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OFFICE OF THE ARMY CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

09 April 2019
Tuesday
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Honor. Patriotism. Duty
By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

**ONLINE NEWS**

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*Honor. Patriotism. Duty*
Malacañang downplayed yesterday President Duterte's threat to declare a "revolutionary war," saying the remark was an "exasperated expression" directed against "enemies of the state," not the people.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Duterte was not threatening the people when he said he would declare a revolutionary war or revolutionary government if pushed to the wall.

"If the statement came across as a threat, it was not made on a whim but brought about by a series of acts committed against the people," Panelo said.

"The threat, if it is a threat, is not against the people but precisely against their enemies -- the criminals, people manning the illegal drug industry, corrupt bureaucrats, greedy politicians, communist rebels, foreign and local terrorists and other enemies of the state," Panelo explained.

He said among the problems that angered Duterte were the bold entry of illegal drugs in the country despite the relentless war against narcotics, unmitigated corruption in government, bureaucratic red tape that has stymied government projects, the seeming impunity of criminals, onerous contracts entered into by government that prevented it from protecting the people's interests, attacks by communist rebels and terrorist threats.

On Thursday, Duterte floated the possibility of declaring a "revolutionary war" after opposition Sen. Franklin Drilon urged the administration to be cautious in reviewing government contracts.

Drilon said no country or entity would forge deals with the Philippines if the sanctity of contracts is not respected.

"I have enough problems..."
with crime, drugs, rebellion and all pero pag ako ang pinaaot ninyo ng sagad (if you go too far). I will declare a suspension of the writ of habeas corpus and I will arrest all of you,” Duterte said during a convention of prosecutors in Palawan last week.

“Why should I be careful in reviewing contracts that are not in the interest of the people? And the onerous and (burdensome) provisions there that the people will have to honor, so you think I will allow it? Just because we cannot impair the obligation of our contracts?” he added.

Duterte also threatened to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, a safeguard against illegal detention. It is a court order to present the body of someone who is in jail.

“So kasama kayo sa mga rebelde, mga kriminal pati mga durugia. Then pahurapan mo ako (You are at par with rebels, criminals and drug addicts, then you make it hard for me). I will declare a revolutionary war until the end of my term,” Duterte said.

Critics lambasted Duterte for threatening to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, saying his bold statement was just a way to divert attention from the failures of his administration.

Advocacy group Karapatan said human rights are not subject to the “personal whining, interests and lunacy” of the President.

The group also expressed fear that Duterte’s statement would lead to intensified onslaught of killings and human rights violations to stifle dissent and to bury the “crimes perpetrated by this government.”

But Panelo said Duterte merely warned violators of the law that he would not condone their actions.

Panelo noted that under Article 2, Section 4 of the Constitution, “the prime duty of the government is to serve and protect the people.”

“The President’s narrative on the revolutionary war is an expression of frustration and at the same time to put the transgressors of the law on notice that he will not sit idly and watch their transgressions (go) unabated,” Panelo said.

He said the President could use the powers reposed to him by the Constitution to quell the attacks on the people and save the state.

— With Edith Regalado
DU3O MUST EXPLAIN WEALTH, SAYS SERENO

The former Chief Justice says the people have the right to know why the earnings of the Dutertes rose significantly. The President did not commit any violation since his assets and liabilities are on record, says his spokesperson.

ILOILO CITY—President Duterte has the duty to explain the significant increases in his family’s earnings instead of saying it was nobody’s business, former Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno said here on Monday.

On the sidelines of a voter education forum on the University of the Philippines Visayas campus, Sereno said the explanation was more necessary amid allegations that members of the President’s family were involved in illegal drugs.

“I believe that we (government officials) should display a simple lifestyle. If an official is suspiciously wealthy, there should be an explanation. And the explanation should be made public,” Sereno said.

A three-part report by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) found significant increases in the incomes of the President and his children, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte and former Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte, while they were in office.

Using data curated from his statements of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALNs), PCIJ said the net worth of the President, a former mayor, rose 195 percent from P9.60 million in 2007 to P48.54 million in 2017.

The net worth of Sara jumped 51.8 percent, from P7.25 million in 2007 to P44.83 million in 2017, while that of Paolo jumped 233 percent, from P8.34 million to P27.74 million.

PCIJ also found that the Dutertes had interests and engagements in at least 23 corporate entities but did not consistently declare them in their SALNs.

It claimed that they had an unregistered law firm and shares that they did not declare.

**Nobody’s business**

During a profanity-laden speech here on Saturday, Mr. Duterte said that whatever his family earned outside of politics was nobody’s business.

He came to his children’s defense, claiming that their wealth came from their businesses and law firms. He went on to say that he had also received inheritance from his mother Soledad Duterte, a schoolteacher.

“You yellows, all the time I was with my mother. Even when I was already mayor, my mother still fed me,” the President said, using a broad reference to Liberal Party members and critics of his administration. “She left us with money. But do I have to tell you how much?”

In a statement, PCIJ executive director Malou Mangahas said that under the SALN law, all public officials should file “truthful and complete” disclosures of their assets, liabilities and net worth.

**‘No violation’**

On Monday, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the President did not commit any violation since he put his assets and liabilities on record.

“What is prohibited is when you do not declare your assets.
But he has declared them. So what’s the hullabaloo?” Panelo asked.

Sought for comment, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea said the SALNs requested by PCIJ were submitted before Mr. Duterte became President and were not in the possession of the Office of the President.

Nitpicking

“It must be made of record that President’s critics and detractors had been nitpicking on the President’s SALN. They have tried to make an issue out of even the minutest detail in hopes to pin the President for some wrongdoing, but to their dismay, their efforts had all failed,” Medialdea said.

Instead of lasting out at investigative journalists and their reports, the President should turn his ire to Panelo, along with his other deputies, for their failure to respond to request letters for interviews for the past five months, PCIJ said.

“The President did not have to lose his cool,” Mangahas said.

“PCIJ had wished only the Duterte to offer clear, direct, straightforward replies to our queries instead of blaming PCIJ for the report,” she said.

Mangahas said PCIJ reporters had exerted best effort to obtain the Duterte’s side, by courier, fax and e-mail.

The center said it sent them two batches of request letters in October 2018 and in January.

Certified true copies

The corporate documents and asset records used in the reports were also authenticated as certified true copies.

“It would have been far better had Mr. Duterte… Sara… and Paolo granted PCIJ’s request for comment, and possibly sit-down interviews, before the story ran,” Mangahas said.

She noted that PCIJ had reported on the wealth and controversies that hounded all five Presidents before Mr. Duterte, beginning with Corazon Aquino, whom Mr. Duterte’s mother actively supported from her Davao City hometown.

“The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines said the President and his family were not exempt from the transparency mandated by the Constitution and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

“As for his accusation against investigative journalists, if he has proof, by all means present it,” said Nonly Espina, NUJP chair. “As far as we know, many of the investigative journalists we know are among the creme de la creme of the profession.”

Sereno said journalists “are just seeking answers to questions.”

“It is clear that the people need an explanation. He is not being accused of any crime or violation as of now,” she said.

Sereno was removed from office last year due to her alleged failure to submit some of her SALNs when she worked as a professor in UP Diliman before she was appointed to the high court.

She had explained that she was not able to secure a copy from UP because these were missing. —WITH A REPORT FROM JHESETO ENANO INQ
DND: No add’l troops to Pag-asa

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

The military will not deploy additional troops but will maintain its presence on Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenza said yesterday.

Lorenza said there are no plans to increase the number of soldiers currently stationed in the area.

“No such plan. We will maintain our normal presence in Pag-asa and in other eight features that we own,” Lorenza said.

Last week, President Duterte told the Chinese to lay off the island, which is part of the municipality of Kalayaan.

In Palawan.

“This is not a warning, this is just a word of advice to my friends, since we are friends. China, I will not plead or beg, but I’m just telling you: lay off Pag-asa because I have my soldiers there,” Duterte said.

“Pag-asa Island belongs to us. Is that our base? China would never do that, I assure you, unless China wants a war with us. I will not allow them to also occupy Pag-asa. No, of course not,” he added.

Lorenza refused to reveal the actual number of soldiers stationed in Pag-asa. In other features in the Spratly chain as such information is confidential.

“Basta taliat ng (All of the) islands belonging to us, we have troops,” he said without giving details.

Soldiers on Pag-asa told the STAR that they call the eastern side of the island as the Philippine side and the western part the “unsafe side,” saying they wouldn’t want to call it the Chinese side.

The government is currently working on improving the facilities in Pag-asa, particularly repairing and improving the runway and constructing a beach ramp.
Otso Diretso bets ‘barred’ from going to Panatag Shoal

BY HELEN FLORES

Local coast guards stopped opposition senatorial candidates yesterday from taking a boat ride to Panatag ( Scarborough) Shoal to do a symbolic planting of the Philippine flag on a sandbar feature now controlled by China.

Otso Diretso candidates expressed dismay at being prevented by the Philippine Coast Guard from leaving Masinloc, Zambales for a boat trip to Panatag.

Human rights lawyer Chel Diokno, Marawi civic leader Samira Gutoc, former solicitor general Florin Hilbay and Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano had originally planned to sail to Panatag on a rented boat.

But they said the PCG refused to give the boat owners permit to ferry the senatorial bets because they were carrying recording equipment. The PCG threatened to seize their equipment if they persisted on taking the boat ride.

The PCG in Manila denied receiving report from its personnel regarding the candidates’ complaint.

The opposition candidates instead decided to hold a dialogue with affected fisherfolk in Masinloc.

Diokno stressed the Duterte administration’s failure to assert the country’s sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea is not just hurting fisherfolk, but all Filipinos and future generations as well.

“Now, our fisherfolk are the ones affected (by Duterte’s acquiescence), that’s the short-term effect,” Diokno said. He has filed a case for the protection of Filipino fishers before the Supreme Court.

“But if we think of the long-term effect, we should think of its impact on our next generation because of the continued incursion (of the Chinese) into our resources, which we fail
From Page 1

To use for our own needs... We are telling our people to refrain from engaging in any protest or coordination with the PCC. If we coordinate with the PCC, we would be able to identify how many people are needed to rescue and coordinate with the people.
'Otso Diretso' bets barred from entering Panatag Shoal

OUR opposition candidates for senator were barred from the disputed Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal off the coast of Zamboanga on Monday.

Four of the Senate bets who held their sortie in Masbate town were dismayed after they were not allowed to monitor the situation in the disputed territory following a dialogue with community leaders and Filipino fishermen who were reportedly harassed by Chinese security forces.

"That is the injustice that we are experiencing. We thought this territory is ours but why aren't we even allowed to go there? It's truly an irony because even the government which claims that this is part of the Philippines is the one preventing us from going there," Human rights lawyer Jose Manuel "Chef" Diokno told reporters in a chance interview.

The party's liaison officer confirmed with the Manila Times that during the Otso Diretso ground team's preparation for the scheduled sortie, it was notified that the candidates would not be allowed to go, especially if accompanied by reporters.

The candidates, however, marched toward Masbate Municipal Fish Port in the morning to join the rally of local protesters in fighting for the country's rights to Panatag Shoal.

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano, a staunch critic of President Rodrigo Duterte's soft stance on Beijing's claims on the disputed West Philippine Sea (South China Sea), said the government was manipulating information about what was going on in the area.

He cited the lack of documentation and information dissemination on the treatment received by fisherfolk from Chinese authorities.

"The information on the harassment being experienced by our fishermen is being controlled by the government when disseminated to the public. That means, the public is being kept in the dark on what is truly happening at the West Philippine Sea, in Scarborough, so that the Filipinos will not be outraged by the treatment of the Chinese against our fishermen," Alejano said.

Duterte called on Diokno to fulfill his duty in pressuring for the country's maritime claims.

"Even if China controls Scarborough Shoal, they should not harm our fishermen. It is the President's obligation to respect that decision and it is China's obligation to respect those rights. That's what needs to be enforced," he said.

Marawi civic leader Samira Gutoc called on pro-administration candidates who have been dominating recent surveys to use their influence and visit the area themselves.

To the administration candidates, you have been topping the surveys. I hope you personally look into this. We were not allowed to look into the waters, but you might be allowed. We challenge the administration to go here by yourselves and see up to what extent you can monitor the situation," she said.

