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NEWS CLIPPINGS

31 January 2019

Thursday

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Military launches offensive in Sulu

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – Artillery shells and rockets from helicopter gunships rained on Abu Sayyaf jungle positions in Patikul, Sulu on Tuesday in what the military said was an execution of President Duterte's order for an all-out offensive against the terror group, following the Jolo cathedral bombing last weekend.

The air strikes followed a ground offensive that began within days of Duterte's issuing the order after visiting last Monday the bombed-out Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo.

Two MG520 attack helicopters unleashed rockets and heavy machine gun fire as 30 Abu Sayyaf members were reportedly spotted in the mountain jungle in Barangay Latih.

The military also pounded the Abu Sayyaf positions with several rounds of 105mm howitzer shells.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman and civil military operation chief of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), said the offensive began Tuesday morning after ground troops detected the presence of 30 Abu Sayyaf terrorists in the thickly forested area.

He said ground troops sought air and artillery support after encountering difficulty penetrating the thick vegetation.

"Air sorties were conducted and nine rockets and machine gun fire support were launched against the position of the Abu Sayyaf," Besana said.

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Military From Page 1

Authorities said an Abu Sayyaf-linked group called Ajang-ajang was also using the forested areas as temporary base.

Besana said there was still no report of casualty on the side of the government, especially ground troops.

The Westmincom spokesman also emphasized the ongoing offensive would not affect civilian communities.

"Our ground forces are very much aware of the safety of the community and it will not just launch any bombardment if the area if inhabited by civilian community," Besana pointed out.

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, Westmincom chief, vowed an intensified military operation until the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu is obliterated.

"Expect that, with the pronouncement of the Commander-in-Chief, we will intensify our focused military operations to pound down the remaining terrorists and penetrate strongholds of the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu," Dela Vega said.

'Persons of interest'

As this developed, four people tagged as "persons of interest" in the Jolo cathedral bombing last Sunday yielded to authorities yesterday to deny involvement in the carnage. Two of them were caught on CCTV appearing like they were detonating the bombs using cellphone.

In Manila, Rep. Edcel Lagman said the latest terror activities should not be used as justification for another martial law extension.

"The bombing incident has been explicitly categorized as a terrorist attack by no less than President Duterte, the military and police leadership and administration officials, and not an act pursuant to an alleged rebellion in Mindanao," he said.

For Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, the situation would have been worse without martial law.

At the Kapihan sa Manila Bay forum, senatorial candidate Francis Tolentino pushed for the strengthening of the Human Security Act of 2007.

Malacañang, through spokesman Salvador Panelo, said the latest violence would not stall the quest for peace and progress in Mindanao. "The movement to change the face of Mindanao and the oppressive conditions affecting its people shall move forward despite these acts of terrorism," he said.

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines will unleash its might and weaponry against these enemies of the state and hunt them ferociously and relentlessly until the law rolls down its guillotine on them,"

he maintained.

ISIS role

For defense chief Delfin Lorenzana, there is a possibility the Islamic State is instigating violence so it could paint a picture of a religious war between Christians and Muslims in the country.

"It's not that farfetched," he told reporters at a press briefing at Camp Aguinaldo.

Fortunately, he said, Filipino Christians – especially Catholics – and mainstream Muslim groups are not taking the bait. He also said no connection has been established so far between the Jolo cathedral blasts and the mosque grenade attack.

He also stressed the "suicide bombing" angle has not been established yet.

"The theory of suicide bombing or not is hanging in the air. It appears to be a suicide bombing because there were many body parts. They are still waiting for confirmation," he said.

He also admitted getting the same information received by President Duterte on the possible involvement of a Yemeni couple in the Jolo blasts. He said the information was from Rohan Gunaratna, a Singaporean analyst on security affairs.

Rep. Jericho Nograles, designated caretaker-representative of the first district of Sulu since September 2016, proposed that investigators check the bodies of two victims in the bombing of the Jolo cathedral to verify reports it was carried out by suicide bombers.

"If the DNA tests will confirm that these severed heads belong to foreign nationals, then we have to call the attention of the Bureau of Immigration to make necessary precautions, as well as the Coast Guard and Navy to implement all that is necessary to prevent entry in the 'backdoors' of the archipelago," he said.

The latest terror attacks drew both condemnation and calls for sobriety from Muslim and Christian religious groups.

"We call on all sober minds to lead in this volatile situation," Yasser Apion, legal adviser of the Ulama Council of Zamboanga Peninsula (UCZP) said at a gathering in Sta. Barbara Masjid. "Nothing could be more evil than shedding innocent blood inside God's abode."

"It's un-Islamic and we are strongly condemning it," Abdulrauf Decampong, an official of the Koronadal City Grand Mosque, told **The STAR** in an interview in Koronadal City.

Sultan Tungko Saikol, assistant regional director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, called the perpetrators of the attacks "satanic people."

– With Michael Punongbayan, Edith Regalado, Delon Porcalla, Emmanuel Tupas, Ramil Bajo, Christina Mendez, Jess Diaz, Cecille Suerte Felipe

31 January 2019 INQUIRER Page: A1

BLOODY WEDNESDAY

STORY BY THE INQUIRER STAFF

Three separate attacks on the morning of Jan. 30 took the lives of two Muslim preachers in Zamboanga City, a peace consultant in Nueva Vizcaya, and a congressional candidate and her driver in Quezon City.

Authorities on Wednesday called for calm and advised against speculation after a grenade attack on a mosque killed two Muslims and wounded four others in Zamboanga City, just days after a deadly bombing at a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu province, and a vote backing Muslim self-rule in Mindanao.

The grenade explosion in Zamboanga City came hours after President Duterte claimed on television that the attack on the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo on Sunday was carried out by two suicide bombers.

In the latest violence, a grenade was thrown into a small mosque at Barangay Talon-Talon, Zamboanga City, at 12:20 a.m. on Wednesday.

Col. Leonel Nicolas, commander of Joint Task Force Zamboanga, said the explosion killed Islamic preachers Sattal Bato, 47, and Rex Habil, and wounded four others—Yasson Asgali, 46; Paulo Salahuddin, 41; Alabani Jakilani, 67; and Amidz Kassara, 30.

Police said the grenade, thrown through the mosque's glass window, landed where the victims were sleeping.

Thickly populated community

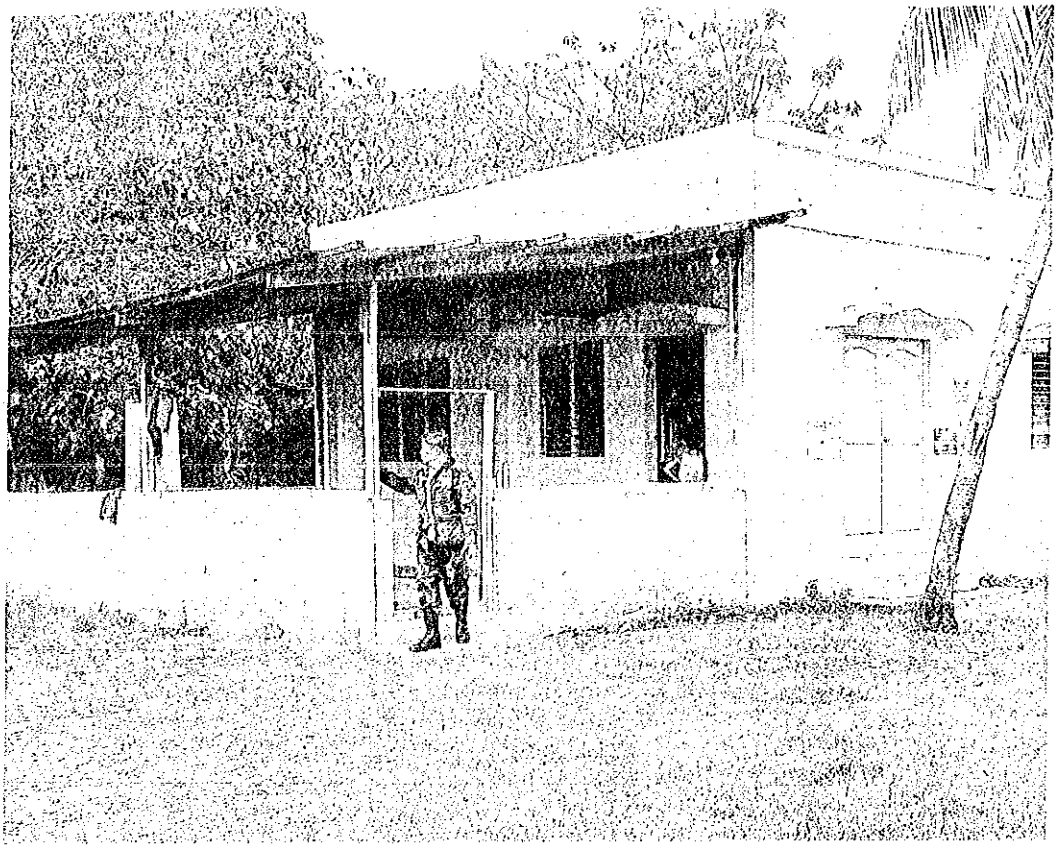
The mosque is located at the far end of the thickly populated community.

Owned by a retired police official, the small mosque is maintained by Muslim scholars.

It was unclear how the attack was carried out, but Chief Insp. Shellamae Chang, spokesperson for the Zamboanga City Police Office, said the attacker took advantage of the darkness in the area.

The attack prompted worries of sectarian retaliation, but authorities urged unity across faiths as investigators looked for a motive.

Zamboanga City Mayor Isabelle Salazar warned against speculation, appealing to resi-



MOSQUE BLAST The grenade was thrown through the glass window of the mosque. It landed and exploded where the victims were sleeping. The mosque is maintained by Muslim scholars and owned by a retired police official. —AFP

dents not to make comments that could spark hatred.

"We don't want to link this to the Jolo incident. This is not about religion," Salazar said.

"This incident has to be investigated thoroughly. We don't want to give this impression that this is another attack on religion," she added.

'Mass murderers'

Malacañang condemned the attack on the mosque, calling the perpetrators "mass murderers."

"The successive attacks on two different places of worship depict the ruthlessness and the godlessness of these mass murderers," presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

Panelo said the military would hunt down the perpetrators and promised that the government would protect the people of Mindanao.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said he saw no relation between the attack on the mosque and the twin explosions at the Jolo cathedral.

"Just looking at it. We do not see any connection because even in the past when churches were being bombed in Davao, Cotabato, General Santos City or wherever, there has been no retaliation. No mosque was bombed in retaliation or whatever immediately after that," Lorenzana told reporters at the military's headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, appealed to the public not to give a "religious complexion" to the Jolo and Zamboanga City attacks and instead cooperate with the security forces by reporting "unusual developments" in their communities.

The bodies of Bato and Habil were taken to Basilan. The four wounded men received treatment at Zamboanga City Medical Center.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the key force in the Muslim insurgency in Mindanao that has signed a peace agreement with the government, condemned the attack on the Zamboanga mosque.

'Crazy people'

Ghazali Jaafar, MILF vice chair and head of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, said the attack on the mosque could only have been carried out by "crazy people."

"We strongly condemn the bombing of the mosque even as we call upon our people not to be swayed by emotion and fall into the trap [of] those who want to draw a barrier between our peace-loving communities," said Von Al Haq, spokesperson for the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces, the armed wing of the MILF.

"Let us instead stand and unite firmly to promote peace in our midst," he said as he extended the MILF's sympathies to the families of the victims.

The militant Moro group Suara Bangsamoro urged the public not to be influenced by people who may be attempting to sow discord and religious animosity.

"If the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are aiming to foment religious animosity, then we should not let their evil intentions succeed and divide our nation," said Jerome Aba, spokesperson for the group.

"Like the bombings at the cathedral in Jolo, the bombing at the [mosque] is reproachable. Attacks on civilian population are against all moral laws and are never justifiable," he said.

Gov. Mujiv Hataman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao blasted the attacks on the Zamboanga mosque and the Jolo cathedral as "blasphemous murder."

Hataman called on the authorities to act with speed and thoroughness in their investigation of the two attacks, identify the perpetrators, and prosecute them. —REPORTS FROM JULIE ALIPALA, CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO, JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE, TAHER SOLAIMAN, MART SAMBALUD, BONG SARMIENTO AND AFP INQ

> **This incident has to be investigated thoroughly. We don't want to give the impression that this is another attack on religion**
>
> **Isabelle Salazar**
> Zamboanga City Mayor

31 January 2019 STAR Page: 1

China invites Rody to 2nd Belt & Road Forum

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

China has invited President Duterte to attend the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in April.

Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua extended the invitation to Duterte for a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"China has sincerely invited President Duterte to attend the aforesaid forum," Zhao said.

He said this is "the first year after the relationship of the countries has been elevated into one of comprehensive strategic cooperation."

"We are looking forward to the seventh meeting between the leaders of our two countries which will chart a more magnificent blueprint for bilateral relations," Zhao said in his speech at the reception celebrating the Chinese New Year at the Makati Shangri-La late Tuesday.

During Xi's first state visit to the Philippines in November, he and Duterte agreed to elevate bilateral relations into a "comprehensive strategic cooperation" and continue to manage contentious issues

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China From Page 1

in the West Philippine Sea.

Former president Benigno Aquino III said he does not believe Philippine-China relations would develop into a strategic cooperation. He said a strategic partnership with a country perceived to be a primary threat is unlikely.

"So, what is the impact of the strategic cooperation with China? Well, a strategic partnership as defined by my advisers stated that you have to share a common background, and there are also shared, common aspirations. Therefore, that presents the basis of being, of a closer relationship with each other," Aquino said.

The former president made the statement during the launching of the book "South China Sea Arbitration for Understanding the Awards and for Debating" authored by Alfredo Robles Jr. at De La Salle University in Manila last week.

Zhao urged the Philippines to work hand-in-hand with China to implement the important consensus reached by Duterte and Xi, promote the mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries in a comprehensive manner and forge an even brighter "golden era" of bilateral ties.

The practical cooperation between China and the Philippines has brought growing benefits to the Filipinos and Chinese in 2018, Zhao said. Last year, China topped the list of foreign investors with P48.7 billion worth of investments, an increase of 8364 percent from P575.8 million in 2017. China has been the Philippines' No. 1 trading partner and import origin, and the fourth largest export market, Zhao pointed out.

He added Philippine companies sold $124 million worth of goods and services during the first China International Import Expo held in Shanghai last November.

China imported more than two million tons of tropical fruit from the Philippines over the past two years and generated a revenue of more than $1.5 billion for 40,000 Filipino farmers.

In 2018, the Philippines received more than 1.25 million Chinese tourists, achieving a 29.6 percent year-on-year increase.

Zhao said China's grants or soft loans fund the construction of drug-rehab centers, two bridges over Pasig River and the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project as well as other infrastructure projects.

"Over the past two years, under the guidance of our two leaders, China-Philippine relations have achieved an overall turnaround, enjoyed a sustained growth with strength and depth and surged forward along a fast track," Zhao said.

Chinese labor invasion

Former president Aquino last week voiced concern over the entry of Chinese workers in the country, saying they may be getting jobs that should be for Filipinos.

Aquino said many of the Chinese workers are working in the construction industry.

The labor department previously reported it has issued almost 52,000 alien employment permits for workers from China.

Malacañang explained the country lacked the necessary labor.

"We lack so many construction workers. Perhaps that's why many Chinese workers were hired. Many Filipinos do not have jobs and yet they lack the skill so we need to teach (them). That would be a good project for TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority)," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said at a press briefing last Jan. 24.

– With Alexis Romero

31 January 2019

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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XINHUA REPORT

CHINA OPENS MARITIME RESCUE CENTER IN WEST PHILIPPINE SEA

China has opened a maritime rescue center on the Philippine-claimed Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef in the West Philippine Sea, state-run media reported on Tuesday.

China's Ministry of Transport opened the new facility on the reclaimed South China Sea outpost, which Beijing calls Yongshu Reef, Xinhua said in a report.

"The center will offer better support to maritime rescue operations in the southern part of the South China Sea," the ministry was quoted as saying.

Xinhua also reported that China deployed another rescue ship on Zamora (Subi) Reef in October last year to replace the first one it deployed in July.

China earlier announced that it would station a search and rescue ship on Panganiban (Mischief) Reef, which, like Kagitingan and Zamora reefs, is also within the Philippines' 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone.

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Disputed waters

"Over the past six months, the two ships have rescued 16 people and two ships in eight operations. Property worth about 12 million yuan ($1.7 million) has been salvaged," Xinhua said.

China claims nearly all of the 3.5-million-square-kilometer South China Sea, including waters close to the shores of the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. —FRANCES MANGOSING INQ

31 January 2019 Standard TODAY Page: A1

China builds maritime rescue hub; PH unfazed

By Nat Mariano

CHINA has established a "maritime rescue center" in the West Philippine Sea, the state-run Xinhua News Agency said Wednesday.

The rescue center was opened Tuesday in Fiery Cross Reef or Kagitingan Reef, one of the Beijing-occupied artificial islands in the Spratlys in the disputed South China Sea.

"The center will offer better support to maritime rescue operations in the southern part of the South China Sea," Xinhua said, quoting the Chinese government.

Earlier this month, China launched ecological protection facilities to restore coral reefs in the Panganiban and Zamora reefs, both of which belong to the Philippines.

Prof. Jay Batongbacal, director of the

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China...

From A1

University of the Philippines Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, told CNN Philippines that China's move only legitimizes the establishment of its military bases in the area.

"It is trying to mask its militarization of the area by highlighting possible civilian benefits or public goods provided by their artificial islands," Batongbacal told CNN.

China has occupied the Kagitingan Reef since it occupied it in 1988.

In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration recognized the Philippines' sovereign rights in areas being contested by China within Manila's 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone, or the West Philippine Sea. But China refused to recognize the court's jurisdiction and rejected the arbitral ruling.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the Philippines would not contest the establishment of a rescue center on Philippine territory because it could help distressed seafarers.

"Maybe this is a humanitarian facility that will benefit seafarers in distress," Lorenzana said.

Even with China's plan to expand its facilities in the contested seas, Lorenzana said tensions between Manila and Beijing would be reduced.

"Considering everything, I think I'm happy with that. What we can achieve is to lower the tension there. No misunderstanding, no miscalculations between troops, so there would be no trouble," he said in an interview with GMA News. **With PNA**

31 January 2019 INQUIRER Page: A7

House approves ROTC bill

By DJ Yap
@deejayapINQ

A bill reviving mandatory two-year military training for senior high school students was approved for plenary consideration by the House basic education panel, triggering recollections of the program's history of hazing abuse and concerns of spreading military culture among the youth.

With no objections, the committee endorsed the proposed "Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) Act," which will substitute three similar bills, restoring the ROTC program for all students in Grade 11 and 12, in what the Duterte administration hopes will create a "pool of trained reservists."

Deputy Speaker Raneo Abu, author of House Bill No. 5113, made the motion to approve the measure amending Republic Act No. 7077, or the "Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines Reservist Act."

No objections

The motion was carried as no panel member objected.

Under the proposal, all senior high school students shall undergo basic military training "in order to motivate, train, organize and utilize [them] for national defense preparedness or civil-military operations."

The program is seen to "inculcate love of country, leadership and character development" in the youth.

"Any student who fails to undergo the mandatory Basic ROTC in accordance with this Act shall not be qualified for graduation," according to the House measure.

The bill, however, sets exemptions for students who are physically or psychologically unfit, participate in sports tournaments or have undergone similar training.

But the committee-level approval of the bill quickly drew criticism from the Kabataan party-list group.

Cases of abuses

Rep. Sarah Elago recalled cases of abuses during the previous implementation of the ROTC program, which was made optional following the hazing death of University of Santo Tomas student Mark Welson Chua, an ROTC trainee, in 2001.

"Under the mandatory ROTC, reports of physical and psychological abuse had been far too common. Officers humiliate, brutalize and even maim cadets in the guise of 'training.' These abusive practices are deeply ingrained and identified with the ROTC and the military," she said.

Elago said reimposing the ROTC program was disturbing and potentially dangerous, especially in institutions of learning.

"This is about suppression of dissent and imposing the Duterte regime's tyrannical rule in schools. It has already militarized the bureaucracy, now it's after our schools," she said. INQ

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Duterte orders marksmanship training for 1,000 gov't snipers

By **GENALYN D. KABILING**

At least 1,000 government snipers would undergo marksmanship training to boost the government's campaign against terrorism, President Duterte announced recently.

The President said these sharpshooters could be deployed to Jolo, Sulu, the site of the two deadly bombings, to assist government forces battling lawless elements.

"'Pag nakakarga ng – nakahawak ng baril, huwag mo nang palapitin, targetin mo na. Tutal marami 'yan, sabi ko I ordered to – the training of 1,000 sharpshooters, snipers [If a person carries a weapon, don't let him go near. Just target him. After all they are many. I have ordered the training of 1,000 sharpshooters, snip- ▶11

Duterte orders marksmanship... ◂1

ers]," Duterte said during his visit to Jolo last Monday.

"Eh 'di i-assign natin dito para hindi masyado baldado ang sundalo ko. Iyan ang direksyon ko. Kung sundan ninyo ako, mabuti. 'Pag hindi, okay lang rin. Pero basta ako, kung -- hindi ako pa – hindi tayo pwedeng ganito [We can deploy them here so my soldiers will not be incapacitated. That's my direction. If you follow me, that's good. If not, that's okay. But we cannot be just like this]," said Duterte who was outraged by the Jolo blasts.

The President earlier directed the military to use all resources, including dropping bombs, to destroy the Abu Sayyaf Group responsible for the Jolo blasts last Sunday.

The commander-in-chief, however, reminded the military to minimize collateral damage, saying the civilian community must be allowed to evacuate a conflict zone. He said the government was ready to assist families who might be displaced by the military operations.

"Be careful about the civilians. Kayong mga Moro do not – baka magtanim kayo ng galit. Nanay ng nanay ko Maranao," Duterte said.

The twin explosions at the Jolo Cathedral claimed 21 lives and wounded dozens others, triggering widespread condemnation. Duterte, citing intelligence information, said the attacks were carried out by a husband and wife team of suicide bombers.

The President, meantime, has vowed to ensure Jolo would not fall into the clutches of the Islamic State, saying he would fight the "movement of evil men" with evil.

"Iyong ISIS, kayo rin ang humingi. Uupakan ko talaga kayo. Gagamitin ko lahat [To the ISIS, you asked for it. I will hit you hard. I will use everything]," Duterte said.

"Jolo is part of the Philippines. It cannot be anything else," he added.

21 January 2019 Tempo Page: ____

Gov't snipers to undergo marksmanship training

By GENALYN D. KABILING

At least 1,000 government snipers would undergo marksmanship training to boost the government's campaign against terrorism, President Duterte announced Monday.

The President said these sharpshooters could be deployed to Jolo, Sulu, the site of the two deadly bombings, to assist government forces battling lawless elements.

"'Pag nakakarga ng – nakahawak ng baril, huwag mo nang palapitin, targetin mo na. Tutal marami 'yan, sabi ko I ordered to – the training of 1,000 sharpshooters, snipers," Duterte said during his visit to Jolo.

"Eh 'di i-assign natin dito para hindi masyado baldado ang sundalo ko. Iyan ang direksyon ko. Kung sundan ninyo ako, mabuti. 'Pag hindi, okay lang rin. Pero basta ako, kung – hindi ako pa – hindi tayo pwedeng ganito," said Duterte who was outraged by the Jolo blasts.

The President earlier directed the military to use all resources, including dropping bombs, to destroy the Abu Sayyaf Group responsible for the Jolo blasts last Sunday.

The commander-in-chief, however, reminded the military to minimize collateral damage, saying the civilian community must be allowed to evacuate a conflict zone. He said the government was ready to assist families who might be displaced by the military operations.

"Be careful about the civilians. Kayong mga Moro do not – baka magtanim kayo ng galit. Nanay ng nanay ko Maranao," Duterte said.

