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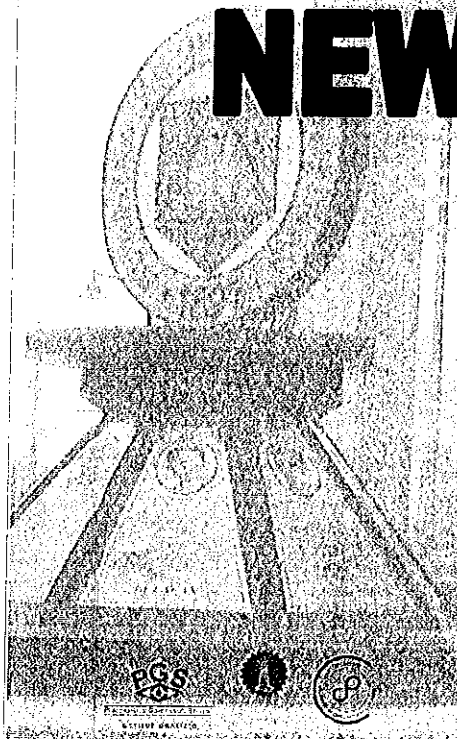
04 February 2019

Monday



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PORK ROW MAY LEAD TO REENACTED BUDGET

STORY BY DJ YAP

With three days left for legislative business, the House of Representatives gives Budget Secretary Diokno an ultimatum to report on last year's government savings or the 2018 budget stays.

FROM A1

By DJ Yap
@deejayapINQ

The prospect of a reenacted budget loomed large on Sunday after the House of Representatives issued an ultimatum to Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno to give a report on government savings in 2018 in exchange for the bicameral approval of this year's spending bill.

"Secretary Diokno may have evaded scrutiny of DBM (Department of Budget and Management) pork in the 2018 budget deliberations. Not this time," said Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., chair of the House appropriations panel.

"No DBM report on 2018 savings, no bicam report for 2019 budget," Andaya said, referring to the penultimate stage before ratification by the House and the Senate of the general appropriations bill (GAB).

The bill, once ratified, becomes law upon signing by the President.

Going on recess

The Senate and the House are under a tight deadline—only three days—to reach consensus on the proposed P3.8-trillion budget with Congress poised to go on recess this week in time for the campaign season.

Senators and House members will resume their conference on the GAB on Monday, even as the lawmakers remain locked in a standoff over what to do with their respective "insertions" or amendments to the spending bill prepared and submitted to them by the executive.

The two chambers have only until Wednesday to reach an agreement, as the legislature goes on recess. Congress will resume on May 20 after the midterm polls.

Pork accusations

But the House ultimatum on the DBM could throw another wrench on conference discussions, which have been stymied by accusations and counteraccusations between senators and House members over their respective "pork" allocations.

Pork funds pet projects of lawmakers and is a source of kickbacks.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson has accused House leaders of allocating P160 million in pork to each congressman, up from P60 million promised by Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

He also claims that some senators wanted to keep the P23 billion they inserted into the proposed budget. The insertions can be considered pork, according to Lacson.

Andaya earlier said the Senate had introduced to the spending bill more than P190 billion worth of amendments, almost four times bigger than the P51 billion inserted by the House.

In a statement, he demanded that Diokno furnish the bicameral committee a report on all unreleased appropriations and unobligated allotments for 2018.

"We need that report in order to pass the 2019 budget," he said. "We need a clear picture of our spending authority. Congress authorized the extension of the 2018 appropriations. We demand to see the balances."

Overdue

Andaya noted that the report was two years overdue.

"We are not talking of millions of pesos here. The total amount runs in billions of pesos. These are lump-sum funds under the disposal of Secretary Diokno," he said.

Last year, the Senate and the House approved Joint Resolution No. 3 prolonging the life of the 2018 budget for another fiscal year.

The measure, signed by President Duterte on Dec. 28, extends the availability of the 2018 appropriations for maintenance and other operating expenses and capital outlays to Dec. 31, 2019.

The resolution, in effect, authorizes the disbursement of appropriations under the 2018 budget that have not been released and allotments issued that have not been obligated.

It allows for the continued use of the 2018 budget until end of 2019 for projects and services instead of being reverted to the unappropriated surplus of the general fund.

"You want to look for pork? This is the multibillion-peso DBM pork that Secretary Diokno has kept secret from Congress and from the public," Andaya said. INQ

07 February 2019 THE MANILA STAR Page: 1

2 Chinese killed in P1.9-B drug bust

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

Two Chinese were killed yesterday in a reported shoot-out with lawmen during a drug sting at a warehouse in Tanza, Cavite where an estimated P1.9 billion worth of shabu was seized.

Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) director general Aaron Aquino identified the slain suspects as Vincent Du Lim and Hong Li Wen, both residents of Fujian, China, based on their passports.

Aquino said PDEA agents and policemen, who posed as buyers, figured in the firefight with the suspects.

The lawmen seized 274 kilos of shabu that were wrapped in blue plastic bags. The drugs were found in carton boxes stored in the warehouse along Antero Soriano Highway in Barangay Amaya I.

"This operation started with a tip from a confidential informant," Aquino said.

He cited intelligence reports revealing that the gang likely smuggled the drugs using a ship and dropped them somewhere off the coast of the Ilocos region.

The drugs were then fished out and transported by motorized bancas somewhere in Cavite. Aquino said most of the boxes of drugs were still wet, indicating they were thrown overboard.

Aquino suspects the group conducted the operation in the wee hours of the morning to evade the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine National Police Maritime Group.

The province of Cavite was the gang's staging ground for repacking the drugs because of its proximity to Metro Manila where the shabu would be sold, Aquino said.

There were no other people caught inside the warehouse. An investigation is ongoing to determine the extent of the drug operation.

Last year, the PDEA also traced shabu shipments hidden in magnetic lifters in Cavite that slipped past the Bureau of Customs in Manila.

04 February 2019 Tribune Page: 03

Protests have been filed, says Locsin

By Mario J. Mallari

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has filed 19 diplomatic protests against Chinese activities in the disputed West Philippine Sea without any fanfare.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., reacting to statements of Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Carpio who urged the government to file formal protests against China's alleged incursions, stressed the DFA is "silently" doing that.

Protest is intended for the Chinese not for hysterics in Manila who, sadly, are not foreigners but, good God, Filipinos.

"SAJ Carpio, we're doing that; 18 or 19 so far," said Locsin in a social media post.

It was not clear, however, when the protests were made and on what particular incidents. Locsin took over the helm of DFA last October from Alan Peter Cayetano who is seeking a congressional seat in Taguig City.

"No fanfare though; protest is intended for the Chinese not for hysterics in Manila who, sadly, are not foreigners but, good God, Filipinos so no need to CC protest to them. It gets in the way of diplomacy," he added.

Recent report showed that Beijing has established a maritime rescue center on Kagitingan or Fiery Cross Reef, one of its military outposts in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea.

Kagitingan Reef is being claimed by the Philippines.

According to a report from Chinese state-run Xinhua, China's Ministry of Transport opened the center to support rescue operations in the southern part of the disputed waterway. 3

Palace: More violence in Mindanao without ML

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Malacañang has asked critics to stop questioning the implementation of martial law in Mindanao following the successive bombings in three areas last month.

Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar claimed that the security situation in Mindanao would have been worse if it were not placed under martial law.

"Some are asking why those incidents happened despite the implementation of martial

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Palace From Page 1

law. It would have been worse if there were no martial law in Mindanao because there would be no checkpoints," Andanar told state-run *Radyo Pilipinas* on Saturday.

Andanar said people he recently spoke with in Cagayan de Oro, Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental shared the same view.

"*So, huwag na silang makialam sa* martial law *sa* Mindanao *sapagkat maayos naman* (They should just let martial law in Mindanao be because things are orderly)," he added.

President Duterte placed Mindanao under martial law after terrorists connected with international extremist group Islamic State laid siege to Marawi on May 23, 2017.

Marawi was declared liberated from terrorists five months later but Duterte did not lift military rule to enable government forces to run after threat groups in southern Philippines.

Congress, which is dominated by Duterte's allies, has agreed to extend martial law in Mindanao three times. The first extension lapsed on Dec. 31, 2017 while the second one lasted until the end of 2018. The third extension will last until the end of this year.

Despite the implementation of martial law, Mindanao was rocked by three bombings that tested the mettle of government forces.

More than 20 people died and dozens others were injured in twin bombings inside and outside a Catholic cathedral in Jolo, Sulu on Jan. 27. Officials have said Indonesian suicide bombers aided by local terrorists were behind the explosions, which happened days after Sulu rejected the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), a measure that seeks to create a new autonomous region with greater economic and political powers.

A day after the Jolo bombings, a roadside bombing occurred in Magpet, North Cotabato, killing a policeman and injuring at least seven other persons. Police have blamed the New People's Army for the incident.

On Jan. 30, two persons were killed and four others were hurt after a grenade exploded in a mosque in Zamboanga City.

Critics have raised doubts on the way authorities are implementing martial law, noting that armed groups still manage to harm people despite the stricter security measures. Human rights group Karapatan has expressed fears that the Jolo bombing would be used to rush amendments to the Human Security Act and "jeopardize" civil and political rights.

Despite the successive explosions, Malacañang said there is no need to expand martial law outside Mindanao and assured the public that the Philippines remains a "safe haven."

Andanar said the government is "wary" about Region 10, noting that the plebiscite for the BOL would be held on Feb. 6. Residents of Lanao del Norte, except Iligan City, and the towns of Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pikit, Pigkayawan and Tulunan in North Cotabato would vote in the plebiscite.

"We do not want the terrorist groups to mar the peaceful resolution in Mindanao through the Bangsamoro Organic Law," Andanar said, urging the public to cooperate with government forces to prevent untoward incidents.

"We have to be on alert. We have to cooperate with our government; we have to cooperate with the (Armed Forces of the Philippines); we cooperate with the Philippine National Police and our local government units. That is the surest way to ensure our safety," he said.

A peace advocate, meanwhile, said recent events such as the Mindanao bombings and virtual collapse of peace talks between government and the communists indicate the need for Filipinos to assert their Right to Peace pursuant to the resolution adopted by the United Nations in December 2017.

The proposal for the upward declaration for Yes for Peace zones has been submitted to authorities for a pro-active, barangay-level approach toward "a just, unifying and lasting peace," convenor Ernie Alcanzare, who was at the peace rally yesterday in Quezon City, said.

04 February 2019 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Page: A17

MALAYAO SLAY

ARMY DISOWNS PNP STATEMENT

By Villamor Visaya Jr.
@villamorvisayaINQ

GAMU, ISABELA---The Army's 5th Infantry Division (ID) at Camp Melchor Dela Cruz here on Sunday denied issuing a press statement that the Cagayan Valley regional police released in which slain National Democratic Front of the Philippines peace consultant Randy Felix Malayao was tagged as a New People's Army member who had a quarrel with the rebel movement. A17

Maj. Jefferson Somera, 5th ID spokesperson, said the statement that Supt. Chevalier Iringan, regional police spokesperson, issued did not come from the Army. INQ

4 February 2019 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Page: A9

₱1.9-B 'shabu' seized; 2 Chinese men killed

By Maricar Cinco and Jeannette I. Andrade
@Team_Inquirer

SAN PEDRO CITY—Two Chinese nationals were killed in a buy-bust operation at a suspected "shabu" (crystal meth) warehouse in Tanza town in Cavite province on Sunday afternoon.

The slain suspects were identified as Vincent Du Lim and Hong Li Wen.

Joint operations

Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Director General Aaron Aquino said the buy-bust operation was conducted by joint teams of the PDEA Calabarzon, Intelligence and Investigation Service and National Capital Region, as well as the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

The buy-bust operation, conducted around 4 p.m. Sunday, at a warehouse along Antero Soriano Highway, Barangay Amaya 1, Tanza town in Cavite, resulted in the death of the suspects and the recovery of some 274 kilograms of shabu worth an estimated P1.9 billion.

According to PDEA Calabarzon operations division chief Joshua Arquero, the suspects were killed in a gunfight with the agents.

"They (Chinese nationals) were the subjects of the buy-bust. They sensed they were dealing with a PDEA agent inside the warehouse, drew their guns and started firing," Arquero told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

The suspects' aggression prompted the agents to return fire which resulted in the death of the two alleged drug dealers.

Arquero said there was no one else besides the two suspects when authorities swooped down on the target shabu warehouse, which he described as a house with an adjacent "bodega."

Finished products

Agents found at least "274 packs" of suspected shabu inside the warehouse.

"These are finished products. It is not a lab (laboratory)," Arquero added.

Authorities were still conducting an inventory of the drug haul as of 6 p.m. A9

Arquero said they were now conducting an investigation on the background of the two slain Chinese nationals. INQ

04 February 2019 THE MANILA TIMES STAR Page: 1

Congress running out of time for 2019 budget

By PAOLO ROMERO

The Senate and House of Representatives have only two days left this week to resolve their differences over the proposed P3.7-trillion national budget for this year and come up with a final version that President Duterte has been pressing Congress to pass since last year.

The bicameral conference committee on the 2019 General Appropriations Bill (GAB), composed of representatives from the Senate and House, is scheduled to resume its meeting today to iron out the differing provisions of their versions of the proposed national budget.

Congress is set to adjourn on Wednesday to give way to the 90-day electoral campaign period, but tomorrow is a non-working holiday owing to the

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Congress From Page 1

Chinese New Year.

It is not yet clear whether the bicameral committee will continue their proceedings tomorrow as leaders of both chambers have vowed to ratify the GAB before they adjourn.

The legislative calendar indicates that the session ends on Friday, which could mean the two chambers can ratify the GAB by that time but several members of the panel said such an extension was unlikely.

The bicameral panel nearly went into a deadlock last Wednesday after Senate President Vicente Sotto III threatened to pull out his chamber's version of the budget, saying he was exasperated over the allegations of billions of pesos of insertions.

The Senate did not want its P190-billion in amendments or realignments in the GAB to be decreased but the House balked, saying the reallocations would practically wipe out funding for their projects.

"We're close to getting to an agreement," Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who has been very vocal against insertions made by some senators and House members, told *dzBB* yesterday.

Lacson noted that the House contingent had previously taken a hardline stance, particularly wanting to open the proceedings to the media and opposing the creation of a smaller group to tally the amendments.

"These differences are all about amendments. But what kind of amendments? That's still being discussed," he said.

Lacson said it was agreed that the entire panel will review what Sen. Loren Legarda, chairperson of the Senate finance committee, and Camarines Sur Rep. Roland Andaya Jr., chairman of the House appropriations committee, have agreed upon before signing the final version of the budget.

"The ending that we want here is for public funds not to be wasted. If we don't be strict in scrutinizing the national budget, we could liken it to a mother's wallet whose zipper is open so the children take from it until the family is bankrupt," Lacson said.

Diokno's 'overdue' report

The leadership of the House under Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday warned Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno that his failure to produce their 2017 and 2018 report on government expenses will further scuttle deliberations on the stalled 2019 budget.

"Secretary Diokno may have evaded scrutiny of Department of Budget and Management pork in the 2018 budget deliberations. Not this time. No DBM report on 2018 savings, no (bicameral committee) report for 2019 budget," Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., chairman of the House appropriations committee, said.

"We need that report in order to pass the 2019 budget. We need a clear picture of our spending authority. Congress authorized the extension of the 2018 appropriations. We demand to see the balances," the chairman of the House contingent in the bicameral conference committee added.

The report is two years overdue, Andaya noted.

Non-itemized allocations

House Majority Leader Fredenil Castro said he was confused why Lacson could not itemize his P50-billion insertion in the 2019 national budget allegedly in favor of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police.

Castro maintained that the lump sum has been highly contentious because it remains unclear what the funds are allocated for.

The House leader lamented that Lacson, who sits as vice chairman of the Senate committee on finance that automatically makes him a member of the bicameral conference committee, could not differentiate "between insertion and institutional amendments."

Non-itemized allocations in the annual budget, or lump sums in layman's terms, have been outlawed by the Supreme Court in November 2013 as prone to corruption.

'Pass the budget'

A member of the House panel in the bicameral conference committee yesterday said Congress should be determined to pass the 2019 national budget.