The opposition said recently that it would work twice as hard to get to the "Magic 12" ahead of the May elections, with pro-administration bets dominating the surveys for months.

Aside from Diokno, Alejano, Hilbay, and Gutoc, the Otso Diretso slate consists of former House deputy speaker Erin Tañada, veteran election lawyer Romulo Palacio, Sen. Paolo Bongbong "Bam" Aquino 4th, and former senator and interior secretary Manuel "Maid" Roxas 2nd.

Only Roxas and Aquino have ranked prominently in recent surveys.
China, Philippines hope for early conclusion of COC talks

MANILA, April 3 (Xinhua) -- China and the Philippines wrapped up their bilateral talks on the South China Sea issues here on Wednesday, with both sides hoping for an early conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

"Both sides reiterated their commitments to full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and agreed to maintain the positive momentum of the negotiations towards the early conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, based on consensus," a statement issued after the talks, read.

China and the Philippines convened the Fourth Meeting of the Bilateral Consultative Mechanism (BCM) on the South China Sea on Wednesday in Manila, respectively led by Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xiaoyu on the Chinese side, and Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Meynardo L.B. Montenegro of the Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs on the Philippines side.

"Both sides affirmed the importance of the BCM as a venue for enhanced and regular dialogue. Both sides also noted the significance of the BCM as a platform for pursuing measures to increase mutual trust and confidence," the statement read.

In this regard, both sides acknowledged that the BCM, as a forum for raising differences with a view to addressing them, preventing and properly managing incidents at sea, and enhancing maritime dialogue and cooperation, can play a significant role in the stable and steady development of bilateral relations.

Both sides reiterated that while the contentious issues in the South China Sea should not be ignored, they are not the sum total of the Philippines-China relations and should not exclude mutually beneficial cooperation in other fields," the statement said.

Both sides also reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting regional peace and stability, freedom of navigation in and over-flight above the South China Sea.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to addressing disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Both sides likewise agreed that their bilateral relations should serve the interests of the Filipino and Chinese peoples and contribute to peace, stability, and development in the region.

Both sides also exchanged views on oil and gas development.

The two sides also recognized the importance of other complementary multilateral platforms, including ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, ASEAN Regional Forum, and East Asia Summit, in promoting peace and stability in the region.

The Fifth Meeting of the BCM will be held in China in the second half of 2019.
‘China loans boost Phil’

By Elmer H. Manuel

The new head of the Filipino-Chinese business chamber on Monday dispelled notions China could not be trusted on its loan deals with the Philippines, calling criticisms against the rising superpower country as fallacious.

Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry president Henry Lim Bon Liong stressed that distrust of China is misplaced.

"The distrust is really misplaced if you ask me," said Lim. "You have to look at the big picture. These loans are going to be paid back in a long period of time."

Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry president Henry Lim Bon Liong stressed that distrust of China is misplaced.

Lim, whose businesses include Sterling Paper and hybrid rice producer SL Agri Tech, added that as long as the loans are used to build infrastructure, "it’s going to be fine. It’s going to pay us handsomely."

Lim takes over as president of the 65-year-old federation midpoint through the term of President Rodrigo Duterte, who sought closer economic and diplomatic ties with China instead of highlighting disputes in the South China Sea.

The third-generation Filipino-Chinese likened his situation to having China as a "biological father" and the Philippines as a "foster father" and added that one challenge is preventing "friction" between Filipino-Chinese and incoming businessmen from mainland China.

A recent Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey released on Thursday disclosed that four in 10 Filipinos do not believe that China wants what’s "good" for the Philippines.

Concerns have also been raised about the terms of the loans from China for infrastructure projects and the influx of Chinese workers in offshore gaming and construction.

The foreigners, some working in offshore gaming operations, are employed for their Chinese-language skills, something Filipino workers can’t match at the moment, officials said in explaining the arrival of Chinese workers into the country.

Roughly half of the 189,000 Alien Employment Permits issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) in the last three years went to Chinese nationals and a third are in support services, including offshore gaming, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III told a Senate hearing on 21 February.

Bello previously noted that his agency had no power to deport workers with BI permits. He said he was consulting with Justice Secretary Menardo Guara to revoke a DoLE order that gave the BI the power to issue such permits.

The Philippines, as well as other Southeast Asian countries, are disputing islands they claim to own with China.

China, however, has been actively making its presence felt in the regional waters as it is fast rising to become a challenge to the US as a world economic and military power.

This explains the Filipino sentiment against the country, which is a new major ally of the Philippines since President Rodrigo Duterte won the presidency in 2016. The Philippines used to rely only on the US as
a major military and economic partner in the past.

Meanwhile, the Department of National Defense (DND) has no plans of increasing military presence on the Philippine-owned Pagasa Island and other occupied areas in the disputed West Philippine Sea.

Manila increasingly taps Beijing for loans and investments over the years.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the Armed Forces of the Philippines will continue maintaining its normal presence on nine occupied areas in the Kalayaan Islands Group or the Spratlys in the West Philippine Sea.

“No such plan. We will maintain our normal presence in Pagasa and the other eight features we own,” Lorenzana said.

“In all islands belonging to us, we have troops,” Lorenzana added.

The Defense Chief, however, refused to reveal the exact number of troops deployed to the Philippine-occupied areas in the West Philippine Sea.

“Let’s be confidential,” he stressed.

Recently, President Duterte told China to lay off the Pagasa Island after reports that about 275 Chinese vessels were sighted near the Philippine territory.

Pagasa Island serves as the seat of government of Kalayaan town in Palawan.

The Department of Foreign Affairs already filed notes verbales to protest the heavy Chinese presence near Pagasa Island, where the DND is conducting improvements on existing facilities.

With Mario J. Malari
3 Russian warships in Phl for goodwill visit

Three large warships of the Russian Pacific Fleet are in the country for a five-day goodwill visit.

Admiral Tributs and Vinogradov, both classified as large anti-submarine ships, and large sea tanker Irkut, arrived at Manila’s South Harbor yesterday morning.

The crew of the Philippine Navy’s BRP Ramon Alcaraz (PS16) greeted them in the vicinity of Corregidor Island and escorted the vessels to their designated berthing area.

Philippine Navy delegates, led by the staff officer for education and training Capt. Constancio Arturo Reyes Jr., accorded the visiting Russian Navy officials a welcome ceremony upon their arrival.

Navy spokesman Capt. Jonathan Zats said confidence-building activities between the two navies, including live firing demonstrations and a visit, board, search and seizure exercise will be held over the next five days.

He said the visit of the Russian Pacific Fleet ships is another manifestation of the Philippine Navy’s commitment in promoting naval diplomacy and camaraderie and fostering goodwill with foreign navies.

- Michael Punongbayan
RUSSIAN NAVY SEES NO CONFLICT WITH ‘BALIKATAN’ IN MANILA VISIT

The head of mission of the visiting Russian Navy contingent said there was no conflict between its port call and that of the ongoing Philippines-US “Balikatan” (shoulder to shoulder) military exercises.

The three- vessel contingent from Russia’s Pacific Fleet arrived at Manila’s South Harbor on Monday for a five-day goodwill visit.

Capt. Sergey Alantiev heads the Russian contingent comprised of the antisubmarine warships Admiral Tributs and Vinogradov and sea tanker Irkut.

“We want to inform you that we have outstanding relations and good rapport with the United States Navy, and all efforts aimed at peace and stability in the region, be it Russian or American, are efforts in the name of peace and stability and serve the same purpose,” Alantiev said through an interpreter.

When the Russian Navy planned the visit with the Philippine Navy, Alantiev said they did not discuss the country’s exercises with US military units.

“In fact, I only found out that it’s going on very recently,” but since it doesn’t prevent us from carrying out this visit in any way (and), it doesn’t create any inconvenience, we decided to carry out (the visit),” he said.

**Naval cooperation**

The Russian vessels will be in the country until April 13, while the 12-day Balikatan exercises will run until April 12.

Capt. Constacio Reyes Jr., education and training staff officer of the Philippine Navy, said the arrival of the Russian Navy contingent would improve cooperation between the two navies.

“The arrival of our Russian Navy counterparts underscores the continuing efforts to further strengthen the relationship between our governments and navies,” Reyes said.

Alantiev noted the significance of their visit on the eve of “Araw ng Kagitingan.”

“I find it highly symbolic that this visit occurs on the eve of the Day of Valor. We consider ourselves honored to be able to pay our deep respects to the World War II veterans of the Philippines,” he said. —JEANNETTE LANDARE INQ
Veterans Bank honors Bataan heroes with Freedom Trail, Ride for Valor

As sweat trickled from their foreheads and dust covered their faces, hundreds of participants in this year’s Veterans Bank Freedom Trail marched through the towns of Bataan, Pampanga and Tarlac to commemorate the bravery, gallantry and sacrifice of over 70,000 Filipino and American soldiers in the Bataan Death March 77 years ago.

It's the third year that the Philippine Veterans Bank has held the annual 140-kilometer march through the original route of the Bataan Death March, from Mariveles, Bataan to Capas National Shrine in Tarlac. Hundreds of soldiers from the different service branches of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), as well as group of US Marines, participated in this year's march.

[Our group joined] as part of the event called the Epic Charity Challenge. This is the third event we've done in three years. Our beneficiary for this particular event is the National Ability Center in Park City, Utah, an organization that encompasses outdoor recreation to fulfill the lives of adaptive athletes and Paraplegic," says Dr. Lance Cummings, director of the Epic Charity Challenge.

As part of the challenge, two differently abled US Marines was part of the contingent.

"In September 2011, my vehicle ran over an IED, catastrophically injuring both of my legs. I went through two years of intense recovery and eventually had both of my legs amputated. Six months after my amputation, I actually completed the Bataan Death March remembrance in New Mexico. Now, I'm about four years since my amputation and I'm just really excited to come here to the Philippines and be able to come to Bataan to see their steps," says double amputee Matthew Melznick.

A MARCH TO REMEMBER

It was a grueling two-day trek through Bataan Peninsula and Central Luzon's hot and dusty plains, which is the same harrowing condition the original Bataan Death March prisoners of war (POWs) faced.

Participating US Marines pass by the kilometer 90 Bataan Death March marker in Ordonez. They joined this year's event as part of the Epic Charity Challenge, which raises funds for differently abled people at the National Ability Center in Utah.

Filipino soldiers pay tribute to war veterans. Paulino Dominguez, 85, and Gavin Clemente-Manuel, 94, at the town plaza of Balanga, Bataan.
A Filipino soldier carries the golden emblem of marchers in this year’s Veterans Bank Bataan Freedom Trail set out from Mariveles, Bataan, at midnight of March 2, 2019, for the 146-kilometer march to Capas National Shrine in Tarlac.

In 1942, the marchers set out from Kilometer Zero in Mariveles at midnight of March 2 and passed through the towns along Bataan’s eastern coast. Every 10 kilometers, the marchers would stop to rest and rest and replace their contingent with a new set of marchers.

Along the way, they met several war veterans, some of whom were survivors of the Bataan Death March. One of them was 90-year-old Paulino Dominguez, a civilian who was among those forced to march by the Japanese Army along with the POWs.

"Since I was from Sambat, I escaped from the Death March when it stopped through the town. But my brother wasn’t able to and he was brought to Capas. Both civilians and soldiers suffered greatly there. Many of them died in the concentration camp," Dominguez recalls.

Another war veteran, 94-year-old Gawain Clemente-Manuel, was a former Hukbalahap fighter and commander. Though she wasn’t part of the Death March, she recounted her ordeal as a guerilla fighting the Japanese.

"Once time, when we were patrolling, my comrades noticed that my left leg was bloodied. Since I was wearing pants at the time, I folded it up and saw that three bullets had grazed my leg just below the knee. Had it hit my knee, it would have been crushed. I guess I got lucky," Manuel says.

After 17 hours of walking through Bataan’s old highway amidst arduous heat and almost without sleep, the marchers made it to Dinalupihan Civic Center where they spent six hours to refresh, eat, and sleep. At midnight of March 3, they set off again for Pampanga.

OF MONUMENTS AND MARKERS.

In the morning, the marchers reached the Old Train Station in the city of San Fernando, where the POWs were loaded into train boxcars that would bring them to Capas, Tarlac. As many as 60 POWs were packed into each boxcar. Hundreds of POWs died inside these "rolling coffins" due to suffocation and extreme heat.