31 January 2019

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 2

CA confirms Madrigal with two other generals

By MARIO B CASAYURAN

The bicameral Commission on Appointments confirmed yesterday the appointment of General Benjamin R. Madrigal Jr., chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The CA, during its plenary session presided by Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III, concurrent CA chairman, also confirmed the appointments of two other ranking AFP officers.

They are Lt. General Noel S. Clement and Brigadier General Virgilio B. Bartolome.

Madrigal replaced Carlito Galvez Jr.

Rep. Seth Frederick P. Jalosjos, chairman of the CA national defense committee, said the three professional soldiers – Madrigal, Clement and Bartolome – also seek peace.

Madrigal, a native of Los Banos, Laguna has been in the government service for 37 years. He becomes the 51st AFP Chief of Staff.

31 January 2019 STANDARD TODAY Page: A3

CA confirms appointment of Madrigal as new AFP chief

THE Commission on Appointments on Wednesday confirmed the appointment of Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr. as Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff.

Zamboanga Rep. Seth Jalosjos, chairman of the CA committee on national defense, recommended the approval of Madrigal's appointment at the plenary. There was no opposition to his appointment.

Madrigal was installed as AFP chief in December last year, replacing now Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr.

Madrigal, the 51st AFP chief-of-staff, served notably as 4th Infantry Division commander, Southern Luzon Command and Eastern Mindanao Command chief.

A member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1985, Madrigal was the most senior among the Board of Generals' recommendees and also among the most competent in terms of distinct professionalism, leadership and character.

Madrigal held key positions in the Philippine Army, which includes command of the 4th Infantry Division based in Cagayan de Oro.

He also served as assistant division commander and later acting head of the 10th Infantry Division in Compostela Valley before becoming Army chief.

Madrigal is set to retire on Sept. 28, 2019. PNA

31 January 2019 Tribune Page: 3

Madrigal hurdles CA

No one objected to the confirmation of Madrigal as the AFP chief of staff

By Mario J. Mallari

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) interim Chief of Staff Benjamin Madrigal Jr. on Wednesday hurdled with flying colors the Commission on Appointments (CA) evaluation that confirmed his ad interim appointment which took effect last month.

Madrigal – who was chosen by President Rodrigo Duterte to replace Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. after reaching mandatory retirement last 12 December – readily answered the panel's questions regarding the country's security and other matters.

Members of the CA-Committee on National Defense – led by Rep. Seth Frederick Jalosjos – took turns in questioning Madrigal, including the recent deadly explosions in Mindanao that saw 21 people killed while leaving almost a hundred injured.

The AFP chief of staff designate revealed the development of the ongoing investigations on the twin explosions in a cathedral in Jolo last Sunday and the recent Zamboanga City mosque grenade attack.

He was also asked by Sen. Gringo Honasan about his plans and programs for the country's military with his remaining eight months in office as he is set to reach the mandatory retirement age of 56 in September.

After a few more questions, Madrigal's rank as four-star general was confirmed, as no one objected to the confirmation with Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri seconding the motion of the confirmation of Madrigal.

Prior to leading the AFP, Madrigal had held key positions in the military, including chief of the Davao-based Eastern Mindanao Command from November 2017 to December 2018 and was also the former commander of the Southern Luzon Command in Lucena City, 701st Infantry Brigade in Mati, Davao Oriental, and 4th Infantry Division in Cagayan de Oro.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, on the other hand, had questioned the date of promotion of Lt. Gen. Noel Clement as three-star general, noting that the latter's ad interim appointment was dated 8 January 2019 – three days after he turned 55.

Lacson stressed that under the law, any military officer is disqualified from promotion to the next higher rank if he has less than one year left in the service and in the case of Clement, he will be reaching the mandatory retirement age of 56 on 5 January 2020.

"It's not about him, it's about policy... this is not to raise objection or opposition to the ad interim appointment of Lieutenant General Clement," stressed Lacson, a former police general.

Nevertheless, the panel went on to confirm Clement and Brig. Gen. Virgilio Bartolome but told the AFP that it will be the last time they will accommodate, for humanitarian reason, such situation.

The CA also confirmed the ad interim appointments of seven diplomats of the Department of Foreign Affairs, namely, Leah Basinang-Ruiz, Alex Chua, Ma. Theresa De Vega, Jesus Domingo, Leo Lim and Raul Hernandez as ambassadors, and Henry Bensurto Jr. as chief of mission.

31 January 2019 Tempo Page: ____

CA confirms Madrigal

The bicameral Commission on Appointments yesterday confirmed the appointment of Gen. Benjamin R. Madrigal Jr. as chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The CA, during its plenary session presided over by Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III, concurrent CA chairman, also confirmed the appointments of two other ranking AFP officers.

They are Lt. Gen. Noel S. Clement and Brig. Gen. Virgilio B. Bartolome.

Rep. Seth Frederick P. Jalosjos, chairman of the CA national defense committee, said the three professional soldiers -- Madrigal, Clement, and Bartolome -- also seek peace.

Madrigal, a native of Los Banos, Laguna and has been in the government service for 37 years, is the 51st AFP chief of staff. He replaced Gen. Carlito Galvez, now the presidential peace adviser. **(Mario B. Casayuran)**

31 January 2019

The Daily Tribune

Page: 7

24 airports open Heroes' Lounges

To uplift and honor the country's uniformed personnel, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), under the directive of Department of Transportation (DoTr) Secretary Arthur Tugade, has completed and opened Heroes' Lounges in various CAAP-operated airports in the country.

According to the DoTr, there are currently 24 Heroes' Lounges catering to police and military men that have been operational since last year.

Heroes' Lounges are available for use of uniformed personnel at eight international airports in various places of the country including Puerto Princesa, General Santos, Zamboanga, Davao, Kalibo, Laoag, Bohol-Panglao and Iloilo.

There are also such lounges at the following airports: Butuan, Lagundingan, Bacolod-Sila, Cotabato, Tacloban, Dipolog, Dumaguete, Legazpi, Naga, Pagadian, Roxas, San Jose, Tuguegarao, Virac, Cauayan and Ozamiz.

In a statement, the department said the Heroes' Lounges were installed to accommodate traveling uniformed personnel (including those who have retired), Medal of Valor awardees and their immediate families traveling with them.

The lounges, furnished with comfortable seats and relaxing interiors, also offer free Wi-Fi. The free use of the lounges by uniformed personnel and their families is subject to existing rules and regulations.

DoTr said the initiative was launched to show appreciation and gratitude to the country's military men for their sacrifices towards peace and in defending and securing the nation from harm. **AC**

31 January 2019 INQUIRER Page: 18

Groups condemn slay of NDFP consultant

By the Inquirer Staff
@Team_Inquirer

Activists and human rights groups condemned the murder of former National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace consultant Randy Malayao on Wednesday, saying it was an example of the brutal persecution of dissidents under the Duterte administration.

Malayao, 49, was shot before dawn while asleep on a Victory Liner bus at a pit stop in Aritao town, Nueva Vizcaya province, and died outright. He was on his way home to San Pablo town in Isabela province.

DOJ petition

Quoting witnesses, Chief Insp. Geovanni Cejes, Aritao police chief, said a man boarded the bus around 2:30 a.m., shot Malayao twice, and escaped on a motorcycle driven by another man.

Malayao, who was also a columnist for Baguio City's Northern Dispatch, was among the more than 600 alleged members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) who were included in the proscription petition filed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in the Manila Regional Trial Court in February last year after President Duterte terminated the peace talks three months earlier.

The DOJ early this month withdrew nearly all of the names of people it had sought to declare as terrorists, including Malayao's.

Malayao had no pending criminal cases for which most of the other NDFP consultants had been hounded and arrested by the police and the military, although he suffered torture and four years of detention in Cagayan Valley during the Arroyo administration before the courts cleared him of all charges.

Randy Malayao

His murder was a "a case of extrajudicial killing" by state forces, according to Bayan Muna secretary general Renato Reyes.

"His death comes after Duterte terminated the peace talks and vowed an all-out war against the CPP-NPA," Reyes said. "We see no other motive and possible perpetrator."

'Death squads'

Human rights group Karapatan said those responsible for the "ruthless murder" were "the death squads of the Duterte regime, which has ceaselessly incited and ordered the killing of peace and human rights advocates and many others."

Salvador Pueblo of the NDFP-Cagayan Valley blamed the murder on "death squads" of the Army's 5th Infantry Division (ID) based in the region.

But Maj. Jefferson Somera, 5th ID spokesperson, said pointing to the military was "an old tune" by the rebels and challenged the NDFP to identify the culprits and show evidence.

In his Jan. 20 Northern Dispatch column, Malayao urged the Duterte administration "to pursue peace, withdraw the proscription petition, stop the terror-listing and the clamping down of fundamental human rights and civil liberties."

Malayao, who spent 33 years fighting for social justice while living with farmers and workers in Cagayan Valley, said the proscription petition "has already put us and the lives of our respective families at security risk and great emotional anxiety."

Terror tag

"The terror tag has also cast aspersion upon our persons and besmirched our reputations," he added.

Edre Olalia, the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers president, who had served as a legal consultant to the NDFP, said Malayao's death "follow[ed] one thread: Get those who fight the oppressive and exploitative system and who work for fundamental change fast and quick."

Malayao graduated with a fisheries degree from UP Visayas-Miagao where he was the editor of the college paper Ang Mangingisda. He was also one of the founders of the Beta Sigma fraternity in that school.

The College Editors Guild of the Philippines denounced the killing and demanded justice "for the abominable murder."

In a statement, Beta Sigma strongly condemned the attack on Malayao.

"The heinous crime was committed by treacherous, brutal and cowardly assassins," the fraternity said. "The executioners ended the life of a man who sought nothing more than peace and development for the Philippines." **—REPORTS FROM KRIXIA SUBINGSUBING, KIMBERLIE QUITASOL, VILLAMOR VISAYA JR. AND INQUIRER RESEARCH** INQ

31 January 2019 THE PHILIPPINE STAR Page: 15

NDF consultant shot dead in N. Vizcaya

By VICTOR MARTIN

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya – A consultant of the National Democratic Front (NDF) was gunned down at a bus terminal in Aritao town at around 2:30 a.m. yesterday.

Randy Felix Malayao, 49, was sleeping in a Victory Liner bus bound for Tuguegarao, Cagayan during a stopover in Barangay Darapidap when the gunman, who was wearing a hooded jacket and ski mask, boarded the bus, Chief Inspector Geovanni Cejes, Aritao police chief, said.

Malayao, a resident of Barangay Minanga Norte in San Pablo, Isabela, died at the scene.

Witnesses said Malayao was awakened when the gunman arrived and even pleaded for his life.

The assailant escaped on a motorcycle driven by his cohort.

"Most of the passengers went out of the bus to freshen up and have coffee," Senior Superintendent Jeremias Aglugub said.

Malayao was reportedly seated adjacent to another male passenger, who was reported missing after the incident.

The victim represented the NDF in various peace fora as consultant from Cagayan Valley. He was also designated as one of the spokespersons of the NDF panel in peace negotiations held in Europe.

Chief Superintendent Jose Mario Espino, Cagayan Valley police director, ordered the creation of a task force to investigate the killing of Malayao.

Espino said Malayao's background as a former New People's Army commander could be among the possible motives for the murder.

Malayao was implicated in the murder of Cagayan Gov. Rodolfo Aguinaldo in 2008 and eight soldiers in San Mariano, Isabela in 2005, but was acquitted of the charges.

A former student activist and campus journalist, he was imprisoned in 2008 and released in 2012.

Salvador del Pueblo, NDF-Cagayan Valley spokesman, blamed the "death squad" of the Army's 5th Infantry Division for the killing.

Del Pueblo said Malayao was covered by the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees that stipulates that NDF consultants should not be harmed or arrested.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) said the killing of Malayao was "a case of extrajudicial killing done by suspected state forces gone berserk."

Bayan noted that the incident occurred after President Duterte terminated the peace talks with communist rebels.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said it would conduct a parallel probe into the incident.

"His death comes at a time when voices of opposition and human rights groups are tagged as enemies, making them plausible subjects of assaults," Jacqueline de Guia, CHR spokesperson, said. – **With Emmanuel Tupas, Raymund Catindig, Artemio Dumlao, Rainier Allan Ronda**

31 January 2019 MANILA BULLETIN THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER Page: 13

NDF peace consultant slain

By **AARON B. RECUENCO**
and **LIEZLE BASA INIGO**

A National Democratic Front (NDF) consultant and former political prisoner was shot and killed as he slept in a parked bus in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, Wednesday morning.

Sr. Insp. Giovanni Cejes, Aritao police chief, said the gunman boarded the Victory Liner bus and shot Felix Randy Malayao Jr. twice at close range.

Malayao had boarded the bus for Tuguegarao City in Quezon City and the bus had made a stopover at Aritao, Cejes told Manila Bulletin.

The gunman fled with a companion on a black motorcycle, Cejes said.

Most of the passengers and the driver had gotten off the bus to have snacks, and the sleeping Malayao was left in the vehicle.

Based on police and military intelligence reports, Malayao headed the New People's Army (NPA) Regional White Area Committee in Cagayan Valley.

The committee is reportedly in charge of the operations of the legal fronts of the communist rebels.

Malayao was charged in connection with the death of Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo and his aide in 2001. He was acquitted due to lack of evidence.

In May 2008, he was arrested by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) under the name of Salvador de Pueblo but was again released in 2012.

The human rights group Karapatan condemned the killing of Malayao who they described as a peace consultant and human rights advocate.

"After imprisonment, aside from undertaking his role as a consultant in the peace process, he was an active human rights campaigner in Cagayan Valley, as military operations in the region resulted to various rights violations such as killings, illegal arrests, and forced evacuation of peasants in the provinces," the statement read.

Malayao earned his degree on fisheries at the UP Visayas campus in Miag-ao, Iloilo. He was the former editor-in-chief of the Ang Mangingisda, the official publication of the college, and was a former official of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines.

31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A1

NDF consultant shot dead in NVizcaya

ARITAO, Nueva Vizcaya: A high-profile consultant to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) was shot dead inside a bus by a still unidentified gunman during a stopover here on Wednesday.

Initial police investigation said Felix Randy Malayao, a resident of Barangay Minanga Norte, San Pablo town in Isabela province, was aboard a Victory

Shot A2

SHOT FROM A1

NDF

Liner Bus with body number 7102 when he was attacked by the suspect.

Based on the conductor's copy of the victim's bus ticket, Malayao's destination was Santiago City in Isabela.

Chief Insp. Geovanni Cejes, this town's police chief, said the bus that left Quezon City at 9:30 p.m. and was bound for Ilagan City, also in Isabela, was parked at the CCQ bus terminal in Barangay Darapidap when two unidentified male suspects arrived in a black Yamaha Mio motorcycle.

Cejes said one of the suspects went inside the bus and fired two successive shots, killing the NDFP consultant instantly.

The gunman then quickly boarded his getaway motorcycle driven by his companion.

Police said a bus utility personnel saw the gunman approach Malayao who was awakened and even raised both his hands and pleaded not to be harmed.

Scene of the crime operatives recovered one bullet and two cartridges.

As an NDFP consultant, Malayao was a holder of a GRP-NDFP (Government of the Philippines-National Democratic Front of the Philippines) Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig) identification card that should have given him immunity from arrest, harassment and attacks.

The NDFP is an umbrella group that counts the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army, as members.

Malayao attended formal peace negotiations in Europe as a consultant from Cagayan Valley and was among the spokesmen of the NDFP negotiating panel. He also represented the NDFP in peace forums here and abroad along with GRP negotiators such as Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello 3rd and lawyer Angela Librado Trinidad, among others.

A political prisoner under the Arroyo administration, Malayao spent more than four years in jails in Cagayan and Isabela provinces. He was freed after being acquitted of the charges against him.

Bello served as his one-time legal counsel during his court trials. Malayao was also a coordinator for the group of political prisoners and detainees called Selda *(Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto)*.

Malayao was also a columnist of the Baguio City-based newspaper *Northern Dispatch*.

The victim's family from San Pablo town said they would bring Malayao's body to his home province of Isabela.

Edre Olalia, NDF legal consultant, mourned the death of Malayao.

"These series of attacks follow one thread: get those who fight the oppressive and exploitative system and who work for fundamental change fast and quick," he said.

"It hits you and you mourn, makes you momentarily catatonic. But Randy, we will one day wake up to the dawn of hope because the nights of rage will usher a morn of justice."

LEANDER C. DOMINGO
WITH REPORT FROM
ROY D.R. NARRA

23

31 January 2019 Standard TODAY Page: A1

NDF consultant shot dead inside bus

Malayao

By Abe Almirol, Nat Mariano, Maricel V. Cruz and Francisco Tuyay

ARITAO, Nueva Vizcaya—A consultant of the National Democratic Front was killed by still unidentified assassins in a parked bus while he was on his way home to Isabela.

Police said Felix Randy Malayao y Paragua, 49, an NDF consultant for peace talks between communist rebels and the government, was aboard a Cagayan Valley-bound Victory Liner bus when it made a usual stop at a restaurant in Barangay Darapidap here.

Next page

NDF...

From A1

Two unidentified men reportedly boarded the parked bus at about 2:30 a.m. and one of them shot the victim dead.

The gunmen were said the attackers fled riding a black Yamaha motorcycle.

Malayao had two gunshot wounds to the right temple, about two inches apart near his eye.

In a statement, the Cagayan Valley chapter of the human rights group Karapatan said Malayao was on the Justice department list that tagged him a terrorist, after peace negotiations collapsed.

The NDF condemned the killing.

"The NDF in Cagayan Valley region, with all its allied organizations and member individuals, condemns the murder of NDF Consultant Felix Randy Malayao by death squad elements of the AFP," the statement said, pinning the murder on the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"Comrade Felix was a humble servant of the masses, who spent 33 years of his life arousing, organizing and mobilizing the people against an unjust ruling system. He lived among the peasants and workers of Cagayan Valley, later serving as the region's representative to the NDF-GRP peace talks, all the while performing other revolutionary duties," the NDF-Cagayan Valley statement said.

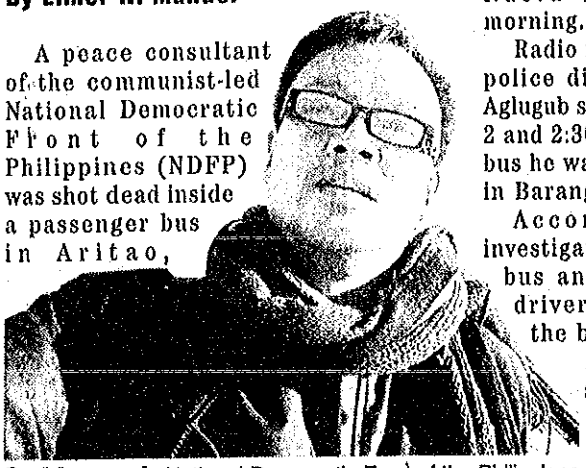
Malayao was arrested in 2008 and was imprisoned for four years, but he was released after the courts found no sufficient evidence to convict him.

11 January 2019 Tribune Page: 1

NDFP peace consultant shot dead

By Elmer N. Manuel

A peace consultant of the communist-led National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) was shot dead inside a passenger bus in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, early Wednesday morning.



Sudden end National Democratic Front of the Philippines consultant Randy Malayao was shot dead by an unidentified man in Nueva Vizcaya. The shooting incident occurred inside a bus bound for Isabela early Wednesday morning. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Radio reports quoting Nueva Vizcaya police director Senior Supt. Jermias Aglugub said Malayao was killed between 2 and 2:30 a.m. when the Isabela-bound bus he was riding in went on a stopover in Barangay Darapidap, Aritao.

According to initial police investigation, the suspect entered the bus and shot the victim after the driver and other passengers left the bus.

A police incident report said after shooting Malayao, the gunman rode a black getaway motorcycle driven by a companion.

Crime scene investigators recovered one slug and two pieces of bullet cartridges in the bus. An investigation is still ongoing to determine the motive behind the killing of Malayao who was one of the spokespersons of the NDFP negotiating panel in Europe.

The suspect entered the bus and shot the peace consultant after the bus driver and other passengers left.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP) issued a statement condemning the killing of Malayao and immediately put the blame on the "US-Duterte" regime.

"The CPP condoles with the family, friends and comrades of Randy Malayao. He offered most of his years, from Visayas to Cagayan Valley, in working with the masses in their struggle for land, wages and other rights," the statement said.

31 January 2019 Malaya Page: B1

NDFP consultant shot dead

BY VICTOR REYES

A CONSULTANT of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) was shot dead yesterday in Nueva Vizcaya by still unidentified man.

Police said Felix Randy Paraguay Malayao Jr., 49, who was involved in peace negotiations between the communist movement and the government, was shot at around 2:10 a.m. while aboard a Victory Liner passenger bus at the CCQ bus terminal in Aritao town.

The bus was on a stop-over at the terminal when the gunman boarded and shot Malayao twice, said Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino, chief of the Cagayan Valley regional police.

He said Malayao stayed inside the bus while the other passengers went out for snacks.

The gunman fled aboard a waiting motorcycle driven by another man, said Espino.

Malayao, a resident of Minanga Norte in San Pablo, Isabela, is a consultant of the NDFP and head of the communist movement's "Regional White Area Committee."

He served as secretary of the

See NDFP ➤ Page B6

NDFP

Northern Luzon Regional Party Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army. He was arrested in 2003 for the 2001 murder of Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo and his aide but was later cleared by a local court.

CPP founding chair Jose Maria Sison, said the NDFP is "reconsidering its policy of being open to peace negotiations" with the Duterte government.

Sison, NDFP chief political consultant

"It can be expected therefore that the murder of Randy Malayao and other criminal offenses of the Duterte regime will result in the intensification of revolutionary armed struggle nationwide against a regime hell-bent on going down in history as a butchering monster and enemy of the cause of just peace," said Sison, who has been on self-exile in the Netherlands since the late 80s.

President Duterte reopened peace talks with the communists in 2016. He suspended the talks, and eventually cancelled the negotiations in late 2017 because of continued attacks by the NPA, the CPP's armed wing, even while the talks were ongoing.

Gunmen kill NDF consultant

Unidentified motorcycle-riding men shot dead a consultant of the National Democratic Front (NDF) involved in the peace process between the government and the communist rebels, inside a passenger bus in Aritao town of Nueva Vizcaya early yesterday morning.

Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino, director of the Cagayan Valley regional police, said that he had already created a special investigation task force to look into the killing of Felix Randy Malayao, Jr.

Malayao was inside the bus which was parked at the CCQ Bus Terminal for a regular stop when a gunman boarded the vehicle and shot him twice at close range.

Espino said that the attack occurred while the driver and other passengers were having early morning meal at the bus station. Malayao reportedly stayed inside the bus.

"The suspect immediately boarded a motorcycle driven by another person and fled," said Espino.

Based on the police and military intelligence report, Malayao used to be a member of the New People's Army. He is reportedly the current head of the Regional White Area Committee of the communist rebels in Cagayan Valley region.

The RWAC is reportedly in charge of the operations of the legal fronts of the communist rebels.

According to reports, Malayao was also implicated and charged in connection with the death of Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo and his aide in 2001. He was acquitted due to lack of evidence.

In May 2008, he was arrested by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) under the name of Salvador de Pueblo but was again released in 2012.

(Aaron Recuenco)

NDFP CONSULTANT DINEDO SA BUS

Dead on the spot ang peace consultant ng National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) na si Randy Felix Malayao Jr., ng Brgy. Minanga Norte, San Pablo, Isabela matapos na ito ay barilin sa loob ng Victory Liines bus (ATA 9361) sa Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, kahapon ng alas-2:30 ng madaling araw.

Nabatid na nag-stop over ang bus na sinasakyan ni Malayao sa bus terminal nang sumampa ang gunman na kung saan ay ginising nito ang una bago binaril sa ulo na agad nitong ikinasawi.

Kaswal na bumaba ang suspek sa bus na tila walang nangyari at sumakay sa isang kulay itim na Yamaha Mio motorcycle na minamaneho ng isa nitong kasamahan.