A reenacted budget is a bad policy as it does not reflect changes in needs of the people and the economy, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda said.

He said a reenacted budget would endanger the increase in salaries of military and civilian state workers, 2019 elections, the country's Southeast Asian Games hosting, expansion of college scholarships to private schools and safety nets against inflation.

"Our people, not Congress, are the biggest losers in a reenacted budget, which government agencies will simply operate on the basis of the previous year's appropriations. A reenacted budget also sends a wrong signal to investors about the ability of the Philippines to maintain the reform momentum," Salceda said.

– With Delon Porcalla

04 February 2019

The Daily Tribune

Page: 1

Napkin, whisper politics bared

By Mario J. Mallari and Hananeel Bordey

In crafting the budget, some lawmakers submit their amendments, sometimes amounting to hundreds of millions if not billions of pesos, by a mere whisper or using a piece of paper napkin.

This was revealed by Sen. Panfilo Lacson

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Others submit their amendments by whispering or (submit) a piece of paper or napkin to the chairman of the Finance Committee

From page 1

yesterday as he justified his P30.4 billion institutional amendments to the P3.757 trillion proposed 2019 national budget.

"All of my amendments ever since are written on official form. These are open documents that can be scrutinized," Lacson said on radio.

"Others submit their amendments by whispering or (submit) a piece of paper or napkin to the chairman of the Finance Committee because they are not official and they don't like to show it," he added.

The Senate Finance Committee is chaired by Sen. Loren Legarda, a graduating senator and seeking the lone congressional district of Antique province.

Lacson admitted being the source of institutional amendments for the Department of National Defense-Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police, Commission on Human Rights and Dangerous Drugs Board.

"All in all, it could reach P30 billion, but I don't have bridges, road networks, flood control, road right-of-way (RRoW) projects and feasibility study. You be the judge - are these individual amendments or 'pork' or institutional amendments?" Lacson asked.

None spared

Lacson has been indiscriminate in scrutinizing the budget, publicly stating that some fellow senators inserted P23 billion in what he described as individual amendments that he considered as "pork barrel."

Lacson admitted being the source of institutional amendments for the Department of National Defense-Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police, Commission on Human Rights and Dangerous Drugs Board.

Pork barrel is the lump sum given to legislators, otherwise named Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), that the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional in a 2013 ruling.

Lacson noted that in one province alone, at least one senator allotted P3.3 billion while other insertions made by senators include items that are worth P2.3 billion and P2.7 billion in the budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Lacson said the pork was intended for projects such as flood control structures, national and local roads, water management, multi-purpose facilities, bridges, feasibility studies and RRoW that are all prone to corruption.

"Who will conduct the feasibility study? The senator? Is it not the agency that should do that? And feasibility study should have been done before the passage of the budget. That's planning," Lacson said.

Come clean

The senator said lawmakers, including his fellow senators and members of the House of Representatives, should make public their own amendments in the P3.757 trillion proposed 2019 national budget.

"It's their call if they want to make public their amendments. It's not for me to make that public," said Lacson when asked to name the senators.

On the other hand, he claimed each of the more than 290 members of the House would receive P160 million.

"The challenge applies to all who introduced amendments, individual or institutional. Let them make public their amendments, so the public can judge if it's pork. That is much better than resorting to lies and cover-up," he said.

Lacson has been accused of being a hypocrite by Rep. Anthony Bravo in branding budget amendments by congressmen as "pork barrel" while declaring as institutional amendments those made by senators.

But the senator was quick to slam Bravo and House Majority Leader Fredenil Castro, branding them as talking heads of Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"What Speaker GMA's talking heads obviously do not realize is that they're actually advancing my cause in educating the public more about the 'evil pork' in the national budget. I earnestly urge them to continue this public discourse. Many thanks to Cong. Castro and Bravo," Lacson said.

Lacson lashed back at Bravo, accusing the partylist congressman of lying when he claimed the senator referred to amendments by the Senate as institutional amendments and those by the House as pork.

"If he intended to be truthful about his statements, he should not have skipped my revelation about the P23 billion insertions made by a number of senators on the Department of Public Works and Highways' budget alone," he said.

Pork were intended for projects such as flood control structures, national and local roads, water management, multi-purpose facilities, bridges, feasibility studies and road right-of-way.

"What I cannot understand is why Bravo would be conveniently selective in his recollection of facts. I hope he would be truthful and not resort to lying," he added.

Explain changes1

On the other hand, Castro had similarly dared Lacson to "explain" the institutional amendments he made in the budget.

The bicameral conference committee on the 2019 national budget, headed by Senate Finance Committee chair Loren Legarda and House Appropriations Committee head Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., is still deliberating on the measure.

The committee, however, committed to pass the budget before Congress adjourns on 6 February.

Castro reiterated that the P160 million that Lacson called as pork was deliberated before being included in the 2019 General Appropriations Bill.

Castro clarified that the P160 million allocation per congressman was itemized and this is "pre-enacted" as opposed to PDAF.

"This P160 million was (in the) line item. It was included in the GAA (General Appropriations Act). This is pre-enacted. Which means this was being deliberated even before the approval of the appropriation bill," the House leader said.

Lacson said lawmakers, including his fellow senators and members of the House of Representatives, should make public their own amendments.

Castro, who called Lacson a "self-proclaimed anti-pork barrel crusader," further explained yesterday that these items that were included in the P160 million allocation per congressman were requests from their constituents in their respective congressional districts which the senators do not have.

Solidarity walk staged

By Gladys Mae Ablon

In a rare show of unity, Muslim and Christian groups staged a solidarity walk yesterday at the Quezon City Memorial Circle (QCMC) to condemn the recent spate of bombings in Jolo and Zamboanga that killed over 20 people and injured scores of others.

Dubbed "Lakad para sa Kapayapaan Laban sa Karahasan" the activity started at 5 a.m. with the Muslims converging on Commonwealth Ave. and the Christians coming from East Ave.

There were Bible and Quran exchanges, interfaith prayer rallies, peace covenant signing and flying white doves as a symbol of peace and unity during the event.

Up to 4,000 participants joined the solidarity walk.

The Metropolitan Development Authority implemented a 'stop and go' scheme on roads near QCMC starting at 7 am. But Traffic returned to normal after the activity.

Members of the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines also participated in the solidarity walk. 3

CA February 2019 The Manila Times Page: A7

Army boosts ops vs Negros Reds

BY EUGENE ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY: The Philippine Army had deployed 220 troops to Negros Island to strengthen internal security operations there, Col. Benedict Arevalo, commander of the 303rd Infantry Brigade based in Murcia, Negros Occidental, said over the weekend.

Arevalo welcomed the arrival of the additional troops that will boost their campaign against the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

He said that with a stronger Army on the island, government forces would be able to run more aggressively after communist terrorists and prevent them from conducting atrocities and extortion activities.

"Our number is enough to pursue the NPA. With the support of the communities, local government units and government agencies, the number will continue to grow until these terrorists will have nowhere to run to," Arevalo added.

On Wednesday, 120 soldiers of the 94th Infantry Battalion's Bravo Company arrived in Negros Oriental, coming from their six-month deployment with the 301st Infantry Brigade on Panay Island.

A total of 100 new soldiers, who underwent training with the 3rd Infantry Division in Jamindan, Capiz, were also recently assigned to different Army battalions in Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental.

In a statement, the 303rd Brigade said the deployment of 220 more troops to Negros Island was based on Malacañang's Memorandum Order 32 issued on Nov. 22, 2018.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea released the directive amid "sporadic acts of violence allegedly committed by lawless groups particularly in the provinces of Samar, Negros Oriental and [Negros] Occidental and Bicol Region."

'Left ordered Malayao slay'

By Pat C. santos

A top-level source from the Kilusan at Alyansa ng mga Dating Rebelde (KADRE), a group composed of former communist rebels, bared that National Democratic Front (NDF) consultant Randy Malayao was ordered killed by the communist leadership itself.

The source, who identified himself as *Ka* George, told a news conference in Manila he has evidence to prove that the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) was behind the killing of Malayao.

Ka George was a former rebel who worked with Malayao during their time with the communist-led National Youth (NY).

Malayao was gunned down while sleeping on board a bus in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya heading for Cagayan early Wednesday morning, 30 January.

Ka George said he has evidence to show the order to kill Malayao really came from the CPP-NPA-NDF. He said the "hit" is similar to the bombing of Plaza Miranda in 1971, which was initially denied by the communist group who pinned the blame on former President Marcos.

However, during the 80s, a member of the communist group admitted that it was CPP founder Joma Sison who ordered the bombing to trigger a revolution among the people.

The communist group feared that Malayao would be jumping to the other side of the fence that is why he was liquidated.

On the issue of extrajudicial killing within the party and the mass purging of rebels, witnesses and victims have come out to prove that these are the handiwork of the CPP just like the discovery of a mass grave in Inopacan, Leyte.

According to *Ka* George, before the killing, Malayao told the communist leadership that he wants to take a break and go to Cagayan. Malayao was formerly the vice president of the College Editor's Guild of the Philippines.

Malayao entered the communist movement in 1992, during the time of the debate in the communist group that caused a breakup between RA (re affirming the Leadership of JOMA and adopting the Maoist line of guerilla warfare) and RJ (Rejecting the leadership of Joma), and also Rejoice (3rd block) that was eventually renamed Makabayan.

Malayao is a product of the streamlining of those who joined the RA. Part of the streamlining is the experimental selection of candidates who will join partylist groups like Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Anakpawis, Migrante, ACT, Kabataan and Piston which will be all be under the Makabayan block.

Part of the experiment is the inclusion of candidates who will run as mayors, congressmen, councilors and senators from the CPP. These partly became successful through the likes of Satur Ocampo, Lisa Masa, Teddy Casino and Neri Colmenares.

This is part of the agreement with party founder Joma Sison and the new guards of the movement. But Malayao, *Ka* George said, was disappointed to see the use of the parliamentary struggle and partylist operations of the communist group as a source of funds for the CPP, particularly in supporting the NPA.

"Millions of funds were collected from the partylist operations and from the alliance with traditional parties and individuals," *Ka* George said.

Reds rehab program lauded

By Kathleen Mae Bulquerin

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana lauded the people behind Task Force Balik Loob for successfully helping former communist party members who have given up "fighting for a lost cause" and live a normal life with their families.

"Through the diligent efforts of our lead and partner agencies, the Task Force was able to positively change the lives of our fellow Filipinos who have been led astray by the deceptive recruitment and lies of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army- National Democratic Front," Lorenzana said.

Created April last year, Task Force Balik Loob is composed of representatives from DND, Department of Interior and Local Government, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Office of the President, the National Housing Authority, as well as other government agencies.

In just five months since the program was started, a total of 1,437 former rebels have been given financial assistance worth P116,45 million under the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP) administered by the DILG through their provincial offices as of 23 January.

DILG also financially assisted 32 provinces and five highly urbanized cities for the construction of their respective halfway houses worth P5 million each, for a total of P185 million.

Under the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) program, another main component of the E-CLIP, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process, disbursed a total of P1,428,25 million for the construction of 15 roads and bridges in areas affected by the communist-terrorist group in Mindanao.

Also, 645 former rebels underwent skills training from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority while 249 benefited from the Integrated Livelihood Program of the Department of Labor and Employment.

In just five months since the program was started, a total of 1,437 former rebels have been given financial assistance worth P116,45 million.

On the part of the Department of Agrarian Reform, seven former rebels who are also farmers were awarded Certificate of Land Allocation, breaking the record for the swift processing and awarding of the grants.

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Bulgar

Ang Nangungunang Pahayagang Tagalog sa Bansa P8.00

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Dalawang NPA supporters, sumuko

LAGANGILANG, Abra – Dalawang taga-suporta ng New People's Army (NPA) ang sumuko sa militar sa Sitio Barbarit, Barangay Tagodtod, Lagangilang, Abra, kamakailan.

Paliwanag ng 24th Infantry Battalion (IB) ng Philippine Army (PA), ipinasya ng dalawang supporter ng kilusan na magbalik-loob sa gobyerno bunsod na rin ng hirap ng kanilang buhay sa pakikibaka sa pamahalaan.

Hindi na binanggit ng militar ang pagkakakilanlan ng dalawang para na rin sa kanilang seguridad.

Isinuko rin ng mga ito ang dalawang Garand rifle at dalawang claymore mine.

Freddie G. Lazaro

4 February 2019 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Page: A16

CHURCH MASSES IN ZAMBOANGA, SULU DELIVER MESSAGES OF FAITH, LOVE, HEALING

By Julie Alipala
@alipalajulieINQ

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Churchgoers on Sunday listened to messages about strong faith, love and healing a week after twin bombs exploded at a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu province, killing 22 people and wounding nearly 100 others.

Fr. Jefferson Nadua, spokesperson for the Apostolic Vicariate of Jolo, said four Masses were celebrated on Sunday in three different places, including a chapel in a military camp in Barangay Bus-Bus.

Current concern

Nadua said holding the Masses was quite painful after the attack on Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo on Jan. 27.

"Our concern now is healing, healing the wounds of our people," Nadua said.

"Our call this time, even if it's very painful to everyone, we have to reflect, instead of being divided, let this event be an event, a venue to unite, to call for justice, to achieve peace," he said.

Nadua said that at first, he could not think of a message for the people of Jolo appropriate at this time, but he was inspired by messages calling for the holding of Masses at the bombed cathedral, although that was not possible because the church had been closed indefinitely.

So the message during the Masses on Sunday, Nadua said, was "a statement of faith, faith [that] has grown stronger and [firmer]. That there is so much to be thankful for than to be broken and sad about while licking our own wounds for healing. Hence, we come as one community of faith."

Fr. Ramil Janquin celebrated Mass on Sunday at Sacred Heart of Jesus Chapel in Jolo, which was bombed on Dec. 25, 2011.

Deep faith

He said Sunday's Mass was most significant after the Jan. 27 attack on the Mount Carmel cathedral.

"We should not be affected because our faith is deep," Janquin said.

He said, however, that churchgoers were fewer on Sunday, which could have been the effect of public fear after the bombings.

"I congratulate those who attended Mass today. Despite [what happened], they [showed their courage to] the whole world: Life has to go on, and it shows how strong our faith here is!" Janquin said. INQ

04 February 2019 The Manila Times Page: A8

Christians, Muslims walk for peace

BY DIVINA NOVA JOY DELA CRUZ

HUNDREDS of Christians and Muslims joined a Solidarity Walk on Sunday to condemn violence in Mindanao and call for peace and unity among members of religious faiths.

The event held in response to the bomb attack on the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo that killed 20 and the grenade explosion at a mosque in Zamboanga City that left two persons dead.

Representatives of Muslim and Christian groups swapped a Bible and a Quran to symbolize harmony and understanding. White doves were released to symbolize peace and a covenant was signed to mark their agreement and commitment to maintain peace.

"Sa mga pangyayari ngayon, of course *kailangan na manaig ang kapayapaan* (with the recent events, of course, peace needs to dominate) because we cannot have peace if we engage in war," Father Oni Rosaroso of the Military Ordinariate of the Philippines said.

"Ipinakikita natin ho dito ang pagkakaisa ng mamamayang Pilipino. Hindi makakahadlang kung ano mang kaguluhan ang ginagawa para pag-awayin at bigyan ng hadlang itong pagmamahalan ng Christian *at* Muslim. (We are showing the unity of the Filipino people. Mayhem or war cannot stop Muslims and Christians from loving each other)," said Datu Basher Bong Alonto, chairman of the Metro Manila Muslim Community for Peace and Justice.

Princess Nur Ana Indanan-Sahidulla, a former congressman and governor of Sulu, said the members of the two faiths had lived harmoniously over the years and respected each other.

"Ang simbahan na yun ay hindi ginagalaw ng mga Muslim *na mga Tausug doon dahil yung mga yun ay nirerespeto dahil marunong din na magrespeto sa mga Tausug na* Muslim. (The cathedral was respected and was not touched by Muslims who are members of the Tausug tribe because (Christians) also respected the Muslims)," she said.

She said the bombings were intended to create tension between the two religions.

Sahidulla urged everyone to maintain peace and harmony among members of the two religions in Mindanao.

