year by the Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA). UMA was formed in 2005, in the aftermath of the Hacienda Luisita massacre. The NFSW was among the organizers.

The articles in the book dwell mainly on the *bungkalan* experiences of the farm workers in Hacienda Luisita, owned by the family/clan of former President Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino, and those in Negros.

Among the recent cases inspired by *bungkalan* were the following:

- The MARBAI versus Lapanday case in Mindanao. In the first two weeks of May 2017, members of the Madaum Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association Inc. (MARBAI) encamped on Mendiola, near Malacañang. They were demanding their reinstatement by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) as owner-tillers of 145 hectares of farmland in San Isidro, which formed part of a 1,400-hectare banana plantation in Tagum City owned and managed by Lapanday Food Corp. Then DAR Secretary Rafael Mariano had already recommended positive action on their petition.

On May 16, President Duterte visited the encamped farmer-beneficiaries, and after hearing their appeals, directed Secretary Mariano to implement their reinstatement. It took some time before the presidential order was fully carried out, as Lapanday security guards hindered the entry of the farmer-beneficiaries apparently under orders by the firm's management.

- A day earlier, on May 17 last year, 100 farmers entered and occupied 60 hectares of land within the Sanggalang estate in Barangay Baloc, Sto. Domingo, Nueva Ecija. The farmers were members of the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon-NE, who had been forcibly driven out of the farms they tilled by Sanggalang security and goons in 2008. In 2001 they had succeeded in asserting their right to till their farms within the estate. The case has been brought to the DAR for resolution.

Still unresolved are the land disputes in Hacienda Loooc in Batangas, the Yulo King farm and other farms in Coron, Palawan, among others.

I had my own little experience, during my first campaign in the 2001 partylist elections, in supporting the landless farmers who had occupied and cultivated an idle piece of land in Bago, Negros Occidental. Through the assistance of lawyers in fighting for their right to till the land, and my own intercession with then DAR Secretary Hernani Braganza, the disputed land was awarded to them.

With President Duterte's ominous warning to landless farmers to stop making productive use of idle land to feed even just themselves and their families, this recurring problem all over the country is bound to continue. An indication of the president's current inclination is the last-minute cancellation of his announced plan to condole with the Sagay victims' families; instead, he was photographed visiting the wake of soldiers who died in an NPA ambush in Bicol.

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COMMENTARY

PATRICK CRONIN AND RICHARD HEYDARIAN

Time for a 21st-century PH-US alliance

Of all the alliances in the Asia-Pacific today, there is none more underappreciated than that of the Philippines and the United States. And there is no line that better captures the essence of this century-old alliance than Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr's immortal refrain: "The more it changes, the more it's the same thing."

Over the past two years, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly threatened to downgrade, if not sever, bilateral strategic relations with the United States. This was partly driven by disagreements over human rights issues, especially in light of his scorched-earth drug war, which has alienated Western partners and put into question the Philippines' democratic credentials.

Yet, Mr. Duterte's fast and furious call for an "independent" foreign policy was also driven by a legitimate desire to diversify Manila's foreign relations and, accordingly, reduce its historical dependence on Washington. Seeking rapprochement with China, the Philippines' most powerful neighbor, formed the core of Mr. Duterte's new foreign policy approach.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump's perceived unilateralism, unleashing trade wars against both foes and friends and occasionally questioning the value of traditional alliances in the region, has raised concerns over Washington's commitment to upholding the liberal order in Asia.

Yet, even as Chinese President Xi Jinping prepares to visit Manila and shower his hosts with shiny gifts and earnest pledges of peace next month, the Philippine-US alliance looms large in the background. After all, the alliance represents the Philippines' key deterrence against external threats, while the geographically blessed Manila represents a crucial node in Washington's "free and open Indo-Pacific" strategy.

Nonetheless, like any intimate relationship, alliances need to be refined and upgraded over time if they are to maintain their vitality and relevance.