Magugunita na bago ikansela ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang peace talks sa NDFP ay dumadalo si Malayao sa pormal na peace negotiations sa Europe bilang consultant mula sa Cagayan Valley. Umaakto rin ito na isa sa spokespersons ng. NDFP Negotiating Panel sa Europe at dati ring Spokesman ng CPP-NPA sa Northern Luzon.

Si Malayao ay gumamit ng alyas na Salvador del Pueblo na nasakote ng Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) operatives at Army Intelligence agents noong Mayo 15, 2008.

Kabilang din si Malayao sa mga nakasuhan sa pagpatay kay dating Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo noong 2001 pero pinawalang sala ni Judge Jezarene Aquino ng Regional Trial Court, Branch 5 sa Tuguegarao City dahilan sa kakulangan ng ebidensya.-*Joy Cantos, Raymund Catindig*

NDF peace consultant itinumba!

Nina VICTOR MARTIN, JOY CANTOS at RAYMUND CATINDIG

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya – Isang high profile na consultant ng National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) ang nasawi matapos pagbabarilin ng hindi pa nakikilalang suspek sa loob ng terminal ng bus na may biyaheng Cagayan sa Barangay Darapidap, Aritao, ng lalawigang ito kahapon ng madaling araw.

Ayon kay P/Chief Inspector Geovanni Cejes, hepe ng Aritao Police, kinilala ang napaslang na biktima na si NDFP peace consultant Randy Felix Malayao, 49, residente ng Brgy. Minanga Norte, San Pablo, Isabela.

Sa ulat, dakong alas-2:30 ng madaling araw nang pasukin ng suspek si Malayao sa loob ng nakahintong Victory Liner bus (ATA 9361), may body number 7102, sa CCQ bus stop terminal matapos itong pumarada.

Ayon sa ilang saksi, gising umano ang biktima at itinaas pa ang kanyang kamay at nakikiusap na hindi sasaktan subalit agad siyang pinaputukan ng suspek ng dalawang beses sa ulo na agad nitong ikinamatay.

"Halos lahat ng mga pasahero ay bumaba na sa bus maliban lamang sa ilan, kaya nagulat na lamang kami nang marinig ang putok mula sa loob ng bus habang kami ay kumakain," pahayag ng isang nasa lugar.

Agad namang bumaba ang suspek na nakasuot ng ski mask at hoodie na jacket at mabilis na sumakay sa isang itim na Yamaha Mio na minamanaho ng nag-aabang na kasamahan.

Napag-alaman na pauwi sana si Malayao sa lalawigan ng Isabela sakay ng First Class Victory Liner bus na umalis mula Quezon City dakong alas-9:30 ng gabi ng Miyerkules patungo naman sa Tuguegarao City sa lalawigan ng Cagayan nang mangyari ang pagpatay.

Napag-alaman na isang lalaki mula sa seat No. 21 ang hindi na mahagilap matapos ang pamamaril.

"Dahil sa First Class po ang bus ay 17 lang po lahat ang aming pasahero, subalit nang bilangin namin ang mga pasahero na lulan ng bus matapos ang pamamaril ay nadiskubre namin na nawawala ang lalake na nakaupo sa number 21 patungo sana ng Ilagan City, Isabela," pahayag ng isang source.

Si Malayao ay nakaupo umano sa seat number 23 na nasa likurang bahagi ng bus kung saan nasa harapan niya ang seat no. 21 na lumipat naman ng upuan sa bakanteng upuan na mismong tapat ng biktima.

Bilang consultant, si Malayao ay laging dumadalo bilang kinatawan ng NDFP sa iba't ibang peace forums sa Pilipinas maging sa ibang bansa kasama ang ilang negotiators ng pamahalaan.

Nagsilbi rin si Malayao bilang spokesperson ng NDFP Negotiating Panel sa Europe.

Sinabi naman ni Chief Supt. Jose Mario Espino, director ng Police Regional Office (PRO) 2 na base sa intelligence report, si Malayao ay nakatala bilang consultant ng NDFP's peace panel na rati ring spokesman ng CPP-NPA sa Northern Luzon.

Si Malayao ay tinukoy ng militar na gumamit ng alyas na "Salvador del Pueblo" na nasakote ng Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) operatives at Army Intelligence agents noong Mayo 15, 2008. Siya ay kabilang sa mga nakasuhan sa pagpatay sa nasawing si dating Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo noong 2001 pero pinawalang sala ni Judge Jezarene Aquino ng Regional Trial Court, Branch 5 sa Tuguegarao City dahil sa kakulangan ng ebidensya. Itinanggi rin nito na siya si Salvador del Pueblo.

Itinuturo ng imbestigador ng Aritao Police ang lugar kung saan nakaupo si NDF peace consultant Randy Felix Malayao bago siya barilin sa ulo ng hindi pa nakikilalang suspek sa loob ng Victory Liner sa bus-stop terminal ng Barangay Darapidap, Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya kahapon ng madaling araw. (Kuha ni Victor Martin)

6 NPA rebels killed in CamSur clash

LEGAZPI CITY – Six New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed in an encounter with soldiers in Tinambac, Camarines Sur yesterday.

Lt. Feliz Solano, Southern Luzon Command spokesman, said the clash occurred when soldiers on combat operations chanced upon some 15 NPA rebels in Barangay Lupi at around 6 a.m.

Solano said four M16 rifles, a grenade launcher and subversive documents were recovered from the fatalities.

There was no reported casualty among government troopers.

Solano said more rebels could have been killed or wounded, citing bloodstains on their escape route.

Skirmishes with NPA rebels were reported in the past weeks in parts of Bicol. – **Cet Dematera, Emmanuel Tupas**

31 January 2019 INQUIRER Page: A14

Clashes in CamSur, Samar kill 8 rebs

Army official says Matuguinao folk complain against extortion by the NPA

LEGAZPI CITY—Eight suspected communist rebels were killed in clashes in the provinces of Camarines Sur and Samar on Tuesday and Wednesday, military reports said.

In Camarines Sur, government soldiers were patrolling the remote village of Tierra Nevada when they chanced upon a group of suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels at 6 a.m. Wednesday, said 1st Lt. Felise Solano, spokesperson for the military's Southern Luzon Command (Solcom).

Guns recovered

Solano said the bodies of six rebels killed in the 20-minute gunfight were taken to the Tinambac town police station. Soldiers also recovered four M-16 rifles, a grenade launcher and personal belongings from the clash site.

Capt. Joash Pramis, spokesperson for the Army's 9th Infantry Division (ID), said a woman was among the six slain in the clash.

Pramis said their reports indicated that the rebels belonged to the NPA's Larangan 1 Guerrilla Front operating in Camarines Sur, under the Bicol regional party committee.

In Samar province on Tuesday, two suspected NPA rebels were killed in a clash with soldiers in Matuguinao town.

In a statement, Brig. Gen. Ramil Bitong, commander of the Army's 803rd Brigade, said soldiers clashed with at least 10 rebels at Barangay Carolina.

Bitong said residents earlier informed soldiers that the rebels were conducting "extortion activities" in the area.

Soldiers recovered three firearms after the 20-minute firefight.

Campaign fees

"We cannot let this bandits get away with the atrocities they committed against helpless civilians. I've said many times that we will not rest until these bandits are banished or killed," Bitong said.

In Lucena City, Maj. Gen. Gilbert Gapay, Solcom commander, said NPA rebels started approaching candidates in the May elections to seek "permit to campaign" and "permit to win" fees in areas supposedly under their control.

'Project proposals'

Gapay, in a press conference on Tuesday, said the rebels or their emissaries would present to the candidates "project proposals" containing data on the number of voters in particular areas and the number of votes that the group would deliver. A14

"What comes next is their demand for cash, guns, vehicles and other materials. Other candidates in the past won but until the end of their terms, they were giving at least 3 percent of their internal revenue allotment to the NPA," he said.

—REPORTS FROM MAR ARGUELLES, DELFIN MALLARI JR. AND ROBERT DEJON INQ

31 January 2019

MANILA BULLETIN
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6 NPAs killed in CamSur

By **NIÑO N. LUCES**

CAMP OLA, Albay – Six suspected New People's Army (NPA) members were killed in a 20-minute exchange of gunfire with troops of the 83rd Infantry Battallion (83IB) of the Philippine Army in Brgy. Lupi, Tinambac town, Camarines Sur, at around 6 a.m. on Wednesday.

Chief Inspector Malu Calubaquib, Police Regional Office 5 (PRO-5) spokesperson, said that the troops encountered some 15 rebels during a combat operation at the remote village of Tinambac.

Calubaquib said that aside from the bodies of still unidentified rebels, the Army also recovered 4 rifles, a grenade launcher and subversive documents.

He said the rebels fled towards Brgy. Tierra Nevada in Tinambac.

The government side did have any casualty, according to Calubaquib.

NEWS ROUNDUP

6 NPA killed in CamSur clash

Six suspected New People's Army rebels were killed in an encounter with government troops in Tinambac, Camarines Sur yesterday morning, a report reaching the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame, Quezon City revealed.

The 83rd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army was conducting a combat-intelligence operation against communist rebels dubbed "Oplan: Peninsula" in Barangay Lupi at around 6 a.m. when they crossed paths with around 15 NPA rebels, the report stated.

A 20-minute encounter ensued and the report said that the enemies were forced to withdraw when they realized they were at a disadvantage.

The bodies of six NPA rebels were left behind by their colleagues and sent to a morgue by the soldiers for proper disposition. Nobody was killed or wounded on the government side.

Police said a pursuit operation was conducted to capture the remaining NPA rebels who fled towards Barangay Tierra Nevada in Tinambac. **(Martin Sadongdong)**

6 NPA REBELS PATAY SA ENGKUWENTRO

Patay ang anim na miyembro ng rebeldeng New People's Army kabilang ang isang amasona nang makasagupa ang tropa ng 83rd Infantry Batallion ng 9th Infantry Division (ID) ng Philippine Army sa Brgy. Lupi sa bayan ng Tinambac, Camarines Sur kahapon ng umaga.

Sa ulat ni Major Joash Pramis, tagapagsalita ng 9th ID-Phillippine Army na nakabase sa bayan ng Pili, na bago naganap ang engkuwentro dakong alas-6:30 ng umaga sa bulubunduking lugar ng nasabing barangay ay nagsasagawa ang mga sundalo ng combat security patrol sa lugar nang maispatan ang hindi bababa sa 15 rebelde at nagkaroon agad nang putukan.

Tumagal ng 20 minuto ang putukan hanggang sa tumakas ang mga rebelde at naiwan ang bangkay ng anim nilang kasama.

Narekober ng mga sundalo sa lugar ng sagupaan ang apat na M16 Armalite Rifle,1 grenade launcher at mga subersibong dokumento habang inaalam pa ang pagkakakilanlan ng mga napatay na rebelde.-*Joy Cantos, Jorge Hallare-*

31 January 2019 BALITA Page: 7

6 pang teroristang NPA utas sa encounter

Nina JORGE HALLARE AT JOY CANTOS

LEGAZPI CITY, Albay - Anim na namang pinaniniwalaang kasapi ng mga rebeldeng New People's Army kabilang ang umano'y isang amasona ang napaslang matapos harapang makipagbarilan sa mga sundalo sa Brgy. Lupi, Tinambac, Camarines Sur kahapon ng umaga.

Sa ulat ni Major Joash Pramis, tagapagsalita ng 9th Infantry Division ng Phillippine Army na nakabase sa bayan ng Pili, dakong alas-6:30 ng umaga nang magsimula ang putukan ng magkabilang panig sa bulubunduking lugar ng nasabing barangay. Nagsasagawa umano ang tropa ng 83rd Infantry Batallion ng combat security patrol sa lugar nang malspatan nila ang hindi bababa sa 15 bilang ng mga rebelde at nagkaroon agad ng putukan. Makalipas ang 20 minuto, tumakas ang mga rebelde at naiwan ang anim na nilang kasamahan na pawang patay dahil sa tama ng mga punglo.

Sinabi ni Pramis na apat na M16 Armalite Rifle,1 grenade launcher at mga subersibong dokumento ang nasamsam ng mga sundalo sa lugar.

Isa-isang ibinaba ang bangkay ng mga rebelde sa bayan para sa kanilang pagkakakilanlan.

Kamakalawa ng hapon, isa ring kasapi ng NPA na nagngangalang Roberto Gualbe Sesno ang nasawi sa nangyaring engkwentro sa pagitan ng mga rebelde at sundalo ng 83rd IB sa Brgy. Payak sa bayan ng Bato.

Binuhat ng mga sundalo ang mga bangkay ng anim na hinihinalang teroristang New People's Army (NPA) na napaslang sa pakikipag-engkuwentro sa 83rd IB ng Philippine Army at nasamsam ang kanilang malalakas na armas sa Tinambac, Camarines Sur kahapon ng umaga. (Victor Martin)

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2 NPAs killed in Samar encounter

TACLOBAN CITY – Two suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) were killed in an encounter with Army troopers in a remote village in Matuguianao, Samar, on Tuesday.

Soldiers from the 63rd Infantry Battalion (63IB) fought with at least 10 communist rebels in Barangay Carolina, reported Lt. Col. Rizaldo Laurena, 63IB commander.

The troops were sent to Carolina to check reports that the rebels were extorting from the villagers.

"Troops were able to catch up with these terrorists and were able to push them out of the community leaving two of their dead comrades behind with one M16 rifle, one KG9 and one shotgun," Laurena said.

Recently, troops came upon an abandoned NPA camp in Barangay Bay-ang, San Jorge, Samar, following firefight that resulted in the wounding of nine soldiers. (Marie Tonette Marticio)

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Abducted barangay official's remains found in Agusan del Sur

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY – The body of a councilman of Barangay Valentina in Esperanza, San Luis town in Agusan del Sur was recovered from a shallow grave in a forested area of Barangay Mantuganoy in the same town.

Rando P. Insavoy was abducted by suspected New People's Army (NPA) terrorists at around 6 p.m. last January 25 from his residence in Purok 2, Barangay Valentina in San Luis town. The rebels were believed to be from the Sub-Regional Command Southland of the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines) -NPA Northeastern Mindanao Regional Committee.

According to reports obtained by The Manila Bulletin from the Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) and Army's 402nd Infantry (Stingers) Brigade here, Insavoy's body bore four stab wounds, two in the chest, another in the neck and the other in the right lower armpit.

Esperanza Municipal Police Station (MPS) Investigator-on-case Police Officer 2 James D. Bretenia said the information as to Insavoy's whereabouts was provided by the abductors themselves.

"The elder brother of the victim received a text message from the suspects using the victim's cellular phonem stating that they can retrieve the dead body of the barangay councilman at the forested area of Barangay Mantuganoy, San Luis town," Bretenia's report said.

PRO 13 Regional Director Chief Supt. Gilberto DC Cruz on Wednesday ordered Agusan del Sur Police Provincial Office and Esperanza MPS to prepare kidnapping and murder charges against the suspects.

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Church tightens security measures

By EDU PUNAY
and EDITH REGALADO

The Catholic Church and the Davao City government banned big bags in churches as part of stringent security measures following the attack on a cathedral in Jolo, Sulu last Sunday that left at least 21 people dead and more than 100 wounded.

Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, issued a circular to 38 parishes in the city stating that beginning yesterday, churchgoers are not allowed to bring "bags, backpacks, knapsacks, boxes, cartons and the like into the church" and its premises due to the "current peace and order situation."

Presidential daughter and Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio said the ban on backpacks will cover other places of worship following the twin blasts that struck the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo and the explosion inside a mosque in Zamboanga City before dawn yesterday that killed two persons and injured four others.

The Davao archdiocese is the biggest in Mindanao covering about 1.4 million Catholics in Davao City, Samal City and Talaingod town and also in Digos, Tagum and Mati cities.

Valles explained that such preventive measure was implemented upon recommendation of security officials.

The mayor said she instructed local security and safety officials to implement the order to thwart any attacks similar to what happened in Jolo and in Zamboanga City.

Checkpoints will also be put up in strategic areas aside from those manned by Task Force Davao personnel.

The attacks in Jolo and Zamboanga City came just days after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law that will expand the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Authorities tagged the Abu Sayyaf as the group behind the incident.

Solidarity walk

An inter-faith solidarity walk will be held on Sunday in Quezon City to condemn the bloody bombings in Mindanao, according to Bong Nebrija, EDSA traffic czar of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

Nebrija said more than 4,000 Muslims and Christians will join the inter-faith solidarity walk. He was the representative of the MMDA during the meeting with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday regarding the event.

–With Robertzon Ramirez

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'BLASTS NOT AN ACT PURSUANT TO AN ALLEGED REBELLION'

JOLO CHURCH BOMBINGS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR MINDANAO MARTIAL LAW EXTENSION–LAGMAN

The deadly church bombing in Jolo, Sulu province, does not justify the extension of martial law in Mindanao, according to opposition Rep. Edcel Lagman.

The Albay lawmaker said the blasts that killed more than 20 people at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Sunday "cannot be used as a prop or justification for the third extension of martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus in the whole of Mindanao."

Lagman, in a statement, noted that the incident had been branded as a terrorist attack by President Duterte, the military and police leadership, and administration officials, and "not an act pursuant to an alleged rebellion in Mindanao."

Under the Constitution, the President may place the country or any part of it under martial rule "to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion or rebellion."

Persistent terror threats

In December, Congress approved a third extension of martial law in Mindanao for the whole of 2019 after security officials cited persistent and continuing terror threats in the region.

But Lagman said the Jolo blast happened 46 days after the third extension of martial law was granted by Congress, and consequently, "it was not a factual basis existing at the time of the controversial extension."

But presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo insisted that martial law in Mindanao remained effective despite the blasts that drew condemnation from world leaders. —DJ YAP INQ

31 January 2019 STAR Page: 12

UN Security Council, China, Japan condemn Jolo bombings

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The United Nations Security Council, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japan strongly condemned the twin bombings in a Catholic cathedral in Jolo, Sulu on Sunday as they expressed readiness to assist the Philippines in its fight against terrorism.

The UN Security Council described the "terror attack" at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel cathedral as "heinous" and "cowardly" and urged all states to cooperate actively with the Philippines and all other relevant authorities in connection with the incident.

Xi, in a message to President Duterte sent on Tuesday, said, "On behalf of the Chinese government and people as well as in my own name, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the victims and convey my sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and the injured."

"China firmly opposes all forms of terrorism and strongly condemns the violent attacks on innocent civilians and stands ready to work with the international community, including the Philippines, to jointly combat terrorism and safeguard international and regional peace and stability," he said.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi issued the same message.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono condemned the "horrible terror attack" as he assured Japan will continue to assist Mindanao in accordance with the ongoing peace process.

In his message sent to Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on Tuesday, Kono said "such terror attack will never be condoned, whatever the reason is."

"On behalf of the government and people of Japan, I would like to pray for the deceased and express my heartfelt sympathy to the injured and their families," Kono said.

"Japan stands with Filipino people who have been long-

ing for peace and stability in Mindanao," he said.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) claimed responsibility for the incident but Philippine officials tagged the Abu Sayyaf as being behind the attack.

Members of the Security Council, the most powerful UN body whose primary responsibility is to maintain international peace and security, expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Philippine government.

They also wished those injured a speedy and full recovery.

They reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

"The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice," the statement read.

The members also reaffirmed the need for all states to combat by all means, in accordance with the charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

The Philippines welcomed the UN Security Council's condemnation of the terrorist bombing in Jolo.

"The Philippines appreciates the expressions of sympathy and solidarity from the Security Council and the other member-states of the United Nations," the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said in a statement.

The DFA said "the Philippines and the Filipino people stand solidly with the rest of the international community in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism."

21 January 2019 PHILIPPINE INQUIRER Page: A2

REPORTING TO PNP-CIDG FOR CLEARANCE

MILITARY'S 'PERSONS OF INTEREST' ARE 3 STUDENTS, TEACHER, SAYS JOLO MAYOR

By Julie Alipala
@alipalajulieINQ

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The "persons of interest" whom the military said were seen on security cameras acting suspiciously before and after twin bombs went off at a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu province, on Sunday were not the bombers but three students and a teacher in a school in the city, Mayor Kherkar Tan said on Wednesday.

"These men seen on CCTV (closed-circuit television) fleeing away from the blasts in the cathedral were actually students [and a teacher]," Tan told the Inquirer.

Clearing their names

"I was informed that they reported to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) this morning to clear themselves. Three are students and one is a teacher," Tan said.

Col. Gerry Besana, public affairs officer of the military's Western Mindanao Command, also reported that the four men went to the Sulu Provincial Police Office to clear their names.

The military identified two of the men as Alshaber Arbi, 18, a Grade 11 student at Kalingalan Caluang National High School who was seen in the video sporting a hair bun, and Gerry Isnajil, a teacher in the same school who was seen in the video wearing a maroon cap and carrying a backpack.

Arbi and Isnajil were accompanied to the police office by Sulu Gov. Sakur Tan II and Kalingalan Caluang Mayor Peping Halun.

They said they came forward to say they had nothing to do with the bombings at the cathedral, according to the military.

The military said the other two men seen in the video were Alsimar Mohammad, 24, and a boy whose name was not dis-

NOT BOMBERS The four men the military had tagged as "persons of interest" in Sunday's bombing of a church in Jolo (three of whom are seen in this photo) went to the police on Wednesday to say they had nothing to do with the attack. —AFP VIDEOGRAB

closed because he was a minor.

They had sought help from the head of Barangay Bus-Bus in Jolo in going to the police to clear themselves.

Mohammad and the boy said they were buying medicine for a sick elder who was confined at the Integrated Provincial Health Office when the bombs went off at the cathedral.

"It was a good decision for them to come to us. They trusted us and submitted themselves for questioning," said Senior Supt. Pablo Labra, Sulu police chief.

Asked if the authorities would apologize for the error, Labra said, "I don't consider it that way."

He said the release of the video showing the four had helped.

"In our investigation, we consider everything. We need to do everything to solve this," he added.

The twin blasts at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Sunday killed 21 people and wounded nearly 100 others.

President Duterte said on Tuesday that the attack was carried out by two suicide bombers.

The military, however, said the bombs were triggered by remote control.

Col. Noel Detoyato, chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' public affairs office, said two survivors had reported seeing a woman leaving a bag in a pew in the fifth row from the back of the cathedral's nave and hurriedly leaving before the first explosion.

"That's the method of the deployment [of the bomb] so it's not a suicide bombing," Detoyato told reporters.

Just a theory

He said no one could have ascertained how the second bomb, which went off outside the church two minutes after the first one had exploded, had been placed because commotion broke out after the first explosion.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said, however, that the second explosion could have been a suicide attack.

On Wednesday, he said suicide bombing remained a theory until DNA tests on recovered body parts could confirm it. —WITH REPORTS FROM JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE AND JAYMEE T. GAMIL INQ

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CBCP ISSUES ADVISORY AFTER JOLO CATHEDRAL BOMBING

NO BAGS, BACKPACKS, KNAPSACKS, BOXES ALLOWED IN DAVAO CHURCH PREMISES

Churchgoers in Davao are no longer allowed to carry bags and boxes into churches throughout the city following the attack on a cathedral in Jolo, Sulu province, on Sunday that killed more than 20 people and injured nearly 100 others.

Purses only

In an advisory to priests and supervisors of public chapels issued on Tuesday, Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), said that "until further notice" churchgoers in the city would no longer be allowed to bring bags, backpacks, knapsacks, boxes, cartons and the like into church premises.

Small purses, however, are exempted from the ban.

Valles said the security measure was adopted "upon the advice" of the Philippine National Police due to the "current peace and order situation" and the "threat of violence" in Mindanao.

The city government issued a similar advisory, prohibiting people from carrying backpacks into places of worship.

The prohibition came two days after twin blasts hit the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, killing 21 people and wounding nearly 100 others.

Early on Wednesday, a grenade was lobbed into a mosque in Zamboanga City, killing two Islamic preachers and wounding four others.

It is unclear whether the CBCP will expand the Davao prohibition to churches in other parts of the country, especially Metro Manila where hundreds of thousands of Catholics go to church nearly every day. —REPORTS FROM JOVIC YEE, KRISSY AGUILAR AND ORLANDO B. DINOY INQ

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WORLD APPEAL

LOCSIN CALLS FOR EXTREME MEASURES VS TERRORISM

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan
@dpazzibuganINQ

Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. has asked countries that have expressed sympathy and solidarity with the Philippines after a deadly bomb attack on a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu province, to support the country's decision to take measures to "crush terrorism without mercy."