PEACE AND UNITY Muslims and Christians sign the Solidarity Wall for Peace during *"Lakad Tungo sa Kapayapaan, Iwaksi ang Karahasan"* (Walk Toward Peace, End Violence) Solidarity Walk held at the Quezon City Memorial Circle on Sunday to condemn the recent bombings in Jolo and Zambaonga. PHOTO BY RUY MARTINEZ

04 February 2019 INQUIRER Page: A1

JOLO CHURCH BOMBINGS

INDONESIA OPEN TO HELP PROBERS

By the Inquirer Staff
@Team_Inquirer

Indonesia is willing to help the Philippines investigate twin blasts that killed 22 people and wounded nearly 100 others in Jolo, Sulu province, a week ago, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said on Sunday.

Speaking on state-run radio, Año said the Philippine government had sought help from the Indonesian government in identifying the perpetrators of the attack on Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in the Sulu capital.

He spoke a day after he claimed that the attack was carried out by an Indonesian couple, the latest information in an investigation that had been fraught with inconsistent and sometimes contradictory statements from authorities and, according to one investigator interviewed on A16

INDONESIA OPEN TO HELP PH INVESTIGATORS OF JOLO CATHEDRAL BLASTS

FROM A1

television, complicated by a contaminated crime scene.

Remotely detonated

Security officials had initially said the two bombs were remotely detonated.

Col. Noel Detoyato, chief of the public affairs office of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said on Tuesday that two survivors had spoken about seeing a woman leaving a bag in a pew in the fifth row from the back of the nave then hurriedly getting out of the church.

"That is the method of the deployment [of the bomb] so it's not a suicide bombing," Detoyato told reporters on Tuesday, answering questions about the possibility of a suicide attack.

He said nobody could have ascertained the location of the second bomb because commotion broke out after the first explosion.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said how the attackers got in or near the church would never be known, as all the soldiers stationed at the main door of the cathedral died in the blast.

Lorenzana, however, spoke about the deployment of the first bomb as Detoyato had told reporters.

Abu Sayyaf attack

But the picture changed later on Tuesday after President Duterte told reporters that the bandit group Abu Sayyaf was behind the blasts and that a couple carried out the attack.

Then Lorenzana said the second bomb, which exploded at the entrance to the church, may have been set off by a suicide bomber, "as indicated by body parts strewn all over."

Año came in on Friday with information similar to Mr. Duterte's but with the claim that an Indonesian couple guided by the Abu Sayyaf carried out the attack.

"It was the Abu Sayyaf who guided them, studied the target, did reconnaissance and surveillance work, and brought the couple inside the cathedral," Año said in a peace meeting in Palo, Leyte province.

In an interview on television, Año said the male bomber was known as Abu Hubda, among several aliases, and had been living in Sulu for a long time.

Año also said there were witnesses who had said the female bomber did not leave the church, suggesting she may have been killed in the explosion.

No foreigner, however, has been identified among the dead in the church.

Indonesian role unconfirmed

On Sunday, Año said the Philippine government sought help from the Indonesian government and received assurance of assistance.

"We coordinated with the Indonesian government. They will help. At least we will know if we can identify these bombers behind the cathedral blasts as Indonesian," Año said.

Indonesian foreign ministry spokesperson Armanatha Nasir, however, said the government had not been able to confirm the involvement of Indonesian nationals in the Jolo attack, the Associated Press (AP) reported on Sunday.

On Saturday, Sidney Jones, director of the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, said that Manila was apparently still in the dark over the identity of the perpetrators.

"There's no evidence. Different officials are saying different things—Malaysians, Yemenis,

Indonesians. They actually have no clue," Jones told The Jakarta Post via text message.

Fitriani of the Center for Strategic and International Studies who uses only one name concurred with Jones, saying that without evidence it was too early to conclude that Indonesians were involved in the bombings.

Mr. Duterte ordered government forces to destroy the Abu Sayyaf after the Jolo attack.

The military launched an operation in Patikul, Sulu, and troops encountered on Saturday what Lt. Gen. Macairog Alberto, the Army commander, identified on Sunday as an Abu Sayyaf faction led by Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who is suspected of helping plot the bombing of the cathedral.

Sawadjaan's band has reportedly sworn allegiance to the Islamic State jihadi group in Iraq and Syria that is attempting to establish a province in Southeast Asia based in southern Philippines.

Five soldiers and three Abu Sayyaf gunmen were killed in two hours of fierce fighting in the jungle between troops from the 5th Scout Rangers Battalion and Sawadjaan's group of about 100 fighters, Macairog said.

Col. Gerry Besana, regional military spokesperson, said five other soldiers and 15 Abu Sayyaf gunmen were wounded in the clash.

Foreign fighters

Besana said there were foreign fighters in Sawadjaan's group but did not say how many and from what countries.

"We cannot give a definite number as to how many and their nationalities because these are operational details," Besana told the Inquirer.

The attack on Jolo was followed by a grenade explosion at a mosque in Zamboanga City on Wednesday in which two Muslim preachers were killed and four others were wounded.

The government tightened security in the region following the bombings, with house-to-house searches by the police and the military in Jolo in pursuit of the perpetrators of the blasts at the cathedral.

A 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew has been imposed in Jolo and other parts of Mindanao since 2017 when Mr. Duterte imposed martial law on the entire island to crush a terrorist siege of Marawi City in Lanao del Sur province.

The military has denied a shoot-to-kill order has been issued for curfew violators. —**REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, JULIE ALIPALA, JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE, DIVINA M. SUSON, REUTERS, AP AND THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK** INQ

February 2019

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Page:

Indonesia offers help in Jolo blast probe

By GENALY D. KABILING and ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

Indonesia is ready to assist the Philippines with the investigation into the suicide bombings in Jolo, Sulu, last month.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año said they intend to work closely with Indonesia after initial probe showed that an Indonesian couple was behind the church bombing that killed dozens of people.

"Nagkausap din kami ng ating Pangulo noong isang gabi, iba ang sources niya pero it also led to the Indonesian couple [I talked with the President the other night. He had other sources but it also led to the ▶12

Indonesia offers help... ◀1

Indonesian couple]," he said over government radio.

"Siyempre bago natin ipa-finalize iyan, kailangan supported properly lalo na ng forensic at ng DNA. So mayroon tayong ugnayan sa Indonesian government -- tutulong sila. At least mabubuo natin kung talagang ma-identify natin ito na talagang Indonesian itong bomber na nagpaputok dito sa cathedral [Before we finalize it, it must be properly supported by forensic and DNA. We have coordinated with the Indonesian government and they will help. At least we will know if we can identify the Indonesian bombers behind the cathedral attack]," he added.

Año earlier revealed that the Islamic State-linked Indonesian suicide bombers received help from the Abu Sayyaf Group in launching the January 27 attack in Jolo. The notorious group, known for kidnap-for-ransom and killings in the south, supposedly provided surveillance and reconnaissance to aid the foreign terrorists in launching the church attack.

Año claimed the Indonesian couple wanted to show an example to other Filipinos on how to carry out suicide attacks. He noted that Filipino terror elements do not carry out suicide bombings since it is "not in our tradition."

"Parang gustong magpakita ng example at gusto nilang itaas sa religious war; kaya ang pinipili nila ay iyong mga simbahan, cathedral, para pag-awayin iyong Kristiyano at saka Muslim [They want to make an example and elevate it to a religious war so they choose churches to sow conflict between Christians and Muslims]," he added.

Año meantime warned about the presence of other foreign terror suspects in Jolo but assured that government troops have launched operations against them and their ASG cohorts.

He acknowledged that the terror suspects were aiming to set up an Islamic State movement in the south and recruit more people to their cause.

Appeal for cooperation

Malacañang has appealed to the public to cooperate with the security measures being implemented by security forces following the successive bombings in Mindanao in late January.

In his radio program aired over state-run Radyo Pilipinas, Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said cooperation is the surest way to prevent such tragedy from happening again.

"Dapat ho ay kailangan alisto tayo lahat (We all need to be alert). We have to cooperate with our government," Andanar said.

"We have to cooperate with the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines), with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and our local government units. Sapagkat that is the surest way na masiguro natin yung ating kaligtasan (Because that is the surest way to ensure our safety)," he added.

A mosque in Zamboanga City was bombed late January, claiming the lives of two Muslim religious followers. The recent bombing occurred just days after the twin blasts at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu which killed 21 people.

Despite the security measures, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo assured the public that the country is still safe and people can still continue with their daily activities.

He also said that there is no need for President Duterte to expand the coverage of martial law being implemented in Mindanao.

"We would like to assure the general public that they can go about their normal activities. Our country is still a safe haven," he said.

"There is no necessity for any expansion of martial law as the President has repeatedly declared," he added, referring to the still effective martial law that was declared in Mindanao because of the attacks in Marawi City by pro-Islamic State terrorists.

He, however, said that the attacks are reasons why martial law in Mindanao should not be lifted.

"Well, if there was no martial law there I'm certain it will not only be one or two as what happened during the Marawi incident," he said.

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Balita

Ang Nangunguna ng Pahayagang Tagalog sa Banga ₱8.00

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Indonesia, tutulong sa Jolo bombing probe

Handa ang Indonesia na tulungan ang Pilipinas sa isinasagawa nitong imbestigasyon kaugnay ng pambobomba sa Jolo, Sulu nitong Enero 27.

Ayon kay Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año, makikipagtulungan sila sa Indonesia makaraang lumabas sa inisyal na imbestigasyon na Indonesian couple ang nasa likod ng pambobomba.

"Nagkausap din kami ng ating Pangulo noong isang gabi, iba ang sources niya pero it also lead to Indonesian couple," sabi ni Año.

"Siyempre bago natin ipa-finalize 'yan, kailangang supported properly, lalo na ng forensic at ng DNA. So mayroon tayong ugnayan sa Indonesian government – tutulong sila. At least mabubuo natin kung talagang ma-identify natin ito na talagang Indonesian itong bomber na nagpaputok dito sa cathedral," dagdag niya.

Una nang sinabi ni Año na tumanggap ng tulong ang Islamic State-linked Indonesian suicide bombers mula sa Abu Sayyaf Group sa magkasunod na pambobomba sa Jolo Cathedral nitong Enero 27.

Sa panayam sa radyo, sinabi ni Año na nais ipakita ng Indonesian couple sa ibang Pilipino kung paano magsagawa ng suicide attacks.

Iginiit naman ng kalihim na ang mga Pilipinong terorista ay hindi nagsasagawa ng suicide bombings dahil ito ay "not in our tradition".

"Parang gustong magpakita ng example at gusto nilang itaas sa religious war, kaya ang pinipili nila ay iyong mga simbahan, cathedral para pag-awayin iyong Kristiyano at saka Muslim," dagdag niya.

Nagbabala si Año laban sa presensiya ng iba pang dayuhang terorista sa Jolo, ngunit siniguro na nagsagawa ang tropa ng pamahalaan ng operasyon laban sa kanila at sa kasabwat na ASG.

4 **Genalyn D. Kabiling**

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BIFF MEMBERS

8 IS-LINKED MORO GUNMEN SURRENDER IN MAGUINDANAO

By Edwin O. Fernandez
@inqmindanao

CAMP SIONGCO, MAGUINDANAO—Eight members of Daesh, or Islamic State-inspired Moro armed men, have surrendered to military authorities on Friday, the Army here said on Sunday.

The surrenderers, led by bomb-making expert Salahuddin Hassan of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), gave themselves up to Joint Task Force Central (JTF Central) through the Army's 601st Infantry Brigade in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao.

Hassan was one of the students of Indonesian bomber Zulkifli bin Hir alias Marwan who was killed in a bloody police operation in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, in January 2015.

That operation led to the death of 44 police officers, 17 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and several civilians.

Air strikes

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of JTF Central and 6th Infantry Division (ID), said Hassan and his men, now in Army custody, had provided the military with precise information on the location of other BIFF members.

With the information, Sobejana ordered air strikes with two OV-10 bombers dropping bombs at Sitio Tatak, Barangay Tugal, Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao at around 6 a.m. on Feb. 2, 2019.

Maj. Arvin John Encinas, 6th ID spokesperson, said the air strikes pulverized suspected 20-capacity bunkers and foxholes of the Daesh-inspired terrorist groups.

Coordinated operation

"We ease the fear of our people and assure them that safety procedures were undertaken and deliberately planned by JTF Central giving due concern to the safety of the civilian populace," Sobejana said, adding that the operation was coordinated with the MILF. A9

"It was far from civilian communities, so no civilians were affected," he added.

Sobejana said he was determined "to defeat these threat groups, and prevent them from doing terroristic activities and to bring about peace in Central Mindanao." INQ

4 February 2019 Malaya The National Newspaper Page: B1

Military kills 8 Islamiyah members, injures 10 others

BY VICTOR REYES

EIGHT members of the Daesh-inspired Daulah Islamiyah were killed and 10 others were injured when military forces bombarded and later assaulted the group's lair in Sultan sa Barongis town in Maguindanao on Saturday.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said pursuit operations are ongoing against the remnants of the group, led by DI leader Abu Toraype and five foreign terrorists, as of yesterday afternoon.

The group has been linked by security forces to the bombing of a shopping mall in Cotabato City last January 2 that left two people dead and over 30 others wounded.

In a phone interview, Sobejana said the bombardment started at 6 a.m. with FA-50 fighter jets of the Air Force dropping bombs on the DI camp in the marshy Sitio Tatak in Barangay Tugal.

Artillery rounds were also used to pound the DI lair, while ground forces assaulted and seized the camp at around 10 a.m.

Sobejana said the operation was launched on validated information provided by Gani Saligan, a commander of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, who surrendered to the military on Friday. The DI broke away from the BIFF eight years ago.

Sobejana identified the five slain

See MILITARY ➤ Page B6

MILITARY

DI members as Abo Salik, Abo Tutin, Saidin Kusain, Guabar Sulaima and one Hashim. The identity of the three other fatalities is still being established, he said.

Sobejana said one of the 10 wounded terrorists was identified as Salahuddin Hassan, a sub-leader of the DI.

He said the DI's overall leader, Abu Toraype, was in the camp at the time of the attack that he called a "surgical operation" along with five foreign terrorists -- Singaporean Muhamad Ali Abdul Rahiman alias Muawiya, two unnamed Indonesians and two Middle Eastern-looking men.

"We are still checking if they were among those hit by our FA-50s which dropped 500-pound bombs," Sobejana said. "There were 70 to 100 of them in the area, we hit their main camp."

Sobejana said the five foreign terrorists are said to be training DI members on bomb-making. "They are also into indoctrination because they want to get the support of the international ISIS or terror groups," he said.

He said the operation was coordinated with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front which signed a peace accord with the government in 2014. Members of the DI and BIFF are mostly former MILF members.

Sobejana said MILF members are helping in the ongoing "clearing operations" at the DI camp. He described the DI as a "notorious" terrorist group in Central Mindanao.

"They're planning to lay IEDs (improvised explosive devices), IED attacks so we acted ahead of them," the official said.

Rebel lair hides foreign jihadists

Eight terrorists that may include foreigners were killed after government security forces have been pounding on Islamic State (IS) sympathizers' lair in Maguindanao province since Saturday.

Among the identified foreign terrorists present in the lair was Singaporean Mawiya. Two Middle Eastern-looking individuals, two Malaysians and two Indonesians were also sighted in the area.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the military's Joint Task Force-Central (JTFC), said as of yesterday troops had already overrun

Turn to page 2

Rebel lair hides foreign jihadists

Martial law in Mindanao was not as tight as martial law should be, thanks to the opposition of the media and the usual collaborators of terrorists in civil society

From page 1

the terrorist lair in Sitio Tatak, Barangay Tugal, Sultan Sa Barongis town where air and ground assaults were launched.

At press time, Sobejana said 10 terrorists were also wounded, citing information from military action agents on the ground.

Sobejana said the operation targeted the IS-inspired group Salahudin Hassan along with several foreign terrorists.

He added the Air Force's FA50s dropped 500-pounder bombs on the IS camps.

At the time of the air strike, Sobejana said between 70 and 100 terrorists were present.

"We hit the main camp," he said, adding troops have already seized most of the camp even as clearing operation continued.

Sobejana said the military managed to identify Hassan's camp following information from Gani Saligan, a former commander of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, who has a standing rido or clan war with Hassan.