At the train station, the marchers saw a remembrance of the Death March as performed by costumed members of the Philippine Living History Society, a group of World War II enthusiasts and reenactors. They also learned about the historical facts about the train station, which has been turned into a museum and gallery.

Before lunch, the marchers made their way across Pampanga and Tarlac, reaching the Capas National Shrine, the final stop of the march, at around seven in the evening. The shrine was the former site of Camp O’Donnell, a former USAFFE camp that the Japanese had turned into an internment camp for the POWs during the war.

Some of those who survived the Death March would face grueling conditions inside the camp, where disease, malnutrition, and maltreatment by the Japanese forces were rife. The POWs had to bury their dead comrades and hunt for rats and insects inside the camp to survive.

Those who were part of the Death March and the internment camp are now honored at the Capas National Shrine through a 73-meter tall obelisk and a black marble memorial wall where their names are carved.

At the shrine, Veterans Bank chairman and CEO Dr. Roberto de Ocampo, OBE, along with Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Philippine Veterans Affairs Office Chief of Veterans Memorial and Historical Division (Ret.) BGen. Restituto Aguilar, and Capas Mayor Reynaldo Catacutan led the marchers in the special rites that include lighting of the bonfire and the 77 torches that symbolize 77 years of the Bataan Death March.

The marchers and VIPs then partook of Filipino dishes in boodle fight style. It was the first time that the members of the US Marines who joined the march experienced a boodle fight.

Apart from the Bataan Freedom Trail, Veterans Bank also staged the first-ever Ride for Valor, a motorcycle challenge to drive through the Bataan Death March route. Open to big bike owners, it attracted several motorcycle groups from as far as Metro Manila. Veterans Bank plans to make Ride for Valor a regular commemorative event that would grow in attendance in the coming years.

Both events — the Bataan Freedom Trail and Ride for Valor — are more than just remembrances of one of the darkest chapters of Philippine history. Proceeds from both events will also be used to restore and maintain World War II markers and memorials throughout the country, including the Bataan Death March markers affected by constructions projects and other human activities.

"They are a permanent record for the entire public to see and read to remember what had taken place and to be able to highlight the kind of values that our heroes represented. That is the role of markers and monuments: you can read about this on your own in books but if you put it as a monument, it assumes even greater importance," shares De Ocampo.

He adds that more than just remembering on the upkeep of World War II memorials and keeping the memory of the horrors and lessons of war alive in the minds of future generations, the bank remains committed to its primary clientele.

"The Philippine Veterans Bank was established specially for providing assistance to our veterans. We are doing our very best to make sure that it is a strong financial institution to meet the various needs of veterans that they may not get from their pension," De Ocampo says.
PHILCONSA CHIEF PAYS TRIBUTE TO WAR HEROES

PHILIPPINE Constitution Association president Martin Romualdez on Monday paid tribute to heroism of the veterans of World War II, who fought for the country's democracy.

On the eve of Araw ng Kagitingan, Romualdez, president of Lakes-Christian Muslim Democrats, said: "Let's not forget their medals, heroism, greatness and sacrifice in liberating the country from invaders."

"The democracy we have been enjoying was carved by blood on the pages of history because of their selfless dedication and invaluable service to keep our freedom alive," Romualdez said.

"We have to ensure a meaningful observance of Araw ng Kagitingan."

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Philconsa...
From A2

by always giving due respect and recognition to their heroism and to continue finding compas-
sion inspiration, hope, and love to their greatness
and patriotism," he added.

"Let's remind our youth about their deep love
for the country through their bravery and hero,
services rendered for the country's freedom," said Romulides, a three-term congressman from
Leyte's first congressional district who is run-
ing again for his previous post.

Meanwhile, defense and military officials said Filip-
inos from all walks of life must be able to defend the
country from all forms of threats if called upon.

"As we remember our heroes, let us not forget
that they put their lives on the line when they
were needed and we must always prepare, just
as we are doing in these exercises with our allies,
for the day when our nations call us to action
during disasters or when our freedom is threat-
ened," Department of National Defense spokes-
man, Arsenio Andolong, said in a statement
Monday, ahead of the country's commemoration
of Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor).

Andolong added that this year's "Araw ng
Kagitingan" observance is made more mean-
ningful as it coincides with the annual "Balik-
tan" exercises.

"This year's 'Balikatan' is more meaningful
because it coincides with our "Araw ng Kagit-
ingan," which commemorates the courage and
sacrifice of Filipino veterans and our Allies, who
valiantly fought side-by-side to defend the Phil-
ippines during World War II," he said.

Some 4,000 Filipino, 3,500 American and
50 Australian troops are participating in the an-
ual military maneuvers, which formally started
April 1 and will end on April 12, while acting
as observers are military personnel of the United
Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Ja-
pan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Armed Forces of the Philippines
public affairs office chief, Col. Noel Detoyato,
said the annual "Day of Valor" observance signi-
fies the shared sacrifices of Filipino and Ameri-
can troops in World War II.

"That was the start of the infamous Bataan
Death March (140 km, from Bataan to Capas).
Thousands died before reaching Capas, Tar-
cas," he said.

While honoring the sacrifices of those fallen
troops, Detoyato said that Americans and Filipi-
nos will be together again in this year's "Balikata-
tan" exercises. Marked V. Cruz, PNA
ACROSS THE COUNTRY

2 NPA rebels killed in Masbate clash

Two New People’s Army (NPA) rebels were killed in an encounter with government troopers in Masbate yesterday.

Capt. Joash Tramis, 9th Infantry Division spokesman, said an M16 rifle and a caliber .45 pistol were recovered from the fatalities after the gunfight in Barangay Puti, Mansaka, at around 1:55 a.m.

There was no reported casualty on the side of government troopers.

In Iligan City, personnel of the 51st Infantry Battalion overran an NPA camp in Sitio Leno, Barangay Kaillangan after a 45-minute gunfight on Saturday.

Various types of ammunition, personal belongings, cooking utensils and rice were recovered at the scene.

In Sorsogon, former militiaman Walter Ricalde was shot dead by suspected NPA rebels near a cockpit in Barangay Ogod, Donsol at around 10:20 a.m. on Sunday.

— Michael Punongbayan, Lino de la Cruz, Emmanuel Tupas
14 Negros Oriental farmers summarily executed, say fact-finding teams

By Connie Fernandez-Brojan and Ador Vincent Mayol @inquirervisayas

CEBU CITY—Human rights and farmers’ organizations in the Visayas want to hold accountable the police and military officials involved in joint operations that led to the killing of 14 farmers in two towns and a city in Negros Oriental province on March 30.

Twenty-one organizations conducted a fact-finding investigation into the killings and found that the farmers were summarily executed, contrary to the claim of the Philippine National Police that they fought back during the search of their houses for illegal weapons.

Danilo Ramos, chair of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, presented the results of the investigation during a news conference in Cebu City on Monday.

Pattern in the killings

"Accounts gathered by fact-finding teams from the victims’ families and witnesses showed a pattern—[police-men in full combat gear and wearing balaclavas] barged into the victims’ houses, [showed] defective search warrants for alleged weapons, shot the respondents... then planted fabricated evidence such as firearms and ammunition," Ramos said.

"Worse, the perpetrators took away money and other valuables from the victims," he said.
Malacañang blamed allegations of human rights violations in the raids on communist propagandists.

Police Gen. Oscar Albayalde, the PNP chief, insisted the operations were legitimate, as these were backed by search warrants.

But Bayan Muna chair Neri Colmenares asked on Monday why, if the operations were legitimate, did the policemen wear balaclavas?

"Under Rule 6 on the use of prescribed uniform in regular police operations, there should be nameplates and the serving unit should not be masked. Why were the police [masked]?” Colmenares asked.

He said Bayan Muna had obtained pictures of the raiding teams wearing balaclavas.

'Evil motive'

"They didn’t bother to introduce themselves and just kicked the door down. They didn’t even show the supposed search or arrest warrant. That’s because there was an evil motive right from the start. So all this talk about it being regular operation is hogwash," Colmenares said.

“It’s been no investigation yet, but General Albayalde has already ruled that the operations were legitimate. [There’s] really a cover-up here," he added.

According to the fact-finding team’s report, policemen in full combat gear, without nameplates and wearing balaclavas, carried out the raids in Cainta City and the towns of Marikina and Santa Catalina between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. on March 30.

Except for one victim, Sonny Falagit, all the farmers were shot multiple times in the body and the head, the report said.

Valentin Acabas was shot seven times, including to the genital area, while Edgardo Avelino was shot twice on the chest and once on the forehead.

Ismael Avelino was shot eight times, while Steve Arapoc was shot on the back while lying face-down on the floor. The wound on his chest was likely where the bullet exited.

The report said the farmers were not allowed to see the supposed search warrants and the family members were herded out of the house or into adjacent rooms, leaving the victims alone with the policemen.

After the shootings, the bodies were dragged into waiting vehicles without waiting for crime scene investigators to do their job.

Evidence planted

Family members who were inside the houses were ordered out and policemen went in to "plant small-caliber firearms, ammunition, hand grenades or rifle grenades," the report said.

"Barangay officials, including those who signed the PNP inventories of [the weapons] allegedly recovered from the crime scenes, arrived only hours after the raids and the killings had taken place," it said.

It said family members were made to sign the inventories in front of armed men and without the assistance of lawyers or local officials.

The report questioned the regularity of the search warrants issued by Judge Soliver Peras of Regional Trial Court Branch 10 in Cebu City.

It pointed out that the search warrants were issued only by Peras when standard court procedure required applications to be filed with the trial court that had jurisdiction over the place where the warrants would be used.

For Cainta, Marikina and Santa Catalina, the authorities should have applied for warrants with a court in Negros, not Cebu, the report said.

The inquirer tried to get in touch with Peras on Monday, but was told that the judge was in Ozamiz City, where he had been assigned as a trier-at-large. He would return to Cebu after the Holy Week.

Senate inquiry

Detained Sen. Lella de Lima introduced a resolution on Monday seeking an inquiry into the killing of the farmers.

In the resolution, De Lima noted that the families of the victims reported that their loved ones were killed in the same way police killed suspects in President Duterte’s brutal war on drugs.

The recurring claim of suspects resisting arrest “has long been serving as a wrongful justification for the targeted and continuous killings around the country,” De Lima said.

An investigation must proceed, she said, adding that the government and institutions needed to develop systems to hold perpetrators accountable so that justice and the rule of law could be restored.

Former Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, in Bulacan City on Monday for a voter education forum, said there was an alarming pattern in the killing of subjects of search and arrest warrants.

Sereno said the police claim that the suspects fought back had become doubtful.

WITH REPORTS FROM DJVAN LEBEL
B. SALAVERRIA AND NESTOR P. BURGOS JR., INQ
New Filipino heroes needed

By Elmer N. Manual

The nation celebrates Army Kaytingan today with the Department of National Defense (DND) calling on all Filipinos to defend the country from all forms of threats and act during calamities if called upon. This is the Philippine Army that Monday announced that it has 5,387 slots to fill, the first time in recent years when the Armed Forces of the Philippines is going on a massive recruitment of additional personnel.

Army spokesman Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala revealed that of the total slots, 4,777 will be allotted for enlisted personnel, while 610 will be filled by officials graduating from the Philippine Military Academy (PMA).

Some 4,000 Filipino, 3,500 American and 50 Australian troops are participating in the annual military maneuvers from 1 to 12 April.

Applicants who will qualify as privates will get P41,000 in monthly basic pay and allowance.

Those who wish to join the Army should be natural-born Filipinos between the ages of 18 and 23 and must have completed high school or have taken at least 72 units in college and are at least five feet tall.

The Army has long been in the forefront of the country's defense against external and internal threats, including those from the Marxist Communist Party of the Philippines-National People's Army (CPP-NPA), which has been waging a five-decade protracted war against the government.

The Army has also been fighting religious, secessionist and terror groups in Mindanao. They should be enlightened and honored alongside the veterans who have sacrificed their lives to keep the country safe.

Department of National Defense (DND) spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said, even as he reminded the nation to continue honoring Filipino heroes.

"As we remember our heroes,
let us not forget that they put their lives on the line when they were needed and we must always prepare, just as we are doing in these exercises with our allies, for the day when our nation calls us to action during disasters or when our freedom is threatened,” Andolong said ahead of the celebration of the Day of Valor.