Three days after the attack on the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo that killed more than 20 people and injured nearly 100 others, Locsin called for "the most extreme measures" against those responsible as he thanked the expressions of support from his counterparts around the world.

"And now, my UN friends, please have our back as we go after the criminals. It is the first and defining duty of a state to protect the law-abiding against the lawless and make the latter pay with the full measure of retribution for the lives they take," Locsin tweeted on Monday.

Common murderers

He said those behind the bombing "are not rebels nor terrorists but common murderers to be hunted down beyond the pale of law by any means sufficient for their extinction."

In acknowledging the statement of British Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field on Tuesday, Locsin tweeted: "Thanks UK but stand by us when we take measures imperative to crush terrorism without mercy," adding that the British elite forces Special Air Service would have done the same.

"This is no longer terrorism but plain murder. This is not a social but a bad people problem. Kill bad [people], end problem," he said.

Locsin said the recent plebiscite that approved a new Bangsamoro region under the peace accord with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front had officially ended the secessionist campaign.

After the grenade attack on a mosque in Zamboanga City early on Wednesday that killed two people and wounded four others, Locsin said the attacks were not limited to a specific group.

Extreme measures needed

"Now the mayhem is interfaith. That means the [Moro rebellion for] secession is over and plain vanilla mass murder has taken over, requiring the most extreme measures sufficient to end it without any talk-back from enemies of the state who objectively, if not intentionally, side with the criminals," Locsin tweeted on Wednesday. INQ

31 January 2019 INQUIRER Page: A14

SACRIFICE FOR PEACE

ARMY, KIN HONOR ISABELA SOLDIERS KILLED IN JOLO BLASTS

CAUAYAN CITY—Relatives of two Army soldiers killed in the Jan. 27 explosions at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, cried for justice as the Philippine flag-draped caskets arrived on a C-130 plane at the domestic airport here on Tuesday.

The remains of Army Sgt. Mark Des Simbre of San Isidro, Isabela, and Cpl. John Mangawit of Tanudan, Kalinga, were given arrival honors by soldiers from the Army's 5th Infantry Division (ID).

On Wednesday, they were flown back to their hometowns, according to Maj. Jefferson Somera, 5th ID spokesperson.

Simbre and Mangawit, both of the 41st Infantry Battalion, had been deployed in Jolo since 2017 as part of the military contingent there.

Heroes

Maj. Gen. Perfecto Rimando, 5th ID commander, described the two soldiers as "heroes who lost their lives and limbs in the quest for peace."

"It pains me that as father to our soldiers in the division, I would receive them in coffins. We honor their service in the military as exemplary for sacrificing their lives," he said.

Five of the slain soldiers' colleagues were wounded in the Jolo blasts, which killed more than 20 people. The explosions happened days after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in a plebiscite on Jan. 21.—VILLAMOR VISAYA JR. INQ A14

31 January 2019 PHILIPPINE STAR Page: 1

2 dead in Zambo mosque grenade blast

By ROEL PAREÑO

ZAMBOANGA CITY – A grenade lobbed through a window of a mosque in a village in this city killed two Islamic preachers and wounded three of their companions minutes after midnight yesterday.

Police said the fragmentation grenade – thrown by an unidentified man – exploded inside the Kamardikaan Mosque where the victims were sleeping at 12:20 a.m. The mosque is on Logoy Diutay drive, Barangay Talon-Talon.

The mosque explosion came three days after the blasts at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo that killed 21 people and wounded 100 others.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the Duterte administration would leave no stone unturned in pursuing and punishing the mosque bombers.

"The successive attacks on two different places of worship depict the ruthlessness and the godlessness of these mass murderers," Panelo said.

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2 dead From Page 1

City police chief Senior Supt. Joseph Thomas Martir identified the victims as Hadji Sattal Bato, 47, a resident of Isabela City; and Rex Habil, 46, of Lamitan City, in Basilan.

Injured were Palson Asgali, 44; Alniskar Sabbaha, 30; and Jikilani Albani, 60, of Lamitan City.

One of the victims died on the spot while the other was declared dead on arrival in a hospital.

The victims were among the group of 11 Islamic preachers or Tabligh doing stay-in preaching for the past two days.

Caretaker Jojo Gonzales, whose house is next to the mosque, said he heard what he thought was a hard object hitting a part of the mosque.

"The explosion was very loud that I was awakened and placed my family to safety and went to the mosque and saw the victims; one of them was already dead and the other badly injured and was trying to move," Gonzales said.

Anticipating a second explosion, he said he asked those who had survived the blast to stay put, as he rushed outside for help and alert neighbors.

Responding policemen recovered from the crime scene a safety lever, a ball bearing and part of a Belgian-made PRB 423 grenade.

Police said the suspects may have busted or switched off the streetlights in the area before the grenade attack.

Lamitan City Vice Mayor Roderick Furigay said the victims, who were his constituents, were known to be peaceful with no known enemies.

Muslim religious leaders called for unity and sobriety. "While we condemn this act, let us not speculate and connect the incident. Allow the authorities to find the real culprit and the truth," Sheik Wakil Tanjilil, a member of the Darul Ifta, said.

Mayor Maria Isabela Climaco-Salazar asked the police to leave no stone unturned in their investigation of the grenade attack.

"Let us remain calm and stay vigilant and allow the authorities to bring the suspects before the bar of justice," Rep. Celso Lobregat said.

No connection

Police, meanwhile, said they see no connection between the mosque grenade attack and the Jolo cathedral bombing last Sunday.

"The one that hit Jolo was due to an IED (improvised explosive device). Here, a grenade was used," Martir told journalists.

One of the victims in the mosque attack, Habil, was a barangay official of Lamitan.

"In politics sometimes there's a grudge. Maybe he was followed," Martir said in Filipino.

"So as of now we see there is nothing to do with the incident in Jolo. We have already persons of interest," Martir said without elaborating.

The Zamboanga City police is under orders from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to step up security measures.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) called for sobriety and vigilance.

"Let us not be swayed by the recent developments that seem to project a religious complexion in the recent tragic incidents," military spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said yesterday.

He said AFP chief of staff Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr. was conveying his sincere condolences and deep sympathies to the loved ones and families of the victims in the mosque attack.

"We ask for your active involvement by reporting your observations about unusual developments in your area, presence of unfamiliar persons, unattended packages and the like," Arevalo said.

'Affront to dignity'

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) also condemned the mosque attack and the Jolo cathedral bombing, calling them "affronts to the dignity of every Filipino (that go) against every fiber of a peace-loving nation."

Jacqueline de Guia, CHR spokesperson, said she hopes the latest violence would "not spoil our vision for a just and lasting peace" in Mindanao.

"It is alarming that this incident happened just days after Jolo, Sulu suffered from twin bombings at a Catholic cathedral," she said.

"As such, we urge the government to make all perpetrators accountable and prevent similar incidents from happening," she said. The CHR is already conducting an investigation of the grenade attack.

Meanwhile, opposition senatorial candidate Samira Gutoc also condemned the mosque attack.

"I strongly denounce this recent and reprehensible act of murder perpetrated by cowards who, under cover of darkness and while people are resting, lodged a bomb in a mosque in Zamboanga City last night," Gutoc said.

Gutoc called on the police and the military to conduct a full-scale investigation of the attacks.

She said the attacks would not hinder the people in Mindanao in their resolve to achieve lasting peace in the region.

"We may be grieving, we may be vulnerable, but we will never be cowed. Our communities will resist your dark agenda with even more fervor," Gutoc said.

At Malacañang, Panelo said the government would not think twice about using force against the perpetrators of the latest violence.

"The Armed forces of the Philippines will unleash its might and weaponry against these enemies of the state and hunt them ferociously and relentlessly until the law rolls down its guillotine on them," he said. – **With Helen Flores, Michael Punongbayan, Christina Mendez, Rainier Allan Ronda, Emmanuel Tupas**

31 January 2019 MANILA BULLETIN Page: 1

2 killed in Zamboanga mosque blast

By **AARON B. RECUENCO** and **NONOY E. LACSON**

Two people died while at least four others were wounded following a grenade blast inside a mosque in Zamboanga City before dawn Wednesday in what is feared to be a possible retaliatory attack on the bloody Jolo Cathedral bombing in Sulu three days earlier.

The blast tore through the building as the victims were sleeping in the predawn darkness.

Blood-streaked prayer mats and shattered glass could be seen on the floor inside the mosque where heavily armed security forces were standing guard, footage from the scene showed.

Police officials would not ▶11

2 killed in Zamboanga... ◀1

comment on the possible link between the two attacks, saying it would be prudent to wait for the outcome of the investigation which the national police leadership has already ordered.

"We are still investigating. We cannot speculate on the motive as of yet," said Chief Supt. Emmanuel Luis Licup, director of the Zamboanga Peninsula regional police.

But Commander Col. Leonel M. Nicolas, commander of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Joint Task Force (AFP-JTF) Zamboanga, assured that the grenade-throwing incident was not a retaliatory act for the two explosions that took place at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Walled City, Jolo, Sulu on Sunday.

Licup has ordered the Isabela police office to be on maximum alert status and deploy policemen in strategic locations in the city to prevent similar attacks.

"Visibility of policemen is a must at this time and their presence would deter terrorist groups from carrying out their plan," Licup said. A

At around 3:30 a.m. Wednesday, an unidentified man allegedly lobbed a grenade inside a mosque located in Logoy Diutay in Barangay Talon-Talon in Zamboanga City.

The ensuing blast killed 46-year-old Rex Habil and 47-year-old Sattal Bato who suffered serious wounds.

Licup said the explosion also wounded Yasson Asgali, 46; Paulo Slahuddin, 41; Albani Jikilani, 67; Amidz Kassara, 30.

Local investigators are eyeing two likely motives behind the mosque attack – the first is that the attack was personal in nature which targets one or two victims, and second is that some people are riding on the Jolo attack.

Some 21 people died while more than 100 others were wounded when two bombs ripped through a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu. The blast occurred while mass was being held Sunday morning.

Most of the victims are churchgoers while some are members of the security forces who were tasked to secure the church.

Chief Supt. Graciano Mijares, director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) regional police, said they are coordinating with the leadership of the Zamboanga Peninsula regional police leadership and the military.

The province of Sulu where the bomb attack occurred is under the ARMM regional police.

"We remain committed to peace and stability in the region and stand by the people of Zamboanga City who want peace and a future free from these horrific acts of violence," said Mijares.

"We are appealing to the public to be vigilant and report any suspicious activities and individuals to prevent these inhumane acts," he added.

In a statement, the Ulama Council of Zamboanga Peninsula has expressed condemnation on what it described as devilish, irrational, and inhumane act.

"We call upon the Zamboangenos to be calm yet vigilant with the current bombing incident in Masjid Jutay in Barangay Talon Talon Zamboanga City. We share the grief of the families who lost their loved ones and sincerely extend our condolences to them in the most comforting manner that a human being may," the statement read. (With reports from AFP and Francis T. Wakefield)

31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A1

2 dead in Zamboanga mosque attack

BY AL JACINTO

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Two men attacked a mosque before dawn in Zamboanga City on Wednesday, exploding a fragmentation grenade and killing two Islamic missionaries, just days after two deadly blasts at the Jolo Cathedral in Sulu.

Five other missionaries or *Tablighi Jamaat* were wounded in the attack on Kamalhaldikan Mosque. At least 11 people were sleeping at the mosque when the attack occurred.

The fatalities were Sattal Bato, 47, and Rex Habil, 46, who were pronounced dead by the

» Blast A2

BLAST FROM A1

2 dead in Zambo

attending physician at Zamboanga City Medical Center at 12:39 a.m. and 1:31 a.m., respectively.

Other victims, identified as Yasson Asgali, Paulo Slahuddin, Albani Jikilani and Amiz Kassara were recovering from injuries.

No individual or group claimed responsibility for the desecration of the mosque, but the attack drew condemnation from Muslim groups and local leaders.

The attack occurred after Sunday's blast at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu province that left dozens of casualties. It was not immediately known whether the attack was connected to the alleged suicide bombings or perpetrated by rival groups.

Chief Supt. Emmanuel Licup, regional police director for Zamboanga Peninsula, told reporters the suspects might have been motivated by the Jolo Cathedral blasts.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, however, dismissed a possible connection of the twin explosions in Jolo, Sulu last Sunday and the grenade explosion in Zamboanga City.

"The ISIS (Islamic State) maybe wants to bring it to a higher level of religious war, but nobody wants to bite into their plan either from the Catholics, Christians or even the mainstream Muslims," Lorenzana told reporters at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

'Blasphemous murder'

Mayor Maria Isabelle Climaco Salazar condemned the attack on the mosque and called for sobriety and vigilance.

She ordered the police to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident, calling it a "dastardly act," as she allayed fears the attack was a consequence of tension between Muslims and Christians.

"We call on the people to remain sober but vigilant, and let us not allow terrorists to divide the good relationship between Muslims and Christians because we remain united, practice tolerance and live together in peace," she said.

Gov. Mujiv Hataman, of the Muslim autonomous region, and the influential Ulama Council of Zamboanga Peninsula, also strongly condemned the attack. Hataman confirmed that two missionaries were killed and five others wounded in the attack.

"There is no redeeming such blasphemous murder. It is the highest form of cowardice and obscenity to attack people who are at prayer. We call on the authorities to act with alacrity and thoroughness as they investigate this latest attack, and identify and prosecute the perpetrators to the fullest extent of the law," said Hataman.

"The goal of terrorism is to sow fear and confusion. We should not allow this to happen. We call on all people of faith — whatever their chosen faith is — to come together in prayer for peace. We must stand united against the terrorists who would divide us and, thus, destroy all that we are working to build and establish in our communities," he added.

Muslim scholars, in a strongly worded statement, called the attack on the mosque and the killings of the missionaries, as "devilish, irrational and inhumane."

"We call upon the Zamboangueños to be calm, yet vigilant with current bombing incident in Masjid. We share the grief of the families who lost their loved ones and sincerely extend our condolences to them in the most comforting manner that a human being may," it said.

Sultan Nasser Sampaco, chairman of the Marawi Sultanate League, said: "Whoever did this inhuman act is a barbaric coward."

Sampaco, who is also the president of Jamiatu Marawi Al-Islamia Foundation, the largest Arabic and Islamic school in Lanao del Sur, said the incidents in Jolo and in Zamboanga City were inimical to the interest of the entire Filipino people as it was fostering hatred between Muslims and Christians."

Imam Kamil Unda of the Supporters of Ahlol Bayt Movement in the Philippines also condemned the "inhuman act" saying, "We prayed for the souls all those martyred in the Masjid, as we call our Muslim brothers and sisters for patience and sobriety, and allow the rule of law to take its course."

Palace vows to hunt down bombers

Malacañang on Wednesday denounced the grenade attack and promised to unleash the state forces' might against the "mass murderers."

In a statement, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo lamented that the bombing took place even as the region was still recovering from the twin blasts that hit Jolo on Sunday.

"Terrorism has once again reared its barbaric and ugly head by unleashing another bomb in a mosque in Zamboanga killing at least two Muslim religious followers and injuring four others," Panelo said.

"The successive attacks on two different places of worship depict the ruthlessness and the godlessness of these mass murderers. The Armed Forces of the Philippines will unleash its might and weaponry against these enemies of the state and hunt them ferociously and relentlessly until the law rolls down its guillotine on them," he added.

He expressed confidence that Mindanaoans "will not be cowed or intimidated" by the recent attacks in the region.

Panelo assured the public that the road to peace in Mindanao would not be disrupted despite the recent bombings in the region.

"The quest for peace and progress by the Bangsamoro people will not be stalled by any obstacle thrown at their path. The movement to change the face of Mindanao and the oppressive conditions affecting its people shall move forward despite these acts of terrorism," Panelo said.

"We assure those who live and sojourn in that part of the region that the government will secure their safety and provide them with whatever support they need with dispatch and sufficiency," he added.

WITH ROY D.R. NARRA, CATHERINE S. VALENTE, DEMPSEY REYES AND MASIDING NOOR YAHYA IN MARAWI CITY

31 January 2019 Standard TODAY Page: A1

Zambo blast kills 2, hurts 4

Grenade lobbed into mosque where Tabligh members slept

By Francisco Tuyay, Nat Mariano and Macon Ramos-Araneta

TWO people were killed after a grenade blew up inside a mosque in Zamboanga City early Wednesday, just three days after a bomb attack on a Catholic church killed 21 people and injured 112 others in Jolo, Sulu.

The latest explosion occurred inside the Kamahaldikaan Mosque in Sitio Logoy Diutay, Talon-Talon, Zamboanga City, during the pre-dawn hours of Wednesday. Two members of a Tabligh or missionary group from Basilan were killed.

Blood-streaked prayer mats and shattered glass could be seen on the floor inside the mosque where heavily armed security forces were standing guard, footage from the scene showed.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the Islamic State terrorist group could have launched both attacks to spark a religious war in Mindanao. Such an effort would fail, however, because neither the Catholics nor mainstream Muslims want a war, he said.

"In the past when churches were bombed... there were no revenge attacks," he said.

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Zambo blast...

From A1

Chief Supt. Graciano Mijares, police director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said the explosion was from a grenade.

Mijares identified the fatalities as Haj Sattal Bato, 46 and Rex Habil, 46, while the wounded were Palson Asgali, 46; Alnizcar Sabbaha, 41; Jikilani Albani, 67 and Amidz Kassara, 30.

Reports said the victims were sleeping inside the mosque when the grenade was hurled into it by unidentified suspects.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the Western Mindanao Command, said the victims were members of the Tabligh from Basilan who sought shelter for the night at the mosque. They were the to teach Islam to children, police said.

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega of the Western Mindanao Command urged the public not to speculate or propagate false information about the attacks, saying this would only make matters worse.

The attacks have cast a shadow over hopes that voters' decisive push to give Muslims in the south more control over their own affairs would help quell long-running separatist violence.

Rebels and the government in Manila have expressed hope the new so-called Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao will finally draw the investment needed to pull the region out of the brutal poverty that makes it a hot spot for recruiting radicals.

However, hardline factions aligned with ISIS were not part of the decades-long peace process with the nation's largest separatist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, that culminated Jan. 21 with the resounding approval of a new Muslim-led region in the south.

Sulu, which includes Jolo, is home to hardline Islamist factions, and was the only area in Mindanao that voted against the Bangsamoro.

The grenade attack on Wednesday drew immediate condemnation from authorities.

"There is no redeeming such blasphemous murder. It is the highest form of cowardice and obscenity to attack people who at prayer," said regional leader Mujiv Hataman.

"We call on people of all faiths... to come together to pray for peace."

The Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito G. Galvez said the grenade attack demonstrated the "extreme length terrorists will go to in order to sow fear, hatred and terror among the populace."

"Clearly, the perpetrators of these terror acts do not have any respect for human life and are willing to engage in mass murder in order to promote their twisted and extremist ideologies. By and large, they are enemies of the state and must be stopped at all costs," he said.

Against the backdrop of a series of terrorist attacks, the Palace said the Armed Forces will "ferociously and relentlessly" unleash its might against the enemies of the state.

"Terrorism has once again reared its barbaric and ugly head by unleashing another bomb in a mosque in Zamboanga killing at least two Muslim religious followers and injuring four others," Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

"The Armed Forces of the Philippines will unleash its might and weaponry against these enemies of the state and hunt them ferociously and relentlessly until the law rolls down its guillotine on them," he said.

The Palace official said the latest attack was "a taunting challenge to the capability of the government to secure the safety of the inhabitants in Mindanao."

"The successive attacks on two different places of worship depict the ruthlessness and the godlessness of these mass murderers," Panelo said.

The Jolo bomb attack came days after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law and days before the oral arguments on the constitutionality of the third martial law extension in Mindanao.

On the sidelines of his confirmation hearing before the Senate, Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr. urged the public to be cautious and vigilant.

"There are some sectors who want to put religious undertone to what happened and we'd like to ask our constituents, our people to be sober and more vigilant," Madrigal said.

"We are still investigating the culprits behind the bombings, and looking into all possible angles," he said.

Former Senate president and defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile warned that there was a danger of more violent attacks if martial law is lifted in Mindanao.

"[There would be] more violence if there is no martial law in Mindanao. That is the deterrent and the restraining power," Enrile said in a radio interview following news of the mosque attack.

He said the government must use "violence against violence" in dealing with terrorists.

"That's the purpose of your police and your military. Why do we have a military? Why do we have police? Because the state must have the monopoly of legal violence to control the deviant and aberrant in society," he said.

During the oral arguments on the petitions against the third extension of martial law in Mindanao this week, the Supreme Court engaged Solicitor General Jose Calida and the AFP in an agreement to lift martial law in Mindanao if the military can reduce the capability of terrorist groups in Mindanao by at least 70 percent.

The petitions were filed against the extension of martial law, which was granted by Congress in December 2018.

Senator Paolo Benigno Aquino IV denounced the grenade attack and urged the public to come together to condemn violence, because the terrorists wanted to divide the people.

"Now is the time to come together to denounce violence as it has no place in our society," Aquino said. **With AFP**

21 January 2019

tribune

Page: 1

Religious war fanned

2 dead in Zambo mosque assault

Gen. Madrigal assures the public that the best AFP commanders are on the ground

By Mario J. Mallari and Kristina Maralit

A grenade attack on a mosque in Zamboanga City that killed two Muslim preachers early yesterday raised the specter of groups manouvering to foment a "religious war" in Mindanao as it happened only days after an alleged suicide bombing at a Jolo cathedral, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr. said.

The grenade attack happened at a mosque in Sitio Logoy Diutay, Barangay Talon-Talon, Zamboanga City. ***Turn to page 2***

Police reports said the victims in the grenade blast at the Logoy Diutay Mosque were asleep when they were attacked

From page 1

On Sunday, twin explosions rocked Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, leaving 21 people killed and 100 others hurt.

Madrigal downplayed any connection between the grenade blast at a mosque in Barangay Talon-Talon in Zamboanga City at around 12:20 a.m. yesterday and last Sunday's twin explosions at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo.

The military launched air strikes against Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) targets in Sulu.

"(Yes), we did air strikes yesterday (Tuesday). (I'm) not sure if there are (any) now," Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

Lorenzana added the air strikes were in retaliation for the twin bombings in the province's capital town of Jolo which left 21 persons dead and 97 others wounded.

The military launched air strikes against Abu Sayyaf Group targets in the towns of Patikul and Indanan in Sulu.

"(I) don't know how many sorties (were conducted)," the Defense chief said when asked how many bombing missions were carried out.

The air strikes were conducted in the towns of Patikul and Indanan in Sulu following President Rodrigo Duterte's order for an all-out campaign to neutralize the terror group.

Religious undertone

The AFP chief stressed that both terror attacks are now being investigated thoroughly by the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

"There are some sectors who want to put a religious undertone to what happened and we'd like our constituents, our people to be sober and to be more vigilant," Madrigal said.

"We're still investigating who were behind these," he added.

Madrigal noted the Zamboanga City mosque attack, where three other individuals were wounded, was the result of a grenade blast while the Jolo explosions were brought about by improvised explosive devices (IED).

"They're different: the one in Zamboanga was a grenade throwing while that in Jolo was an IED," he stressed.

Police reports said the victims in the grenade blast at the Logoy Diutay Mosque were asleep when they were attacked.

The victims were preachers from Lamitan and Isabela towns in Basilan who were in the city for religious activities.

Subsequently, both Zamboanga City police and the military's Task Force Zamboanga have intensified checkpoints and increased visibility patrols in several areas in the city.

Best commanders on hand

"Let us not be swayed by the recent developments that seem to project a religious complexion in the recent tragic incidents," AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said in a statement.

"The AFP Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., conveys the sincere condolences and deep sympathies of soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines to the victims of the attack against civilians inside a mosque in Barangay Talon-Talon in Zamboanga City," Arevalo said.

He assured the people government troops are currently conducting an investigation to determine the motive of the attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.