"Upon validation, we launched the bombardment," Sobejana said.

The official said the military is coordinating closely with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in clearing the area.

"We ease the fear of our people and assure them that safety procedures were undertaken and deliberately planned by JTFC giving due concern to the safety of the civilian populace," Sobejana said.

"Appropriate coordination was also made with MILF CCCH (Moro Islamic Liberation Front-Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities) and the targeted areas were confined to be locations far from the local communities," he added.

He vowed the task force will not relent in pursuing the terrorists within its jurisdiction.

"I am very determined to defeat these threat groups and prevent them from doing terrorist activities to bring about peace in Central Mindanao," Sobejana said.

ML sharp steel edge

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. also called on the government to impose the "sharp steel edge" of martial law in Mindanao following the twin explosions at a Jolo cathedral and grenade blast in a mosque in Zamboanga City last week that killed 24 people and wounded more than 100 others.

Locsin noted how bombs used in the twin explosions at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu escaped detection from soldiers manning the Catholic church 24 hours a day and amid the imposition of martial law in Mindanao.

"Because martial law in Mindanao was not as tight as martial law should be, thanks to the opposition of the media and the usual collaborators of terrorists in civil society," Locsin said in his social media post.

"Now is the time to show the sharp steel edge of martial law. Now," he added.

President Duterte said the twin explosions were the handiwork of a suicide-bomber couple citing intelligence information.

Soldiers to thank for

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and the Sulu police, citing facts gathered by investigators and the pieces of evidence at hand, echoed Mr. Duterte's pronouncement.

Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año declared the bombing was done by Indonesian bombers aided by the Daesh-inspired Abu Sayyaf Group.

Mario J. Mallari, Kathleen Mae Bulquerin, Raymart T. Lolo

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8 TERORISTA PATAY SA ENGKUWENTRO

Napatay ang walong miyembro ng teroristang grupong Daulah Islamiya habang 10 pa ang sugatan nang maka-engkwentro ang Philippine Army at nabawi ang kuta ng mga ito sa Sultan, Barongis, Maguindanao.

Ayon kay 6th Infantry Division Commander Major General Cirilito Sobejana, sa walong nasawi lima pa lang ang may pangalan kabilang ang lider ng BIFF faction, dalawang Indonesians, dalawang middle eastern looking men at isang Singaporean sa nasabing kampo. Patuloy pang bineberipika ang tatlo.

Kinilala ang nasugatan na subcommander ng Daulah Islamiya Toraypa group na si Salahudin Hassan na nasa kampo din kasama ang mga dayuhan.

Patuloy ang pagsuyod sa nasabing lugar para masiguro kung walang nakatakas at kung kasama ang mga ito sa mga namataan ng FA50 na may 500 lbs na bombang ibinagsak kahapon.

Nabatid din na mayroong 70-100 na mga bandido ang naaresto ng tropa ng Philippine Army.-*Gemma Garcia*-

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Sayyaf casualties pile up in Sulu clashes

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Abu Sayyaf extremists suffered the higher number of casualties in last Saturday's clashes with government troops in Sulu, the military maintained yesterday.

Col. Gerald Monfort, spokesman for the newly created 11th Army Division in Sulu, said the troops had "good visual shots" of the militants during the firefight.

At least eight people were killed and 33 others wounded in heavy fighting between Army Rangers and a large group of Abu Sayyaf gunmen in a remote village in Patikul.

The military said five soldiers, including a junior Army officer, and three Abu Sayyaf militants were killed in the two-hour firefight in Sitio Sungkog, Barangay Kabbon on Saturday.

Some 18 others were wounded in the clashes, officials said.

Despite the higher number of fatalities on the government side, Monfort said the troops that figured in the firefight with the Abu Sayyaf in the area were certain that the militants sustained the higher number of casualties.

"The Abu Sayyaf group positively suffered bigger fatalities than what was monitored because the army rangers have good visual shots on the targets. They saw how they were fatally shot down," Monfort said.

Based on the accounts of the soldiers who were wounded in the clash, the Abu Sayyaf gunmen were in a defensive position where some of the militants were taken down by sniper fire.

Officials believed the bodies of the killed militants were dragged away by their comrades who broke up into smaller groups to escape.

"We believe they were not able to slip out from the area and were trying to consolidate," Monfort said.

The military have deployed additional troops as blocking forces to cordon the area and prevent a big group of Abu Sayyaf from slipping out of the theater of operation in Patikul town.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), said among the three bandits killed was a certain Black Moro.

The military said Black Moro was a suspected Indonesian terrorist alleged to have volunteered to carry out the attack on Our Lady of Mount Caramel Cathedral in Jolo where 22 were killed.

The militants were led by Abu Sayyaf commander Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who is suspected of helping plot the bombing.

The Abu Sayyaf, which has about 300 to 400 armed fighters, has been globally blacklisted as a terrorist organization because of years of bombings, kidnappings and beheadings of hostages.

Government forces have over the years pressed on sporadic offensives to crush the Abu Sayyaf.

Since the Jolo cathedral attack, the Air Force has launched airstrikes on suspected militant bases near Patikul and police killed a suspected militant on a raid in the city.

President Duterte earlier this week said the church bombing was a suicide attack carried out by a militant couple.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said Friday that an Indonesian couple was responsible for the bombing aimed at fomenting sectarian conflict in Mindanao.

The Indonesian man reportedly used the nom de guerre Abu Huda and Philippine authorities said they would coordinate with their Indonesian counterparts to try to validate the identities of the two.

Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Arrmanatha Nasir said the government had not been able to confirm the involvement of Indonesians in the attack. 12 – With AP

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MILITARY: Abu Sayyaf coddling more foreign terrorists

BY DEMPSEY REYES

THE Armed Forces of the Philippines is going after foreign terrorists being coddled by the Abu Sayyaf Group based in Sulu, following a deadly encounter in Patikul town on Saturday.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman for the military's Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), said the foreigners were embedded in Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan's Ajang-Ajang subgroup under the Abu Sayyaf terror and kidnap group.

Sawadjaan's group is believed to be behind the deadly blasts at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu a week ago.

The Ajang-Ajang group is composed of orphans and children of the Abu Sayyaf. They run errands for their superiors in the terrorist group.

Besana said the foreign terrorists attached to Sawadjaan's group in the

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Abu Sayyaf

Abu Sayyaf were being tracked down by the military.

Aside from the Abu Sayyaf, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) is also coddling foreign terrorists. The Philippine Army believes the BIFF has members coming from the Middle East, Singapore and Malaysia.

"We can't give a definite number as to how many, as well as their nationalities, because those are operational details," he told reporters.

Besana said Sawadjaan, himself, and his group had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS), attracting foreigners to join his group in Sulu.

Following Saturday's encounter in Patikul, the military's Joint Task Force Sulu said that among the fatalities was a foreign terrorist named Abu Black, whose nationality remained in question. A source, however, said he may have come from Egypt.

Lt. Gen. Arnel de la Vega, WestMinCom commander, said the military had been coordinating with its counterparts in Malaysia and Indonesia regarding the presence of foreign terrorists in the Philippines.

These include trilateral patrolling through a trilateral agreement among the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia.

"We are going in the right direction as far as collaboration with other countries is concerned," de la Vega told reporters in a separate interview in Jolo, Sulu.

Speaking to Arab News on Thursday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the Philippines had monitored foreign terrorists from Yemen, Pakistan, Morocco, Malaysia and Indonesia roaming around Sulu, Basilan and the Central Mindanao provinces.

Lorenzana, citing "unconfirmed reports," said there were about 40 foreign terrorists spotted in Mindanao.

He said there was a small group composed of Indonesian and Malaysian terrorists who came from Syria and entered the country through its southern backdoor.

SAFETY FIRST Manila Police District police personnel gear up for the upcoming celebration of Chinese New Year by conducting vicinity check in Chinatown, Binondo, Manila to prevent any act of violence. PHOTO BY ROGER RAÑADA

8 BIFF killed, 10 wounded in Maguindanao clashes

Eight terrorists were killed while 10 wounded, including a terror leader, during military operations against the BIFF on late Saturday in Maguindanao, the Philippine Army disclosed on Sunday.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (ID), said five of the eight extremists killed in the firefight in Sultan Sa Barongis, Maguindanao have been identified.

They were Hashim, Abo Salik, Abo Tutin, Saidin Kusain and Guabar Sulaima, while three remain unidentified.

Sobejana said the BIFF group, or the ones under the Torayfe faction, were accompanied by foreign terrorists including those from the Middle East, two Malaysians and a Singaporean identified only as Mawiya.

The faction that soldiers engaged with on Saturday was headed by Salahudin Hasan, a sub-commander of the Dawlah Islamiyah Torayfe faction.

Based on the military's report, Hasan was among the critically wounded during the firefight that lasted for about four hours.

Sobejana also said that the camp of the BIFF members was seized by soldiers following the encounter.

Recently, a brigade commander of the BIFF surrendered to the military, he said. He was identified as Gani Saligan.

According to Sobejana, Saligan had a rift with Hasan, which was why when the former yielded, he pinpointed the exact location of the BIFF leader to authorities.

Saturday's encounter also involved airstrikes through the Philippine Air Force's FA-50 fighter jets.

Terrorists' lair destroyed

The Joint Task Force Central (JTFC) intensified focused military operations at a terrorist lair in South Tatak, Barangay Tugal, Sultan Sa Barongis, Maguindnao at about 6 a.m. on Saturday and destroyed 20-capacity bunkers and foxholes.

According to Maj. Arvin Encinas, spokesman of the 6th Infantry Division (6ID), on Sunday, the JTFC launched surgical air, artillery and ground operations on the confirmed targets against the IS-inspired terrorist group under Salahudin Hassan.

He said the successful operation was a result of positive information and support provided by the former members of the BIFF who surrendered to JTF Central.

"We ease the fear of our people and assure them that JTFC undertook safety procedures as they planned the attack giving due concern to the safety of the civilian populace," JTFC Commander Sobejana said.

"Appropriate coordination was also made with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (MILF-CCCH) and the targeted areas were confined to locations far from the local communities," Sobejana added.

"I am very determined to defeat these threat groups and prevent them from doing terroristic activities to bring about peace in Central Mindanao," Sobejana continued.

'Be vigilant'

Following the twin bombings that rocked Sulu last week, Malacañang urged Filipinos to remain vigilant and cooperate with the government regarding terror threats.

Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Martin Andanar said in a radio interview that this would be the only way to ensure the safety of Filipinos.

"Now, we have to be vigilant. We have to cooperate with our government; we have to cooperate with the [military]; we cooperate with the Philippine National Police and our local government units. That is the surest way that is the surest way to ensure our safety," he said.

Andanar also insisted that religion did not come into play on the bombings. He echoed the statement of the Palace earlier that the explosions justified the implementation of the martial law in the country.

He said that if martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus were not implemented in Mindanao, the situation would have been worse.

"If there is a martial law there and these things happen, what will happen if there is none? So, do not meddle with the martial law in Mindanao because it is good," he said.

The Palace official also voiced hope that no similar situations would happen during the second plebiscite for the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) on February 6.

"We do not want to have terrorist groups meddle with the peaceful resolution for our Mindanao through the BOL," he said.

WITH JULMUNIR JANNARAL AND RALPH U. VILLANUEVA

9 February 2019 Standard Page: A1

Bombs rain on ASG lair; 8 die

State forces swoop down on IS-linked bandit group

By Francisco Tuyay

MILITARY forces launched air strikes and artillery fire against a terrorist lair in Maguindanao Saturday, killing eight Islamic State (ISIS)—inspired fighters and destroying bunkers and foxholes.

Maj. Arvin John Encinas, spokesman for he 6th Infantry Division, said the assault was launched at 6 a.m. in Sitio Tatak, Barangay Tugal, Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao.

Two Air Force FA50 bombers dropped eight 250-pound bombs on the lair of the ISIS-linked Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

Encinas said surgical air, artillery and ground operations were launched against the identified and confirmed location of BIFF sub-leader Salahuddin Hasan alias "Orak."

"He (Hasan) is under the BIFF-Abu Toraife faction, which is believed to be behind the two separate bombings in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat in September last year," he said.

The air and ground bombardment could be heard by residents in Tulunan

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Bombs...

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and M'lang in North Cotabato as well as Shariff Aguak in Maguindanao.

Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Commander of Joint Task Force Central, said Hasan was among those wounded.

He said reports indicated that foreign terrorists in the camp included a Jemaah Islamiya operative Muhammad Ali bin Abd Al-Rahman, alias Mauwiya, two Indonesians, two Arabs, two Malaysians and Abu Toraype, leader of the Daulah Islamiya Toraype Group.

Sobejana said the bombing was so intense that the terrorists scampered out of their camp, where they were surrounded by government troops, who engaged them in a four-hour battle.

"There were about 70 to 100 fighters in a wide area of the encampment when they were hit by air strikes and ground shelling," Sobejana said.

Before the air and ground strikes, the terrorist were planning to launch terror attacks on still undetermined targets, Sobejana said.

The assault was launched after Gani Saligan, brigade commander of the BIFF under the Karialan faction led by Ustadz Karialan, alias Imam Minimbang, surrendered to the military on Friday and disclosed the location of the camp.

Earlier, government troops engaged 100 Abu Sayyaf Group bandits under their sub-leader, Hatib Sawadjaan, in Patikul, Sulu, killing three terrorists, including their sub-leader Idang Susukan.

Five soldiers died while 18 others were wounded in the attack.

The Army said the situation in Mindanao remained volatile, but despite the casualties it incurred, it is determined to continue its effort to crush the terrorists.

"We would like to remind everyone that terrorism is real and remains a clear and present danger. Hence, we urge everybody to help and join in our effort to address this phenomenal threat," the Army said in a statement.

On Sunday, medals were awarded to members of the Scout Rangers who were wounded in the battle with the Abu Sayyaf.

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, commander of the Western Mindanao Command, handed out the Wounded Personnel medals.

Col. Gerry Besana, Western Mindanao Command information officer, said troops of the Army's 5th

Scout Ranger Battalion led by Lt. Col. Marlo Jomalesa engaged some 150 Abu Sayyaf bandits under Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan for almost two hours.

He said the troops are tracking down the whereabouts of the remaining Abu Sayyaf bandits.

The President's order to pulverize the Abu Sayyaf came after the bomb attack on the Our Lady of Mount Carmel cathedral in Barangay Walled City, Jolo, Sulu.

Two successive blasts killed at least 22 people, including five soldiers, a coast guard personnel and left more than 100 people wounded. **With PNA**

4 February 2019 Tempo Page: 5

Troops, Abu Sayyaf clash; 5 soldiers, 3 militants killed

Government troops clashed with Abu Sayyaf gunmen in fierce jungle fighting that left five soldiers and three militants dead, as the military pushed forward with a fresh offensive following a deadly church bombing last weekend.

President Duterte has ordered government forces to destroy the Abu Sayyaf after the bombing last Sunday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in the Sulu provincial capital of Jolo that killed 22 people and wounded more than 100. The attack has renewed terrorism fears across the Philippines, where the national police went on full alert and security has been strengthened in churches, shopping malls and other public areas.

Regional military spokesman Col. Gerry Besana said another five soldiers and 15 militants were wounded in nearly two hours of fighting Saturday between the army and about 150 Islamic State group-linked fighters in the jungles near Patikul town.

The militants were led by Abu Sayyaf commander Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who is suspected of helping plot the bombing. The Abu Sayyaf, which has about 300 to 400 armed fighters, has been blacklisted by the United States and the Philippines as a terrorist organization because of years of bombings, kidnappings and beheadings in the predominantly Roman Catholic nation.

Government forces have over the years pressed on sporadic offensives to crush the group, including in Jolo, a poverty-wracked island of more than 700,000 people where Muslims are the majority. A few thousand Catholics live mostly in the provincial capital.

Since the church attack, the air force has launched airstrikes on suspected militant bases near Patikul and police killed a suspected militant on a raid in the city.

Duterte told reporters earlier this week that the church bombing was a suicide attack carried out by a militant couple.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Ano said Friday that an Indonesian couple was responsible for the bombing aimed at fomenting sectarian conflict in the south. The Indonesian man reportedly used the nom de guerre Abu Huda and Philippine authorities said they would coordinate with their Indonesian counterparts to try to validate the identities of the two.

Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Arrmanatha Nasir said the government had not been able to confirm the involvement of Indonesian nationals in the attack.

There has been speculation that the bombing may be a diversionary move by Muslim militants after troops recently carried out an offensive that killed a number of IS-linked extremists in an encampment in the hinterlands of Lanao del Sur province, also in the south. The area is near Marawi, a Muslim city that was besieged for five months in 2017 by hundreds of IS-aligned militants, including foreign fighters.

Troops quelled the insurrection, which left more 1,100 people dead, mostly militants, and the heart of the mosque-studded city in ruins.

Duterte declared martial law in the entire southern third of the country to deal with the Marawi siege, his worst security crisis. His martial law declaration has been extended to allow troops to finish off radical Muslim groups and other insurgents, but bombings and other attacks have continued. **(AP)** 5

6/4 February 2019 MANILA BULLETIN THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER Page: 14

Government moves to thwart recruitment of suicide bombers

By JOSEPH JUBELAG

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – Government security forces are cracking down on Islamic radicals in Mindanao who have been indoctrinated by terrorist groups to be suicide bombers.

An intelligence officer working for a counter terrorism unit in Central Mindanao, said the government is alarmed by the deadly bomb attack in Jolo said to have been carried out by suicide bombers.

The intelligence officer, who asked not to be identified as he was not authorized to speak to the media, said authorities should be alarmed by the recent development on the threats of terrorism in the country.

Based on intelligence data, groups inspired by Maute, Dawlah Islamiyah and ISIS are planning to recruit suicide bombers from local Islamic radicals who will be unleashed three years from now.

Foreign terror groups including the moribund Al-Qaeda-inspired Jemaah Islamiyah were having difficulty of recruiting suicide bombers from local terror groups because the Filipino culture strongly values human life.

The source said the ISIS central command in the Middle East has been pressuring local Islam radicals to engage in suicide bombings through massive indoctrination on Islamist extremism.

"The foreign terrorists were doing some pressure on ISIS-inspired local terrorists to undertake suicide bomb attacks in a bid to sow terror and create an environment reigned by terrorism," the officer said.

He said that even before the bombing of the Jolo cathedral last Jan. 27, the ISIS-inspired local terrorist group launched a suicide bombing in Basilan in July last year which killed 11 people.

Authorities said the attack in Basilan was carried out used a vehicle-transported Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

The source also said government intelligence units are keeping an eye on local ISIS recruits who served as conduits of foreign funds.

He said the funds were coursed through charities which are used as fronts by ISIS. 14

Suicide bombers more dangerous, Lacson warns

By Macon Ramos-Araneta and Rio N. Araja

IF it's true that the bomb attack on a Jolo church was carried out by foreign suicide bombers, the situation has become "more deadly and dangerous," Senator Panfilo Lacson said Sunday.

Previous bomb attacks have always been planted and remotely detonated, Lacson, a former police chief, said.

Worse, he said, if locals learn to do it, there will be even more suicide bombings, he said.

Lacson said investigators should reconstruct the crime scene to get a better idea of what happened before, during and after the bombing. *Next page*

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He recalled the Rizal Day bombing in 2000, when he was still the Philippine National Police chief, and saw the capabilities of the crime lab, the Army and the forensic teams from the National Bureau of Investigation.

They were able to reconstitute the bomb and determine whose signature it bore.

"So there was a lead. This means the investigation done was methodical and systematic," he said.

Senator Aquilino Pimentel III, meanwhile, condemned the grenade attack on a mosque in Zamboanga City on Jan. 30, which claimed the lives of two visiting Muslim missionaries.

"Churches, mosques, temples, or other such places dedicated to religious worship must be respected and revered. They should be a safe sanctuary for the people and not a place of carnage," Pimentel said.

On Sunday, more than 3,000 people from various religious groups gathered at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City to denounce the two bomb explosions at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu.

Muslims and non-Muslims took part in the "Lakad Tungo sa Kapayapaan, Iwaksi ang Karahasan," greeted one another and prayed for peace in Mindanao.

Aleem Said Ahmad Basher of the Imam Council of the Philippines and Msgr. Albert Songco, vicar general of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, held a symbolic exchange of a Qur'an and a Bible.

The vicar general of the Philippine National Police, Fr. Onie Rosaroso, said there is still hope for peace in Mindanao.

"Together with our Muslim brothers and sisters, we are one to attain peace. We will be praying hard to violence not to happen again," he said.

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Ang Nagbungunang Pahayagang Tagalog sa Bansa P8.00

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Terror group, magre-recruit ng suicide bombers

Ni JOSEPH JUBELAG

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – **Nagsasagawa na ng counter-terrorism operations ang militar at Philippine National Police (PNP) upang mapigilan ang posibleng ilunsad na suicide bombing attack ng teroristang grupong Maute-Dawlah Islamiyah sa Mindanao.**

Ito ang inihayag ng isang intelligence officer na kabilang sa counter-terrorism unit na nag-o-operate sa Central Mindanao.

Aniya, naalarma na ang pamahalaan sa nakaraang dalawang pamnbobomba sa Jolo Cathedral sa Sulu na ikinasawi ng 22 katao, kamakailan.

Nauna nang lumabas sa intelligence report na inaasahang magre-recruit ang nasabing ISIS-inspired terror group ng mga tauhan mula sa Islamic radical upang magsilbing suicide bomber tatlong mula ngayon.

Naiulat na nahihirapan ang mga foreign terror group, kabilang na ang Al-Qaeda-inspired Jemaah Islamiyah, sa pangangalap ng potential suicide bombers ng local terror group dahil na rin sa pagpapahalaga sa kanilang buhay.

"The foreign terrorists were doing some pressures on ISIS-inspired local terrorists to undertake suicide bomb attacks in a bid to sow terror and create an environment reigned by terrorism," the officer stressed.

Ipinaliwanag pa nito na bago pa man naganap ang pambobomba sa Jolo nitong Enero 27 ay nakapaglunsad na sila ng suicide bombing sa Basilan noong Hulyo ng nakaraang taon na ikinasawi ng 11 katao.

Ang pambobomba aniya sa Basilan ay isinagawa sa pamamagitan ng Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED).

4 February 2019 Malaya The National Newspaper Page: B1

Sulu bombings: Army focuses on Abu sub-leader

BY VICTOR REYES

THE Philippine Army yesterday vowed to use all available resources to neutralize an Abu Sayyaf sub-leader blamed for the January 27 bombings at the Our Lady of Mt Carmel in Jolo, Sulu that left 22 people dead and over a hundred others injured.

"Get Sawadjaan. That is our objective: to exterminate them -- based on the instruction of the President," Army spokesman Col. Louie Villanueva said, referring to Abu Sayyaf leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan.

Officials blamed the group of Sawadjaan as behind the Jolo bombings, utilizing the sub-group Ajang-Ajang and a foreign couple who were reportedly among those who died in the apparent suicide attack.

After the bombings, a grenade attack on a mosque three days later left two people dead.

Authorities have said they see no links between the two assaults.

Villanueva said an appropriate number of troops in Sulu is available but "if there is necessity, we can re-align forces (to Sulu) but as of now, our forces on the ground are still sufficient to maintain the operational tempo.

"Our operations are continuing. After the Jolo bombings, the instruction of the President was all-out war against the ASG. We will deliver the necessary might of the Armed Forces. The Army, we are the ones on the ground. That is our thrust," he said.

On Saturday, Army Scout Rangers caught up with Sawadjaan's group in Patikul town but five soldiers were killed and 18 others were injured in the fight that ensued. The Abu Sayyaf suffered three killed and 13 injured.

Villanueva said they consider the Saturday encounter as a "breakthrough in the AFP's pursuit to pursue and neutralize the perpetrators of the bloody bombing in Jolo.

"The situation remains volatile but the Philippine Army, through the 11th Infantry Division, despite the casualties it incurred, is determined to continue its effort in crushing these terrorist criminals and push them to their limit until they are totally exterminated," said Villanueva.

Villanueva said the Army was saddened by the loss of five of its men in the fighting and vowed "to fully commit its resources and capabilities in support of its ground forces."

Lt. Gen. Arnel Dela Vega, commander of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said: "We are still in pursuit operations. We are focused on him (Sawadjaan) and other leaders of the Abu Sayyaf Group and we are in sustained conduct of focused military operation.

"Our operations are continuing. You may not be seeing artillery firing or aircraft flying but it's (pursuit operations) continuing," added Dela Vega.

Dela Vega said soldiers, despite last Saturday's debacle, remain motivated "to end this armed group which is terrorizing the province (of Sulu).

"We are determined to fulfill our mandate and that is to ensure the safety of the civilians, main order in the community, through the neutralization of this armed terrorist group," Dela Vega also said.

Dela Vega added the military is enhancing its counter-terrorism cooperation with Malaysia and Indonesia amid continuing reports that foreign terrorists are working with Filipino terrorists in Western Mindanao.

Dela Vega said he doesn't have a specific number of foreign terrorists who are in the country but Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana placed the number at around 40.

"We don't have (a) specific number but there is a considerable effort from our end to monitor and follow0up this reported presence of foreign fighters," Dela Vega said.

SOLIDARITY WALK

Thousands of people, including Christians and Muslims, participated in a solidarity walk yesterday in Quezon City to condemn the attacks in Mindanao.

The inter-faith solidarity walk started from East Ave. The group converged at the Quezon City Memorial Circle where the participants shook hands.

Aleem Said Ahmad Basher of the IMAM Council of the Philippines and Monsignor Albert Songco, Armed Forces vicar general, also made a symbolic exchange of a Qur'an and a Bible.

The event was attended by Metro Manila police chief Guillermo Eleazar Jr., PNP vicar general Monsignor Lucio Rosaroso Jr., Metro Manila Muslim Community for Justice and Peace president Datu Basher Bong Alonto, and Secretary Saidamin Pangarungan of the National Council for Muslim Filipinos.

"If the perpetrators are proven to be extremists like the Abu Sayyaf, they should not claim to be Muslim dahil hindi ito gawa ng Muslim," Pangarungan said, adding Islam is the religion of peace.

Rosaroso said: "Together with our Muslim brothers and sisters, we are one in order to achieve peace. Of course 'yung mga karahasan na nangyari, we will pray hard na sana hindi na iyan mauulit (that it will not happen again)."

– With Evan Orias

04 February 2019 MANILA BULLETIN THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER Page: 14

8 BIFF fighters surrender

By ALI G. MACABALANG

COTABATO CITY – Eight combatants of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) have yielded to authorities amid intensified military operations in Maguindanao, an Army official said Sunday.

Major Arvin Encinas, spokesman for the Army's 6th Infantry Division (6ID), said the BIFF fighters led by Gani Saligan were to be presented to the media at a press conference at the 6ID headquarters in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat town in Maguindanao Sunday afternoon.

Brig. Gen. Diosdado Carreon, commander of the 601st Infantry Brigade (603IB), would present Saligan's group to 6ID Head Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana and other military officials alongside Maguindanao Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu and local civilian authorities, it was learned.

Saligan is a sub-commander of Ustaz Karialan, the figurehead of one of the BIFF factions.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) leadership consider Karialan as a "moderate" rebel leader "inclined" to join the folds of the law once the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is put in place.

News about the surrender of Saligan's group came a day after Air Force planes dropped bombs on Sitio Tatak, Barangay Tugal, Sultan-sa-Barongis town where fighters of the ISIS-inspired Abu Toraife's BIFF faction were reportedly holding out in 20 bunkers.

Encinas said the airstrikes helped ground troops cleared Tatak of Toraife's men led by sub-commander Salahuddin Hassan. 14

Mangudadatu and Sobejana welcomed the surrender of Saligan's group, even as the governor renewed his commitment that children rebels rejoining the government will be "given" priority for coverage under the provincial government's scholarship program called Maguindanao Education Assistance for Community Empowerment (MagPEACE.)

4 February 2019 Tempo Page: 5

8 BIFF fighters surrender

₱3.4-M shabu seized in Bicol

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency nabbed two suspected illegal drug suppliers from Cavite and seized P3.4-million worth of shabu from them during a buy-bust operation in Barangay San Jose, Milaor, Camarines Sur Saturday.

PDEA-Bicol acting Regional Director Christian Frivaldo identified the suspects as Jane Christine Luzvi Nuevo, alias "Jing," 32, married, and Marlon Luisse Espiritu, 23, single, both residents of Bacoor City, Cavite.

The two were arrested after they sold shabu to an undercover PDEA agent on the Milaor-Naga bypass road. **(PNA and Jinky Lou Tabor)**

COTABATO CITY – Eight combatants of the outlawed Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters have yielded to authorities amid intensified operations coupled with persuasions by both civilian and military officials in Maguindanao, an Army official announced yesterday.

Major Arvin Encinas, Public Affairs Office head of the Army 6th Infantry Division, said the eight BIFF fighters led by Ganl Saligan were presented in a press conference at the 6ID headquarters in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Diosdado Carreon, commander of the 601st Infantry Brigade, presented Saligan's group to Army 6th ID head Major Gen. Cirilito Sobejana and other military officers alongside Maguindanao Gov. Esmael Mangudadatu and local civilian authorities.

Encinas said the presentation and press conference were originally set at the 603rd IB headquarters in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao, one of four communities constituting the so-called "SPMS box," a known operational area of three BIFF factions.

Saligan is a sub-commander of Ustaz Karialan, figure head of one of the BIFF factions.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front leadership and local military leaders considered Karialan as a "moderate" rebel leader "inclined" to join the fold of law once the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is put in place.

News about the surrender of Saligan's group came a day after Air Force planes dropped bombs in Sitio Tatak in Barangay Tugal, Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao town where field combatants of Daesh-inspired Abu Toraife's BIFF faction were reportedly holding out in 20 bunkers. **(Ali Macabalang)**

04 February 7 2019

Balita

Ang Nangungunang Pahayagang Tagalog sa Bansa P8.00

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8 sa BIFF, sumurender sa Maguindanao

COTABATO CITY – Sumuko na sa gobyernon ang walong umano'y kaanib ng Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) dahil na rin sa pinaigting na operasyon ng militar laban sa mga ito sa Mindanao.

Inihayag ni Major Arvin Encinas, hepoe ng Public Affairs Office ng 6th Infantry Division (ID), anumang oras mula ngayon ay ihaharap ang mga ito sa mga mamamahayag sa 6th ID headquarters sa Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat sa Maguindanao.

Ang nasabing grupo aniya ay pinamunuan ni Gani Saligan, sub-commander ni Ustaz Karialan, isa sa mga lider ng BIFF.

Ipinasya aniya ng grupo ni Saligan na sumuko matapos simulang bombahin ng mga sundalo ang Sitio Tatak sa Bgy. Tugal, Sultan-sa-Barongis na pinagkukutaan ng grupo ng BIFF leader na si Abu Toraife kung saan nakapuwesto ang 20 bunker ng mga ito.

Ipinahayag pa ni Encinas na tumakas na ang mga tauhan ni Toraife dahil na rin sa serye ng pambobomba sa kanilang pinagkukutaan.

Matatandaang aabot sa limang sundalo at tatlong tauhan ng nasabing Islamist militant organization.

Ali G. Macabalang

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5 foreign terrorists, 3 pa utas!

Walong miyembro ng teroristang grupong Daulah Islamiya kabilang ang limang dayuhan, ang napatay habang 10 pa ang sugatan matapos ang isang engkuwentro sa pagitan ng Philippine Army at mga terorista kasabay ng pagbawi sa kanilang kuta sa Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao.

Sinabi ni 6th Infantry Division commander Major General Cirilito Sobejana, kabilang sa mga nasawi ang leader ng BIFF faction, dalawang Indonesians, dalawang middle eastern looking men at isang Singaporean.

Sa walong nasawi, lima pa lamang umano ang may pangalan subalit patuloy nila itong bineberipika dahil ang tatlo ay hindi pa nakikilala.

Ni GEMMA GARCIA

Kinilala naman ni Sobejana ang nasugatan na sub-commander ng Daulah Islamiya Toraypa group na si Salahudin Hassan na nasa kampo din kasama ang mga dayuhan.