Alliances are strongest when they serve the vital common interests of nations beyond transient political cycles and temperamental shifts in their domestic leaderships. The bedrock of the Philippine-US alliance is the shared need for two Pacific democracies to safeguard a favorable balance of power by upholding and adapting a fair, rules-based system free from coercion, predatory economics, and assaults on freedom.

Philippine security can be supported through the diversification of its security partners, which the United States welcomes as the sovereign prerogative of its partners, so long as it doesn't undermine the bilateral alliance. In fact, there is only one country that has and will come to the defense of Filipinos should it face aggression by a hostile power. That country is the United States. For those in doubt, a visit to the American cemetery in Manila provides a poignant reminder of a shared history of wartime sacrifice.

There are lingering concerns over American reluctance to grant Manila a blank-check security guarantee, but this should only serve as a basis to strengthen the alliance, not question its utility. While the United States will retain some ambiguity over how to respond to specific threats as part of its "strategic ambiguity" approach, in practice, however, it will support the Philippines against any legitimate threat.

As Randall Schriver, assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, put it earlier this year, "We'll be a good ally... There should be no misunderstanding or lack of clarity on the spirit and the nature of our commitment... We'll help the Philippines respond accordingly [to any external threat]."

More robust American strategic guarantees, particularly against any coercive move against Filipino troops stationed in the South China Sea and third-party reclamation or the militarization of the Philippine-claimed Scarborough Shoal issue, would be a welcome development for the alliance.

Moreover, the United States is seeking to expand the capabilities of the Philippine military, coast guard and law enforcement capabilities so that Manila can better protect its sovereignty and security. The Obama administration started providing increased maritime assistance as part of a strategy to foster principled, inclusive, networked security. The Trump administration is building on that through both additional bilateral engagements and expanded Freedom of Navigation Operations in the West Philippine Sea, as well as close coordination with other allies such as Japan.

Moving forward, the two allies should focus on how to best implement existing defense agreements, particularly the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, to optimize their strategic cooperation against external threats, both in the maritime security and counterterrorism dimensions.

The United States has been a key source of assistance against the threat of terrorism in the Philippines. For the past two decades, American Special Forces have provided invaluable assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines in tracking, isolating, capturing and decimating terrorist franchises in the country.

During last year's siege of Marawi, Washington provided high-grade equipment, state-of-the-art surveillance and intelligence, as well as much-needed urban warfare training to help the AFP's valiant efforts to liberate the city with minimum casualties.

In the realm of economics, the United States is a leading investor in the Philippines and among its top export destinations. This close economic relationship can be further enhanced through the proposed new US-Philippine Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, as well as expanded American infrastructure investment in the Philippines under the \$60-billion Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) initiative, which is meant to complement the "Build, build, build" vision of the Duterte administration.

Far from fading into oblivion, Asia's oldest alliance is alive and kicking. Yet, it's an alliance that has to be upgraded in the context of uniquely 21st-century security challenges and strategic opportunities, if it is to maintain its 20th-century relevance, vitality and strength.

Civilian or military: Who is more trustworthy in public service?

First
word

THE
NATION
should



OBSERVER

YEN
MAKABENTA

pause a minute to reflect on the bizarre developments at the Bureau of Customs: 1) the alleged smuggling of P11-billion worth of shabu during the watch of Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña; 2) inquiries in Congress; 3) the sudden transfer and promotion of Lapeña to director

► MakabentaA4

of the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and to membership in the Cabinet, and 4) the appointment of another retired military officer as the new Customs chief.

The pace of developments is so rapid and breathless I wonder how our septuagenarian president is able to keep abreast of them.

This is more than just a case of another massive drug smuggling attempt through Customs. This will not just be another fruitless inquiry in Congress on how the Customs bureau works or does not work.