"Your security forces have assisted the victims even as the investigation is ongoing to get to the bottom of this incident. We exhort our citizens for your help and cooperation with your government security forces in addressing these evolving challenges," he said.

"Gen. Madrigal assures that the best AFP commanders are on the ground and that, in cooperation with the PNP and other agencies of government, are firmly committed to neutralizing these threats. But we can best attain that if we have the unequivocal support of our people in every sitio and barangay since they are more familiar with their localities," he added.

Strings of violence

At the Palace, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo stressed that the military is actively pursuing the perpetrators of the deadly attacks.

It is the second deadly attack to happen in a place of worship, three days since twin blasts rocked a cathedral in Jolo.

"The successive attacks on two different places of worship depict the ruthlessness and the godlessness of these mass murderers. The Armed Forces of the Philippines will unleash its might and weaponry against these enemies of the State and hunt them ferociously and relentlessly until the law rolls down its guillotine on them," Panelo said in a statement.

He added the incident was a "challenge to the capability of the government to secure the safety of the inhabitants in Mindanao."

Still, he gave assurances to the public that the government forces will "secure their safety" at all costs.

Panelo expressed confidence that the people will "not be cowed nor intimidated" by the recent acts of violence. He called on Filipinos to do their part in helping authorities by reporting any suspicious activity or person.

"The quest for peace and progress by the Bangsamoro people will not be stalled by any obstacle thrown at their path. The movement to change the face of Mindanao and the oppressive conditions affecting its people

Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral that killed 21 people.

The President said the twin explosions were launched by a couple - the woman was responsible for the explosion right inside the cathedral at the height of a Holy Mass while the man undertook the second blast.

"Currently, we are trying to resolve it, there are still unclaimed body parts... If they remain unclaimed, we would know if this could be what the President is mentioning," Madrigal said.

"The President has his own sources of information," he added.

Madrigal said the initial pronouncement downplaying suicide bombing was based on the findings of the Scene of the Crime Operatives.

shall move forward despite these acts of terrorism," the Palace official said.

The bombings happened barely a week since the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was ratified.

Go for unity

Former Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go also called for national unity amid the Zamboanga grenade attack in Sulu.

Go also called for support and understanding after Mr. Duterte ordered an all-out war against the ASG and their affiliate Ajang-Ajang group who were allegedly behind the Jolo bomb attack.

The unclaimed body parts in the twin explosions at the Jolo cathedral are key to the in-depth investigation of the attack amid a pronouncement by no less than President Duterte that the incident was a case of suicide bombing.

Madrigal stressed the military has not dismissed the possibility of suicide bombing in the Sunday explosions at the Our

IS initiation rite

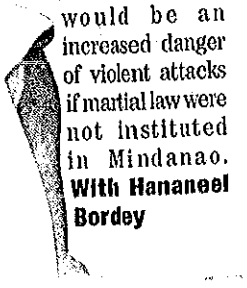
The AFP chief also cited military information that foreign terrorists are embedded in the Ajang-Ajang Group of Hatib Sawadjaan that was tagged in the Jolo bomb attack.

Madrigal theorized that Sawadjaan's group is trying to gain attention by pulling off the cathedral attack.

"This group wanted to have recognition by ISIS... (but) there are conditions set for this, one of them is for them to be able to demonstrate leadership, that they have territory and they have the capability," he said.

Meanwhile, former Senator and Defense Minister Juan Ponce-Enrile warned that there would be an increased danger of violent attacks if martial law were not instituted in Mindanao.

With Hananeel Bordey



21 January 2019 TABLOID Page: 2

Mosque grinanada:

2 patay!

Nina JOY CANTOS at RHODERICK BEÑEZ

Emmanuel Luis Licup, ang mga nasawi na sina Hadj Sattal Bato, 46, ng Isabela City at Rex Habil, 46, ng Lamitan City pawang sa Basilan. Kapwa dead on arrival ang dalawa sa Zamboanga City Medical Center.

Sugatan naman sina Palson Asgali, 46; Alnizcar Sabbaha, 41; Jikilani Albani, 67 at Amidz Kassara, 30.

Naganap ang insidente bandang alas-12:25 ng madaling araw sa Logoy Diutay, Brgy. Talon-Talon ng lungsod.

Nagpapahinga umano sa nasabing mosque ang mga biktima na mula sa Islam religious group na "Tabligh", nang biglang patayin ang ilaw sa poste ng kalsada ng mga suspek saka hagisan ng granada ang mosque.

Nakarekober ang mga otoridad ng lever at metal fragments mula sa hindi pa matukoy na uri ng granada.

Kinondena naman ng Malacañang ang panibagong terrorism act na ang una ay nangyari noong Linggo ng umaga sa isang cathedral sa Jolo, Sulu na ikinasawi ng 21 katao at pagkasugat ng 112 iba pa. *(May ulat ni Rudy Andal)*

7 January 2019 Malaya Page: 1
The National Newspaper

2 dead in Zambo mosque attack

Incident not related to Sulu church bombings, say officials

BY VICTOR REYES

TWO Muslim preachers died while four other persons were injured after a hand grenade was lobbed at a mosque in Zamboanga City early morning yesterday.

The incident came just three days after two improvised bombs exploded at a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu, killing 21 persons and wounding around 100 others.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said there was no connection between the church bombs and the mosque attack, echoing remarks by a local task force commander that it was "not a retaliatory act."

"We're not seeing any connection... The connection, or retaliation angle, there's none," said Lorenzana, noting that Christians and Muslims have been coexisting in Mindanao for over a hundred years now, including in Sulu.

Mindanao has been under martial law since May 2017 when the Maute terror group attacked Marawi City and occupied several barangays for five months.

Lorenzana, martial law administrator for Mindanao, implied that Islamic State is behind efforts to project a religious war. "But nobody is biting, from the Christians and even mainstream Muslims," he said.

AFP spokesman Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said the public should "not be swayed by the recent developments that seem to project a religious complexion in the recent tragic incidents."

Lt. Gen. Arnel dela Vega, chief of the Western Mindanao Command, said, "We call on the public not to draw speculations and spread fake news in the social media relating this incident to the explosion in Sulu. It will just result in further distress."

"I also call for unity, let us not be divided by the recent incidents instead. Let us work as one for the perpetrators to be immediately identified and neutralized," he added.

The Zamboanga incident prompted condemnation and calls for cool heads and unity among Christian and Muslim communities.

Col. Leonel Nicolas, commander of the military's Joint Task Force Zamboanga, said they are conducting further investigation on the bombing but said it "is not a retaliatory act" to the Jolo bombings.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the military's Western Mindanao Command, said the grenade was lobbed at the Kamahaldikaan Mosque in Sitio Logoy, Barangay Talon-Talon at around 12:20 a.m.

Besana named the fatalities as Sattal Bato, 46, and Rex Habil, 46, both members of a "tabligh" contingent from Basilan, who have been in t the mosque since Monday.

The two died upon arrival at the Zamboanga City Medical Center.

Wounded were Palson Asgali, 46; Alnizcar Sabbaha, 41; Jikilani Albani, 67; and Amidz Kassara, 30.

Arevalo appealed to the public to report to authorities "unusual" developments and the presence of unfamiliar persons and unattended packages in their areas.

Zamboanga's Ulama Council called the mosque bombing "devilish, irrational and inhumane," while the regional governor condemned the church and mosque incidents and said an attack during prayers was the "highest form of cowardice and obscenity."

"We must stand united against the terrorists who would divide us and, thus, destroy all that we are working to build

See 2 DEAD ➤ Page B6

and establish in our communities," Gov. Mujiv Hataman said on his Facebook page.

Muslims are a minority in the predominantly Catholic Philippines and represent about a quarter of the population of the Mindanao region, where communal violence is rare.

Malacañang assured the public, especially those living or visiting Mindanao, that the government will ensure their safety and well being despite the latest incident.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo, concurrent presidential spokesman, said the latest attack aims to sow terror in Mindanao as well as taunt the government and its capability to secure the safety of the public.

He also said military will "unleash its might and weaponry" against these enemies of the state and hunt "ferociously and relentlessly" those behind the recent attacks and bring them to justice.

Panelo urged the public to remain vigilant.

Peace Adviser Carlito Galvez said the attack demonstrates the lengths terrorists will go to in order to sow fear, hatred and terror among the populace.

"Those who use such deadly methods have no other purpose but to take the life of others on a massive scale. Clearly, the perpetrators of these terror acts do not have any respect for human life and are willing to engage in mass murder in order to promote their twisted and extremist ideologies. By and large, they are enemies of the state and must be stopped at all costs," added Galvez, former Armed Forces chief. – ***With Jocelyn Montemayor and Reuters***

MOSQUE PINASABUGAN NG GRANADA: 2 TODAS, 4 SUGATAN

Nasawi ang dalawang katao habang apat pa ang malubhang nasugatan nang masapol ng sumabog na granada na inihagis ng mga hindi pa kilalang suspek sa isang mosque kahapon ng madaling araw sa Zamboanga City.

Kinilala ang mga nasawi na sina Hadj Sattal Bato, 46, residente ng Isabela City at Rex Habil, 46 ng Lamitan City; pawang sa lalawigan ng Basilan.

Nasugatan naman sina Palson Asgali, 46; Alnizcar Sabbaha, 41; Jikilani Albani, 67; at Amidz Kassara, 30.

Sa ulat ni Police Regional Office (PRO) 9 Director P/Chief Supt. Emmanuel Luis Licup, bandang alas-12:25 ng madaling araw nang hagisan ng granada ang mosque na matatagpuan sa Logoy Diutay, Brgy. Talon-Talon ng lungsod.

Nabatid na ang mga biktima ay mula sa grupo ng Muslim "Tabligh", isang relihiyosong grupo ng Islam na nagpapahinga sa nasabing mosque nang bigla na lamang patayin ang ilaw sa poste ng kalsada ng mga suspek saka hagisan ng granada.

Kinondena naman ng Malacañang ang panibagong terrorism act na ang una ay nangyari noong Linggo ng umaga sa isang cathedral sa Jolo,Sulu na ikinasawi ng 20 katao at pagkasugat ng 112 iba pa.- ***Joy Cantos,Rudy Andal,Rhoderick Beñez-***

(9)

31 January 2019 MANILA BULLETIN THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER Page: 15

Tolentino says Sulu bombing threatens peace, security

Former presidential political adviser Francis Tolentino has expressed concerns over the recent bombing incident that hit a Catholic cathedral church in Jolo, Sulu last Sunday, saying that the peace and security of the people are being jeopardized.

Two explosions disrupted the Sunday morning mass at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral, causing 20 dead and 100 injured civilians and soldiers.

Tolentino condemned the incident and called for a prompt investigation to immediately deliver justice to the victims.

"Nakatulungkotnasagiltna ng pagsisikap ng ating pamahalaan sa pangunguna ng Pangulong Duterte na makamit ang tunay at pangmatagalang kapayapaan sa Mindanao, may mga salungat na puwersa ng pilit na humahadlang sa pagsulong tungo sa pagunlad," Tolentino said.

He stressed that peace and order are necessary to realize the development agenda of Mindanao and free the Muslims from poverty and conflict of war.

The former Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chairman added that the success of the recently held plebiscite last January 21 could have been a good start for the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

GV

31 January 2019 MANILA BULLETIN THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER Page: 15

Go calls for sobriety, vigilance in aftermath of Jolo twin blast

Former Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go Monday urged the people of Jolo, Sulu and entire Mindanao to maintain sobriety but keep vigilant and cooperate with authorities.

Go made the appeal as he bared that President Rodrigo Duterte has vowed to give justice to the victims of the bombing attack at the Jolo Cathedral on Sunday that left at least 21 dead and over a hundred others wounded.

Go accompanied Duterte when the Chief Executive visited the blast site in Jolo on Monday to personally assess the situation and determine the assistance needed from the national government. The President also attended a security briefing conducted by the authorities.

"Tayo po ay maging mahinahon, saka maging vigilant po tayo sa ganitong pangyayari lalong lalo na po sa Mindanao," Go said in a radio interview.

He noted that while the entire Mindanao was still under martial law there were no reports of abuses committed by military and the police who remain respectful of the law and human rights. In fact, Go said the visibility of the police and military has helped maintain peace and order in the region.

"Subalit tuloy tuloy po ang threat ng terrorism sa buong Mindanao. Hinihiling ng gobyerno ang inyong kooperasyon at gagawin naman ng gobyerno ang nararapat para sa kapakanan ng nakararami," added Go, who is running for senator in the 2019 elections.

Go bared that President also reminded the people of Jolo that the attack should not be seen as a conflict between Muslims and Christians but a brazen act of terrorism that everyone should unite against.

31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A3

Bong Go to Sulu residents: Be vigilant

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte's former top aide, Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, has called on people living in Jolo, Sulu to maintain their sobriety and remain vigilant.

Go said President Duterte vowed to give justice to the victims of the bombing attack in Jolo on Sunday. At least 21 people were killed and more than a hundred injured in the attack on the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral.

The former Palace official accompanied the President when he visited the blast site on Monday.

"Tayo po ay maging mahinahon, saka maging vigilant *po tayo sa ganitong pangyayari lalong lalo na po sa* Mindanao," Go said in a radio interview.

He noted that while Mindanao was still under martial law, there were no reports of abuses committed by the military and the police. Go said the visibility of the police and military helped maintain peace and order in the region.

"Subalit tuloy tuloy po ang threat *ng* terrorism *sa buong* Mindanao. *Hinihiling ng gobyerno ang inyong kooperasyon at gagawin naman ng gobyerno ang nararapat para sa kapakanan ng nakararami* (There is no end to the terror threat in Mindanao. The government needs your cooperation so that it can better implement measures for your safety)," added Go, who is running for senator in the 2019 elections.

Go bared that Duterte also reminded the people of Jolo that the attack should not be seen as a conflict between Muslims and Christians, but a brazen act of terrorism that everyone should unite against.

"[Ang sabi ng Pangulo] hindi po ito away ng mga taga Jolo — *ibig sabihin hindi po ito away ng mga kristiyano at mga muslim. Wala ho kayong kinalaman dito, kayong mga taga* Jolo, *ito po ay terrorismo, ito po ay kagagawan ng terrorista at napakalawak po ng giyerang ito* (This is not a quarrel between Christians and Muslims. This is terrorism, and this war is huge)," Go said.

He recalled that during the President's conversation with the victims, majority of them wanted nothing but justice.

"Pangako niya po sa naging biktima, sa mga nasugatan, sa mga naputulan, sa mga nasawi, sabi niya po ay bibigyan ko kayo ng hustisya (He promised them, those who were injured, maimed, the families of those killed, he said he would give them justice)," Go said.

He added that Duterte also committed to help the victims.

In the case of military and police personnel who were either killed or wounded in the blast, Go said they would be taken care of under the Comprehensive Social Benefit Program of the Office of the President.

Civilian survivors and families of the victims can avail themselves of the livelihood programs and small business assistance being offered by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Go denounced the attack on the cathedral that happened while Mass was underway. K3

"There were many victims, Christians and Muslims. The President and I are really sad," he said.

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'Bombings to affect Feb 6 plebiscite'

A series of bombings in southern Mindanao would affect the turnout of voters in next week's second plebiscite, which would determine the inclusion of the province of Lanao del Norte and seven towns in North Cotabato in the Bangasamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), according to the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

"Yes, it will be affected in the sense that some some [voters] will fear for their safety," Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said in a news briefing on Wednesday.

Jimenez, however, added that even as some voters would fear for their lives, the effect was not so much that they would change their mind about what they wanted, but whether they would be brave enough to express what they want during the plebiscite.

According to the spokesman, the Comelec is constantly in contact with its local officials in the area, as well as with the Philippine National Police to determine corresponding actions that the poll body would carry out to ensure the safety of the voters in response to the bombings that rocked the city of Jolo, North Cotabato and Zamboanga City in the past few days.

"The safety of the voters is very important to the Comelec. If we need to take an active or definitive action in areas where the plebiscite will be held, we will be able to do it," Jimenez said.

"It's just that we have a process to follow and the process entails the recommendation being given by the local Comelec offices," he added.

The Comelec, Jimenez said, would also be sending special monitoring teams to Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato to witness the conduct of operations and, if necessary, assist in the activities undertaken by local officials.

The February 6 plebiscite covers Lanao del Norte, except Iligan City, the municipalities of Baloi, Monai, Nunungan, Pantar, Taguilowan and Pangkal, and the towns of Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pikit and Pigkawayan, including Tolanan, all in North Cotabato.

These areas will be asked if they want to join the soon to be created BARMM as mandated by Republic Act (RA) 11054 or the "Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao."

The BARMM will replace the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which is composed of the provinces of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

The ARMM ratified RA 11054 during the first plebiscite held on January 21.

The city of Cotabato also opted to join the BARMM, but Isabela City (Basilan) rejected it.

WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL

31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A2

FOLLOWING BLASTS IN JOLO, ZAMBOANGA

Bags banned in Davao churches

BY CATHERINE A. MODESTO

FOLLOWING the deadly blasts inside the Catholic cathedral in Jolo, Sulu on Sunday, the Archdiocese of Davao is prohibiting churchgoers from bringing bags and boxes inside churches and chapels as part of security measures for an indefinite period.

In a circular, Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles said the faithful would not be allowed to bring bags, backpacks, knapsacks, boxes and cartons into churches, "due to the current peace and order situation, vis-à-vis threat of violence."

"Only small purses and the like are allowed," he added.

Valles said the measure was recommended by security forces.

"[This is] because of the current threat of violence upon the advice of the government's security and PNP (Philippine National Police) personnel," said Valles, who is also the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

The Islamic State (IS) has owned up to the blasts at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral over the weekend, where 21 people were killed and more than 100 others were injured.

The explosions occurred despite martial law in Mindanao, which President Rodrigo Duterte declared in May 2017 to quell a rebellion by the IS-inspired Maute group that

laid siege to Marawi City in a bid to establish a caliphate.

Government troops defeated the terrorists in October of the same year, but Duterte asked Congress to extend martial law to keep the peace in the restive region. Lawmakers approved not one, but three requests for extension.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday began the oral arguments on the third martial law extension in Mindanao as a response to the petitions filed by opposition legislators and indigenous peoples from southern Philippines, seeking to nullify the Congress' decision to approve the request of Duterte to extend the military control in the region until Dec. 31, 2019.

Associate Justices Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa and Mario Victor Leonen questioned the inconsistencies on the martial law extension justification listed by the government in its memoranda.

Leonen told Solicitor General Jose Calida, "Sufficiency of factual basis must require some level of credibility and consistencies," to which Calida agreed.

"To err is human," Calida added.

Leonen also said martial law was the "new normal in Mindanao" after discussing with the solicitor general, who confirmed the possibility of three more martial law extensions in the region, until the end of Duterte's term due to the persistence of violent extremism.

Calida said that the government's goal was to reduce or "degrade" the capability of the rebel groups, particularly the Communist Party of the Philippines, to 70 percent, a target that administration officials came up with on the day of the oral arguments.

Caguioa, before wrapping up the oral arguments, appealed to the government officials to be "lucid and strong" in their reports, to be submitted to the magistrates on or before Thursday. #2

4 January 2019 Malaya Page: B1

Probers verifying info on Yemenis' role in Sulu blasts

BY VICTOR REYES

DEFENSE Secretary Delfin Lorenzana yesterday said authorities are verifying information that a "Yemeni couple" was behind the twin bombings at a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu last Sunday.

Lorenzana said he got the information from Singaporean security analyst Rohan Gunaratna.

"He texted me, he told me about the two bombers, a couple, Yemeni couple," said Lorenzana.

He did not say what Gunaratna's basis was for linking the foreigners to the explosions at the Our Lady of Mt Carmel Cathedral, which left 21 dead and about a hundred others injured.

President Duterte late Tuesday said security officials told him a man and a woman brought the bombs to the church. He also said they could be suicide bombers.

Lorenzana, asked if the woman was the one who left the improvised explosive device (IED) that exploded inside the church, said that and other information have yet to ascertained.

"These are all the things that we have to validate. We don't know if the Yemenis were involved," he said.

"We're finding out what's the nationality (of the suspected suicide bomber). Is he a Filipino or a foreigner, because someone said the suicide bomber was a foreigner because no Filipino had been involved in a suicide bombing in the Philippine history," he said.

Lorenzana said the case "appears to be a suicide bombing and I was also convinced immediately that it's likely a suicide bombing."

"This is very alarming. If true, it proves that we have a lot of enemies from the outside, foreign fighters (terrorists). The intelligence people are monitoring 40 of them (in Sulu, Basilan and Central Mindanao)," he said.

However, Lorenzana said, he is wondering why terrorists have yet to make a statement naming certain bombers as "martyrs for inflicting casualties on the enemies of Islam."

The Islamic State, via its Amaq news agency, on Monday claimed responsibility for the cathedral attacks, but security officials dismissed this.

The military said four persons shown on CCTV footage after the bombings in the company of an Ajang-Ajang member outside the Jolo cathedral submitted themselves to authorities to clear their names.

The Ajang-Ajang is a sub-group of the Abu Sayyaf which is a suspect in the bombings.

Alsimar Mohammad, 24, and Julius Abdulzam, 17, surrendered to the military at around 10 a.m. in Jolo while Alshaber Arbi, 18, a Grade 11 student at the Kalingalan Caluang National

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PROBERS

High School, and Gerry Isnaji, a teacher at the same school, surrendered to the provincial police also at around 10 a.m.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman of the military's Western Mindanao Command based in Zamboanga City, said Mohammad and Abdulzam claimed they went to a pharmacy to buy medicines for Mohamad's mother who is confined at the Integrated Provincial Health Office in Sulu.

"After they bought the medicine, a loud explosion occurred at the Catholic church. Julius immediately went outside, near the vicinity when the secondary explosion occurred. Alsimar called Julius to stay away when the suspects, who are behind him, fled the vicinity," Besana said.

"They decided to come out purposely to clear their names for fear that they might be hunted down by the authorities," Besana added.

Besana said the two others, Arbi and Isnaji, were accompanied by Gov. Abdusakur Tan II and Kalingan Caluang town mayor Peping Halun during their surrender.

He could not immediately said the explanation given by Arbi and Isnaji.

LAIR RAIDED

Government forces raided on Tuesday a lair of one of the suspects in the bombings but alias "Kamah" eluded arrest.

However, an Abu Sayyaf member identified as Ommal Usop was killed in the raid in Kalimayahan Village, Barangay Latih in Patikul town, Besana said.

Besana said Kamah is a member of the Ajang-Ajang group and a logistics officer of the Abu Sayyaf. He was one of those caught in the CCTV footage.

PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Bernard Banac said another unidentified suspect in the Jolo bombings was able to escape with Kamah.

BACKPACKS, BOXES BANNED

The Archdiocese of Davao is prohibiting churchgoers from carrying bags and boxes inside churches and chapels.

Davao Archbishop Romulo Valles, also president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, said security measures are being intensified in the wake of the bombings.

"Due to the current peace and order situation vis-à-vis threat of violence, please be informed that starting today, for all churchgoers, it is not allowed to bring with you bags, backpacks, knapsacks, boxes, cartons, and the like into the church," said Valles.

"Only small purses and the like are allowed," he added.

Valles said the directive will be in effect until further notice.

The Southern Police District deployed 50 policemen to guard the Baclaran Church in Parañaque City.

Senior Insp. Joseph Dionaldo, head of "Oplan Buhos sa Baclaran," said security guards are also inspecting the bags of church-goers.

Last Monday, the National Capital Region Police Office placed Metro Manila under "full alert" status. – ***With Gerard Naval, Evan Orias, and Reuters***

21 January 2019 Tempo Page: ____

Zambo mosque bombed

By AARON RECUENCO

Two people died while at least four others were injured following a grenade blast inside a mosque in Zamboanga City before dawn yesterday in what is feared to be a possible retaliatory attack on the bloody Jolo Cathedral bombing in Sulu three days earlier.

But police officials would not comment on the possible link between the two attacks, saying it would be prudent to wait for the outcome of the investigation which the national police leadership has already ordered.