Sa kabila nito tuluy-tuloy pa rin umano ang pagsuyod sa nasabing lugar para masiguro kung nakatakas at kung kasama sila dun sa mga natamaan ng FA50 na may 500 lbs. na bombang ibinagsak kahapon.

Nilinaw din ng opisyal na mayroong 70-100 na mga bandido ang naaresto ng tropa ng Philippine Army at kahit malawak umano ang nasabing area ay nasapol ng bomba ang main camp ng mga terorista.

Ayon pa kay Sobejana, nagsimula ang kanilang pag-atake sa kampo ng mga terorista dakong alas-6 at natapos ito ng alas-10 umaga.

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Lanao leaders asked to protect plebiscite

By JOSE RODEL CLAPANO

Local leaders of Lanao del Norte have been asked to protect the integrity of the plebiscite on Feb. 6 for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

The plebiscite seeks to include the province's six towns – Balo-i, Munai, Tangkal, Nunungan, Tagoloan and Pantar – in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. issued the appeal to mayors and barangay leaders during the conduct of a BOL information drive in Iligan City over the weekend.

"Our commitment for a peaceful and orderly plebiscite demonstrates our pledge to uphold our democratic ideals and provide equal opportunities to freely cast our votes despite differences in opinion," Galvez said.

The BOL is being seen as a viable instrument to institute a lasting peace in the Bangsamoro region, which according to Galvez has been marred by political alienation and economic marginalization.

"The BOL presents a pragmatic solution that will addresses extremist violence in the Bangsamoro," he said as he asked everyone to remain vigilant and observant in protecting the integrity of the votes.

Galvez expressed hope that the votes would truly reflect the people's sentiment for peace and development in the region.

Aside from Lanao del Norte, the plebiscite on Wednesday will also be conducted in North Cotabato, where six of its towns – Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pikit and Pigkawayan – and 28 villages have been identified for inclusion in the BARMM.

Galvez said the inclusion of these areas "does not divide the province, but widens and democratizes opportunities for economic development and political empowerment."

The Philippine National Police deployed 3,300 personnel while the Armed Forces of the Philippines will send 10,000 soldiers to help secure the plebiscite.

– With Lino dela Cruz

6 February 2019

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Duterte: Bangsamoro transition body members must show sincerity

By GENALYN D. KABILING

President Duterte is counting on the soon-to-be-constituted 80-member Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) to ensure "effective governance" in the proposed new autonomous region.

Presidential adviser on the peace process Carlito Galvez Jr. said they started to vet the people to constitute the BTA or the interim government in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region and submit their names to the President for approval.

According to Galvez, Duterte wants the BTA members to have "no record of corruption" and be "sincere public servants."

"The President said there should be good governance, effective governance. Even if the law is good but then we cannot implement it well so the President's prerequisites were the person must have no record of corruption and they are sincere public servants," he said on government radio last Saturday.

Galvez said the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has nominated 41 representatives to the BTA and the government 39 individuals. Of the BTA nominees, nine come from the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

"It will be multi-sectoral and there will be equitable representation from the different provinces," Galvez said.

"We are waiting for the authorization for the BTA and the appointment coming from the President. Once these are signed, we will commence with the period of transition," he said.

The transition process will begin soon after the Commission on Elections has formally declared the ratification of the law creating the Bangsamoro region in a plebiscite.

The transition period was tackled by Galvez in his meeting with Moro Islamic Liberation Front chair Murad Ebrahim and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Mujiv Hataman last Wednesday.

Under the Bangsamoro organic law, MILF shall lead the BTA without prejudice to the participation of the MNLF in its membership. It will be composed of 80 members appointed by the President representing various sectors.

The legislative and executive powers in the Bangsamoro region will be vested in the BTA until 2022 or when the regional government leaders are elected.

The January 21 plebiscite showed overwhelming support for the law creating the Bangsamoro region. The second plebiscite will be held in areas in Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato on Feb. 6.

16 February 2019

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Roxas urges authorities, Muslim leaders to prevent religious conflict

By **HANNAH L. TORREGOZA**

Former Senator Manuel "Mar" Roxas II has called on authorities and the Muslim community leaders to exhaust all efforts at preventing a religious war from spilling over following the series of bombings in Mindanao.

Roxas made the appeal as he stressed the importance of having both sides -- that of the government and the stakeholders in the peace process in Mindanao — agree to peaceful efforts at resolving decades-old armed conflict in the southern part of the Philippines.

"Para sa akin, ang aking panawagan sa lahat ng panig ay wag na wag nating hayaan na lumaki pa ito sa isang religious war (On my part, I call on all sides to prevent this from becoming a full-blown religious war)," Roxas said in a recent interview in Antipolo City.

"Magkakapatid tayong mga Pilipino, iba ang ating mga relihiyon na sinasamba pero magkakapatid tayo (We Filipinos are brothers and sisters, even if we have different religious beliefs, we are still siblings)," he said.

"At ang mga relihiyon na kinabibilangan natin, parehas nagsasabi na para sa kapayapaan, para sa generosity, para sa pakikipagkapwa sa ating mga kababayan. So huwag po nating hayaan na lumaki pa ito o lumalim pa ang hidwaan at panatilihin natin ang brotherhood natin ng pagiging Pilipino (And the religion we believe in pursues and supports peace, generosity, and camaraderie. So let's not allow the animosity to grow and to deepen and instead let our brotherhood as Filipinos thrive)," added Roxas.

Roxas expressed belief that with the government already pushing for Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), the Muslim community will fully cooperate with the government in going after and prosecuting the terrorists groups who launched the twin explosions that rocked a cathedral in Jolo, Sulu.

"I am sure, even the BOL members o magiging (who would become) assembly members, ayaw nila ng terorismo kasi papano uunlad ang kanilang lugar kung nagkakasabugan, nagkakaputukan (do not like terrorism too, because how can their city develop if there are always bombings and strife)," he pointed out.

"So parcho po ang ating layon na magkaroon ng kapayapaan para sa ating kasaganaan (We have similar advocacies and that is to achieve long-term peace for our prosperity)," he said.

Roxas, likewise, said he believes the government is capable of finding a solution in going after the terrorist groups particularly the infamous Abu Sayaff Group, saying the state can use its full force to eliminate them.

"Government forces have enough funds — intelligence funds -- to use to go after them. That goes by the billions. They can conduct efficient detective work, investigative work," he pointed out.

AFP braces for BOL vote part two

THE military in North Cotabato and Lanao Del Sur provinces are ready for any eventuality on Wednesday, February 6, when voters head to their precincts for the plebiscite on the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Major Arvin John Encinas, spokesman of the 6th Infantry Division, told radio dzBB there was no information of any threat on the plebiscite in North Cotabato.

Col. Gerry Besana, the spokesman of the Western Mindanao Command, said troops in Lanao Del Norte have contingencies in place to ensure the orderly conduct of the plebiscite.

They made the remarks a week after two explosions rocked the Catholic cathedral in Jolo days after the ratification of the BOL overwhelmingly won in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and other key areas.

Besana said the Westmincom was monitoring the movement of the remnants of the Maute-ISIS group, which remained a threat to some areas and were being pursued by government forces.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) will make all resources related to the BOL available to public.

PCOO Secretary Martin Andanar made this promise, saying it was former Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza who reminded Andanar to ensure that the public, especially Muslim Filipinos, have access to BOL documents.

"Since the BOL was signed by our beloved President Duterte, OPAPP Secretary Jess Dureza and I have talked about disseminating information on the BOL," Andanar said in an interview over Ratlyo Pilipinas on Saturday.

"And his request to me was just make all of the government resources available for our Muslim brothers and sisters in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front... because we don't really want to control or to manage their narrative on the story," he added. PNA

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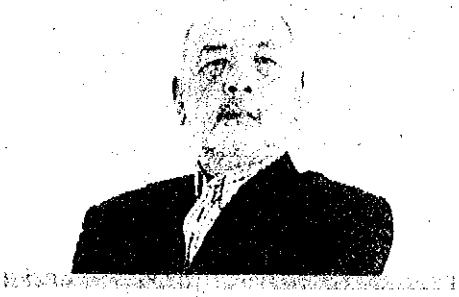
Genuine Bangsamoro autonomy is a mirage if...



KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

ANTONIO J. MONTALVAN II

If the bombing of the Jolo cathedral was retaliation against the Maguindanao-M'ranao dominated version of Bangsamoro autonomy, then so be it. For so indeed, some sectors of the Moro populace, principally Tausug, are against it. There have been Tausug advocates who rally for a Bangsa Su'uk. In this day and age of legitimate self-determination, why ever not? Ethnic identity has become an acceptable legal ethic in the 21st century.

There is of course the main irony of the Jolo cathedral bombing: it was supposed to be prevented by martial law. More than 80 percent of the military are now concentrated in Mindanao. For the first time in history, the Office of the President is awash with intelligence funds cash. Lawmakers whimsically twist the Constitution's interpretations on the justification of martial law. And yet Jolo's Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral was bombed. Twenty-two lives—which should have been secured under martial law but ravaged by presidential caprice—are enough to persuade us that martial law in Mindanao must be lifted.

If the bombing was influenced by the sick rhetoric of a president who is severely ill of narcissism (among others), as M'ranao civic stalwart Samira Gutoc connects, then genuine Bangsamoro autonomy is something that a nonreformist traditional politician like Rodrigo Duterte cannot simply usher in during his watch. To reiterate Samira: Duterte is part of the problem.

If the statement on the recent referendum on the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law by the militant Moro voice Suara Bangsamoro is held up for national scrutiny, then we must be convinced by now that a genuine Bangsamoro autonomy is not on the near horizon.

Consider the conduct of the referendum that Suara Bangsamoro describes. Reading the statement, one sees the same pattern in regular elections elsewhere in the Philippines.

"The plebiscite... testifies to how the democratic participation of the people in the voting process is hampered by violence, intervention by local politicians and intimidation by the military."

Familiar forms of disenfranchisement? It is as though Suara Bangsamoro was describing regular elections in all of the country's dynastic *baluarte* and some election hot spots like Abra, Cavite or Masbate.

"There are reports of anomalies such as vote-buying, flying voters, delays in the delivery of election paraphernalia, difficulties in locating voters' names. There are several incidences of meddling of local officials in the voting process, threats against voters and intimidation caused by military and police takeover in some voting precincts."

What do these observations indicate? Very simply, Moro land is under the control of dynastic political interests that have the wherewithal of power, money and land. The problem is dynasties. Are we not surprised that after Ampatuan family members were jailed, the wives and other family members simply took over their positions? What democracy can truly exist under such condition?

"BOL/BARMM does not sufficiently give resolution to the clamor of the Moro people for the right to self-determination, control over Moro land and resources and exacting justice for the historical and ongoing injustices against the Moro. Noteworthy is the fact that land reform as articulated in the ARMM organic law is missing in the BOL."

"Upon the ratification of the BOL, the promise of peace remains uncertain; Marawi City still lays in ruins, Maguindanao is still militarized, attacks against Moro communities and civilians continue. As long as exploitation and oppression against the Moro people persist, our struggle for our right to self-determination, justice, land and freedom will carry on."

On dynasties, Moro Islamic Liberation Front leader Mohagher Iqbal gave me an answer that I found quite blasé: "Political dynasties are un-Islamic. We can only hope the Bangsamoro parliament legislates against it." If only an organic law was designed to expunge dynasties forever as the first order of the day. Disempower dynasties, empower the Moro masses. A15

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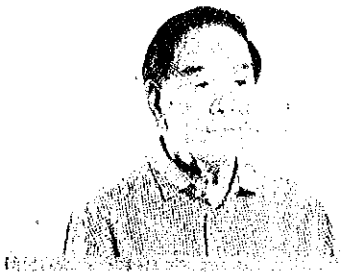
The Veterans Medical Center

Recently, the commander in chief, President Rodrigo R. Duterte, visited the Veterans Memorial Medical Center (VMMC), a facility referred to in the past as the "Mona Lisa" Medical Center. As the song goes, "they just lie there, and they die there." He took note of the great improvements carried out under the current administrator, Dr. Dominador Chiong Jr., and immediately ordered the release of P100 million for the VMMC from the presidential social fund. Of this amount, more than half went to the purchase of a 128-slice CT scan machine while the rest to the 500 modern beds to replace the old, worn-out and, in some cases, rusting, bunks that have serviced several generations in the past. Another P100 million was made available for medicines and assorted medical supplies.



REVEILLE

RAMON J. FAROLAN

The President was a bit perplexed by the name of the facility. "Memorial" made it sound like a place for the dead, and so he directed that the hospital be renamed "Veterans Medical Center," omitting "Memorial." An executive order should be out this week implementing the change, this according to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Now for a bit of history. The veterans hospital was established as a result of a $9.7-million grant from the US government for the construction of a facility that would provide hospitalization, medical care and treatment for Filipino war veterans who served with the USAFFE, recognized guerrilla units, the Philippine Scouts and the Commonwealth Army. Coverage was later extended to all AFP retirees and their dependents. As a counterpart contribution, the Philippine government donated 55 hectares of land in Quezon City that had originally been set aside in 1939 as the site of a new Malacañan Palace.

President Emilio Aguinaldo of the First Republic was confined at the VMMC for some time prior to his death in 1964. So was President Sergio Osmeña of the Commonwealth government and President Elpidio Quirino after he left Malacañang. Sen. Benigno

Aquino Jr. was treated there after several days of fasting in protest against his detention and trial under the martial law regime.

The center was also home to detained presidents Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, both of whom occupied the presidential suite reserved for chief executives. President Fidel Ramos would use the center's conference room for some of his Cabinet meetings after an early round of golf. The center is surrounded by an 18-hole golf course that is open to the public.

In response to my earlier observations made during a personal visit to the VMMC, Dr. Chiong had this to say:

First, on the need to secure a VMMC ID prior to any assistance. He stressed that this will no longer be required before any treatment is provided. The regular AFP retiree ID will suffice with the other requirements for the issuance of a VMMC ID to be submitted later. During my visit to the center, I was asked for a VMMC ID which I did not have and was required to submit other documents such as my retirement order and two passport-sized pictures. My good friend Joe Molano, sent in his own suggestion regarding this problem and is duly noted.

Second, the presence of signs that read "*Bawal ang* fixer." I noted that such signs were not appropriate for a facility providing health and medical care at times in a life or near-death situation. Dr. Chiong explained that this sign is a requirement imposed by the Civil Service Commission. I believe it is time for the CSC to rethink this type of sloganeering. With or without the warning, fixers will operate if the environment provides the conditions that make "fixing" thrive and prosper.

There have been several government agencies that provide continuing support for the center: Pagcor, under Didi Domingo; and PCSO, with Gen. Alex Balutan. The Association of General and Flag Officers led by Gen. Raul Urgello, has donated a suite. PMA Class '70 headed by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu is renovating 12 private rooms for retirees. PMA Class '76 president Vice Adm. Emilio Marayag Jr., announced recently that the class is donating one suite and private room, plus a special suite in memory of Lt. Leopoldo Bataoil, Class '43, an uncle of Rep. Leopoldo Bataoil, chair of the House committee on veterans affairs. Other members of the class instrumental in providing support to the center are Rear Adm. Ramon Punzalan, Generals Victor Ibrado and Alexander Yano. Incidentally, Admiral Marayag, the son of retired Air Force Master Sergeant Emilio Marayag Sr., has a daughter, Amellita Pearl, who graduated from the US Naval Academy with a BS in oceanography. Since she and her husband, classmates in Annapolis, were both in the Marine Corps, she decided to leave the military service and is now an FBI special agent.

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COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

'Autopsy' of the Jolo bomb attack

It is saddening that the casualty count from the twin bombing attacks of a cathedral in Jolo City, Sulu last Jan. 27 rose to 22. The latest casualty was a 68-year-old woman who succumbed last Friday to injuries from the deadly blasts that rocked Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral of Jolo City.

Thelma Villanueva, along with several other injured victims, were flown and admitted to the state-run Zamboanga City Medical Center (ZCMC). Villanueva who hails from Basilan, (no relation with my family who comes from Bulacan), succumbed to serious injuries sustained from the improvised explosive device (IED) that exploded inside and outside the cathedral.

Based from official reports, there were at least 101 people who were wounded and many of them remained confined in various hospitals and being treated from shrapnel wounds and other IED blast-related injuries.