As we remember our heroes, let us not forget that they put their lives on the line when they were needed.

Andolong added that this year’s observance of Araw ng Kagitingan is made more meaningful as it coincides with the annual Balikatan exercises, with Filipino troops joining forces with their American and Australian counterparts.

“This year’s Balikatan is more meaningful because it coincides with our Araw ng Kagitingan, which commemorates the courage and sacrifices of Filipino veterans and our allies, who solemnly fought side by side to defend the Philippines during World War II,” he said.

This year’s Balikatan is more meaningful because it coincides with our Araw ng Kagitingan.

Some 4,000 Filipino, 8,500 American and 50 Australian troops are participating in the annual military maneuvers from 1 to 12 April.

Military personnel from the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam are also in the country to observe the drills.

Armed Forces of the Philippines public affairs office chief Col. Noel Detoyato remembered the “shared sacrifices” by the Filipino and American soldiers during World War II, especially during the infamous Bataan Death March (a 98.6-km trek from Bataan to Capas) where thousands died before reaching Capas, Tarlac (where they were interned).

Detoyato thanked the joint troops as they are “together again” in a different situation, like delivering basic services, training together to prepare for calamities and disasters, responding in the regions of exchanging skills in counterterrorism training and exercises.”

Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, AFP spokesperson, said this year’s Balikatan exercises are a tribute to the Filipino and American troops who have fallen in defense of Bataan.

PNA
Moves to ‘neutralize’ NPA assassins in place—AFP

The military on Monday announced that it has already initiated measures aimed at neutralizing the threat posed by the “SPARU” (Special Partisan Unit) assassins of the communist rebels.

Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo made the remark in response to President Rodrigo Duterte’s statement expressing concern over the SPARU threat.

“We thank our Commander-in-Chief for his concern for our soldiers, who face risks while combating Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) on a daily basis—either against this band of terrorists in the hinterlands or the bunch of treacherous hit squads in the urban centers,” he added.

While SPARU elements do pose a threat to the security of Filipino soldiers, especially those who are off-duty, Arevalo said the AFP has instituted both overt and covert measures to deal with the NPA assassination plots.

“Our soldiers are ingrained with the knowledge and skills to prepare themselves against suspected individuals with hostile intent. Our soldiers also cover for each other’s backs when in high-risk areas,” he said.

“We have specialized units and personnel under the Special Operations Command who are trained to deal with situations outside conventional warfare like unconventional and asymmetric threats,” Arevalo added.

The AFP spokesperson said the military has further enhanced its intelligence operations by units active in monitoring and tracking CPP-NPA fighters in urban areas.

Information about these personalities is shared with the Philippine National Police for joint and legitimate law enforcement operations not limited to SPARU units.

The CPP-NPA is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States, European Union, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

Meanwhile, two suspected New People’s Army rebels were killed in a clash with Army soldiers on Monday in a remote village in Mandao town, Masbate province.

Capt. Jonas Framis, public affairs chief of the Army’s 9th Infantry Division (9ID), said soldiers were on patrol in Barangay Bari at around 1:55 a.m. when they encountered a group of armed men believed to be communist guerrillas.

A five-minute firefight ensued that resulted in the death of two still unidentified rebels and the recovery of an M16 rifle, a .45-caliber pistol and a knapsack containing personal belongings.

Framis said no casualty was reported on the side of the government troops.

Army soldiers are still in pursuit of the rebels, who fled the site of the gun fight.

The NPA, the armed wing of the National Democratic Front-Communist Party of the Philippines, is listed as a terrorist group by both the European Union and the United States.
'Revo gov't arose from frustration'

By Nat Mariano

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte’s threat to declare a revolutionary government was not meant to threaten the people, Malacauang said Monday, adding it was an "exasperated frustration" over the people violating the laws.

"It was more of an exasperated expression to put on notice the transgressors that he will not just sit idly and watch them do their illegal things," Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo told reporters.

"The threat, if it is a threat, is not against the people but precisely against their enemies, the criminals, the people running the illegal drug industry, the corrupt bureaucrats, the greedy politicians, the communist rebels, foreign and local terrorists and other enemies of the state."

Panelo said Duterte’s remarks were not "made on a whim."

"It was not made on a whim but brought about by a series of acts committed against the people," he said.

He mentioned the entry of illegal drugs in the country, the corruption in the bureaucracy and the seeming impunity of criminals.

He also cited the onerous contract signed by the government with Maynilad Water Services Inc., the New People’s Army’s attacks against the armed forces and the continuing threat of terrorists.

Panelo said the President was duty bound to "use the powers reposed to him by the Constitution to quell the attacks on the people and to save the state."

In a speech last week in Palawan, Duterte warned he would suspend the writ of habeas corpus and declare a revolutionary government once he was "pushed to the extreme."

The Communist Party of the Philippines then slammed the President for his remarks, saying he would only "exasperate in further estranging the people and inviting them to wage all forms of revolutionary resistance against the administration."
2 NPA rebs utas sa engkuwentro


Tumitrabaho na din diin ni Rolando "Ka Jojo" Jr., na sasabing nakaunang at naglathala ng manang sa alyas na "Ka Arnold".

Ayon kay Captain Joash Pramis, tagapagsalita ng Army's 9th Infantry Division, ang mga ang iyang sasabing "Ka Arnold" sa palit na "Ka Arnel".

Sa pagpipipot ng mga mambabatay ni dyito na egad ng mga sugarang rebolede sa Mindanao, nagpalit na ang pitong armadong mga matulungan na nanggagawalang ng security operation.

Narito na ang isang M-16 rifle, isang kalibre 45 na gamit at mga subseribong maging dokumento. (Jorge Hallare at Joy Cantos)
BARMM launches full disclosure policy

COTABATO CITY: Bangsamoro Chief Minister Al Hajj Murad Ebrahim launched the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Full Disclosure Policy Portal (BARMM-FDPP) recently to inform the public on how funds are handled by the regional government.

The BARMM-FDPP is the first program launched by the Bangsamoro government through its Ministry of Local Government (MLG), which is designed to enable constituents to understand government financial transactions and how the local government budget is spent and managed. It is based on the national government’s Full Disclosure Policy.

Ebrahim said the move “is in line with our policy of moral governance and transparency of all the activities and also the transparency in handling financial matters and other related activities.”

He said the portal provides a full disclosure of the local government unit’s (LGU) budget, finances, bids and public offerings. The summary of income and expenditures as well as the budget process of the participation of representatives from the civil society are also part of the postings in the FDPP.

“LGU officials who are non-compliant to the policy may face administrative charges which could result to their suspension or removal from office,” Ebrahim warned.

The new Bangsamoro government has the authority to regulate the affairs of its constituents over the transactions of the LGUs under the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

JULMUNIR J JANNARAL
Lanao clash won’t affect BOL implementation

By Nananee Bordey

The recent clash between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the police commandos in Lamas del Sur will not affect the implementation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in the restive Mindanao region.

Administration senatorial bet and Maguindanao Rep. Zajid "Dong" Maguindatu issued the statement yesterday even as he stressed that the said incident will undergo appropriate and thorough investigation.

"From my point of view, we have due process, there's ongoing investigation. It will all depend on the outcome of the investigation of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines," he told the reporters.

Maguindatu clarified the framers of BOL had considered the MILF along with the preferences of different groups in Mindanao.

He added the implementation of the BOL should come with the execution of the devolution of power under the Republic Act 1054 as this will be advantageous to the newly-established Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Under Section 3, Article III of RA 9054, the regional government is mandated to adopt policies on local autonomy where regional powers shall be decentralized to local government units, particularly in areas of education, health, human resource, science and technology and people empowerment.
BARMMM aims for transparency

By Nash B. Maulana

COTABATO CITY—Leaders of the new Bangsamoro government have urged constituents of the country's predominantly Muslim region to help establish transparency in governance from the local level.

Chief Minister Hadji Murad Ebrahim of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao made the call as he officially launched last week the Bangsamoro Full Disclosure Portal of the Ministry of the Interior and Local Government.

MILG Minister Naguib Sinarimbo said the FDP mandates LGUs to post in three conspicuous places information such as annual budget, bids, appropriations and other fiscal ordinances. The same information will be uploaded online and will be accessible to the public on FDP.

Sinarimbo said the new autonomous government is also working with the military through the 6th Infantry Division under Major General Cirilito Sobejana “to optimize the presence and performance of local chief executives in the region.”

Ebrahim asked people to help the MILG monitor compliance of LGUs with the FDP requirements.

“The FDP also provides a complaint box to which people may send their complaint and we will respond,” Sinarimbo said.

This move by the new regional government is consistent with his policy on transparency and drive towards moral governance, Ebrahim pointed out.

The MILG under Ebrahim has assumed leadership of the newly created BARMMM, which is run by the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority.

President Rodrigo Duterte has appointed 77 representatives from the MILF, the government, the Moro National Liberation Front and members from the settlers and indigenous peoples communities.

Meanwhile, the BARMMM environment minister on Monday lauded the league of mayors in Maguindanao for campaigning against the posting of campaign materials along major thoroughfares of the province.

Minister Abdulrauf Macacua of the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy personally thanked Mayor Freddie Mangudadatu of Maguindanao for his active campaign against displaying and mailing campaign materials on trees.

Mangudadatu, president of the league of mayors in the province and running for governor of Maguindanao, recently met with Macacua and agreed to work together in pushing forward the BARMMM’s environmental-protection initiative.
The President will not be sitting idle and just watch their transgressions.

By Kristina Marallit

It’s not against the people but a revolutionary war against the enemies of the state.

Thus, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo on Monday reiterated the spirit of President Rodrigo Duterte’s statement against “transgressors of the law,” while ensuring citizens’ safety and their basic rights.

Panelo said it was more of an “exasperated expression” by the President as he tried to address the threats imposed by “enemies of the state” who do not want government to succeed in bringing quality life to the people.

“The President will not be sitting idle and just watch their transgressions,” the spokesman relayed.

“The threat – if it was a threat – was not against the people but precisely against the enemies. The criminals, the people clamping the illegal drug
The threat — if it was a threat — was not against the people but precisely against the enemies.

Mr. Duterte was not threatening the people on a whim, he said. He would declare a revolutionary war if “pushed to the wall.”

I have enough problems with criminality, drugs, rebellion and all. If you push me to my limit, I will declare a suspension of writ of habeas corpus and I will arrest all of you. I will detain you along with the criminals, rebels and drug lords.

The Chief Executive was referring to the country’s continuing problem with illegal drugs — despite the administration’s unceasing campaign against narcotics, graft and corruption in government, impunity of criminals and the alleged questionable deals entered into by the government, he explained.

These issues frustrate the President, who wants to see results, he said, adding Mr. Duterte was just expressing his right to exercise powers accorded him by the Constitution to duly serve and protect the people.

When the key democratic institutions are being used to the detriment of the people and have become illusory for the people’s interest, when their safety is imperiled, when the territorial integrity is at stake, and when the enemies of the republic are bent on bringing it down, then it becomes the constitutional duty of the President to use the powers reposed to him by the Constitution to quell the attacks on the people and save the state,” Panalo said.

“I have enough problems with criminality, drugs, rebellion and all. If you push me to my limit, I will declare a suspension of writ of habeas corpus and I will arrest all of you. I will detain you along with the criminals, rebels and drug lords,” the President explained.

Mr. Duterte was not threatening the people on a whim when he said he would declare a revolutionary war if pushed to the wall.

“If you give me a hard time, I will declare a revolutionary war until the end of my term. Deal with it,” he added.

The seeming impunity of criminals to do their nefarious trade, the onerous contract entered into by the government that prohibited it from performing government action protective of the interest of the people and the communist rebels’ attacks and ambushes of military and police personnel and local government units and their continuing extortion activities may have triggered the President’s statements,” Panalo said.

The Palace official also mentioned the “continuing threat” from terrorists that endangers the security of the state and “other acts of its enemies” that imperil the safety of the nation as the other issues that the President wants to face.

Panalo said it was more of an exasperated expression by the President as he tried to address the threats imposed by enemies of the state who do not want government to succeed in bringing quality life to the people.

Calling the Constitution a “living instrument,” Panalo said the framers of the country’s charter “would have not intended the President to have without recourse in confronting any exigency that places the people’s interest in jeopardy and their safety in mortal danger.”
In politics, they say, there are neither permanent friends nor enemies, only permanent interests. The problem with this realpolitik cliché is that it’s only half-true. After all, interests themselves are not permanent, since our preferences and goals evolve over time, depending on our historical interactions with the outside world and internal reflections on the meaning and purpose of existence.