"We are still investigating. We cannot speculate on the motive as of yet," said Chief Supt. Emmanuel Luis Licup, director of the Zamboanga Peninsula regional police.

At around 3:30 a.m. yesterday, an unidentified man allegedly lobbed a grenade inside a mosque located in Logoy Djutay in Barangay Talon-Talon in Zamboanga City.

The ensuing blast killed 46-year old Rex Habil and 47-year old Sattal Bato who sustained serious injuries.

Licup said the explosion also wounded Yasson Asgali, 46; Paulo Siahuddin, 41; Albani Jikilani, 67; Amidz Kassara, 30.

Local investigators are eyeing two likely motives. It could be personal targeting one or two victims or some people are riding on the Jolo attack.

Twenty-one people died while more than 100 others were injured when two bombs ripped through a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu Sunday.

Most of the victims were churchgoers while some are members of the security forces who were tasked to secure the church.

Chief Supt. Graciano Mijares, director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) regional police, said they are coordinating with the Zamboanga Peninsula regional police leadership and the military for coordination and assistance in the investigation.

The province of Sulu where the bomb attack occurred is under the ARMM regional police.

"We remain committed to peace and stability in the region, and stands by the people of Zamboanga City who want peace and a future free from these horrific acts of violence," said Mijares.

"We are appealing to the public to be vigilant and report any suspicious activities and individuals to prevent these inhumane acts," he added.

In a statement, the Ulama Council of Zamboanga Peninsula has expressed condemnation on what it described as devilish, irrational and inhumane act.

"We call upon the Zamboangeneos to be calm yet vigilant with current bombing incident in Masjid Jutay in Barangay Talon Talon Zamboanga City. We share the grief of the families who lost their loved ones and sincerely extend our condolences to them in the most comforting manner that a human being may," the statement read.

31 January 2019 Tempo Page: ____

Palace condemns bombing of mosque

By ARGYLL GEDUCOS

Malacañang vowed to unleash the whole might of government forces against the "mass murderers" behind the bombing of a mosque in Zamboanga City yesterday.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo condemned the incident, saying terrorists reared their "barbaric and ugly head" by unleashing another bomb, this time in a mosque in Zamboanga City.

Two persons were killed while four others were injured in the incident.

"This latest act of murder apart from the terrorists sowing terror in the Mindanao region, coming as it does in the wake of the Jolo dastardly bombing, is a taunting challenge to the capability of the government to secure the safety of the inhabitants in Mindanao," Panelo said. "The successive attacks on two different places of worship depict the ruthlessness and the godlessness of these mass murderers," he added.

The Palace official said that government forces will aggressively hunt down those responsible for the two bombings which rocked Mindanao days after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. "The Armed Forces of the Philippines will unleash its might and weaponry against these enemies of the state and hunt them ferociously and relentlessly until the law rolls down its guillotine on them," Panelo said.

Panelo assured that the road to peace in Mindanao will not be derailed despite the two bombings. He said Malacañang will give whatever support the people in Mindanao may need.

"The quest for peace and progress by the Bangsamoro people will not be stalled by any obstacle thrown at their path. The movement to change the face of Mindanao and the oppressive conditions affecting its people shall move forward despite these acts of terrorism," he said. "We assure those who live and sojourn in that part of the region that the government will secure their safety and provide them with whatever support they need with dispatch and sufficiency," he added.

Panelo asked the people in the South to be vigilant and report to authorities of any events that may require their intervention.

4 suspek sa Jolo bombing sumuko

Sumuko na kahapon ang apat na 'persons of interest' sa twin bombings sa Jolo Cathedral sa Sulu noong Linggo.

Sinabi ni Army's 11th Infantry Division (ID) Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu Commander Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, dakong alas-10 ng umaga unang sumurender sina Ishaber Arbi, 18, Grade 11 student ng Kalingalan Caluang National High School na nahagip sa CCTV footage na nakaponytail at Gerry Isnajil, guro sa nasabing eskuwelahan na nakasuot naman ng kulay maroon na sombrero.

Bandang alas-3 ng hapon sumuko sina Alsimar Mahamud at Julius Abdulzam.

Nilinaw naman ni Pabayo na hindi kabilang si alyas Kamah sa tatlong nakunan sa CCTV. Si Kamah ay isa umanong bomb maker na kapatid ng lider ng Ajang-Ajang group na si Surakah Ingog.

Ang Ajang-Ajang ang unang tinukoy ng AFP at PNP na nasa likod ng pagpapasabog. Ang grupo ay kaalyado ng Abu Sayyaf na tinukoy na mastermind ng pambobomba.

Itinanggi naman nina Arbi at Isnajil na sangkot sila sa pagpapasabog at mamamalengke lamang umano ng mangyari ang insidente.

Ayon naman sa dalawa pa, bumibili lamang umano sila ng gamot para sa ina ni Alsimar na naka-confine sa Integrated Provincial Hospital sa Sulu.

Duda naman ang mga imbestigador sa pagtanggi ng mga suspek dahil karaniwan na umano ito sa mga sumusuko at inaaresto. *(Joy Cantos)*

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Dayuhang suicide bomber sinisiyasat na

Iniimbestigahan na ng security forces ang posibilidad na suicide bombing na isinagawa ng isang dayuhang terorista ang ikalawang pagsabog sa labas ng Our Lady of Mount Carmel sa Jolo, Sulu.

Ayon kay Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, isinasailalim na sa validation ang nagkapira-pirasong bangkay sa lugar ng ikalawang pagsabog na hinihinalang isa itong dayuhan.

Una rito, sinabi mismo ni Pangulong Duterte na mag-asawang suicide bomber ang nasa likod ng kambal na pagpapasabog sa Jolo Cathedral bagay na masusi pang kinukumpirma ng militar.

Ang unang bomba na iniwan ng isang babae ay sumabog sa loob ng simbahan alas-8:58 ng umaga at ilang minuto pa ay ang ikalawang pagsabog sa labas ng simbahan.

Inihayag ni Lorenzana na may mga impormasyon din mula sa intelligence sources sa Mindanao Region na ang pambobomba ay kagagawan ng magasawang Yemeni.

Una rito, inako ng Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) na ang kanilang grupo ang nasa likod ng pambobomba pero inihayag naman ng AFP at PNP na ang Ajang-Ajang group na kaalyado ng Abu Sayyaf ang nasa likod ng pagpapasabog.

Noong Hulyo 2018 ay niyanig ng malakas na pagsabog ang Lamitan City, Basilan na ikinasawi ng 11 katao. Ang pag-atake ay sinasabing gawa ng isang Malaysian suicide bomber pero hindi narekober ang bangkay nito sa blast site. *(Joy Cantos)*

4 NA NAKUNAN NG CCTV SA JOLO BLAST, SUMUKO

Upang linisin ang kanilang mga pangalan matapos na isangkot sa madugong cathedral bombing sa Jolo, Sulu noong Linggo matapos makunan ng CCTV.ay sumuko kahapon ang apat na lalaki na kabilang sa anim na "person of interest". Sinabi ni Army's 11th Infantry Division (ID) Joint Task Force (JTF) Sulu Commander Brig. Gen. Divino Rey Pabayo, magkakasunod na lumantad ang apat sa mga persons of interest na nahagip sa CCTV footage sa kasagsagan ng pagsabog sa Mount Carmel Church sa Jolo , Sulu. Unang sumuko sina Ishaber Arbi, 18, Grade 11 student ng Kalingalan Caluang National High School na naka-ponytail sa CCTV footages at Gerry Isnajil, guro sa nasabing eskuwelahan na nakasuot naman ng kulay maroon na sombrero.

Bandang alas-3:00 ng hapon nang sumunod na sumuko sina Alsimar Mahamud ng Brgy. Busbus, Jolo, Sulu at Julius Abdulzam ng Brgy. Takut Takut , Jolo ng lalawigan. Kasalukuyang isinasailalim sa masusing imbestigasyon ng Joint Interagency Task Force na binubuo ng AFP, PNP at National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) ang apat na pawang itinanggi ang partisipasyon sa pambobomba sa Our Lady of Mount Carmel.-*Joy Cantos*-

2

Pag-atake ng iba pang grupo ng mga terorista pinabantayan ni Enrile

Nagbabala kahapon si dating senador Juan Ponce Enrile sa posibilidad na umatake rin ang iba pang grupo ng mga terorista matapos ang pagsabog sa Jolo, Sulu noong Linggo.

Sinabi ni Enrile na hindi malayong magmula sa Muslim o Kristiyanong "extremist groups" ang umatake.

"I've handled it for 17 years. We have studied the reactions of the Christians especially the Ilonggos and the Ilocanos of Mindanao. You remember the Ilaga problem that we had in Mindanao? Don't ever think that that is dead," sabi ni Enrile na kumakandito muli sa Senado.

Ang Ilaga ay isang Kristiyanong extremist group na nagsagawa ng ilang masaker sa Mindanao noong 1970's. Mula 1970 hanggang 1972, nakilala ang Ilaga dahil sa 22 akto ng karumal-dumal na pagpatay ng daan-daang Muslim na sibilyan.

"The Ilaga was created by several mayors. They were supported by some military officers who were Ilonggos," ani Enrile.

Nagbabala rin si Enrile sa muling pag-atake ng mga grupo tulad ng Maute at iba pang mga pangkat na konektado sa Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

"Saan ba nanggagaling mga sundalo niyan? Saan ba nanggagaling mga tauhan niyan? Nanggagaling din sa mga eskuwelahan sa Mindanao. Nanggagaling dun sa mga madrasah," pahayag ni Enrile ukol sa mga paaralang nagtuturo ng Islam.

Dagdag paniya, "Sino ba ang sumusuporta ng mga madrasah? Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the practitioner of the most purist of all Islamic groups in the Middle East - Wahabism or Salafism."

Ang Wahabism ay isang extremist na interpretasyon ng pananampalatayang Islam na inuugnay sa mga kilusang terorismo sa iba't ibang dako ng daigdig kung saan may mga madrasah na pinopondahan ng Saudi, tulad ng Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, at ng Philippines.

Ayon sa AFP, ang Abu Sayyaf na rati nang nangako ng suporta sa ISIS, ang hinihinalang namuno sa dalawang pagsabog sa Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral sa Jolo, Sulu. ***(Malou Escudero)***

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Abante
Ang Nangungunang Pahayagang Tagalog sa Bansa P8.00

1,000 snipers isasabak sa marksmanship training

Sasailalim sa marksmanship training ang nasa 1,000 snipers ng pamahalaan upang mapalakas ang kampanya ng gobyerno laban sa terorismo, ipinahayag ni Pangulong Duterte.

Ang nasabing armas ay maaari umanong ipadala sa Jolo, Sulu, kung saan naganap ang magkasunod na pambobomba, upang tumulong sa puwersa ng pamahalaan sa pakikipaglaban sa mga rebelde.

"'Pag nakakarga ng – nakahawak ng baril, huwag mo nang palapitin, targetin mo na. Total marami 'yan, sabi ko I ordered to --- the training of 1,000 sharpshooters, snipers," pahayag ni Duterte sa kanyang pagbisita sa Jolo, nitong Lunes.

"E 'di i-assign natin dito para hindi masyado baldado ang sundalo ko. Iyan ang direksyon ko. Kung sundan ninyo ako, mabuti. 'Pag hindi, okay lang rin. Pero basta ako, kung – hindi ako pa – hindi tayo p'wedeng ganito," pahayag ng Pangulo.

Ipinag-utos na ng Pangulo sa militar ang paggamit ng lahat ng resources upang ubusin ang Abu Sayyaf, na nasa likod ng pambobomba sa Jolo.

Gayunman, pinaalalahanan ng commander-in-chief ang militar na hanggat maaari ay bawasan ang collateral damage. Handa rin umano ang pamahalaan na tulungan ang mga pamilya na maaapektuhan ng mga operasyon ng militar.

"Be careful about the civilians. Kayong mga Moro do not --- baka magtanim kayo ng galit. Nanay ng nanay ko Maranao," ani Duterte.

Genalyn D. Kabiling

31 January 2019

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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A mother's pain: No more calls from Jolo

By ZEA C. CAPISTRANO

DAVAO CITY – Aida Ayoman, a mother who lives in Kolambugan, a fourth-class municipality in Lanao del Norte, was expecting a call in the morning of January 27 from Jolo, Sulu. Her eldest son, Private First Class Alizon Ayoman, would make it a point to talk to her every day no matter what he was doing.

But no call came that day. Instead, a cadaver arrived at their home on Tuesday afternoon. The family's breadwinner was among the 21 people who were killed when two bombs exploded in Jolo.

"Sukad namatay iyang papa, ako na naghawid sa cellphone sa iyang papa. Buntag-udto nako siya manawag, gabii pa gyud (Ever since their father died, I'm the one using his father's cellphone. He would call me morning, noon, and night)," Aida told Manila Bulletin.

Her husband died on July 19, 2017. Her son Alizon made sure that she had someone to talk to after that.

"Pangutan-on ko niya kung kinsa akong kauban sa balay, nikaon na ba daw ko, kamusta daw ko (He would ask me whether someone is accompanying me at home, if I have already eaten, and how I am doing)," she recalled.

She described the 28-year-old Alizon as a good son who became the "padre de pamilya" when her husband died.

"Sakit gyud kaayo ang iyang pagkawala (His death ▶11

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A mother's pain...

is really difficult to accept)," she said.

The last call she got from Alizon was at 6 p.m. on Saturday, where, as usual, he asked whether the family has eaten, what they ate, and how they are doing.

Alizon's body was among the eight that were airlifted in a C-130 aircraft to Zamboanga City on the night of January 27. At least five soldiers died in the blast at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral. The blast also injured at least 111 people who were attending the second mass.

"Ang sakit tanggapin, ang hirap po tanggapin," Mary Shine Ayoman, a senior high school student and the only girl among the siblings said. Ayoman was the eldest of four siblings.

Mary Shine last saw her brother before he left their house on December 26 last year. She said they were expecting to see him again in March. The family has already planned to go to a resort to spend time together.

The bombing incident happened barely a week after the Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified. Sulu voted "no" for inclusion in the expanded Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. But the International Alert Philippines said "there is no credible evidence that the bombing had anything to do with the recent plebiscite or the NO vote carried by the province."

"State security forces were aware of the heightened risks against the diocese of Jolo long before the chain of events that led to the ratification of the BOL," the International Alert said. It added that the attack proves that "a wedge is being driven between Muslims and Christians in Sulu, particularly in the capital city."

Three days after the twin blasts in the Jolo Cathedral, a grenade blast exploded inside a mosque in Talon-Talon, Zamboanga City. At least two individuals died and four others were wounded.

Lt. Col. Gerry Besana said it is too early to speculate whether the blast inside the mosque is connected to the bombing at the cathedral.

"It is under investigation by the PNP. Let's wait for the result," he said.

Meanwhile, Suara Bangsamoro said the bombings at the cathedral and the masjid are "reproachable."

"Attacks on civilian population are against all moral laws and are never justifiable."

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Army in Western, Central Visayas placed on high alert

By **TARA YAP**

ILOILO CITY–The Philippine Army's 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) is on high alert following the bombings in Jolo and Zamboanga City.

"Your Army in Western and Central Visayas will double its efforts to suppress any terror attempt that would jeopardize the peace and security situation in the region," said Major Gen. Dinoh Dolina.

The 3ID covers Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, and Negros Occidental in Western Visayas, and its soldiers also operate in Negros Oriental and Siquijor in Central Visayas.

The 3ID is coordinating with other armed services including the Air Force and Navy in monitoring Visayan waters for terrorist groups entering or leaving Mindanao.

The unit is also reaching out to Muslim communities in its area of jurisdiction to report any individuals espousing radical violence.

"You must be vigilant and continue cooperating with your Army to prevent any terrorist group from casting similar terror attacks in the whole region," Dolina said.

Also placed on alert following the Jolo church bombing was the police in Bohol.

The chief of the Police Community Relations Supt. Conrado Manatad said police provincial director Sr. Supt. Julius Caesar Gornez directed chiefs of police in all municipalities in the province to coordinate with the parish priests of different parishes for security arrangements.

Gornez recommended that the church leaders install surveillance cameras and hire security guards.

Police will also step up patrols near churches.

In 2017, the Abu Sayyaf tried to set up a cell in Inabanga, Bohol but was thwarted after residents alerted the authorities. (With a report from Dave Albarado) 14

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Military drops bombs on Abu Sayyaf lairs

AIR strikes were conducted in areas surrounding Jolo, Sulu in a mission to pulverize the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), as authorities continued to determine whether Sunday's bombing of a Catholic cathedral was the handiwork of suicide bombers.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman for the military's Western Mindanao Command (WestMinCom), said soldiers had utilized all aircraft from the Philippine Air

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Force to secure the areas surrounding Jolo town, including Maligay, Patikul and Indanan.

The air strikes, using MG-520 rockets, began on Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. and ended at 10 a.m.

On Wednesday, the aircraft only flew to patrol, but no bombs were dropped at the areas of the Ajang-Ajang, a sub-group of the Abu Sayyaf composed of members in their 20s to 30s.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has noted that young people of the Ajang-Ajang sub-group, suspects in the Jolo blasts, ran errands for their Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) superiors.

The sub-group is being commanded by Hatib Sawadjaan, father-in-law of Malaysian terrorist Amin Baco.

Besana said the air strikes were launched after establishing that there were no civilians in the target areas.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana also confirmed the strikes.

4 surrender

Four persons of interests in the twin bombings in Jolo have surrendered to the military's Joint Task Force Sulu.

According to the WestMinCom, two of the four suspects who surrendered at 10 a.m. to authorities were seen in security footage obtained by the military.

They were identified as Alshaber Arbi, 18 and Gerry Isnajil.

Arbi is a Grade 11 student of Kalingalan Caluang National High School, while Isnajil is a teacher of the same school.

At about 3 p.m., the two persons of interests surrendered to the Sulu Provincial Police Office and were identified as Alsimar Mohammad Albi, 24, and Julius Abdulzam Albi, 17.

Alsimar and Julius, according to the WestMinCom, went to a pharmacy to buy medicines for Alsimar's mother, who was confined at a hospital in Sulu.

After they bought the medicines, an explosion was heard at the cathedral, prompting the two to go near the blast site.

A possible suspect evaded authorities, but his aide was killed in an armed confrontation in Patikul, Sulu Tuesday evening.

The man, known as "Kamah," who was said to have triggered the twin bombs in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral that killed 21 people on January 27, was encountered by police and government troops at 6:30 p.m. in Barangay Latih.

With him were his aide Ommal Yusop and another person.

A spot report said Yusop immediately drew fire once the policemen arrived in the area, which caused security forces to return fire. Yusop was killed as a result.

Authorities recovered one pistol, one empty shell, five live ammunition and one magazine.

The military said Kamah, a bombmaker whose brother is slain ASG leader Surakah Ingog, might have tinkered with the cellphone device that was used in triggering the bombs in Jolo.

Ransom used?

A former fighter of the Indonesian militant group, Jemaah Islamiya (JI), said the deadly twin bombings in Jolo was largely funded by ransom paid to free an Indonesian hostage of the pro-Islamic State ASG.

Abdullah Sandakan, who is based in Sabah, told BenarNews that the attack on the church on January 27 was planned by the ASG.

"This attack was on their calendar...They were just waiting for the ransom money, which they used for the bombing," he said.

The ex-JI militant was referring to Indonesian fishing boat captain Samsul Sanguni, who was released by the ASG on January 15 in Sulu province.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE, DEMPSEY REYES, ROY D.R. NARRA AND AL JACINTO

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Military pounds ASG

The military conducted airstrikes against Abu Sayyaf Group targets in Sulu last Tuesday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday.

"(Yes), we did airstrikes yesterday (Tuesday). (I'm) not sure if there are (any) now," Lorenzana said.

Lorenzana said the airstrikes were in retaliation for the twin bombings at the Jolo Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu in which 21 persons were killed and 97 persons were wounded last Sunday.

"(I) don't know how many sorties (were conducted)," the Defense chief said when asked how many bombing missions were carried out.

Government troops conducted the airstrikes in Patikul and Indanan, following President Duterte's order to pulverize the terror group.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines called on the public to exercise sobriety and calm in light of the attacks in Sulu and Zamboanga City.

"Let us not be swayed by the recent developments that seem to project a religious complexion in the recent tragic incidents: In Jolo on Sunday (Jan. 27) and on Jan. 30 (Wednesday) around 20 minutes past midnight," AFP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said.

A grenade blast inside a mosque in Zamboanga City killed two persons and injured three others early yesterday morning.

"The AFP Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., conveys the sincere condolences and deep sympathies of soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines to the victims of the attack against civilians inside a mosque at Barangay Talon-Talon in Zamboanga City," Arevalo said.

He assured that government troops are currently conducting an investigation to determine the motive of the attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.

"Your security forces have assisted the victims even as the investigation is ongoing to get to the bottom of this incident. We exhort our citizens, for your help and cooperation with your government security forces in addressing these evolving challenges," Arevalo said.

Arevalo also urged citizens to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity or the presence of unfamiliar persons in their areas. **(PNA)**

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Authorities close in on Sulu blast suspect 'Kamah'

By MARTIN A. SADONGDONG

The world of "Kamah" is getting smaller.

Joint elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) raided Tuesday night the alleged lair of alias "Kamah," a person-of-interest in the bombing of Jolo Cathedral in Sulu province last Sunday, police said.

The operation resulted in the death of one Ommal Yusop, 62, an alleged member of the Ajang-Ajang Group and a cohort of Kamal, according to Chief Superintendent Graciano Mijares, regional director of Police Regional Office in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (PRO-ARMM).

But Mijares disclosed that Kamah and another accomplice managed to escape the pursuing policemen and soldiers.

Mijares said troops from the Patikul Municipal Police Station, 52nd Special Action Company (SAC), Regional Mobile Force Battalion (RMFB-14) and the military's Joint Task Force (JTF)-Sulu conducted the assault at Kalimayan Village, Barangay Latih, Patikul, Sulu around 6:30 p.m. after receiving an information on Kamah's whereabouts.

The troops, upon their arrival in the area, were allegedly welcomed with a burst of gunfire as Yusop engaged them in a shootout. Mijares said the security forces were forced to retaliate.

Moments later, Yusop, who is believed to be a relative of Kamah, was killed but the target of the operation was nowhere to be found.

It has yet to be verified if Yusop was just providing assistance to Kamah or he was among the three persons-of-interest earlier caught in a closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage lurking near the Jolo Cathedral before the two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were detonated last Sunday.

As of this writing, the death toll stands at 21 while 112 others were injured in the incident.

Senior Superintendent Bernard Banac, PNP spokesperson, said police forces will not stop until Kamah and his accomplices are arrested.

He also urged the group to surrender and cooperate with authorities to shed light on the case.

"The hot pursuit operations against alias Kamah" and others will continue," Banac said.

Authorities recovered during the raid a caliber .45 pistol and several empty shells.

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Ajang-Ajang man falls; Kamah escapes

By Francisco Tuyay, Maricel V. Cruz, Vito Barcelo and Joel E. Zurbano

GOVERNMENT troops killed a member of the Ajang-Ajang wing of the Abu Sayyaf Group that was blamed for Sunday's deadly bomb attack following a raid on its safe house in Patikul, Sulu Tuesday night.

Col. Gerry Besana, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command identified the slain militant as Ommal Usop, a member of the Ajang-Ajang group that the authorities hold responsible for the bombing of a Catholic Church in Jolo, Sulu that killed 21 people and wounded more than 100 others on Sunday.

The raid in Patikul came hours after President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to crush the Abu Sayyaf. Next pag

Ajang-Ajang...

From A1

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana also said the miltiary conducted airstrikes Tuesday on Abu Sayyaf positions in the towns of Patikul and Indanan in Sulu, in retaliation for Sunday's church attack.

He could not say how many sorties were conducted or if the airstrikes continued on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, four people who were seen on CCTV footage leaving the cathedral that was bombed in Jolo surrendered to the police, saying they wanted to clear their names.

Alsimar Maohammad Albi, 24, resident of Bus-Bus, Jolo, Sulu and Julius Abdulzam Albi, 17 of Brgy Takut-Takut said they had gone to a pharmacy to buy medicine for Alsimar's mother when the bombs went off.