Perhaps in the confusion, some will finally realize that it is surely time to scrutinize the creeping thesis being advanced by President Duterte that military veterans or persons with military backgrounds can be better trusted with the cares of public office or the tasks of administration.

This impels inquiry now because from a seemingly problematic position of command responsibility at Customs for the alleged P11-billion drug smuggling attempt, Lapeña was inexplicably promoted by the President.

This impels inquiry also because to replace Lapeña, the President tapped another retired general, a former AFP chief of staff, Rey Leonardo Guerrero, to serve as the new commissioner of customs. He will join a large group of retired military men in the executive branch of government.

Are retired military men better prepared for government service than civilians? Do they have special training to hold high public office? Or are they more honest?

Which is more unsettling?

The hard reality is that DU 30 has a proclivity to test the civilian against the military in our public life. I wonder frankly which is more unsettling.

1. The fact that DU30 has openly declared that he prefers to be succeeded by a military junta than by his constitutional successor, Vice President Leni Robredo, and that he keeps urging soldiers and officers to replace him if they are displeased with him, or

2. That he markedly prefers to appoint military veterans or individuals with military backgrounds to the executive service, than civilians.

I am totally perplexed by DU30's attitude because I was raised and schooled on the constitutional principle of "civilian control over the military." And the principle was the same in our Constitution the last time I looked.

It's best to look at the facts and the argument.

We are not the first to ask as to which is more reliable or effective in high-level government service — the military or civilian. America has perennially argued this question because of the wars it has had to fight, especially the Vietnam War.

Military vs civilian leadership

In an article in *Foreign Policy*, published on Sept. 21, 2018, Mara-L. Karlin discusses how preference for officials with military experience for defense leadership was closing off the outsider benefits of civilian leadership.

She contends that since 9/11,

persuasive, persistent, and unrealistic myths have eroded faith in civilian leadership of defense policy.

Among these myths are the superior virtue of military over other kinds of public service; that battlefield experience is the most authoritative source of military policy expertise; and that an exclusively civilian background is inadequate for strategic defense leadership.

In the United States, these myths are nurtured and perpetuated by both military and civilian communities and affect general public opinion as well as the attitudes of national security professionals. These myths are also corrosive. Unless they are acknowledged, addressed, and challenged, future civilian leaders may struggle to control the use of force — a profound problem for a democratic system. Downgrading civilian leadership will weaken US national security and the military itself.

The myth which the majority of Americans are most familiar with is the notion that military service tops the hierarchy of civic duties.

The idea that civilian politicians are "empty barrels" in contrast to substantive, hardened veterans undergirds the argument that officers and veterans must also fill moral vacuums in strategic leadership.

The author Karlin, an associate professor of strategic studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, makes this wise point: "Military service should be venerated, but it is not the only type of service to the nation, and it does not monopolize civic virtue."

I may be wrong, but I suspect the same kind of mythmaking in the present predilection here for military men in appointments to the public service.

You blew your chance

Duterte reinforced this thinking when he reproached the military last Wednesday for blowing the chance to initiate real change in the country when it returned power to politicians after helping oust two unpopular administrations.

"You have had your chance to really change the country but you did not," Duterte said in a speech at the awarding ceremonies for national artists.

Addressing the military, he said, "You in the military, listen to this. You have staged so many coups, mutinies and everything. The problem with you is, every time there's a successful revolution, you returned power to the people. Power emanates from the people, remember, not to the few," he said. He clearly meant the February 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution that toppled dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the so-called EDSA 2 in 2001 that forced President Joseph Estrada to step down.

"So next time if you want a revolutionary government or if you want... Sleep on it, think about it, and do not just surrender and salute whoever you want to salute," DU30 concluded.

He then declared again that he doesn't mind getting toppled by the AFP or even by the Philippine National Police, and that they only have to tell him to leave if they are not satisfied with his leadership.

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Clear and present threat

“The IS threat is not a limited domestic concern as the design of the fundamentalist group is the domination of Asia through its base in the Philippines.