And this brings us to the almost existential question we face as a nation today: Is China our “friend”? And, accordingly, has President Duterte’s Beijing-friendly policies worked in favor of our national interest?

Since the beginning of this year, an armada of Chinese paramilitary vessels has swarmed Pag-asia Island (Thitu), which has hosted Filipino troops and civilians for more than four decades.

In many ways, this is increasingly looking like Mr. Duterte’s own version of the Scarborough Shoal crisis, except on a far worse scale.

There have been as many as 657 sightings of, and 275 individual Chinese vessels involved, in what increasingly looks like an all-out siege on Pag-asia. This is a classic Chinese “gray zone” strategy aimed at displacing other claimant states through deployment of ostensibly “fishing” vessels instead of using warships.

The armada of Chinese vessels hits four birds with one stone (or rather 275 vessels).

First, it restricts our movements in the area, including our fishermen. Second, it threatens and intimidates our supply lines and surveillance activities. Third, it spies and monitors our maintenance activities on Pag-asia. And lastly, it prevents us from building structures on Sandy Cay, a low-tide elevation within the territorial sea of Pag-asia.

Having built giant artificial islands (likely using our own soil) and fully militarized them with state-of-the-art weapons, China ultimately wants to dominate the whole South China Sea without firing a single shot. And the deployment of paramilitary forces is crucial to the fulfillment of this objective.

And yet, Mr. Duterte insists that China is a “friend,” an ally crucial for our national development goals.

In fact, the first time I heard this line from him was during a 2016 interview with China’s CCTV (now CGTN) channel, where a reporter interviewed Mr. Duterte, Sen. Grace Poe and me on the future of Philippine-China relations after the 2016 elections.

In the video, you see a completely different Mr. Duterte. No trace of his brash, and almost crass, political lexicon. Far from an overexalted and tough-talking populist, essentially the image he has projected before much of the world over the years, what you instead see is a sober and contemplative leader.

I’ve noticed that this is the President Duterte one sees every time he visits China, a country he is set to visit for the fourth time in less than three years. During the interview, the former city mayor not only described China as a developmental partner, but also expressed a defeatist view on the South China Sea disputes.

Just months before the arbitral tribunal verdict on the South China Sea disputes came out, Mr. Duterte told the Chinese news channel: “If we cannot enforce [it], and if the United Nations cannot enforce its judgment, then what the heck?”

The message to Beijing was clear: I am willing to work with you and look at avenues of cooperation almost irrespective of the disputes in the West Philippine Sea.

Sensing our defeatism, however, China has only accelerated what former president Bidel Ramos described to me as the “creeping invasion” of the West Philippine Sea. This is why, as former ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales said, “You are stupid if you don’t assert your rights.”

Facts on the ground clearly confirm former foreign secretary Albert del Rosario’s Orwellian conundrum throughout his five years of dealing with Beijing—namely, that whatever they say tends to be “the opposite of truth.”

China may have been a friend at some point in history, the same way imperial Japan and 19th-century America were our enemies at another point.

But at this juncture, China is not treating us as a “friend,” but more like a potential vassal state for an emerging global empire. As things stand, China may be a friend of Mr. Duterte, but not necessarily of the Filipino people.

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Low esteem for China

The $62-million loan agreement between the Philippines and China for the construction of the Chico River Irrigation project is having a rough sailing.

The provision allowing the use of our country’s patrimonial assets and assets dedicated for commercial purposes as collateral for the loan has come under fire from Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio.

He expressed fear that provision would allow China to seize the oil-rich Soco (Reed) Bank in the West Philippine Sea if the country defaults on the loan.

According to Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo, collaterals are standard in loan agreements and the Philippines had no choice but to agree to that arrangement because that was what China wanted.

His statements muddled, rather than clarified, the issue. He probably hasn’t heard of “clean” loans where banks lend money to borrowers on the strength of their proven paying capacity without demanding a mortgage or collateral to secure the loan.

When Panelo’s “beggars are not choosers” statement drew adverse public reaction, he backtrack and said the terms and conditions of the loan were mutually discussed and agreed by the parties.

As the administration found itself on the defensive, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III stepped into the picture and issued a statement castigating the criticism of the loan for their lack of faith in the country’s ability to pay its foreign loans. He said the Philippines has never defaulted on its loans.

Not so, said Carpio, who pointed out the Philippines declared a moratorium on its foreign debt repayments in 1983 when the then Central Bank did not have sufficient foreign reserves to service the country’s debt obligations.

No word has been heard from Dominguez or any Department of Finance official after Carpio questioned the country’s alleged clean record on foreign loan repayments.

From the looks of it, the controversy over the Chico loan agreement is not going away anytime soon. A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court questioning its constitutionality and the manner it was entered into by the government.

The heat generated by the Chico loan rates an interesting question: If the loan was sourced from the United States, Japan, South Korea, or any country other than China, would it have drawn the same degree of intense questioning or scrutiny?

According to the DOF, the interest rates on the China loan are on a par with the rates offered by Japan and South Korea. If this is true (and we have no reason to think otherwise), then the financial terms of that loan should not be a cause for alarm.

Assuming a US, Japanese or South Korean development loan carried the same collateral provision as the China loan (which is not standard in those two financing schemes), it is doubtful if that provision would create a big fuss in the public sector.

The collateral would probably be looked at as a cosmetic feature of the loan, or a subtle pressure mechanism on the Philippines to see to it the amortization payments are made on time.

In other words, those countries would be given the benefit of the doubt that they were motivated by benevolent intentions in lending the money, and that in the unlikely event the Philippines defaults in its loan payments, the collateral provision would most likely not be invoked and the loan would be restructured with more liberal terms.

What may account for the difference in reactions? Simple, trust. In the September 2018 survey of Social Weather Stations, China was the least trusted country by Filipinos.

The low esteem for China may be traced to, among others, its territorial incursions in the West Philippine Sea, the influx of Chinese workers in construction projects and the involvement of Chinese nationals in the local drug trade.

The uproar over China’s loan for the Chico project is an expression of the suspicion that the loan is being extended for reasons other than benevolent, and is part of China’s grandiose plan to expand its political hegemony in this region.

If past experiences with China are used as standard, this concern is not unfounded. INQ
Celebrating Filipino valor

by ATTV. JOSY D. LINA
Former Senator

As the nation celebrates Araw ng Kagitingan, we remember the heroism of the more than 60,000 Filipino soldiers who fought alongside 15,000 American soldiers in their valiant efforts to resist the advance of Japanese enemy troops in the Bataan peninsula 77 years ago.

Today marks what used to be called the Fall of Bataan when the Filipinos and American soldiers belonging to the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) surrendered to the Japanese Imperial Army on April 9, 1942, that set off the infamous Death March from Mariveles, Bataan, to San Fernando, Pampanga, during which thousands of the prisoners of war perished.

But why commemorate the day of ignominious defeat and humiliating surrender? In an apparent response to criticism of what is known as Bataan Day, the shift to Araw ng Kagitingan was made in 1989 to more aptly observe the valor of those who had made a last stand against superior invading forces.

It was the stubborn Bataan resistance, lasting about three months, that has served its noble purpose— to delay the advance of Japanese forces, considering that the Philippines was the last country in Southeast Asia to yield to Japan's conquest while expected time periods were easily attained everywhere else.

"The Japanese gave invasion commander Gen. Masaharu Homma 50 days to conquer the Philippines, probably thinking that their combat-hardened veterans who had fought in China could easily overwhelm the half-trained and ill-equipped recruits of the Philippine Army," according to a historical account by Benito Legarda Jr.

The surrender in Bataan "was never a question of individual courage," explained Dr. Jose Maria Edito Tirol of Ateneo de Manila University's Department of History. "Rather, it was the results of months of hunger, thirst, disease, and the failure of the United States to send reinforcements. In other words, although from a military standpoint, defeat was inevitable, the ability of the USAFFE to hold out beyond the expectations of both sides remains a historical achievement for the Filipino people."

The frustration over the crucial failure by the US to send reinforcements to help the beleaguered forces in Bataan was expressed in a Jan. 26, 1942, letter sent to US Gen. Douglas MacArthur, written by then Philippine President Manuel L. Quezon who said, "This war is not of our making... We decided to fight by your side and we have done the best we could and we are still doing as much as we could be expected from us under the circumstances. But how long are we going to be left alone?"

As archived in the Philippine Diary Project, Quezon lamented that "America apparently prioritized the defense of Europe than Asia at the start of World War II. "Has it already been decided in Washington that the Philippine front is of no importance as far as the final result of the war is concerned and that, therefore, no help can be expected here in the immediate future, or at least before our power of resistance is exhausted?" Quezon wrote. "If so, I want to know it, because I have my own responsibility to my countrymen whom, as President of the Commonwealth, I have led into a complete war effort. I am greatly concerned as well regarding the soldiers I have called to the colors and who are now manning the firing line," he pointed out.

"I want to decide in my own mind whether there is justification in allowing all these men to be killed, when for the final outcome of the war the shedding of their blood may be wholly unnecessary," wrote Quezon in the letter.

Quezon's letter to MacArthur was forwarded to US President Franklin Roosevelt who wrote to the Philippine President: "I have read with complete understanding your letter to General MacArthur. I realize the depth and sincerity of your sentiments with respect to your inescapable duties to your own people and I assure you that I would be the last to demand from you and them any sacrifice which I considered hopeless in the furtherances of the cause for which we are all striving. I want, however, to state with all possible emphasis that the magnificent resistance of the defenders of Bataan is contributing definitely toward assuring the completeness of our final victory in the Far East."

Amid Quezon's frustration over the absence of US reinforcements, leading to the Bataan surrender, the gallantry of Filipinos despite terrific odds is beyond doubt. I agree with Dr. Tirol in his assessment: "The willingness, the courage, the valor of thousands of ordinary Filipinos— with or without formal training but took up arms anyway, soldiers who had not surrendered or had escaped, and civilians providing logistical, intelligence, and moral support— to find ways to continue the struggle against the occupation, forces says much about what we are as a people."

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77th Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor)

Araw ng Kagitingan commemorates the day in 1942 when Philippine and American armies were forced to surrender to the Japanese troops for lack of food, medicine, and ammunition, after months of intense battle on the Bataan Peninsula. The Japanese were unprepared for the large number of prisoners (nearly 80,000 Filipino and American prisoners of war). They forcibly transferred them by foot from Sajazin Point, Bagac, Bataan, and Mariveles to Camp O'Donnell in Capas, Tarlac taking the San Fernando, Pampanga, route in what history refers to as the Death March. Many prisoners perished during the long march.

This year's Araw ng Kagitingan theme, "Sakripisyo ng Beterano ay Gunitain, Gaying Tanglaw ng Kabataan Tungosa Kaunlaran," underscores the sacrifices of our war veterans and urges our youth to draw inspiration from this selfless act of giving oneself so that they too can contribute to the advancement of this nation.

The annual Araw ng Kagitingan events usually feature a speech of the country's president and key government officials, wreath laying at the Libingan ng mga Bayani and Mt. Samat in Bataan, tributes to war veterans and parades of war veterans (in large and small groups) in various cities and localities of the country. The Philippine Veterans Bank
(PVB), in cooperation with the local governments of Bataan, Pampanga, and Tarlac, and a group called Without Limits, in partnership with the Department of National Defense and the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office, staged its annual Freedom Trail and Ride for Valor to raise funds for the maintenance of over a hundred Death March markers and the restoration of key points located along the route from Mariveles, Bataan, to Capas, Tarlac. The PVB is also scheduled to stage a Bataan Run on April 14, which is a marathon of 10k and 5k for kids and the whole family.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Consulate General in Honolulu hosted the screening of the Spyrun AV Manila World War II documentaries entitled “Corregidor: The Road Back” and “Manila 1945: The Rest of the Story” last April 7 at the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, also in commemoration of the 77th Araw ng Kagitingan.