Alsimar said he told Julius to stay away when the suspects who fled the scene appeared behind him.

Earlier, two others also came forward.

Alshaber J. Arbi, 18, a grade 11 student, and Gerry Isnajil, a high school teacher, also presented themselves to the police provincial office.

Security forces were still hunting for the bombers of the cathedral and said initially the attack was not a suicide bombing.

However, on Tuesday President Rodrigo Duterte contradicted them, saying one of the bombers had blown himself up outside the cathedral.

On Wednesday Lorenzana appeared to walk back the President's comments, saying: "The final conclusion is not there yet. It's still being investigated."

The probe was zeroing in a group tied to the notorious Islamist kidnap-for-ransom group Abu Sayyaf, which has pledged allegiance to ISIS.

Besana said troops of the Philippine Marines Ready Fleet Sulu, the 35th Infantry Battalion, the 110th Infantry Brigade, and the police Special Action Force swooped down on the Ajang-Ajang lair in Sitio Kalimayahan Village in Brgy Latih at about 5:40 p.m. but found no occupants there, including Kamah, the main suspect in the church bombing.

As troops were clearing the site, however, Usop fired upon them, forcing them to return fire and kill him on the spot.

Troops recovered a .45 caliber pistol, five bullets, a sniper scope, two cell phones and a motorcycle.

Besana said Kamah, the subject of a massive manhunt, is the logistic officer of the ASG.

Besana said the Ajang-Ajang belong to the Daulah Islamiya with five groups under Sawadjaan with 38 members and about 50 assorted high-powered firearms.

The Ajang-ajang is reportedly made up of mostly teenage bandits, who are said to be next generation members of the ASG.

The authorities have identified three of the suspects in the CCTV footage, including one alias Kamah, who supposedly wore the green jacket in the video and who is said to be a brother of Abu Sayyaf bomb maker Surakah Ingog.

Also on Wednesday, Sulu caretaker-representative and Puwersa ng Bayaning Atleta partylist Rep. Jericho Nograles on Wednesday urged the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police to conduct DNA testing on the two recovered heads from the blast site of the Jolo church bombing.

"Based on reports, the President and other officials have raised the possibility that suicide bombers carried out this appalling attack. It is entirely possible that these individuals are foreigners and DNA testing may be able to verify these reports," Nograles said in a statement.

Nograles was designated as the caretaker-representative of the First District of Sulu since September 2016 after the death of Rep. Tupay Loong in July 2016. **With PNA**

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'Kamah' eludes arrest

Duterte tags suicide bombers in Jolo attack

By MARTIN SADONGDONG

"Kamah", one of three men suspected of having a hand in the twin bombings of the Jolo Cathedral Sunday, eluded arrest Tuesday night following a raid at the Kalimayan Village in Barangay Latih, Patikul, Sulu.

Heavily-armed policemen and soldiers were met by a burst of gunfire as they approached Kamah's alleged lair.

During the shootout, troops killed Ommal Yusop, 62, an alleged member of the Ajang-Ajang Group of Abu Sayyaf, according to Chief Superintendent Graciano Mijares, regional director of Police Regional Office in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (PRO-ARMM).

Mijares said Kamah and another accomplice managed to slip out unnoticed.

The raid was conducted by the Patikul Municipal Police Station, 52nd Special Action Company (SAC), Regional Mobile Force Battalion (RMFB-14) and the military's Joint Task Force (JTF)-Sulu.

It was unclear if Yusop, believed to be related to Kamah, was just providing assistance or was one of three persons of interest caught on closed-circuit television near the blast site.

The twin blasts killed 21 and wounded 112 others.

Senior Superintendent Bernard Banac, PNP spokesman, said police forces will not stop until Kamah and his accomplices are accosted.

He also urged the group to surrender and cooperate with authorities to shed light on the bomb attacks.

"The hot pursuit operations against alias "Kamah" and the others will continue to be intensified," Banac said.

Authorities recovered during the raid a caliber .45 pistol and several empty shells.

On Tuesday night, President Duterte said the church attack in Jolo was a case of suicide bombing carried out by the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Citing intelligence information obtained from security authorities, the President said a suspected husband and wife were involved in the deadly suicide attacks at the Jolo cathedral that left several people dead.

"Yes we are sure of that. Walang iba. Nobody but nobody can perpetrate that kind of terrorism thereabout sa lugar," Duterte said in a press conference during his visit to Malabon about the involvement of the Abu Sayyaf group in the twin blasts in Jolo last Sunday.

"I have no doubt. That is what the military told me, that's what the police relayed to me. and I am guided by what the government workers would tell me," he added.

Duterte revealed that a woman wearing a cross slipped past the security cordon and blew herself inside the Jolo cathedral. He noted that it was "not the norm" in the country to frisk a woman going to church.

Another suicide bomber believed to be the husband, on the other hand, launched the attack outside the church, according to the President.

"Yes. Babae. Lalaki 'yung isa. Mag-asawa," Duterte said about the suicide bombers.

"Ang problema, iyan ang... Kasi 'yung babae, almost wearing a cross pa. malaki ang cross sa dibdib niya so who would ever think," he said.

"The other bomber was outside. There was no reason for him to be frisked. Either he was just passing by before blowing himself up," he added.

Asked if the bombers were Filipinos or foreigners, Duterte said there were still conflicting reports about the nationality.

"They said that it's Indonesian. Others say from the looks of it, it was -- wala kang makita. No part of the body... Sumabog eh. Kasi terrorism talaga iyan saka suicide iyan unless nilagay doon," he said. **(With report from Genalyn Kabiling)**

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Balita

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'Kamah' nakatakas, 1 patay sa raid

Nina MARTIN A. SADONGDONG, FER TABOY, at MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

Nagiging maliit na ang mundo para kay "Kamah," isa sa mga persons-of-interest sa pambobomba sa Jolo Cathedral sa Sulu.

Sinalakay ng mga elemento ng Philippine National Police (PNP) at Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) nitong Martes ng gabi ang umano'y lungga ni Kamah, ayon sa awtoridad.

Nagresulta ang operasyon sa pagkamatay ni Ommal Yusop, 62, sinasabing miyembro ng Ajang-Ajang Group at kasabwat ni Kamal, ayon kay Chief Supt. Graciano Mijares, regional director ng Police Regional Office in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (PRO-ARMM).

Gayunman, sinabi ni Mijares na si Kamah at isa nitong kasama ay nakatakas sa mga pulis at sundalo.

Isiniwalat ni Mijares na isinagawa ng Patikul Municipal Police Station, 52nd Special Action Company (SAC), Regional Mobile Force Battalion (RMFB-14) at Joint Task Force (JTF)-Sulu ang operasyon sa Kalimayan Village, Barangay Latih, Patikul, Sulu, dakong 6:30 ng gabi.

Ito ay matapos na makatanggap sila ng impormasyon hinggil sa kinaroroonan ni Kamah.

Pagsapit sa lugar, sinalubong ang tropa ng mga bala nang pagbabarilin sila ni Yusop. Sinabi ni Mijares na napilitang gumanti ang mga pulis at sundalo.

Makalipas ang ilang sandali, si Yusop, na pinaniniwalaang kamag-anak ni Kamah, ay nasawi ngunit ang target sa operasyon ay wala na.

Kinukumpirma pa ng awtoridad kung tinutulungan lamang ni Yusop si Kamah na makatakas o kabilang ito sa tatlong persons-of-interest na una nang nakunan sa closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera malapit sa Jolo Cathedral bago ang magkasunod na pagsabog ng improvised explosive devices (IEDs) nitong Linggo.

Habang isinusulat ito, nasa 21 ang nasawi habang 112 ang sugatan sa insidente.

Ayon kay Senior Supt. Bernard Banac, tagapagsalita ng PNP, hindi titigil ang mga pulis hanggat hindi naaaresto si Kamah at kanyang mga kasabwat.

Hinikayat din niya ang grupo na sumuko at makipagtulungan sa awtoridad upang mabigyan ng hustisya ang mga biktima.

"The hot pursuit operations against alias "Kamah" and the others will continue to be intensified," ani Banac.

Narekober sa operasyon ang isang .45 caliber pistol at ilang basyo ng bala.

BOMB IDENTIFICATION AND AWARENESS SEMINAR

Nagsagawa ang regional command ng Northeastern Mindanao Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) ng bomb identification and awareness seminar sa PRO 13 Multi-Purpose Hall Regional Headquarters sa Butuan City, nitong Martes.

Dinaluhan ito ng 200 local government unit (LGU) officials, business sector, security officers, police personnel at media personalities.

"This bomb Identification and awareness seminar is part of its education campaign in Mindanao, in response to the latest bombing that transpired in Jolo, Sulu that killed many innocent people," pahayag ni PRO 13 Regional Director Chief Supt. Gilberto DC Cruz.

"And besides this is everybody's concern to avert any untoward incident, everybody has a vital role to play," diin ng police official.

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FROM THE STANDS

DOMINI M. TORREVILLAS

Manay Gina's 'Inang Mahal'

Staying on the sidelines for four years after she finished her two terms as Representative of the 4th district of Pangasinan in the 15th and 16th Congress, Gina de Venecia is back in the political arena – under a new initiative – the Inang Mahal Party-list.

So, why is she running again?

The erstwhile representative explains: "In Congress, I learned the importance of institutionalizing social programs, to ensure that they will be implemented even with changes in government leadership. My former work as a member of Congress also made me realize that the pieces of legislation we passed are improving the lives of millions of people instead of mere hundreds. So, in order to make meaningful reforms in the lives of more women and girls, mothers like me, need an active voice in Congress to push for our causes.

"In my personal experience, I saw that compassion, hard work and sincerity are all good but they're not enough. In order to perpetuate excellent services that really work, we need to institutionalize our programs. And we need the power of legislation, to do that."

To her credit, Manay Gina founded four national institutions. She established The Haven for Women, a 16-building hospital in Alabang for abused women, women victims of armed conflict, victims of rape, and incest (The Haven has 15 regional centers nationwide); the INA Healing Center in Batasan Hills, Quezon City that helps orphaned mothers; the Haven for Children in Muntinlupa City and its four regional centers that help street children; and The Haven for the Elderly in Tanay, Rizal that helps abandoned senior citizens.

Those institutions were built when she was president of the Association of Women Legislators during her congressional terms. These were realizations of her desire to do meaningful projects when she was chair of the Congressional Spouses Foundation Inc. when her husband, Joe de Venecia, was Speaker of the House.

A tragedy befell her family when KC, Joe and Gina's daughter, perished in a fire that razed their residence in Makati. The bereaved Gina realized that there were many women who also lost children; this led to her organizing Inang Naulila sa Anak Foundation in 2005, to help console and lift the spirits of grieving mothers.

But those projects are not enough, Gina says.

Continuing, she explains, "Aside from economic problems, many mothers in our country also get married at a very young age."

This is confirmed by the Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study conducted

by the University of the Philippines Population Institute and Demographic Research Development Foundation that revealed, 'one in every 10 Filipina teen, aged 15 to 19 years old, is already a mother.'

"The scenario is all too familiar. After giving birth, these young mothers sacrifice their dream of having a promising career to take care of their family.

"The mother works full time, 24-7, caring for her husband and kids. And should there be a shortage in the family's budget, it's still the mother who would try to augment the family income by using her free time to make money as a *lavandera*, manicurist, banana cue or fish vendor.

"And when her children have all grown up. What's left of the mother? She can no longer be gainfully employed because of old age. Some of them are very insecure already because their beauty has faded and they have no money.

"Yet again, when their children get married, the mothers are, as usual, tasked to take care of the *apos*. And the cycle as caregivers goes on, until the mothers' final years. *Wala na. Hindi na nahinto sa kata-trabaho si Nanay.*

"Sadly, after working non-stop for years, the mothers do not receive any compensation. *Puro* T.Y. *lang serbisyo nating mga* mommies -- no *health benefits, no SSS*, nothing. That's why it came as no surprise that, in some provinces, I meet mothers, already in their senior years, who are still working as housemaids in order to survive."

These realities compelled the 69-year-old Manay Gina to organize a national political movement called ***Inang Mahal*** that will become the voice of all the mothers in the Philippines. It will work for the welfare and for the protection of mothers in all sectors of society.

Moreover, this party-list hopes to empower women and mothers in their critical role in shaping the consciousness of nation building.

"As mothers, we have shaped our world," she says. "And for every decent employee, community worker, doctor, caregiver, among others, there is a loving mother.

"I believe it's about time that we reclaim our right to help create a productive and peaceful society by undertaking programs that will encourage, preserve and promote family cohesion, social responsibility, community consciousness and self-reliance, with the end in view of enhancing the well-being of women, mothers and their families."

One can vote Gina to the 17th Congress by shading #69 Inang Mahal.

* * *

Email: *dominitorrevillas@gmail.com*

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POSTSCRIPT

FEDERICO D. PASCUAL Jr.

We sow violence, we'll all pay for it

VIOLENCE has been taking too many innocent lives. The explosions in places of worship in Jolo and Zamboanga this week are the latest manifestations of the culture of violence that misguided policies have been cultivating ironically in the name of peace and order.

We sow violence, we reap it. Who'll pay for it? We all will.

The rash of violence with religious undertones shows that the imposition of martial law in the entire Mindanao has not been able to push back the widespread lawlessness in the very bailiwick of President Duterte.

With the failure of the political leadership to close the cultural divide where violence continues to fester, it may be time for religious elders in the various sects to come together and assert themselves in leading their common flock back to the road of brotherhood and peace.

We do not subscribe to the principle being peddled by the biggest power broker in town that religious leaders (especially Catholic prelates) should not meddle in temporal matters that should be the exclusive domain of politicians.

Our secular and spiritual elders have the responsibility to attend to the proper care and upbringing of the citizen – the total person. Total, because it is impossible, it is futile, to separate the needs of the body and his soul that are bound together till death.

The duality of the human person must be recognized by political leaders. This can help them craft policies and programs with holistic approaches to such social problems as the narcotics scourge, juvenile delinquency and the abuse of the environment.

Malacañang mouthpieces echoing the anti-church rhetoric of President Duterte have been indoctrinating the people – by twisting the concept of separation of Church and State – that religious leaders have no business speaking and acting outside the confines of the house of worship.

There is nothing as stupid, if we may borrow the term from President Duterte's discourse on God, as believing and urging others to believe that religion or religiosity starts at the altar and ends at the church doors, and that prelates may preach only on faith and not on morals.

This is the same immoral split-view that big-time thieves in government use when pretending to look after the welfare of their constituents while plundering taxpayers' money. More than a mandate under the Constitution, accountability comes from a higher moral code.

With violence and the smell of gunpowder thick in the air, it is time to remind ourselves of the basic fact that the human person is both body and soul, which should be nourished together. Take away the soul, the principle of life, and the person dies.

It seems that President Duterte wants the Church to keep out of people's lives and thoughts, because he sees it as a serious threat. Like he does to other sectors seen as potential problems, he demonizes and intimidates the Church in the hope that it will retreat to a quiet corner.

The Church (a term used here to encompass all religious sects) will not retreat, if only because it has a higher moral obligation to look after the flock entrusted to it.

• CBCP to follow letter with action?

WE DO not know what to make of Catholic bishops suddenly asking for forgiveness for taking time to react to mounting attacks against the Church, much of it coming from the direction of Malacañang.

A clearer picture of what the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines meant in its pastoral letter released Monday will probably emerge when (if) their words are translated to action, possibly with mandated lay groups and other motivated sectors.

On the menacing culture of violence creeping over the land, will the bishops link up with religious leaders of other sects for common action?

Breaking their collective silence after a three-day assembly, the bishops said in their letter to the faithful titled "Conquering Evil with Good":

"Forgive us for the length of time that it took us to find our collective voice... We too needed to be guided properly in prayer and discernment before we could guide you."

The bishops said they have observed how the "culture of violence" has gradually swept the country, noting the explosions on Sunday at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu, where dozens were killed and several others wounded.

Without mentioning the President, the bishops noted that they have been the object of "cruel words" piercing through the soul of the Church like "sharp daggers." Some bishops have answered Duterte's tirades, but this was the first time the CBCP spoke up as a group.

The CBCP said in its letter: "We have silently noted these painful instances with deep sorrow and prayed over them. We have taken our cue from Pope Francis who tells us that in some instances, 'the best response is silence and prayer'."

Duterte has not relented in his attacks on the Church and its prelates, hurling accusations of corruption and sexual misconduct. This is a common tactic he uses against his foes, who are put on the defensive because of their vulnerabilities.

This recalls "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone" in a near-stoning scene related in the Bible of a woman denounced by a crowd. Sometimes it works in modern-day Philippines where critics or potential enemies in politics, business and the media are terrorized into keeping quiet. 8

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31 January 2019

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Page: 7

METRO CORNER

Caveat for the MNLF

By **ERIK ESPINA**

THE Sulu Cathedral bombing came as no surprise. It has and will always be par for the course in that part of the Philippines. The incongruous application of two laws in our republic is most evident, when stricter enforcement and compliance is served in Luzon and the Visayas, with Mindanao as discrepant, trumpeting a variant culture and history as basis to be errant of Constitutional governance. The irony here is, the state of 'Martial Law' remains in force and effect. Such a state weapon could precisely be the surgical approach to pursuing, collecting, arresting, and charging all illegal firearms, particularly in Southern Mindanao, to include private armies under Article 18, Sec 24, of the current 1987 Constitution.

The passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law must be the initial opening for government to require the MILF (who will be the predominant majority of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission) to have their illegal firearms registered and duly licensed. And high-powered arms for war surrendered.

I spoke to some friends close to MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari after the Sunday Cathedral blast which extinguished 20 lives and wounded 80 innocent human beings, and they await talks with President Rodrigo Duterte. They are "innocently" hopeful of Federalism with 2 separate states for the Bangsamoro (Maranao, Maguindanao, etc., and Tausog, Samal, Badjao, etc.). If the MNLF of "pro-Sabah and anti-Malaysia" is patient for federalism, what was the rush for the MILF to scurry BOL? I specifically warned those who have the ear of Misuari that 2 federal states for Bangsamoro will never see the light of day. The MILF, their pseudo MNLF partners, and Malaysian patrons will be defiant of such a proposal. In 3 years, it is pragmatic to consider, given the new power and funding granted the MILF, stalwarts and hardliners in the MNLF will be diluted and eventually co-opted.

The last stumbling block for an MILF and Putra Jaya alliance to excise any threat over existent protest for Sabah's return, will be an MNLF, Sultanate, and Sulu people politically neutered and sidelined from what is still a developing scenario and strategic step for what I fear in the next 20 years, a Bangsamoro State declaration joining the Malaysian Confederation? And the latter officially recognizing their existence and entry?

31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A1

Is there still a way to lasting peace in Mindanao?

REPUBLIC SERVICE

RICARDO SALUDO

BEFORE anything else, one offers deepest condolences and fervent prayers for the more than 20 killed and scores injured in the Jolo Cathedral bombing last Sunday. ➤SaludoA5

May God punish those responsible, not only for their irredeemably evil barbarity, but also for their distortion of religion to justify their atrocities.

Terrorism is never ever sacred or just. It is mindless, merciless mass murder, pure and simple, and anyone claiming that God decrees such wanton bloodletting is either woefully misguided or willfully misguiding themselves and others.

Turning to the headline topic, the public actions and statements following the January 27 two-bomb explosions seem more of what usually happens after such carnage. National leaders, foreign governments, and international bodies issued statements of outrage, sympathy, and resolve to defend peace and security.

Among early verbal responders were Saudi Arabia and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which groups Muslim nations; Pope Francis, the UN and the EU; and Presidents Xi Jinping of China and Vladimir Putin of Russia.

President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to mount all-out war against the terrorist Abu Sayaff Group, the prime suspect in the two blasts at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral. The AFP has locked down Sulu, and launched air strikes against the ASG.

Immigration authorities have intensified vigilance against foreign terrorists trying to enter. And both the AFP and the Philippine National Police have tightened security in Metro Manila.

Keep Bangsamoro on track

Well and good. But perhaps the most crucial among all responses to the bombing, and one that would help prevent more attacks, is the resolve by the Commission on Elections (Comelec), the security forces, and Mindanao leaders and voters to proceed with the second round of referendum voting for the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

There is yet no clear link between the BOL plebiscite and the Jolo attack. But if the blasts are in any way allowed to delay or derail the BOL, it could very well spur opponents of the law and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) which the BOL shall create, to stage more bombings.

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Anti-BARMM elements include not just the ASG, but also the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), which broke away from the main Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, when the MILF began negotiating for increased autonomy, setting aside its separatist goal.

Add to the ASG and BIFF the Syria-based Daesh cabal, which has inspired and funded Mindanao terrorism, including the 2017 assault on Marawi.

So, whatever else is done to counter terrorism, the government and the nation must make doubly sure that the BOL, now overwhelmingly passed by the January 21 referendum, is implemented for the establishment of the BARMM.

This will not only show Muslim autonomy opponents that violence will not stop peace efforts. It would also give Muslim Filipinos hope of a better life and greater self-determination — and reduce the lure of extremism.

In coming weeks and months, there should be resolute efforts by all authorities and sectors involved to establish the BARRM, addressing the inevitable problems and issues with the firm commitment to make the peace plan work.

And most of all, not to let any terrorist incidents — and there may be more, as the Tuesday Zamboanga mosque grenade blast shows — will stop Filipinos of all creeds and cultures from building peace and progress.

Ulama must denounce extremism

Along with the collective resolve to forge Mindanao peace, the region's leaders, both secular and religious, must lead all Mindanaoans in standing up against extremism of all stripes.

Let's be crystal clear: Terrorists thrive and multiply because there are respected figures and segments of society who actually give moral, if not material support to these monsters.

That is why the Abu Sayaff have survived despite the best efforts of our security forces. Ditto the BIFF and other Daesh-inspired extremists in Mindanao. There are Mindanao leaders who see some justification for the high-profile killing of innocent civilians. And as AFP intelligence found during the Marawi siege, local politicians and business people aided and abetted terrorists.

This coddling of killer extremists must stop if Mindanao is to finally achieve lasting peace, and the Bangsamoro autonomous region is to succeed as a peaceful, prosperous, and progressive entity in the Republic of the Philippines.

The starting point in any Mindanao campaign against extremism must be the Bishops-Ulama Conference. Bringing together 24 Christian prelates and 26 ulama and ustadz figures, the BUC held its 45th general assembly last November at the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Davao University, with no less than the Pope's representative, Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, in attendance.

The BUC, especially its Muslim members, must firmly and promptly condemn all terrorist attacks and their perpetrators as against Christianity and Islam, and the will of God. The Ulama League of the Philippines, whose ustadz are part of the BUC, must also declare a fatwa on terrorism and terrorists, as has been contemplated for years.

Needless to say, of course, leaders of all faiths must be swift and sweeping in condemning any and all savage violence. Any delay or reluctance to issue such blanket denunciation might just give moral succor to mass-murdering extremists, and buttress their twisted belief that their brutality would somehow earn heavenly reward.

This religious condemnation becomes even more imperative if the Jolo attack was a suicide bombing by a husband-and-wife team, as President Duterte said, quoting AFP intelligence. Only those who believe that Paradise awaits after they blow up themselves and others, would sacrifice their lives. The BUC must disabuse extremists of such false and destructive ideas.

Along with bishops and ulama, political and sectoral leaders must also lend their collective voice in condemning terrorism and terrorists. The nation's and the region's political establishment and key sectors must also make plain and public the major initiatives designed to uplift Mindanao's poor and disadvantaged.

After Jolo, Mindanao's response must be clear: We will continue pursuing peace and resisting those who exploit pains and grievances to sow chaos and brutality.

31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A1

When churches are bombed

FR. RANHILIO CALLANGAN AQUINO

SALADIN would have had every reason to go on a rampage. He had fought a drawn-out battle to reconquer Jerusalem. >Aquino A6

Earlier, Muslims and Jews alike fell to the swords wielded by crazed Crusaders driven either by holy zeal or plain (it is never plain!) bloodlust. And when at last Saladin had breached the Holy City's defenses, its Christian inhabitants feared the worst: Saladin would have had every reason to avenge the death of Muslims. But he did not. He was not only chivalrous. He exhibited the most exalted characteristics of a man of faith: seeing to the protection of women, allowing his erstwhile enemies to make their way to the sea, guaranteed safe conduct, and safeguarded the sacred shrines and holy places of the Christians.