Police, military and other law enforcement investigators are now piecing together bits of information that could unravel those behind these evil attacks. Crime scene investigators from the Philippine National Police (PNP) and forensic experts from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), assisted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), literally are leaving no stones unturned at the carnage site.

President Rodrigo Duterte ordered all hands on deck to determine the perpetrators of the carnage. The Commander-in-chief minced no words in demanding quick results of investigation.

An enraged President Duterte issued the marching orders while he was at the ground zero of the cathedral bomb attacks in Jolo less than 24 hours after the incident. Accompanied by several key Cabinet security officials, President Duterte also visited some of the survivors who were taken to various hospitals in Sulu and in Zamboanga City.

Thus, suspicions of political angle to the horrific terror act is on top of the probe.

President Duterte later disclosed getting initial incident reports to him pointing to a man and a woman as possible bombing suspects. This contradicted the version of military and police authorities whose investigation indicated the IEDs were remotely detonated. This angle was bolstered by the closed circuit television (CCTV) that captured four persons of interest who were seen running away from the area near the cathedral moments after the first blast.

One of them was identified as allegedly a member of Ajang-ajang group, composed of relatives of Abu Sayyaf terrorists killed in encounters with government forces.

As can be seen from the CCTV, one of the four men passed on a mobile phone to another. But the four were later cleared when they voluntarily showed up and explained their presence in the area.

Investigators have gathered parts of a human that were blown off by the blasts inside and outside the cathedral. The suicide bombing angle came out as some of these human body parts recovered from the blast site being processed for DNA could not be traced to any of those killed or seriously injured.

The death of Villanueva brought to 15 the number of churchgoers who were killed in the blasts that also resulted to the deaths of six soldiers and a personnel from the Philippine Coast Guard K-9 who was with the six soldiers assigned to secure the Jolo cathedral. The second blast that went off at the cathedral's parking lot two minutes after the first one either killed or injured several of the soldiers who responded to help the blast victims.

There were intelligence reports of the Jolo cathedral being targeted of possible attack plots to be carried out by unidentified terrorist groups in Mindanao before this happened. Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) immediately claimed as behind the IED blasts in Jolo. Obviously, it was for ISIS own agenda to promote themselves as forces to reckon with.

Until this writing, no local terror group claim authorship of the IED attacks in Jolo.

The IED attack in Jolo came a few days after the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was overwhelmingly rejected in Sulu during the Jan. 21 plebiscite. Sulu, along with Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and Tawi-tawi consist the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) that would be phased out under the BOL. The ARMM was created as part of the 1996 peace agreement entered into by the government that supposedly ended the secessionist rebellion of the Muslim rebel group headed by Nur Misuari, erstwhile chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The BOL, on the other hand, is the end product of the government's peace agreement with MNLF's splinter group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Sulu Gov. Sakur Tan Jr. was among the petitioners who earlier asked the Supreme Court (SC) to stop the BOL plebiscite. Sulu is a known bailiwick of Tausug clan leaders like Misuari and the family of Gov. Sakur Tan Jr. Still facing rebellion charges for the Zamboanga siege, Misuari has not come out with any statement to denounce or disclaim the Jolo IED attacks.

The SC did not issue any injunction to stop the BOL plebiscite but set into motion oral arguments. It would, however, take place later this month after the second BOL plebiscite set this Wednesday, Feb.6. The second and final BOL plebiscite will be held in 28 barangays in Lanao del Norte and six municipalities in North Cotabato.

As envisioned, there will be wider self-rule in predominantly Muslim provinces and cities that ratified the BOL under the umbrella of the soon-to-be-set up BARMM. But even as the BOL lost in Sulu during the plebiscite, it will still remain under the BARMM umbrella.

Thus, suspicion of political angle to the horrific terror act is on top of the probe.

Security lapses were also among the key issues that came out of the investigations even as the entire Mindanao, including Sulu remains under martial law.

But no amount of security measures could stop a determined terrorist to carry out his evil plot to destroy or even kill innocent lives.

Whatever comes from the "autopsy" of the Jolo IED blasts on the motive and those behind it, speedy justice, especially for all the families who lost their loved ones from such senseless attacks, could at least give a balm feeling to ease their grief.

★

6A February 2019 The Manila Times Page: A1

Can we have the facts now on the bombings?

FIRST THINGS FIRST

FRANCISCO S. TATAD

A WEEK after the January 27 twin bombings of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo and the January 28 bombing of a mosque in Zamboanga City, the peace promised by the January 21 ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) appears to have been rolled back, and once again we are witnessing a military offensive, this time against the Abu Sayyaf.

➤TatadA5

Can we have the facts now on the bombings?

Unfortunately, President Rodrigo Duterte's statements on the bombings have preceded, rather than come after, any police investigation, and have confused rather than enlightened us on the relevant facts.

DU30 was quick to accept the claim that the Islamic State (IS), which is facing certain extinction in Syria and Iraq, and which failed to prevent the collapse of the Maute terrorist group in Marawi City earlier, was behind the terrorist attack in Jolo which killed 22 and wounded 100 others, mostly churchgoers. At the same time he expressed confidence that the "new wave" of IS terrorism will not be able to "spill over" to any other part of the Philippines

Suicide bombers?

At first DU30 said an unidentified husband and wife team carried out the suicide bombing attack. One day later, he said the suicide bombers were foreigners whose identities he did not disclose. Interior Secretary Año sought to reinforce DU30's statement by saying, without offering any proof, that the "suicide bombers" were Indonesians whose identities he also did not divulge. The latest field reports claim that one foreign terrorist was killed in an encounter in Patikul, Sulu, between the military and the Abu Sayyaf. His nationality is not known, according to the reports, but he was identified as "Abu Black."

The reports tend to raise a number of questions.

—How can IS suddenly make a dramatic comeback in Jolo after it has been, according to the DU30 government itself, flushed out of Marawi together with the Maute extremist group last year, and decimated by powerful armies in its original stronghold in Syria and Iraq?

—If indeed the IS was the one that staged the terrorist strike in Jolo, how can anyone now say it can do no further harm elsewhere? Isn't this a wishful statement?

—Presumably the alleged husband-and-wife suicide bombers were blown to pieces. Were their body parts ever recovered and their identities ever established?

—How can anyone say they were foreigners, or Indonesians, for that matter, when there was no known record of their personal circumstances, no testimony of any churchgoer having talked to the woman with the backpack? Is there any corroborating statement or even a simple query from the Indonesian government?

—As for the "foreign terrorist" killed in the Patikul encounter, how did the military, which reportedly did not know his nationality, know him as "Abu Black"?

There are more questions.

Security breach

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has been quoted as saying the Jolo cathedral was tightly guarded and fully secured. "Those entering were screened, all bags and belongings were screened." The only way to bring in the explosive without screening, he said, was if it had been strapped to the body and the carrier was able to avoid proper inspection.

Now Sulu Provincial Police Director Pablo Labra was quoted as saying a woman about 5'2" to 5'3" tall entered the cathedral, carrying a backpack covered by her dark grey hooded jacket. If she was indeed the suicide bomber, and the explosive was inside her backpack, it could mean a security breach enabled her to enter the cathedral without proper inspection.

Whether or not there was such a breach deserves to be fully investigated. Yet we are hearing nothing about it.

No crime lab report

Until this writing, the Philippine National Police crime laboratory has not been able to say what explosive materiel or device was used by the "suicide bombers." For one thing, do we know the IS terrorists' standard explosive materiel of choice, if any? The PNP munitions experts do not seem to know, thus the crime lab has been unable to come up with the expected crime report.

According to highly informed intelligence sources, the police could not say C-4, because it is military-grade materiel, and mentioning it could fuel speculations that the attack on Jolo was a rogue military operation.

It was then suggested, the sources said, that they used a "pipe bomb," an improvised explosive device which uses a tightly sealed section of a pipe filled with explosive material; similar to what an alleged terrorist group had reportedly intended to use during the Philippine visit of St. Pope John Paul 2nd in 1995. Ultimately the pipe bomb theory was reportedly abandoned.

It was then suggested that the "suicide bombers" used ammonium nitrate, which is predominantly used in agriculture as a high nitrogen fertilizer (Wikipedia). This explosive is quite bulky and would have weighed around eight to nine kilograms, and there would have been no way of bringing it inside the cathedral, without being detected at the gate or the main entrance. Thus, the crime lab could not sign the crime report, the sources said.

Woman with a backpack

But the latest story about a woman's backpack concealed under her hooded jacket, if true, could explain why the explosive could have been a bulky type, after all.

What was the motive behind the bombing?

The question *"Cui bono?"* (who benefits?) does not offer any easy answer. If the intention was to punish the province of Sulu for voting against the BOL, while all the other provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) voted for it, the cathedral was the wrong target. The ones that voted against inclusion in BARMM were mostly Muslim voters who would rather stay with ARMM under the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) than shift to BARMM under the MILF. Cotabato voted for inclusion, after voting against it twice before, because of a strong Catholic Church campaign.

If the intention was to provoke a religious war, it means its author or authors believe they would personally benefit from religious conflict. But not many Muslims or Christians believe in this. They all profess a deep longing for peace.

The Zamboanga bombing

As deadly and destructive as the Sulu bombing was, some people believe we should be looking more closely at the bombing of the Zamboanga mosque. Whoever set off the bombs that killed 22 individuals and injured a hundred others in Jolo could not have expected the Catholics to rise in arms and wage a religious war against IS, much less against BARMM. But whoever bombed the Zamboanga mosque, killed two Islamic missionaries and wounded five others, after the Jolo bombing, might have done so, hoping to provoke a violent Islamist response.

This could be the handiwork of a group that believes it could profit from a Christian-Muslim shooting war.

So far, government reaction to the Zamboanga bombing has been subdued; DU30 himself has spewed no expletives about it. But this is not the first time something like it happened in Mindanao. On Dec. 28, 1993, when DU30 was on his second term as city mayor of Davao, three bombs exploded inside the Davao cathedral, killing seven churchgoers, and wounding 151 others, 32 seriously. Within eight hours, some "Christian militants" responded by bombing a mosque nearby.

Luckily, there were no casualties. Then-President Fidel V. Ramos was determined to prevent the Mindanao conflict from deteriorating into a religious shooting war. Mayor DU30 however favored a stronger response. And now he is in charge. During the siege of Marawi in 2017, DU30 allowed the military to go after the Maute fighters who had taken refuge inside a mosque. To their credit, the military did their best not to violate the sanctity of the mosques. But this time a mosque has been attacked, and the imams expect DU30 to show greater respect and concern for Islam.

They like him to condemn the Zamboanga bombing in the same manner he has condemned the Jolo bombing. But he has failed to do so. This has prompted some to suggest that perhaps the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should call for an independent inquiry into the bombing. Political suspicions die hard. Despite DU30's open role in the BOL plebiscite, many believe he is still trying to create a situation where he would end up controlling all the political variables while Christians and Muslims clash on religion and other ancestral issues.

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EDITORIAL

A member of the Philippine Press Institute
The National Association of Philippine Newspapers

Knowing the enemy

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippine National Police-DILG, the National Bureau of Investigation, the defense secretary, and several eyewitnesses and survivors said the bomb attacks on the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo on Jan. 27 was a clear case of suicide bombing.

The Chief Executive even pointed at a couple from Yemen as the most likely perpetrators, before he was corrected the next day by his DILG secretary that the prime suspect was an Indonesian woman.

Not so, says the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The military was nearer the scene, with Army troopers giving security to Jolo and its citizens, patrolling its streets and standing guard at its public places and government buildings.

'All these booboos are symptomatic of how amateurish our investigative capabilities are about national security matters, this despite the fast pace of technological breakthroughs being achieved throughout the world on security.'

All indications, says the AFP spokesman, point to two bombs which were remotely detonated, and therefore, there were no suicide bombers. This, despite DILG Secretary Eduardo Año's assurances that they have moles inside the Abu Sayyaf who provided the police with A-1 information about the suicide bombing.

Año said while Indonesian suicide bombers were the culprits, they were guided by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), whose members studied the target, made the reconnaissance and surveillance, and probably drew the maps for the operation, aside from being the ones responsible for bringing the attackers inside the cathedral on the designated day and time.

A couple of days after the twin bomb attacks, the police made public a CCTV footage showing a young Muslim teenager with long hair and a male adult, running in the "wrong direction" after the first blast. The police and the social media immediately labeled them suspects or persons of interest, but it turned out the duo are a student and his teacher, running to retrieve their motorcycle near the church.

The PNP had to clear them a couple of days later.

All these booboos are symptomatic of how amateurish our investigative capabilities are about national security matters, this despite the fast pace of technological breakthroughs being achieved throughout the world on security.

How can our security forces fight these terrorists and religious fanatics when they don't even know who they are, what their prime motivations are, what strategies and tactics they employ?

Sun Tzu said, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."

B4

EVERYMAN

Thankful to China

by Val Abelgas

Finally, a different tone is emerging from the Department of Foreign Affairs on China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea.

On Saturday, Foreign Secretary Teddy Boy Locsin said the Philippines must protest China's establishment of a maritime rescue center on the contested Kagitingan Reef in the Spratly Islands. Locsin, just recently the country's ambassador to the United Nations, said he agreed with the position of Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio that the country must lodge a protest as not doing so could mean consent to China's recent aggressive action in the disputed waters.

"This means we are recognizing that China has a right to occupy and use Fiery Cross Reef. Occupation and use are acts of sovereignty. This contradicts our claim that we have sovereignty over Fiery Cross Reef," Carpio said.

Locsin, however, was vague about filing a formal protest, which the government should have done immediately upon China's pronouncement that it has built the structure. In a tweet -- hardly the proper way for the country's top diplomat to state his objection -- Locsin said he would rather voice his protest on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly.

Still, Locsin's tweet—statement, if you may,—was an improvement over his previous position that he was not keen on filing protests against China. "Every time you send a note verbale and no one responds to it, what does that look like? When you keep sending those notes – I know some people say, you just keep on sending them – what I keep calling it is banging your head against the wall," he said then.

Also, his promise to bring the protest to the UN floor was completely different from the official reaction from Malacanang on reports that China has constructed a maritime rescue center in the South China Sea, or what our government wants to call the West Philippine Sea.

Instead of protesting, Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in his usual light tone that we should even be thankful to China. "Maybe we should be thankful," Panelo said. "That could help seamen in distress, it can help everybody."

Even Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, the man tasked to defend the country's national security and sovereignty, thinks along the same line as Panelo, saying that the defense department would "do nothing" because "it would help seamen in distress."

So, will the Philippines file a formal protest or not? From the looks of it and based on the policy of appeasement President Duterte has followed on China, there will be no formal protest. It is even doubtful that beyond his tweets, Locsin would even pursue his promise of protesting China's actions before the world's delegates in the world body.

And this non-action is precisely what worries Carpio and other foreign policy experts.

In the usual propaganda line of the Chinese government, China's Ministry of Transport announced it has opened the new facility on Kagitingan Reef (Fiery Cross Reef). "The center will offer better support to maritime rescue operations in the southern part of the South China Sea," the ministry said.

"We should protest because Fiery Cross Reef is part of the geologic features we claim in the Kalayaan Island Group. If we do not protest, then we impliedly consent to China's act of putting up a maritime rescue center there," Carpio said. "This means we are recognizing that China has a right to occupy and use Fiery Cross Reef. Occupation and use are acts of sovereignty. This contradicts our claim that we have sovereignty over Fiery Cross Reef."

Maritime expert Dr. Jay Batongbacal, who along with Carpio has been warning the Philippines and whoever cares to listen about China's true intent in the South China Sea, calls the propaganda line China's gray zone tactics that aim to put a "soft face" to its aggressive behavior in the disputed waters to downplay or maybe even hide their military activities in the area.

The Chinese are making it appear that they are, in fact, helping, and not restricting, maritime navigation in the area by providing assistance to vessels operating in the area. The ministry said that, in fact, two rescue ships that it had sent to Zamora Reef have rescued 16 people and two ships in eight rescue operations.

We all know, of course, that these installations that China has built on reclaimed islands are not for civilian purposes, as China claims, but to project China's military power over the region. Independent agencies have released photos of missile launchers and radar-jamming equipment in these structures. There is also no doubt that the missile shelters, runways, ports, and aircraft hangars built in recent years are military installations and not for civilian use.