Several laws and administrative/executive orders had been issued in the past designating varying dates for the celebration of Bataan Day and/or Araw ng Kagitingan. There was a time when Araw ng Kagitingan was observed on May 6 pursuant to Letter of Instruction No 1087 issued on November 28, 1980. On June 30, 1987, Executive Order No. 263, which provided a list of regular holidays and special days to be observed throughout the country, and for other purposes declared April 9 as Araw ng Kagitingan (Bataan and Corregidor Day). On July 24, 2007, Republic Act No. 9402 designated the celebration of Araw ng Kagitingan (Bataan and Corregidor Day) on the Monday nearest April 9. Beginning 2011, by virtue of annual presidential proclamations, Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor or Bataan Day) has been observed on April 9.

Today, let us devote a moment of prayer for our fallen war heroes who sacrificed and offered their lives to gain the freedom, and democracy that we now enjoy. Let us honor them by living and safeguarding the principles, freedom and democracy that they fought so hard for, so that future generations could relish them.
THE lamentable stance of many of Manila’s intellectuals against the Chinese due to the South China Sea maritime dispute, and a proposed ban on the entry of foreign workers by a reelected senator only fans prejudice, and invites reprisals and counter-prejudice against our own workers and migrants on foreign shores.

Imagine the hundreds of thousands of Filipinos working in China in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. All of these territories also have positions that counter our own in the South China Sea issue. Likewise, these combined economies constitute our biggest trading partner, as almost a third of our trade is with them.

Taiwan is a curious case since, despite heavy backing from Washington, its official position disagrees with that of the Philippines in the International Arbitral Tribunal on the South China Sea, since Taiwan claims the Spratlys and even sends its own ships to patrol it.

Another false belief of some of Manila’s intellectuals is that other claimant countries in the SCS can be rallied against China to support the Philippine position. Hello? They have claims against our own. Feel free to read up on them. We wonder why their “intrusions” are not reported in media?

The deeper backdrop is that our growth over the last ten years is linked closely to our Asian neighbors with whom we have competing claims in the South China Sea, as our businesses depend heavily on inputs we import from them, while they have become a growing market for our own exports, and have sent millions of tourists over the last two years.

Our trade relations within Asia have grown faster than those with the west. Go ahead and check our tourist and trade statistics.

Realizing this forces us to pause and rethink our prejudices and see the strategic implications of our positions, that is, their long-term impact on us, our economic development, rather than short-term tit for tat.

This kind of myopic, knee-jerk policy muckracking is disastrous if you cannot contain the aftermath. Worse, it promotes a false sense of superiority and allows intrusive political and cultural agendas that may benefit from conflict.

Worse, the ethnocentric trash talk spawned by this prejudice builds bigotry against those who are different, something that should have been stamped out.
after 30 years of EDSA. In short, if you can't think like me, you are wrong.

As Mindanaoans we understand how this prejudice has affected us, having endured decades of neglect by way of smaller than proper government budgets and pushing a top-down approach in dealing with its adversaries, blind to the larger realities that lie beyond surface facts with politically expedient solutions that do little to advance our collective interest for peace and development, and instead, prolonged conflict and exacerbated poverty, while Metro Manila and its neighboring regions now have the GDP of Thailand.

Thus, examining the fluid nature of geopolitics, our position on these EEZs should now closely to the spirit of UN CLOS itself: encouraging cooperation rather than conflict.

Diplomatically, it is never wise to promise your relations on the one conflict, while negating ten other areas of cooperation.

We have had the conflicts with neighboring states over the last 50 years, yet our relations have remained mutually beneficial. Only the myopic muckrakers would like you to forget that.

On a deeper level, we all need to check ourselves for unfair prejudice.

Cultivating hatred serves no purpose but hatred and strife, which are sure barriers to peace, development and growth.

Youth events inspire hope

Kudos to major events held in Davao City that will inspire young people to take action. The CFC Youth for Christ International Conference drew almost 7,000 delegates from all over the world. It began with immersions to outlying and urban communities examining the grassroots initiatives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Davao.

Another initiative is that of EN ACTUS, which inspires entrepreneurship among college students and allows them to network with their peers.

We look forward to the Palarong Pambansa to be hosted in the brand-new sports complex inside the university of the Philippines Mindanao campus.

May all of these events inspire hope and a sense of collective vision among young people.

For reactions: facebook.com/johntriupage
Presidential ramblings, vice presidential ignorance

We certainly are in deep trouble if the two top officials of the land exhibit a serial tendency, which has become a habit, toward making irrational statements. Though expressed in different ways, both President Rodrigo Duterte and Vice President Leni Robredo have this habit of speech that simply begs the application of some hermeneutic skills, if not deconstruction.

The President has on many occasions engaged in what can be construed as incoherent ramblings with incomplete sentences and with a kind of prose and a choice of words that require some skills to decode. This is why he is prone to misinterpretation, and often requires presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo or his cabinet officials to elaborate, interpret or sometimes contradict or negate. President Duterte's oral skills are characteristic of someone who thinks aloud. His speech is what people who are used to conversing with friends over bottles of beer or gin can easily relate to. And this is why despite the seeming incoherence, there is an air of familiarity with the masses, which is made even more familiar by the intermittent cursing and vulgarity.

Leni Robredo's manner of speaking is, however, a totally different matter. The Filipino language is such a beautiful way to express ideas, but it seems that it gets murdered every time Robredo uses it. She has this habit of turning what appears to be logical arguments into inane and empty rhetoric. While President Duterte's incoherent ramblings be mere labels designed for effect, in the same manner that even civil society activists refer to a war against poverty or environmental destruction.

After all, the only war that are formally declared are against other countries, for which it is Congress that has the power and not the president. Civil wars are not formally declared, but they could be outcomes of a declaration of hostilities by rebel forces against the government.

Governments do not declare war against its own people, but simply deploy their monopoly over the legitimate use of violence against rebel forces and enemies of the state. If this is what the President refers to, then it would be perfectly within the bounds of the Constitution as provided in Section 18 of Article VII.

But what the President cannot declare is a revolutionary war, simply because it is not the state that initiates a revolution. What he can mount is a palace coup, and oust his own constitutional government, after which he can declare a revolutionary government. This is no longer a constitutional process since it effectively deposes the Constitution.

However, while the President's irrational utterance may just be based on his lack of familiarity with the academic jargon used
appear to be a result of a tendency to think aloud, Robredo’s incoherence appears to be emanating from what many allege as the absence of thought. And it could even be fatal to statements that otherwise make sense but lose their logic and turn into inanities the moment she utters them, like what happened to the feminist advocacy statement that rape exists because of rapists.

But what is even worse is when Duterte and Robredo appear irrational not because of how they say things, but of what they actually say.

Recently, the President threatened to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and declare what he labeled as a “revolutionary war.”

The suspension of the privilege of the writ is a prerogative of the President as provided in the 1987 Constitution, under Section 16 of Article VII, where he can do so “in case of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it.”

Under the Constitution, and as Commander-in-Chief, the President can also call the Armed Forces whenever it becomes necessary to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion or rebellion. He can also, aside from suspending the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, declare martial law. However, both the suspension of the privilege of the writ and the declaration of martial law are subject to review and concurrence by Congress, and can be elevated to the Supreme Court on issues of presence or absence of factual basis.

However, there is no construct in political science where a sitting president declares a “revolutionary war.” He is free to call his campaign against crime and drugs as “wars” but they would by political scientists to refer to types of political violence, the irrationality of Robredo is worse. It emanates from a fundamental ignorance of what an extra-constitutional process implies.

Robredo expressed her readiness to take over the reins of power in Malacanang if and when the President declares a revolutionary government, because she thinks it is her mandate as Vice President. This is evidence no longer just of an unfamiliarity with the proper jargon, but goes deeper and reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of the concept of a revolutionary government and its implications on political order.

Robredo and her cabal of lawyer friends like Florin Hilbay must be told. Constitutional succession no longer exists in the event that a revolutionary government is installed. The basis of the legitimacy of rule is no longer the Constitution but whoever wields the power to mobilize arms and exact compliance from the people. They should be reminded that this is exactly what enabled Cory Aquino, and not Arturo Tolentino who was the legitimate vice president at the time, to become president in 1986 after Ferdinand Marcos was ousted by a coup led by Juan Ponce Enrile and Fidel Ramos.

If Robredo wants to become president should Duterte declare a revolutionary government, then she and her allies have to wage a countercoup. However, should they succeed, she must realize that she will also ascend to the post in an extra-constitutional manner. But then again, this is something that Robredo, who evidently lacks understanding of the nature and consequences of an extra-constitutional political transition, would find hard to comprehend.
Reminding Duterte of constitutional basics

MANY were surprised and taken aback by the President’s threat to his critics that he would suspend the writ of habeas corpus, jail all of them and declare a revolutionary government. But then again, after three years into this administration, who would be surprised by the President’s penchant for theatrics not to mention profanities? Yet as a lawyer from one of the premier law schools in the country, one could only expect that the President would be aware of the legal repercussions of his every pronouncement.

The 1987 Constitution is crystal clear: The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended except in cases of invasion or rebellion when the public safety requires it. Suspension of the writ shall be for a period not exceeding sixty days. Within 48 hours from the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus (or martial law), the President is required to submit a report in person or in writing to the Congress which may, by a vote of at least a majority of all its members in regular or special session, revoke such proclamation or suspension, which revocation shall not be set aside by the President. Congress may extend such proclamation or suspension for a period to be determined by the Congress, if the invasion or rebellion shall persist and public safety requires it.

In the few instances that the chief executive suspended the privilege, it was always during the time of rebellion and necessity of public safety. In 1980, President Efrain Rios Montt suspended the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus due to impending communist threat from Fidel Velasco. In 1971, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos suspended the privilege to prevent a bomb attack during the rally of Liberal Party at Plaza Miranda in Manila. Former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo suspended the writ in 2009, in some areas of Maguindanao province following the Maguindanao massacre.

And recently, martial law was declared in Mindanao and the writ was suspended by Duterte due to armed attacks, violent acts, and perpetrated by the Abu Sayyaf and Maute terrorist groups.

Nowhere has there been an instance when the writ was suspended to suppress administration critics. Of course, criticizing an administration is never a ground to suspend the writ, much less declare martial law.

A Constitution, founded on the principles of democracy and civil liberty, cannot sanction the suspension of basic freedoms. By the State. A healthy democracy can only thrive in an atmosphere of freedom, including the freedom to engage in healthy and constructive criticism of the government. The exchange of ideas and even criticizing the leadership is an essential component of democracy. As one pundit said: “Democracy must be built through open societies that share information. When there is information, there is enlightenment. When there is debate, there are solutions. When there is no sharing of power, no rule of law, no accountability, there is abuse, corruption, subjugation and degradation.”

Aside from the suspension of the writ, the President also threatened to declare a revolutionary government. Early on in his administration, in 2016, I think, Duterte also threatened to declare the Left and Yellows with a revolutionary government. And again, most recently Duterte, outraged by words of caution on his order to review all government contracts, again threatened to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and arrest “all” his critics. Duterte also warned he would declare a “revolutionary war” if pushed to a corner.

I can remember only two instances in our history when a revolutionary government was set up. One was declared by Aguinaldo in 1898 and by Corazon Aquino following the ouster of Marcos in the EDSA People Power Revolution. In order to justify a revolutionary government, there must be a revolution just like in 1898 during the war of
Reminding...

From A4

independence and 1986 people power revolution. For Duterte to threaten the opposition with a revolutionary government is utterly unwarranted, illegal and extra-constitutional, if not laughable. Any upheaval brought about by lawlessness, rebellion or invasion can be remedied by adopting the prescriptions within the constitutional framework.

Piolo Hilbay and Romy Macalintal hit the nail right on the head when they say that if Duterte declares a revolutionary government, he is in effect resigning and choosing to become a rebel thereby operating outside the law and by operation of the Constitution, VP Robredo takes over the reins of government which makes it her duty to quell the rebellion and stamp out the rebels. Robredo said declaring a revolutionary government (RevGov) runs against Duterte’s duties as President and his oath to protect and uphold the Constitution.

Our leaders cannot be onion-skinned and resort to intimidation and threats at the drop of the hat. In the case of President Duterte, what makes it more dangerous is that he actually means it. He cannot in fact take criticism and will in fact have his critics arrested if the opportunities arise. Take the cases of Senator Leila de Lima, Maria Ressa, and Antonio Trillanes. It is shameful that the Department of Justice and the judiciary have played along and allowed this weaponization of the law.