The ongoing pipe bomb scare in the United States is a reminder of the incessant threat of terrorism globally.

Since last Monday, 10 suspected or confirmed mail bombs were sent to prominent personalities, including former President Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton who was erstwhile Secretary and billionaire George Soros in five states.

On Thursday morning, a similar package was found addressed to actor Robert de Niro and two packages were discovered addressed to former Vice President Joe Biden.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and New York Police Department (NYPD) held press conferences saying they do not know if there are other devices yet to be uncovered or the group manufacturing the bombs.

New York state Gov. Andrew Cuomo confirmed media reports from unnamed law enforcement sources that the bombs originated in Florida.

California Democratic member of Congress, Maxine Waters, a target of two of the devices, blamed US President Donald Trump for whipping up his supporters and, in her view, encouraging violence.

The cloud of fear pervading the US is similar to the prevailing uncertainty in the nation in the aftermath of the five-month occupation of Marawi City by Islamic State (IS) forces last year.

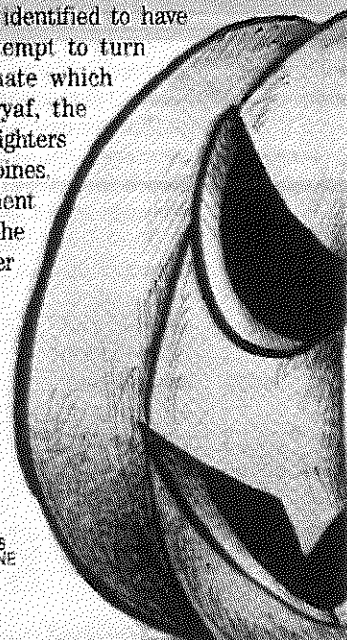
The liberation of the city was recently marked as a reminder of the brutal urban war that pitted state forces against IS-linked forces.

Four IS-aligned groups were identified to have participated in the daring attempt to turn Marawi City into an IS caliphate which are the Mautes, the Abu Sayyaf, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Ansar Khalifah Philippines.

What surprised the government in the terror offensive was that the IS forces were stronger and better resourced than expected.

Despite their thrashing from the government forces, the IS elements remained capable of launching deadly attacks such as recently on 31 July when a suicide bomber detonated his device at a military checkpoint on the outskirts of Lamitan city, on the island of Basilan, killing 11 people.

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DAILY TRIBUNE



It was later revealed to have been carried out by a Moroccan with ties with Abu Sayyaf and was also claimed by Islamic State's official *Amaq* news agency indicating that the IS continues to harbor ties with the bandit group.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, however, said the Abu Sayyaf has a largely diminished strength of fewer than 150 fighters.

Despite martial law being in force, the BIFF remains a continuing threat in Mindanao as its units recently clashed with the military in the provinces of Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

The BIFF is split into at least three factions and is commanded by IS-linked radical Abu Toraiife.

The group has acquired a high degree of bomb-making skills from Indonesian and Malaysian jihadists who move with the BIFF. The splinter group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has a peace agreement with the government, is now the organization of choice for foreign IS militants.

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A key advantage of the Philippines in fighting terror is its cooperation with its neighbors that Trump would not even imagine doing

The siege of Marawi City happened after security forces failed to detect the extent of jihadi infiltration in western Mindanao, as militants from neighboring Indonesia and Malaysia used isolated waterways of the Sulu and Celebes Seas to join up with the Mautes and Abu Sayyaf.

Now, naval and air patrols carried out jointly by the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia are regularly being held in the area.

Another advantage, of course, is the military rule that allows the government to limit the movements of the IS-aligned groups.

The IS threat is not a limited domestic concern as the design of the fundamentalist group is the domination of Asia through its base in the Philippines.

There are calls for the extension of martial law in Mindanao beyond 31 December which comes not from government but residents, mainly the business sector, who are being benefited by the guarantee of peace.