Batongbacal said China will continue to give the islands a "soft face" in "an attempt to look good to create a more benign image in the region especially in light of the ongoing competition with the United States."

Both Batongbacal and Carpio warned that the building of the supposed maritime rescue center, the weather stations and the implementation of alleged ecological protection programs in the area are all designed to create a sense of civilian administration and control of the contested area, which are essential in establishing sovereignty over the islands.

Either Panelo and Lorenzana have fallen prey to China's propaganda line or they are part of the whole shebang as part of the Duterte administration's policy of appeasement with China.

While the Duterte administration continues to profess trust for China, Filipinos have repeatedly shown overwhelming distrust for China in surveys after surveys. But did it ever matter to Duterte and his friends?

In the meantime, China continues to creep into the country's sovereignty without a nary a word from our government except to thank its benefactor.

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Mr. Abelgas is a former managing eitor of Manila Standard. He now lives in the US but remains a key observer of Philippine events.

VA

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04 February 2019 PM Pang-Masa Page: 03

Editoryal

Ba't nakalusot sa AFP ang bombers

NAGING relaxed umano ang Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) kaya naganap ang dalawang magkasunod na pambobomba sa Jolo Cathedral noong nakaraang Linggo na ikinamatay ng 21 katao. Sabi ng DILG, suicide bombers daw ang may kagagawan. Mag-asawa raw ang pumasok sa cathedral at pinasabog ang sarili. Maski si President Duterte ay nagpahayag na mag-asawang suicide bombers ang may kagagawan.

Ang nakapagtataka, paano nakalusot ang ikalawang pambobomba na hindi naamoy ng military. Isang nakaparadang motorsiklo na may lamang bomba ang ipinarada sa labas ng simbahan at pinasabog. Paano ipaliliwanag ng military ang ganitong pangyayari na nalusutan sila ng mga terorista. Malaking katanungan na hanggang ngayon ay wala pa ring kasagutan.

Nagkulang ang military kaya nangyari ang pagsabog sa Jolo Cathedral. Kung naging mahigpit sana sila sa pag-iinspeksiyon sa mga pumapasok sa simbahan, hindi sana naisagawa ang pagpapasabog, ma-suicide bombers man o sadyang iniwan ang bomba sa simbahan.

Dati, mayroong desk ang mga sundalo malapit sa pintuan ng cathedral at kinakapkapan nila ang mga magsisimba pero wala na iyon ngayon. Maraming nagtataka kung bakit inalis iyon ng mga sundalo. Naging kampante ang mga sundalo na sinamantala ng bombers.

Nakapagtataka rin na dati ay may mga nagbabantay na sundalo sa labas ng cathedral pero wala na rin iyon ngayon. Wala umano kahit isang sundalo. Iyon ang nasilip ng bombers kaya iniwan ang motorsiklong may bomba sa bakuran ng simbahan at saka pinasabog gamit umano ang cell phone bilang triggering device.

Kung kailan dapat naghigpit at naging mapagmatyag ang AFP dahil may martial law saka nangyari ang karumal-dumal na pambobomba. Hindi na sana mangyari ang ganito. Patunayan ng AFP na mas matalino at mas mautak kaysa mga terorista.

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Balita
Ang Nangungunang Pahayagang Tagalog sa Bansa ₱8.00

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PAGTANAW AT PANANAW
Bert de Guzman

Opensiba, durugin ang Abu Sayyaf

SINIMULAN na noong Martes ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) ang opensiba sa Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) bilang pagtalima sa direktiba ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte (PRRD) na pulbusin at durugin ang bandidong grupo na hinihinalang nasa likod ng magkakambal na pagsabog sa Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral sa Jolo, Sulu.

Sa opensibang ito na ginagamitan ng attack helicopters, maging kapalaran din kaya ng Patikul, Sulu na umano'y pinagkukutaan ng mga terorista at bandido, ang nangyari sa Marawi City na nadurog bunsod ng paghuhulog ng mga bomba?

Sa karumal-dumal na pagpapasabog ng mga terorista sa loob ng simbahan habang may misa, 21 tao, karamihan ay churchgoers at ilang kawal, ang namatay samantalang mahigit sa 100 ang sugatan. Naitatanong tuloy ng mga mamamayan kung anong uri may paniniwala o ideolohiya (?) mayroon ang ganitong uri ng mga nilalang na pati mga walang malay na sibilyan ay pinipinsala.

Dapat ang salakayin at pasabugin nila ay iyong itinuturing na mga kalaban, halimbawa ang AFP at Philippine National Police (PNP), kung talagang determinado silang isulong ang kanilang paniniwala. Bakit hindi sila magpunta sa mga kampo at doon magsagawa ng kasumpa-sumpang gawain, gaya ng pagtatanin ng explosives o paghahagis ng granada?

Pagkatapos ng kambal na pagsabog sa Mt. Carmel Cathedral, sinundan ito ng "bloody Wednesday" (Enero 30) na kumitil sa buhay ng dalawang Islamic preachers sa Zamboanga City. Hinagisan ng granada ang isang mosque sa siyudad na kanilang ikinamatay at ikinasugat ng tatlong kasamahan. Ang granada ay sumabog sa loob ng Kamardikaan Mosque habang natutulog ang mga biktima 12:20 ng madaling-araw. Ang mosque ay nasa Logoy Diutay Drive, Barangay Talon-Talon.

Noong Miyerkules ding ito, nanaig ang karahasan nang barilin at patayin ang isang consultant ng National Democratic Front of the Philippines sa Aritao, Nueva Viszcaya at isang Barangay chairwoman na kandidato sa pagka-kongresista sa Quezon City.

Ang pinaslang na NDFP consultant ay si Randy Malayao. Ang in-ambush at napatay namang chairwoman at kandidato sa pagka-kongresista sa ika-2 distrito ng Quezon City, ay si Crisel "Beng" Beltran. Namatay din ang kanyang driver na si Melchor Salita nang silay pagbabarilin habang lulan ng isang SUV sa J.P. Rizal Street, Bagong Silangan.

oOo

Umiiral pa hanggang ngayon ang martial law sa buong Mindanao. Tatlong beses na itong pinalawig ng Kongreso sa kahilingan ng Malacañang upang masupil ang terorismo, kidnapping at iba pang makahayop na gawain ng mga kalaban ng gobyerno.

Subalit bakit tila inutil ang ML sa Mindanao? Patuloy ang karahasan, patayan, kidnapping at nalulusutan pa ang ating militaryat PNP gayong kaylaki umano ng intelligence fund nito para masubaybayan at matiktikan ang mga walang budhing terorista at bandido na maging inosenteng mga sibilyan ay idinadamay sa kanilang maiitim na layunin.

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ONLINE NEWS

04 FEBRUARY 2019

www.retiredanalyst.blogspot.com

Troops now battle 2 pro-ISIS groups in Southern Philippines

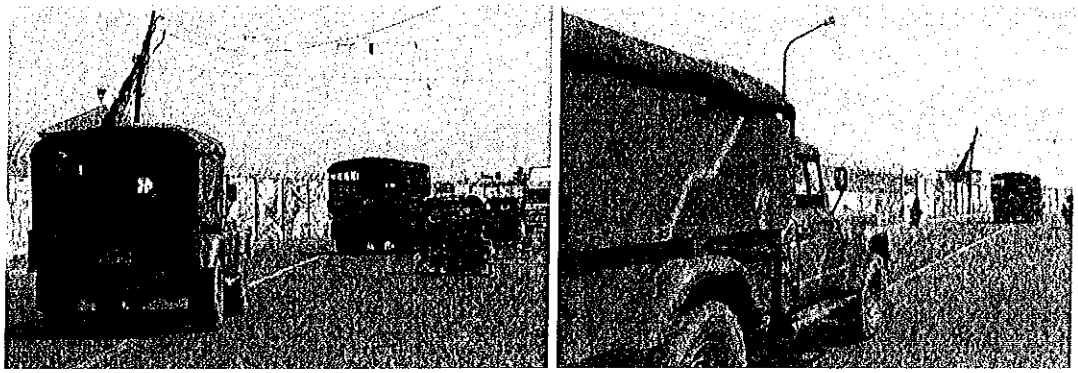
Security forces are battling two brutal pro-ISIS groups in southern Philippines as government offensives continue Sunday in the restive region.

Over 2 dozen soldiers had been killed and wounded in fighting Abu Sayyaf militantsover the past days following two suicide bombings on January 27 of a cathedral in Jolo town in Sulu province being claimed by ISIS.

Five soldiers had been confirmed dead and nearly two dozen more injured in clashes with over 100 Abu Sayyaf fighters in Patikul town. The fighting triggered an exodus of civilians in villages there.

There had been no reports of civilian casualties, but the Joint Task Force Sulu said they have received intelligence reports that a foreign militant, who goes by his nom de guerre Abu Black, was killed in the fighting, but his nationality remains unknown. Another Abu Sayyaf commander, Idang Susukan, was also wounded in the clashes and lost his finger, the report added.

The regional military headquarters, Western Mindanao Command, did not release any information to journalists about the campaign against the Abu Sayyaf. But on Sunday, sealed caskets of slain soldiers from Sulu were spotted being transported by the army to the Philippine Air Force base in Zamboanga.



A convoy of military trucks is spotted in Zamboanga City on Sunday, February 3, 2019 transporting sealed caskets of soldiers killed in fighting with pro-ISIS Abu Sayyaf militants in Sulu province. Troops are now fighting 2 pro-ISIS groups in separate fronts in southern Philippines -- one in Sulu and the other in Maguindanao, a stronghold of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. Both provinces are part of the Muslim autonomous region. (Mindanao Examiner Photos)

On the main island of Mindanao, troops are also fighting a notorious militant group called Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters or BIFF, whose members were mostly former rebels from the larger Moro Islamic Liberation Front, according to Major General Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the 6th Infantry Division, and the Joint Task Force Central (Mindanao) or JTFC.

He said troops managed to destroy a several bunkers and fox holes during an offensive that began February 2 in the village of Tugal in Sultan sa Barongis town in the troubled province of Maguindanao.

The military operation involved air and ground forces, backed by a battery of canons, against the BIFF under Salahudin Hassan. Sobejana called Hassan's faction as a "DAESH-inspired terrorist group," an acronym of ISIS' Arabin name al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi l-Iraq wa-sh-Sham.

"JTFC launched surgical air, artillery and ground operation to the identified and confirmed targets against the DAESH-inspired terrorist group under Salahudin Hassan. Initial result of the operation is the destruction of suspected 20-capacity bunkers and foxholes of the DAESH Inspired terrorist groups," Sobejana said.

He said the offensive was launched after former BIFF members, who surrendered to the military, provided intelligence on the location of the rebel camp. "The successful operation is a result of positive information and support provided by the former members of BIFF who surrendered to JTF Central," Sobejana said.

There were no reports of military and BIFF casualties in Maguindanao. The offensives were ordered by President Rodrigo Duterte following the cathedral bombings by an Indonesian couple that killed 22 people and left over 100 others wounded.

www.pna.gov.ph

10 BIFF men yield to Army in Maguindanao

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 3, 2019): **10 BIFF men yield to Army in Maguindanao**

CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao – **Ten surrendering members of the Islamic State-linked Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were formally presented here to Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, Army's 6th Infantry Division commander, on Sunday afternoon.**

The surrenderers all belonged to the group of Gani Saligan, a sub-commander of the BIFF- Karialan faction operating in the marshy areas of Maguindanao.

Saligan and his group voluntarily surrendered on Friday to the military in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao. After their surrender, the BIFF members provided the Army with information on the location of their other comrades in the Maguindanao marshland.

With the confirmed information, Sobejana, concurrent head of the military-led Joint Task Force Central, ordered an air strike on pinpointed BIFF lairs at the marshland.

At 6 a.m. Saturday, two attack planes of the Philippine Air Force bombed Sitio Tatak, Barangay Tugal, Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao, destroying foxholes and running trenches of the terror group.

Brig. Gen. Diosdado Carreon, commander of the 601st Infantry Brigade, said the **10 BIFF fighters decided to surrender mainly for three reasons.**

"These are their desire to be with their families and children, and even grandchildren, the continued and relentless military pursuit operations against them, and the benefits of returning to the folds of the law as experienced by their other comrades who yielded earlier," he told reporters here in an interview.

He said some of those who surrendered were bomb experts and trained by Malaysian bomb-maker Zulkifli bin Hir alias "Marwan."

Marwan died during an elite police operation in Mamasapano, Maguindanao on Jan. 25, 2015. The same operation also left 44 police officers, 17 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and BIFF fighters, and five civilians dead.

Maguindanao Governor Esmael Mangudadatu said the children and relatives of the surrendering BIFF members may be qualified to a scholarship program the government is offering for them. "Even former BIFF fighters who wish to study will be given priority," he said.

www.pna.gov.ph

Army's infantry battalions in Rizal, Quezon get new commanders

From the Philippine News Agency (Feb 3, 2019): **Army's infantry battalions in Rizal, Quezon get new commanders**

CAMP GEN. CAPINPIN, Tanay, Rizal – **Both the 80th and 85th Infantry Battallions in Rizal and Quezon have new commanders installed in turn-over ceremonies in their respective headquarters on Saturday.**

Maj. Gen. Rhoderick M. Parayno, commander of the 2nd Infantry "Jungle Fighter" Division (2ID) presided over consecutive ceremonies for the 80th Infantry "Steadfast" Battalion (80IB) based in Barangay Pinugay, Baras, Rizal and the 85th Infantry "Sandiwa" Battalion in Barangay Villa Prinsipe, Gumaca, Quezon.

Lt. Col. Christopher M. Diaz assumed post as the new 80IB commanding officer replacing Lt. Col. Melencio W. Ragudo who will be installed on Monday as the new battalion commander of the 59th Infantry (CADRE) Battalion.
On the other hand, Lt. Col. Arnold L. Gasalatan took over as the new 85IB commander succeeding Lt. Col. Ely R. Tono who opted to retire from the military service.

Parayno expressed his deepest appreciation to the accomplishments contributed by the two outgoing battalion commanders.

"Allow me to commend you for successfully graduating as battalion commanders with flying colors. Indeed, you have effectively marched your respective battalions in pursuit of our mission," the 2ID commander said.

He lauded the two for successfully leading various combat operations in their areas which resulted in the neutralization of several New People's Army rebels and the recovery of various firearms.

"These extensively decimated the leadership structure and degraded the NPA members," Parayno said.

He also welcomed the new commanding officers Diaz and Gasalatan in their respective posts "with high hopes that their vast military experiences and competencies will be a great help to their respective units."

"I encourage you to maintain your passion and enthusiasm that you have shown from your previous units to your new work. Carry on the torch of persistently confronting the real and present enemies within our area of operations. I wish you the best days and months ahead," he said.

Parayno also expressed gratitude for the presence and support of local government unit officials and representatives who graced the occasion.

"I am confident that with all of you, solidly supporting the Army in its programs and undertakings, we will be able to finally win the peace we all deserve. Makakaasa kayo na

ang Philippine Army partikular ang 2nd Infantry Division ay laging nakahanda na paglingkuran ang mamamayan at protektahan at panatilihin ang kapayapaan sa rehiyon (Rest assured, that the Philippine Army, the 2ID in particular, stands ready to serve our people and protect and maintain the peace in the region)," he said.

A part of the military tradition, the change of command ceremony signifies the formal transfer of authority and responsibility for a unit from one commanding or flag officer to another, marked by the passing of the unit color from an outgoing commander to an incoming one.

www.inquirer.net

Army disowns PNP statement

By: **Villamor Visaya Jr.** - **@inquirerdotnet**
Philippine Daily Inquirer / 05:16 AM February 04, 2019

GAMU, Isabela — The Army's 5th Infantry Division (ID) at Camp Melchor Dela Cruz here on Sunday denied issuing a press statement that the Cagayan Valley Police Regional Office released in which slain National Democratic Front of the Philippines peace consultant Randy Felix Malayao was tagged as a New People's Army member who had a quarrel with the rebel movement.

Maj. Jefferson Somera, 5th ID spokesperson, said the statement that Supt. Chevalier Iringan, regional police spokesperson, issued did not come from the Army.