The President is clearly reacting to the narco-list videos and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) report on the Duterte’s Statements of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN). On the latter, he argued that it is not PCIJ’s business to inquire about their wealth. That of course is not correct. It is the business of all citizens, and particularly media, to ask if their president and other government officials are corrupt or have abused their power. After all, Section 1 of Article 11 of the 1987 Constitution proclaims: “Public Office is a public trust.”

So there: all the President and his men need to do is to go back to the basics of the constitution. I will humbly agree that the President is a brighter lawyer than I am; on the constitutional basics I do claim some knowledge as a teacher of the subject in quite a number of schools. It does not take rocket science to know what is constitutional and unconstitutional. And clearly the President’s latest statements are the latter; hence, this reminder from one Mindanaoan lawyer to another.

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Discretion is the better part of valor

TENSION is brewing in Philippines-China relations. We've been reading a raft of bad news for China in local media of late. There's the uproar over recent disclosure of the presence of a flotilla of Chinese vessels near Pag-asa island in the South China Sea that we claim as part of our Exclusive Economic Zone. There's also the growing clamor for the Philippine government to crack down on the presence of illegal Chinese workers in the country. And certain quarters are also raising the alarm on alleged onerous loans from China for infrastructure projects they claim would inevitably draw the country into a "debt trap."

Result: the 4th Quarter 2018 SWS survey conducted between Dec. 16 and 19 reveals that most respondents do not agree with the statement that "most of what the Chinese government wants to happen in the Philippines is good for Filipinos." The survey found that 44 percent of Filipinos disagreed with the statement, 27 disagreed, and 29 percent remained undecided. This translates to an agreement score of -17, classified by the SWS as "moderately weak."

What all this means is that bilateral relations appear to be under siege from various directions. But are all this enough to make us conclude that the Philippine government should reconsider its decision since 2016 to pivot to China and strengthen its ties with a neo-door neighbor?

Our email inbox yielded last week a briefer on the forthcoming Second Belt and Road Forum, to be held in Beijing from April 25 to 27, that's going to be attended by President Rodrigo Duterte, who attended the first one in 2017.

The theme of this year's BRF is: "Belt and Road Cooperation: Shaping a Brighter Shared Future." The events will include a leaders' roundtable, a high-level meeting, thematic forums, a CEO conference and other side events. Representatives from over 100 countries, including about 40 leaders of foreign governments, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, have confirmed their attendance. During this second forum, more agreements are expected to be signed, and more detailed guidance and documentation will be introduced, based on the last five years of experience.

The 2019 BRF expects participating parties to "further enrich the vision of advancing quality BRI cooperation by following the principle of consultation and cooperation for shared benefits, sticking to people-centered development philosophy, forging extensive partnerships, jointly promoting all-round connectivity, and implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The second BRF will hopefully send a positive message of strengthening international..."
economic cooperation, promoting global growth, and building an open global economy.”

And more: “With the concerted efforts of all the participating parties, the second BRF will deliver fruitful outcomes, create more driving forces for the economic growth of both participating countries and other countries concerned, provide more opportunities for international economic cooperation, and contribute more to the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind and a new type of international relations.”

China considers the Philippines, with our unique geographical position, as a natural partner in the Belt and Road Initiative. In fact, during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping last November 2018, a total of 29 cooperation documents were signed, including the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative.

The signing of this MOU is significant as it would serve to “inject fresh vitality to the bilateral relations and lift our economic and trade cooperation to a new level.”

The briefed points out that in the past two years, China has become the Philippines’ top trading partner, largest export market and largest source of imports. China Customs statistics reveal that bilateral trade volume in 2018 reached US$56 billion, a year-on-year increase of 8.5 percent. China imported more than 2 million tons of tropical fruits from the Philippines over the past two years. Philippine companies also sold US$124 million products in five days during the first China International Import Expo held in Shanghai last November.

Our own Department of Trade and Industry has also reported that China topped the list of foreign investors with P48.7 billion last year, equivalent to nearly 84 times increase from P575.8 million in 2017. China Telecom has won the bid of the third telecom operator license in the Philippines, and promised to invest about US$5 billion in five years. Hobai Iron & Steel Co. has indicated willingness to establish an Iron & Steel Plant in Cagayan de Oro worth US$3.5 billion. A Chinese enterprise, CNOOC, also wants to actively participate in putting up LNG projects in Batangas province.

We see all this as positive signs in bilateral relations and economic cooperation going forward. At the same time, serious efforts should be made for the two sides to thresh out differences in an atmosphere of good neighborliness and mutual benefit, and avoiding any rash actions that would put longstanding ties in jeopardy.

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Victories, not defeats

TO THE POINT

EMIL P. JURADO

THIS made me laugh.
A 95-year-old, who always called his wife Honey, Darling and Love, was asked what her name was.
The man said: "Gosh that was many years ago, I can’t remember and I am afraid to ask her."

***

Today we commemorate Day of Valor, commemorating the Fall of Bataan and the Fall of Corregidor.
I have been saying all along that the Philippines must really have a distorted sense of values because we celebrate days of infancy like what happened in Bataan and Corregidor.
For one, in June 1945, there was a culmination of the Battle of Bessang Pass in the Cordilleras. This was called the Battle Among the Clouds in the Annals of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

After months of an uphill battle by the 121st Infantry of the USAFIP-NL, the guerrilla forces under then-Col. Russel Volckmann, the 3rd Battalion under Major Conrado Rigor was to be the assault forces to fight the Japanese under Tshiyuki Yamashita. They had retreated to the Cordilleras after the rape of Manilla when the US forces took over.

In particular, it was the F platoon then under my eldest brother Desi (who later on became a justice of the Court of Appeals) that led the assault in an uphill combat that ended in the surrender of Yamashita.
The surrender was in Bagui. And later on he was executed by the Americans in Los Baños, Laguna.

Suiza Banasa, this was a signal victory that ended the Japanese Occupation.
Ironically, the only Philippine presidents who recognized that victory were former soldiers Ferdinand Marcos and Fidel Ramos.
Ramos had a shrine built in Cervantes, Bocos Sur, in commemoration of that victory. It was at that Battle of Bessang Pass that cost the lives of no less than 1,400 Ilocanos and Igorot guerrillas.

And yet we commemorate the Fall of Bataan and the Fall of Corregidor.
Why do we want to relive our defeats? I have been writing about the need to mark, nationwide, the Battle of Bessang Pass.
I am passionate about this because every time I visit the house of my widowed sister-in-law, I see the Silver Star awarded to Desi for his heroism.

It’s unfortunate that the secretaries of the Department of National Defense seem to have forgotten that victory against foreign invaders.

***

We should remember the times we won.

***

I was rather shocked to hear a president—a lawyer at that like Mr. Duterte say that he will have his critics arrested without due warrant and that he will declare a revolutionary war, not a revolutionary government.

For a lawyer, Duterte should know that despite all the criticism against him, there is no basis for suspending the writ of habeas corpus. The 1987 Constitution is very clear: he may call on the Armed Forces only to suppress lawless violence, invasion or rebellion when public safety requires it. And only for a period of 60 days.

In the case of declaration of a revolutionary war, which is beyond the Constitution which he swore to defend and uphold, then he must resign and pave the way for Vice President Leni Robredo to be president.
The President should not make threats he cannot fulfill. He should be aware of the consequences of his threats.

The findings of the Philippine Center

\[\text{Tunto A5}\]
Victories,...

From M4

for Investigative Journalism about the unexplained wealth of the Duterte family brings to the fore more questions.

Why didn’t the President and his mayoral daughter, both lawyers, declare that they practiced law while in office?

Recall that the late Chief Justice Renato Corona was convicted by the Senate for not declaring his dollar accounts.

Duterte claimed that his law office did not deal with the government and did not receive funds from government. Is that an exception in the rule on the Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth?

Recall that earlier on, the PCIJ also found that the father and brother of now-senatorial candidate Bong Go cornered no less than P1.4 billion in public works contracts while Duterte was mayor of Davao City.

All I know is that the PCIJ report raises questions that cry out for answers.

***

The statement of President Duterte in the wake of “*** findings of the AFP that hundreds of Chinese vessels have been surrounding Pag-asa Island, that he would not allow this to happen, is indeed a show of leadership.

I commend the President for finally standing his ground against incursions into our Exclusive Economic Zone.

***

My beloved birthday greetings to former President and now Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, soon to become a private citizen. Her legacy is the strong fiscal fundamentals of the country.

Happy birthday and may you live to be a hundred!
We won’t be duped anymore

Instantly, they produced a video of a fictitious character, nicknamed “Bikoy,” narrating yet again another recycled allegations against presidential son Paolo “Pulong” Duterte being a drug lord.

I wouldn’t be surprised if the hooded actor in the video turns out to be Paredes himself, with a storyline ripped off primetime TV.

Just the same, nobody would be shocked if “Bikoy” turns out to be Sonny Trillanes himself, the terror of Oakwood and Manila Peninsula hotels.

They are so desperate that they have pitched any and every possible issue, not only targeting the head of the State but also his family members.

They have not spared even his youngest daughter Veronica “Kitty” Duterte, in their social media onslaught, accusing the 14-year-old as being the dummy for the Duterte family’s alleged hidden wealth in Hong Kong.

They will stop at nothing in their efforts to win public support, even employing the “China scare” tactic.

And all the while that these Yellows are engaging us in their black propaganda, the government forces wage a bloody war against terrorism.

The Philippine Army suffered at least three casualties in search and rescue operations in Sulu Island, where two of three foreign hostages were recovered and three Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) kidnappers killed.

These Yellows are unmindful of the real clear and present dangers that threaten the gains under this “essentially, truly revolutionary leadership” of President Duterte.

But the people will not be duped by their false hypocritical “holier-than-thou” stance.
PH protests vs China

I strongly believe it behooves China to heed our protests if she really is a friend, as she claims to be. We cannot forever be protesting her unwarranted actions without adversely affecting our friendship.

CROSSHAIRS
REY O. ARCILLA

FOREIGN Secretary Teodoro “Teddy” Locsin, jr. has been tagged by one of his predecessors, Albert “Super Amboy” del Rosario, as the “perfect person” to convince President Rodrigo Roa Duterte a.k.a. Digong to have the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the West Philippine Sea raised in the United Nations General Assembly.

I don’t know if Locsin and Del Rosario are friends and, if so, how close. One thing is for sure though—they both belong to the elite. I suspect Locsin is also an Amboy.

Nonetheless, it sounds like Del Rosario is simply hating Locsin, being the “perfect person” that he supposedly is. Surely, Del Rosario knows that Digong, given his firm position not to rock the building China-PH friendship boat is not likely to agree to such a proposition. Such a move will definitely irk China.

I therefore hope, for his sake, Locsin doesn’t bite. He could get his head chopped off.

Given his present predisposition, however, to follow Digong’s foreign and domestic policies, particularly vis-à-vis China, he probably won’t.

But let’s watch what happens.

Speaking of Del Rosario, I think he knows he will ignominiously go down in history as the man responsible, along with former President Noynoy Aquino, for losing Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

He obviously doesn’t realize that by making all sorts of noises, he is simply reminding everyone of his colossal blunder.

DEA ON CHINESE VESSELS IN PAG-ASA

Sundry politicians have been clamoring for the release by the DFA of the diplomatic protests filed against China on the presence of 275 Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asu Islands. DFA chief Locsin, however, said he will never make them public.

I could be wrong but I think the essence of the protests filed may be gleaned from the DFA statement on the issue, to wit:

“The Pag-asa Islands are part of the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG), which is an integral part of the Philippines over which it has sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction.

Accordingly, the presence of Chinese vessels near and around Pag-asa and other maritime features in the KIG is illegal. Such actions are a clear violation of Philippine sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction, as defined under international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Moreover, it has been observed that Chinese vessels have been present in large numbers and for sustained and recurring periods—what is commonly referred to as “swarming” tactics—raising questions about their intent as well as concerns over their role in support of coercive objectives.

“Such actions when not repudiated by the Chinese government are deemed to have been adopted by it.

“The presence of Chinese vessels within the KIG, whether military, fishing or other vessels will thus continue to be the subject of appropriate action by the Philippines.

“For the record, the Philippines has consistently manifested its position on the Pag-asa Islands and on the KIG, and its objections or concerns over illegal, tension-raising or coercive activities, through diplomatic actions, including notes verbales and in meetings with the Chinese side, including the Philippine-China Bilateral Consultation.”