President Rodrigo Duterte is waiting the advice of senior army generals on the proposed extension. Philippine National Police chief Director General Oscar Albayalde had voiced his support.

Duterte's continuing engagement with the MILF through its shared effort with the government to put up the Bangsamoro region also makes the government always one step ahead in dealing with the terrorists.

The yellow mob's call for an end to martial law is a clear invitation for the terror group to launch another Marawi City push or bigger.

Whether or not to extend martial law in Mindanao, thus, depends on the military view on the IS capability to still carry out its campaign of terror on the entire region.

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CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP | OSAGS has new chief

Posted by Alvin Santiago

FORT ANDRES BONIFACIO, Taguig City (DWDD) – The Philippine Army Office of the Secretary Army General Staff (OSAGS) has a new chief in the person of Lieutenant Colonel Patrick B. De Villa who succeeded Colonel Christopher C. Tampus in a simple turn-over rite held at the HPA Conference Room, on October 24, 2018.



Major General Danilo Chad D. Isleta, Chief of Staff, Philippine Army presided the ceremony before the crowd comprised of general, personal, special and technical staff, as well as personnel from various HPA offices.

Lt. Col. De Villa in his remarks said, *"I am overwhelmed for the trust and confidence given by the Command. I know I'll be facing a great challenge with this new job as I fill the giant shoes left by my predecessor. Nevertheless, through teamwork and cooperation, which I expect from the OSAGS family, we can accomplish numerous task with flying colors."*

Lt. Col. De Villa is a member of the Philippine Military Academy "Bantay Laya" Class of 1994. He holds a Master's Degree in Business Management. He spent the early years of his career in Visayas and Mindanao with the Special Forces and he is also a recipient of various awards which include a Distinguished Service Star, Military Merit Medals, and Military Commendation Medals.

On the other hand, Maj. Gen. Isleta in his message expressed his gratitude to Col. Tampus. He said that through the diligence and professionalism of Col. Tampus, numerous Command activities were accomplished with resounding success. He also acknowledged the new OSAGS Chief whom he described as a "silent worker but high achiever".

Change of leadership is a constant thing and traditional to the Philippine Army whose goal is to sustain organizational excellence and good governance in order to provide better service to the country and the Filipino people. **OACPA / MCAG**

GRADUATE | Ex-NPA, IPs finish TESDA Course

Posted by Alvin Santiago

MAGPET, Cotabato (DWDD) – A total of 27 individuals completed the first batch of the Skills Training Program in Carpentry that was initiated by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Institute of Motorbike and Auto Mechanics Incorporated (IMAMI) and 19th Infantry Battalion at Barangay Manobo, Magpet, Cotabato, on October 25, 2018.



According to 1Lt. Prolen Bonacua, Commanding Officer of Alpha Company, 19th Infantry Battalion, twenty (20) among the participants were former CPP-NPA terrorists who yielded during the start of 19IB's counter-insurgency campaign in Arakan Valley Complex on first semester of this year.

Engr. Franklin Beltran, representative from TESDA – North Cotabato Office said that the participants were able to complete their training, in line with the agency's National Integration Scholarship Program (NISP), which seeks to empower the former rebels and help them go back to the mainstream society.

Aside from receiving their National Certificate (NC) from TESDA, the participants were also provided with starter tool kits for them to start their own livelihood. They also received Php 2,400 as cash allowance during their 24 days of skills training. Alias James, one of the participants was teary-eyed before the other attendees, as he gave his testimony during the Closing Ceremony of their training. He could not imagine that the government he hated for several years of being in the armed movement is the same government who extends assistance to him and his former comrades.

He also lauded the local officials, partner agencies and soldiers of Alpha Company, 19th Infantry Battalion who are presently conducting Community Support Program (CSP) in Barangay Manobo and nearby villages in the town of Magpet.