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PH PROTESTS

Mechanism (BCM).

"We call on concerned parties to desist from any action and activity that contravenes the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), as these generate tension, mistrust and uncertainty, and threaten regional peace and stability.

"While negotiations for a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea are ongoing, the Philippines calls for the full and effective implementation of the DOC. We cannot emphasize enough the imperative to build and promote mutual trust and confidence, to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities, and to avoid actions that may further complicate the situation and undermine peace, security and stability in the region.

"The Joint Statement issued by the Philippines and China on the occasion of last year's State Visit of President Xi Jinping to the Philippines includes an agreement by both sides to exercise self-restraint with respect to activities in the South China Sea that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability. We call on the Chinese government to adhere to this consensus reached at the highest level, down to its agencies and its military."

***

I strongly believe it behooves China to heed our protests if she really is a friend, as she claims to be. We cannot forever be protesting her unwarrranted actuations without adversely affecting our friendship. For one thing, they only serve to make the majority of Filipinos continue to be wary and suspicious of China’s intentions, to the delight of parties here and abroad who have been driving a wedge in the growing ties between China and the Philippines.

I believe it would really be best, as stated by the DFA, for the two countries to stick to the agreement reached at the highest level “to exercise self-restraint with respect to activities in the South China Sea that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability.”

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REMINDERS

This segment is intended to remind the Duterte administration of some of its yet unfulfilled promises and matters that need attention and/or follow-up action. More importantly, the people are entitled to know what’s being done about them.

1. Digong’s promise to rid the country of foreign troops. This, of course, necessitates abrogating the MDT and the lapsed and constitutionally infirm VFA and the EDCA.

2. Reciprocal visa arrangements with the US and other countries. What is “Tweetter” Loksin doing about this? Our embassy in Washington? No less than President Digong has said he wanted this done about three years ago.

3. The return of the Canadian waste. I wonder why “Tweetter” Loksin hasn’t tweeted on this issue till now. He tweets on almost anything that strikes his fancy (pata ba naman taho-throwing by a Chinese national which he dismissed as trivial), but nothing on a very important and stinking matter like the Canadian garbage, especially after the South Korean Government took back their waste.

Recently, ten Canadian environmental groups urged Prime Minister Justin “Trashy” Trudeau in a letter to take back 103 containers of garbage illegally dumped on our shores more than five years ago which “is a violation of Canada’s obligations under the UN Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.”

***
The dogs of war

Those who have been following President Duterte's appearances on the campaign trail will have already noticed: it seems easier to get under Mr. Duterte's skin these past few days. It's easy to think that his tirades against his declared enemies are just part of the course, or crossed off as frustrated rantings.

But listen to him more often than not and you'll realize that it's a tried and true tactic to keep one's base: identify an enemy and keep attacking. Similar to what US President Donald Trump does in every appearance or speech, Mr. Duterte also has a handy mental list of "enemies" that he attacks at leisure to keep his audience's attention; it whips his base into a frenzy online, and fuels their belief that they should keep supporting Mr. Duterte to enable him to keep fighting oligarchs, priests, drugs, and bed, bad, things. He peppers his speeches with his brand of jokes to entertain those in the audience, and on easy days, the joke part of his speeches usually occupy a longer time than any other policy pronouncements.

The truth of the matter is: Mr. Duterte has never stopped campaigning, even when he assumed the presidency in 2016. The threat to declare a revolutionary government proves this guess: he thinks, and acts, as if he remains an outsider in government, raging against the bureaucracy, its systems, and its weaknesses.

These days, however, Mr. Duterte seems to be on the warpath against his critics, reacting more viciously and rabidly against those who do not agree with his worldview. His jokes also seem to be less and less (not that we should be complaining), with Mr. Duterte devoting more time railing against Senators Antonio Trillanes IV and Leila de Lima and calling them various names. Even Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon was not spared last week, after Drilon warned government that it should tread carefully in reviewing contracts already entered, saying it could adversely affect the perception that the Philippines makes good on its word when it comes to international agreements.

Instead of unleashing the dogs of war on his enemies, perhaps the President could instead focus these energies into solving the actual problems that beset Filipinos in this day and age.

It's Complicated

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

ONLINE NEWS
09 APRIL 2019

http://www.pna.gov.ph
Pilot mandatory ROTC program eyed for coming school year

By Jose Cielito Reganit

MANILA -- The Department of National Defense (DND) and the Department of Education (DepEd) are ready to jointly implement a two-year pilot program for the proposed mandatory Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) in selected public high schools nationwide this coming school year, a ranking Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) official said Monday.

Appearing before the Senate Committee on Education, Arts and Culture, Brig. Gen. Rolando Rodil, commander of the AFP Reserve Command, said the pilot program will be called the Advanced Citizen Training Program (ACTP) and will be implemented in 100 public senior high schools nationwide.

The military official said the outlines of the Defense and Education departments started working on the pilot program after President Rodrigo Duterte mentioned mandatory ROTC as one of his priorities in his first state of the nation address (SONA) in 2016.

"After President Duterte’s first SONA, the DepEd and DND agreed to come out with a pilot program to ensure readiness in the full implementation of the program should the law be enacted," Rodil told the committee.

He said a joint curriculum for the two years of the pilot implementation of the program in Grades 11-12 has already been formulated along with an estimated budget of PHP211 million.

Likewise, the 100 public senior high schools that will be part of the pilot implementation have already been identified.

All regions, except the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), would be represented in the pilot program.

"We came up with a draft memorandum of agreement (MOA) that was signed by the (DND and DepEd) Secretaries. It has not just taken off last semester but we plan to implement it in Grades 11 and 12 this coming school year," Rodil said.

In the meantime, Rodil told the Senate the general concept on how ROTC will be administered as well as some key points of the measures and guidelines that will be implemented to address hazing, abuse and corruption in the conduct of the program.

He said that unlike previous ROTC courses, there will be no weekend training since it will become part of the education curriculum.

The exception would be only during practical exercises in military camps.

ROTC cadets would initially use ordinary P.E. uniforms during ROTC training, with a plan to later issue AFP military uniforms.
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Grievance committee

To immediately address complaints of hazing, abuse and corruption, Rodil said a grievance committee will be established in each school.

While written complaints are required, the grievance committee would also consider anonymous complaints.

“We anticipate that some probably do not want to be initially identified. So anonymous complaints would not be immediately scrapped or dismissed by the committee. They will be evaluated for sufficiency,” Rodil said.

Additionally, reservists will be tapped to serve as ROTC instructors, with the DepEd providing counterparts through the creation of plantilla positions.

Rodil said the ROTC curriculum will be heavy on values formation and character building.

“We always subscribed to the belief that ROTC has been a very viable program of government to instill discipline, build character and to infuse the values that we should be infusing to our youth today, including nationalism and patriotism,” he said.

The AFP official added that parts of the ROTC module include developing leadership skills; civic consciousness, and community involvement; disaster preparedness; survival; and, life skills.

“We also like to instill basic military skills to lead, move, navigate, shoot and communicate - the basic soldier skills that we like to impart to ROTC cadets,” Rodil said.

Law not needed

In the meantime, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian said he has nothing against the implementation of the ACTP since this will be implemented in the basic education level.

The chair of the Senate Committee on Education, Arts and Culture noted that the ACTP will just be like a curriculum that can be implemented by the DepEd in Grades 11 and 12.

“It would be just like a curriculum. We do not need a law for that since DepEd can make their own curriculum,” Gatchalian said in an interview after the hearing.

He, likewise, clarified that mandatory ROTC would be limited to the selected public senior high schools.

“ROTC will be mandatory only to the students in the 100 pilot testing schools, not in all senior high schools. The plan is to implement this 2019-2020 school year, but they also have to submit to us their strategy on how to implement it,” Gatchalian said.

As far as he is concerned, the lawmaker said his main concern is the safeguards to be implemented to curb past abuses.

“They are now talking how to implement it, how to roll it out. I am putting more emphasis on the safeguards because it is important that we have mechanisms that will penalize violators, as well as mechanisms that will investigate the problems that will arise in its implementation,” Gatchalian said. (PNA)
Filipinos must always be ready to defend PH vs. all threats

By Priam Nepomuceno

MANILA — Defense and military officials said Filipinos from all walks of life must be able to defend the country from all forms of threats if called upon.

"As we remember our heroes, let us not forget that they put their lives on the line when they were needed and we must always prepare, just as we are doing in these exercises with our allies, for the day when our nations call us to action during disasters or when our freedom is threatened," Department of National Defense (DND) spokesperson, Arsenio Andolong, said in a statement Monday, ahead of the country's commemoration of Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor).

Andolong added that this year's "Araw ng Kagitingan" observance is made more meaningful as it coincides with the annual "Balikatan" exercises.

"This year's 'Balikatan' is more meaningful because it coincides with our 'Araw ng Kagitingan', which commemorates the courage and sacrifice of Filipino veterans and our Allies, who valiantly fought side-by-side to defend the Philippines during World War II," he said.

Some 4,000 Filipino, 3,500 American and 50 Australian troops are participating in the annual military maneuvers, which formally started April 1 and will end on April 12, while acting as observers are military personnel of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) public affairs office chief, Col. Noel Detoyato, said the annual "Day of Valor" observance signifies the shared sacrifices of Filipino and American troops in World War II.

"It signifies the shared sacrifices the Filipino and American soldiers during World War II. That was the start of the infamous Bataan Death March (140 km. from Bataan to Capas). Thousands died before reaching Capas, Tarlac," he said.

While honoring the sacrifices of these fallen troops, Detoyato said that Americans and Filipinos will be together again in this year's "Balikatan" exercises.

"Filipino and American soldiers will be together again in a different situation that is, delivering basic services, training together to prepare for calamities and shoulder to shoulder in the rigors of exchanging skills in anti-terrorism training and exercises," the AFP public official said.

"Times have changed, but the camaraderie is still as warm as ever, exemplifying the best of military diplomacy while remembering the heroism of our forefathers who gave the best ofsoldiery," Detoyato pointed out.

Meanwhile, AFP spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo, said this year's "Balikatan" exercises is a good tribute to Filipino and American troops who have fallen in defense of Bataan.

"This comes as a gesture to pay tribute to the heroism and indomitable courage of Filipino and American soldier-patriots as they fought side by side, shoulder to shoulder, against seemingly insurmountable odds," he said.

"To date, the friendship and the fight continues alongside one another in combating contemporary challenges of terrorism and in capacitating one another towards resiliency to natural and human-induced disasters among other events of significance covered in the exercise," Arevalo added.
By 2028, a world-class Army that is a source of national pride.

Earlier, AFP Chief-of-Staff, Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., said the 35th iteration of the "Balikatan" is a testament to the Philippines and US' enduring defense partnership.

"It was in this crucial moments of insurmountable odds when our forebears, the forebears of our great nation, our soldiers have truly embodied, understood and experienced the real meaning of 'Balikatan', carrying the load together on our shoulder, however heavy the load, however huge the obstacle, and at whatever the cost," he added.

Underequipped and meagerly supplied American and Filipino forces, fighting in the Bataan front lines, were forced to surrender on April 9, 1942 after 93 days of gallant resistance against the superior Japanese force.

Some 60,000 Filipino and American troops were made prisoners of war by the Japanese.

They were made to walk some 140 km. from Mariveles, Bataan to Capas, Tarlac under the scorching heat of the sun with no food and water for days in what is known the world over as the "Death March".

'Death March' remembered

Meanwhile, representatives from the DND and AFP joined the 2019 Bataan Memorial Death March (BMDM) held at the desert terrains of White Sands Missile Range in the US state of New Mexico last March 17.

Defense Undersecretary for Civil, Veterans and Retiree Affairs Reynaldo B. Mapagu led participants from the DND and the AFP to the annual marathon honoring soldiers who served in World War II and suffered the arduous Death March.

A record-high of 8,631 runners and walkers registered for this year's BMDM, wherein participants were given the option to undertake the full 26.2-mile trek or the 14.2-mile honorary march.

Prior to the event, the Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project (FilVetREP) held an awarding ceremony to present the US Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) to Filipino and Filipino-American World War II veterans.

The awarding of the CGM to the veterans continues in the US and in the Philippines, pursuant to the enactment of the Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2015 in December 2016, which recognizes the service of Filipino forces under the US Army during the war. (PNA)