"Kung wala ang sundalo sa among barangay, magduhaduha gayud pag nganhi ang mga taga TESDA ug uban pang ahensya sa gobyerno tungod sa mga NPA nga nakasulod dinhi sa among lugar. (It would have been difficult for TESDA and other government agencies to come here without the presence of the military because our village is infested by the NPA) Alias James said.

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

For his part, Lt. Col. Ehrlich Noel Paraso, Commanding Officer of 19IB believed that it will be easier for former CPP-NPA terrorist to fully return to the mainstream society if they are equipped with skills that will help improve their families' standard of living.

*"Government interventions cited in the Enhanced-Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) such as the skills training provided by TESDA through the Institute of Motorbike and Auto Mechanics Incorporated (IMAMI) is one of their doors towards embracing a new life together with their family. Again, I am calling for the remaining bandits who are still out there in the mountains to grab the opportunities the government has offered: surrender and live a normal life", Paraso said. **19IB / MCAG***

TIRED | NPA members surrender in Cuartero, Capiz

Posted by Alvin Santiago

CUARTERO, Capiz (DWDD) – Members of the New People’s Army together with their members of the Militia ng Bayan under East Front Committee, Komiteng Rehiyon Panay voluntarily surrendered to the Local Government of Cuartero, Capiz and 61st Infantry Battalion, 3rd Infantry “Spearhead” Division, Philippine Army at Brgy Poblacion, Cuartero, Capiz on October 22, 2018.

There are a total of seven (7) NPA regular members and 52 Militia ng Bayan (MB) members who voluntarily surrendered bringing along with them the following high powered and low powered firearms; one (1) US M1 Garrand rifle, one (1) US calibre .45 pistol, ten (10) locally made shotguns, two (2) calibre .38 pistols, one (1) hand grenade and various live ammunition.

The said surrender is the result of the relentless efforts of the 61st Infantry Battalion and with the assistance of the LGU Cuartero particularly the Barangay Officials of Brgy Putian, Cuartero, Capiz.

The Militia ng Bayan, (MB) is a force multiplier or sometimes act as part time NPA armed members. They support the regular NPA members by providing them additional manpower, information, food and other logistics.

A certain alyas “Bong-Bong”, former Militia ng Bayan (MB) member said that “The reason we surrendered is because we are already tired of fighting the government forces. We experienced starvation due to the continuous combat operations conducted by the Joint AFP-PNP forces in the area and realized the false promises of the CPP-NPA, that is why we decided to return to the folds of the law.”

Colonel Benedict M Arevalo, Brigade Commander, 301st Infantry Brigade, Philippine Army said “We acknowledge the important efforts of the local chief executives in leading the campaign in anti-insurgency in their community by encouraging NPAs to surrender. We encourage the other members of the NPA to surrender and live a peaceful life. And for those who still choose to fight, we will hunt them and use the full force of the law and our military might to neutralize or capture them”.

The Philippine Army and the Local Government Units will ensure that all benefits under the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP) will be given to the NPA members who surrendered in order to help them have a normal and peaceful life”, Colonel Arevalo added.



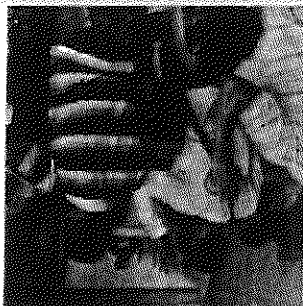
Col Arevalo inspects the surrendered firearms together with Mayor of Cuartero, Capiz Hon Tito Mayo, Provincial Director John Ace Azarcon of DILG Capiz, Ms. Joerin C Tan-Representative from DSWD Capiz and PSI Grace D Borio-OIC Cuartero MPS

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Relatedly, for those who want to surrender and for any information on NPA's movements and extortion activities call or text the 301st Infantry Brigade hotline numbers, 0928-175-7208 and 0916-766-3740. 301Bde / MCAG



Rebel Returnees swear allegiance to support the government



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