While international humanitarian law makes the wanton destruction of churches and places of worship a war crime, the fact is that sacred sites are a prime target in armed conflict, particularly those that resonate with conflicting religious professions. Within a church, a temple or a mosque, the believer assumes a posture of complete surrender and submission to the will of God. Within sacred precincts, the believer knows that "the ground on which he treads is holy." In these sites he is prepared

for a privileged encounter with God — as many before him in the same places stood in the presence of the All-Holy, the *res tremendum et fascinans*...that which both attracts and holds at bay!

Precisely because of this, the church is the center of the community, its spiritual and cultural heart. *Bajo de la campana* was not a Hispanic colonial idiosyncrasy; people had to live within earshot of the pealing bells, because life was regulated by the hours of prayer and the days of worship. Basilica originally had to do with courts of law and the conduct of business, not with religion. But it became the accepted term for large churches of venerable origin because it is where large numbers of faithful assemble. Churches and mosques, for this reason, have been citadels of strength for those who have surrendered themselves to the embrace of God in faith and obedience. It should be evident then that an enemy, either of the people or the faith, would consider churches premium strategic objectives! Destroying a church is nothing short of an assault on the heart of a people and on the well-spring of its strength.

It is bad enough to insult a person because of some personal failing; it is worse to smear the memory of loved ones already gone on ahead. But it is worse of all and cuts most deeply when one attacks the most cherished beliefs and the deepest convictions of a person by which he orientates his existence, organizes his world and sets his life's goals. Religion, especially in institutional churches, lends a person a tremendous sense of "ontological security." The narratives, rites, rules and hierarchy are the guarantee that no matter the senselessness and anomy without, there is tranquility and stability within! Lobbing grenades into the sanctuary of a church (or a mosque, or a temple) is nothing short of attempting to shatter this ontological security — an attempt at pulling the rug from under the feet of those who believe.

As we mature in the realization that God has many names and is worshipped in a thousand places, and that his grace is not denied even those who deny him, with a denial born out of honest belief and the dictates of an unsullied conscience — a most important point that Vatican 2 teaches — then it is nothing short of reprehensible to assault others because of beliefs that differ from ours. One has every right to be firm and unyielding in his beliefs, but he has the duty to accord to others the very same right. No one can claim as an intrinsic right that which he denies of others!

But the contumely attains particularly execrable levels when the destruction of sacred places has political ends. Then religion is surely denigrated. Once more birthright is traded for lowly pottage. While, without a doubt, politics and religion do many times go hand in hand, faith offers the believer the ultimate level of justification and stratum of comprehension that no political affiliation or ideology can, of itself, attain. And that is what makes the bombing of a church because of political rancor particularly obnoxious and despicable—because so much is traded for what does not and will never measure up to it!

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31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A5

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth?

IN MY LINE OF SIGHT

RAMON T. TULFO

A GRENADE was thrown inside a mosque in Zamboanga City early yesterday morning, killing two of its occupants and wounding four others, just three days after two bombs exploded at the Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu, which killed 21 worshippers and wounded 111 others.

The Zamboanga City mosque was filled with preachers from Basilan who were preparing for the morning prayers.

That was apparently in retaliation for the bombing of the Jolo Catholic church.

It was meant as a warning that the bombing of Christian places of worship would be met with equal violence.

Many Muslim religious leaders know the terrorists among their flock.

The perpetrators of the mosque bombing could be soldiers or policemen out to avenge the death of some of their comrades in the Jolo Cathedral bombing.

The grenade that was used was the fragmentation type typically used by the military.

If the perpetrators indeed were government troops, they still practice their Christian faith as the object of their revenge were Muslim clerics and not ordinary members of the Muslim faith.

Twenty-one dead Christians against two dead Muslims is a lopsided exchange in favor of the latter.

That is not Israel's way of retaliating against Arabs who kill Jews. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

We should learn from the Israelis on numbers.

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Anyone who thinks that the perpetrators of the twin bombings at the Mt. Carmel Cathedral were not motivated by *jihad*, or the Muslim war against infidels or non-believers of Islam, is ignorant of the ways of the Islamic State, or IS.

The IS has owned up to the bombing of the cathedral in Jolo.

IS, which advocates the setting up of a theocracy in Muslim countries — or a caliphate — is in the Philippines where there is a large Muslim population.

Jihad dates back to the war between Christianity and Islam during the Middle Ages.

In the Philippines, Muslims in Sulu engaged Christians in jihad through the *juramentados*, or frenzied (amok) bolo-wielding Muslim warriors who were sworn to kill Christians or infidels in an early form of suicide attack. Juramentados hacked every Christian in sight, particularly soldiers.

The Moro amoks were so strong in their suicidal frenzy they would hack as many infidels as they could with their *barong* (the Tausog term for machete) before being killed in a hail of bullets from soldiers.

The juramentados of Sulu led to the development by the US military of the 1911-model .45-caliber pistol which could knock down an opponent with a single bullet.

When my father, Ramon Tulfo Sr., was a lieutenant assigned in Sulu in the late 1940s up to the early 1950s, there were incidents of killings of Christians by juramentados.

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The bombing of the Mt. Carmel Cathedral was a failure of intelligence, the military itself admits.

Military intelligence was informed by its Indonesian counterpart that a church in Jolo would be bombed months before the incident last Sunday.

How were the couple — a husband and wife from Malaysia, according to military intelligence — who had strapped bombs on their bodies able to enter the church when soldiers were guarding the entrance?

The term military intelligence is really an oxymoron, ha! ha!

In case our military doesn't know what the term is, the dictionary defines oxymoron as a combination of contradictory words, such as *cruel kindness*.

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The Manila Hotel owes the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) P17 billion and does not want to pay, according to Clint Aranas, the GSIS president and general manager.

The Manila Hotel got a loan from the GSIS for P197 million between 1995 and 1996 for renovation and payment of employees who were on strike, Aranas says.

Since then, the hotel has accumulated P17 billion in unpaid interest and surcharges for non-payment.

Who says behest loans went away with the ouster of President Marcos?

Emilio Yap, the Manila Hotel owner and also the owner of the *Manila Bulletin*, was granted the loan because of his great influence with the government as a newsmaker.

In short, Yap used his newspaper to scare the previous GSIS managements into not charging him for the loan.

But Aranas is not scared of either Emilio Yap, who died in 2014, or his heirs.

Nor is Aranas scared of the *Manila Bulletin*, which has sometimes given him bad press, apparently to intimidate him.

Ramon T. Tulfo has been a journalist since the 1970s when he started out as a newswriter and newsreader for radio. From 1973 until 1975, he was a deskman at the Philippines News Agency. In 1975, he moved to the now defunct Times Journal *where he covered various beats: transportation, health, labor, education and the military. In 1978, he joined the* Manila Bulletin *as a police reporter, becoming a columnist 1982 until he resigned in 1987. Until October last year, he was columnist for the* Philippine Daily Inquirer. *Tulfo is a self-styled private ombudsman through his radio show, "Isumbong Mo Kay Tulfo." The public service program has been responsible for the dismissal of numerous abusive policemen.* A5

31 January 2019 The Manila Times Page: A6

Juan de la Cruz: 'Farewell, Pepe'

THE twin blasts in Jolo were not about religion. The church was targeted to make it appear like they were. It was notably a political move, occurring just right after the plebiscite that confirmed the Bangsamoro Organic Law's (BOL) rejection. They want to make it look like 'religion' to widen support among the rest of the Muslims who voted in its favor. Whether IS inspired it or not, it was about territorial muscle-flexing.

The Abus are bandits and like the Mautes, will kill fellow Muslims who get in their way. Lasting peace will make all of them irrelevant as progress will deprive them of new recruits. They bombed the church to scare Christians away and leave the place alone to themselves. When the motive is territorial, it becomes political.

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I was invited as one of the resource persons at an Association for Philippines-China Understanding (APCU) forum, with the topic "Is China Friend or Foe?" I learned so much from the other panelists like Gen. Victor Corpus and Herman Tiu Laurel. An eye opener was the validation that China is militarily capable of retaliating when attacked by any country, including the United States. My gratitude for the privilege and opportunity to be part of the discussion to my APCU friends Secretary Raul Lambino, Dr. Rene Velasco and Jeffrey Ng.

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The House of Representatives passed on third and final reading last Tuesday a proposed measure legalizing the use and research of medical marijuana in the country. House Bill 6517, or the Philippine Compassionate Medical Cannabis Act, seeks to provide "compassionate and right of access to medical cannabis and expanding research into its medicinal properties." I am a firm believer in the health benefits of this plant especially if given to children and adults suffering from insurmountable ailments.

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I read in one of the dailies that Takeda Pharmaceutical Company of Japan announced that an experimental dengue vaccine appears to be safe and effective at preventing all four types of the mosquito-borne disease, meeting the main goal of the Japanese drug maker's late-stage clinical trial.

It was reported that Takeda collected blood samples from 20,000 children aged 4 to 16 from Asia and Latin America who participated in the Phase III TIDES trial. The study looked at the vaccine's safety and efficacy both in children who had been exposed to dengue and those who had not.

It quickly reminded me of Sanofi which did not collect blood samples from all subjects prior to beginning its trials. By the time the company confirmed the safety risk in 2017, the vaccine had already been used on more than 800,000 schoolchildren in the Philippines.

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It is really quite difficult to detect all forms of terrorist threat at any given time and place. Even First World countries with hefty investments in surveillance and intelligence-gathering infrastructure succumb to these violent attacks.

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The initial phase of the Manila Bay clean-up drive was praised by Filipinos because of the clutter-free coastline. The changed environment was a result of the clean-up drive launched last January 27 where

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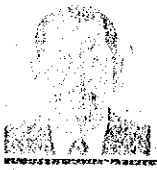

ROLLY G. REYES

different government workers and volunteers under the Manila Bay rehabilitation program participated. It has been dubbed the "Battle for Manila Bay," and is being run by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, with the cooperation of different government agencies.

This is the gist of what I said in my previous article:

"Sure, the Manila Bay clean-up is good as the first step but it will take a concerted effort of all. All tributaries connected with the bay should contribute in the rehab, Pasig River, Laguna Lake, and even coastal provinces like Cavite, Bulacan, Bataan and Zambales. All Metro Manila cities and municipalities should stop dumping waste and start dredging operations. Public and private sectors including residents should practice correct waste management and efficient drainage system in place to achieve the desired objective. An expensive endeavor but cost-effective in the long run."

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Musicians and music enthusiasts mourned the passing of Filipino rock icon Joseph "Pepe" Smith who was a member of the Juan de la Cruz Band, considered pioneers of Pinoy rock music. Smith passed away in the early hours of January 28, at the age of 71.

But who is Pepe Smith? Smith, (born Joseph William Feliciano Smith), gained fame as a pioneer of the Pinoy Rock genre in the 1970s with the Juan de la Cruz Band. His hit songs include *"Himig Natin," "Balong Malalim,"* "Beep Beep," and "Titser's Enemy No. 1."

Smith learned to play the drums by about age 9, and formed his first rock band at age 11, in 1959. This group, composed of friends from the Kamuning district, was first called The Blue Jazzers, later The Villains, then The Surfers. Smith became a rock sensation in Manila as the drummer and lead vocal of the Eddie Reyes and the Downbeats band, imitating Mick Jagger which earned him the title "Mick Jagger of the Philippines."

In December 1970, Smith joined the seminal Pinoy rock group Juan de la Cruz Band along with Wally Gonzales (guitar) and Mike Hanopol (bass). The band had some earlier line-ups, but this trio was the classic one. It became a quartet a few years later with the addition of Edmon "Bosyo" Fortuno, on drums, when Smith decided to play guitar instead.

Among their first exposures was the 1970 Antipolo Rock Music Festival, a concert similar to Woodstock, attended by thousands.

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This is my idea of a good smartphone: three days of battery life, 6.1" (diagonal) LCD display, three cameras with built-in stabilization, depth control, auto HDR with F1.2 opening, fingerprint, face and voice recognition to unlock, light and ultrathin, water and dust resistant, touchless screen gesture, gorilla glass with synthetic diamond coat, dual sim, memory card slot, both micro usb and lightning slots for charging, retina display, faster bionic chip, lifetime warranty on service and 3-year warranty on parts.

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Good work, good deeds and good faith to all.

21 January 2019 Daily Tribune Page: 5

Transition challenges

An overwhelming "Yes" for the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was seen in an unofficial tally on 21 January.

> ***Sulu's opposition brings to light continued rivalries or conflicts among members of the ARMM itself.***

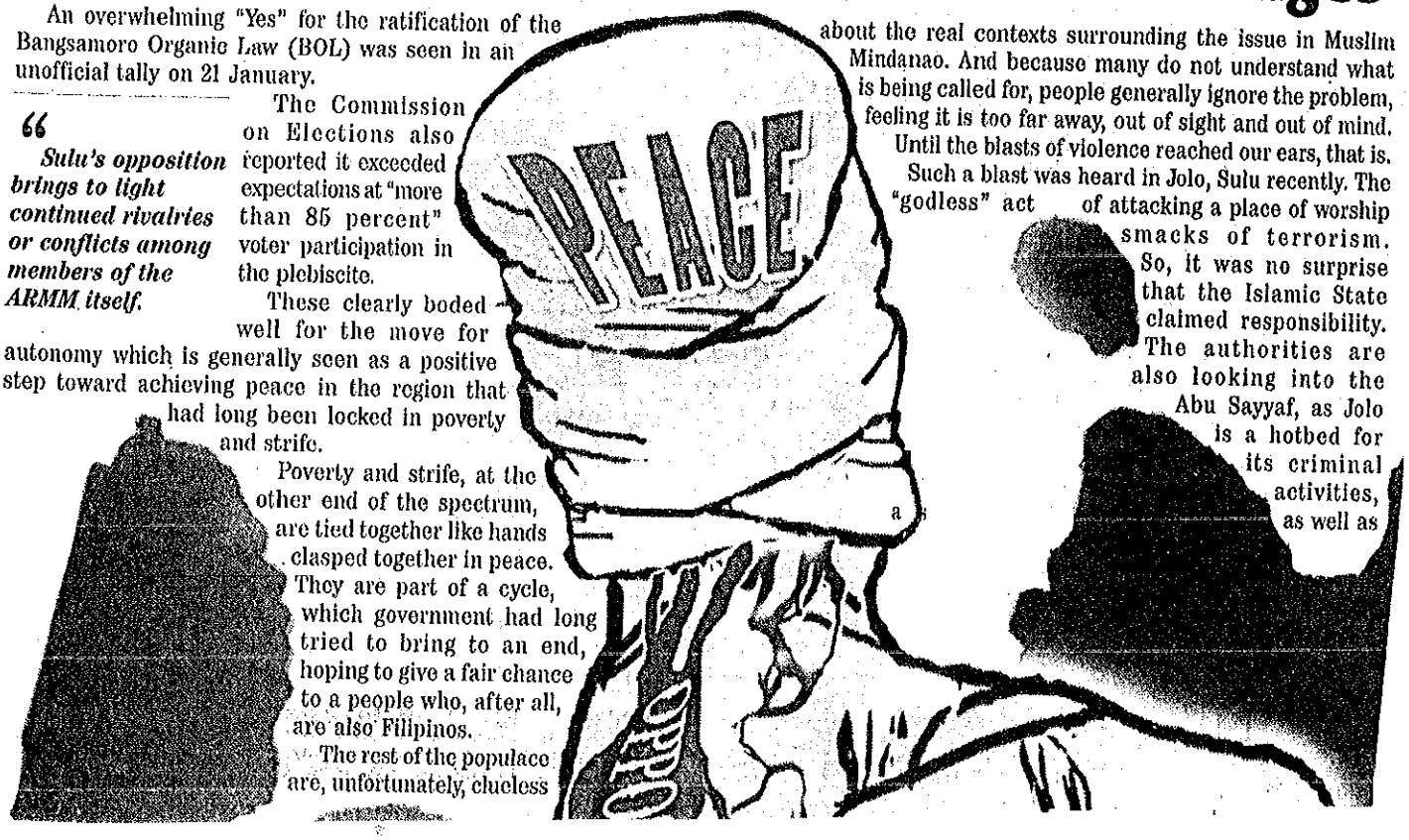
The Commission on Elections also reported it exceeded expectations at "more than 85 percent" voter participation in the plebiscite.

These clearly boded well for the move for autonomy which is generally seen as a positive step toward achieving peace in the region that had long been locked in poverty and strife.

Poverty and strife, at the other end of the spectrum, are tied together like hands clasped together in peace. They are part of a cycle, which government had long tried to bring to an end, hoping to give a fair chance to a people who, after all, are also Filipinos.

The rest of the populace are, unfortunately, clueless about the real contexts surrounding the issue in Muslim Mindanao. And because many do not understand what is being called for, people generally ignore the problem, feeling it is too far away, out of sight and out of mind. Until the blasts of violence reached our ears, that is.

Such a blast was heard in Jolo, Sulu recently. The "godless" act of attacking a place of worship smacks of terrorism. So, it was no surprise that the Islamic State claimed responsibility. The authorities are also looking into the Abu Sayyaf, as Jolo is a hotbed for its criminal activities, as well as



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other angles that may lead to the root of this deadly attack.

As of 28 January, reports said 12 civilians and six soldiers were killed in the two explosions that rocked the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

National Security Adviser Jun Esperon was the first to note the timing of the events, implying that those opposed to the BOL ratification may somehow have been responsible.

Government, strongly condemning the dastardly act, is pulling all stops to rope in the perpetrators.

Jolo had a strong negative vote to be part of the new autonomous government that is being created. Yet it doesn't make sense that those opposed would instigate violence to show they are opposed because that was already established through their majority vote.

What this means, perhaps, is that even with the overwhelming vote for the creation of the Bangsamoro, there are still issues that need to be fleshed out and fully understood for the whole transition to succeed.

Ultimately, there is that question of whether a new autonomous government will be effective in bringing peace through real progress in Mindanao.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), unfortunately, had been viewed as ineffective in ending the conflict in the region. The ARMM, composed of five provinces -- Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi -- generally supports the BOL which will create the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao or BARMM. Only Sulu was against it, but then also Cotabato and Isabela City which also will be part of BARMM.

Why the entire province of Sulu deeply opposes the Bangsamoro is something government must closely examine even though it makes sense for everyone to expect that the majority vote will be respected by all.

Obviously, this is not the case, as seen in that violent blasts. There was only hate in that action, a brutal attack on our sensibilities and a challenge to the Duterte administration's goals of bringing peace to Muslim Mindanao -- a show of respect, really, for the call for a chance to govern themselves -- and to finally allow economic development to flow in the region.

But Sulu's opposition brings to light continued rivalries or conflicts among members of the ARMM itself in which rebel groups are unwilling to work toward a common goal for the entire region. This does not bode well for a smooth transition at all, unless an acceptable compromise is reached.

Otherwise, not all wounds related to the Muslim Mindanao issue will heal and that could mean continued chaos.

That may just be too bad because the BARMM government, once set, will get more powers than the ARMM did to prove itself capable of deciding its own fate, moving for its own economic growth and managing its own natural resources.

An "unconditional funding amounting to P60 billion to P70 billion yearly," though a topic of contention for some, also gives it the fuel to push for long-needed development. When will all of Muslim Mindanao be ready to move forward when some people keep dragging it down?

> ***"Even with the overwhelming vote for the creation of the Bangsamoro, there are still issues that need to be fleshed out and fully understood.***

21 January 2019 Tempo Page: ____

Firing Line

Robert B. Roque, Jr.

Jolo blasts & the BOL

THE deadly claws of terrorism made their scratch mark once more in a twin bomb attack in a Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu last Sunday morning, leaving 20 people dead and more than a hundred others wounded.

Although the militant group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the attack, saying two of their suicide bombers detonated explosive belts at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, an initial military probe revealed that the bombs used were planted. The first bomb went off during a Mass while the second exploded from the utility box of a motorcycle in the parking area as soldiers rushed to help the wounded.

The military earlier said the dreaded bandits of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) could be behind the blasts. However, the pipe bombs used in the attack contained ammonium nitrate fuel which was not commonly used in previous Sayyaf attacks. Foreigners could have made the bomb or taught Sayyaf members how to assemble an explosive.

One alias "Kamah", a known bomb maker and said to be the brother of slain ASG leader Sukarah Ingog, has emerged as a person of interest after being caught on a surveillance camera while acting suspiciously outside the church before the blasts.

The bloodshed came two days after the Commission on Elections (Comelec) proclaimed the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) which would create a new Muslim autonomous region and sparked hopes of quelling the separatist violence that has lasted for several decades.

Jolo is a base of the ASG which was not part of the peace agreement with the nation's largest separatist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), whose deal with the government in 2014 led to the creation of the Bangsamoro region.

And apparently, there have been lapses on the part of soldiers securing the church surroundings considering that Mindanao is under martial law. How were the bombs placed inside the church and at the parking lot in spite of the soldiers' presence?

We understand that the Bangsamoro Organic Law was created to end the Moro insurgency but government should also be prepared for the opposition of other armed groups or the possibility of a creation of a new faction disputing the BOL.

You just can't please everybody all the time.

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SHORT BURSTS. Allow me to sincerely greet each and everyone a Happy New Year.. For comments or reactions, email firingline@ymail.com or tweet @Side_View. Read current and past issues of this column athttp://www.tempo.com.ph/category/opinion/firing-line/

Ipatupad na ng AFP

INANGKIN ng ISIS ang dalawang pagpapasabog sa simbahan ng Our Lady of Mt. Carmel sa Jolo. Ayon sa SITE Intelligence Group na nagbabantay sa mga aktibidad ng mga militante sa buong mundo, naglabas daw ng pahayag ang ISIS hinggil sa pagsabog sa Jolo. Dalawang suicide bombers daw ang nagpasabog, isa sa loob ng simbahan at isa sa may paradahan ng sasakyan.

Ayaw pang kumpirmahin ng mga awtoridad sa bansa kung ISIS nga ang nasa likod ng krimen. Sa ngayon, ang hinala ay Abu Sayyaf ang nasa likod, nang makita sa CCTV ang kapatid ng namatay na lider ng nasabing teroristang grupo sa paligid ng simbahan. Hindi pa alam kung mga suicide bomber nga ang nagpasabog, o may iniwan lang na bomba at pinasabog gamit ang cell phone. Patuloy ang imbestigasyon sa krimen. Kakailanganin nang maraming kagamitan para makalap ang mga ebidensiya, at matukoy ang mga salarin.

Maraming bansa ang kinondena ang pagpapasabog sa simbahan, pati ang MILF na kabilang sa usapingkapayapaan at nangunguna sa pag-ukit ng awtonomiya sa Mindanao. Hamon na rin ito sa administrasyon at sa AFP, dahil naganap ang pagpapasabog sa Mindanao, na nasa ilalim pa ng martial law na pinalawig pa nga hanggang sa katapusan ng taon. Kinukuwestiyon na nga kung epektibo ang martial law, kung sa loob mismo ng simbahan ay may nagaganap na ganito. Katatapos lang ng ratipikasyon ng Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), na inaasahan ng mga taga-Mindanao ay magdudulot ng kapayapaan sa rehiyon. Pero dahil nga sa nangyari, parang wala ring pagbabago. Hindi rin naniniwala ang mga analyst na titigil ang Sayyaf at ISIS sa karahasan dahil pumasa na ang BOL.

(Sundan sa pahina 5)

K KA LANG?... *Mula pahina 4*

Ilang dekada ng problema ng Pilipinas ang Sayyaf. Nagpahayag ng mga malupit na salita ang Palasyo laban sa mga nasa likod ng krimen. Kapag natukoy na kung sino, gawin na nila ang mga banta. Durugin na, sino man iyon. Kung Sayyaf nga, tapusin na ang mga salot na iyan. Hindi titigil ang mga iyan, kahit ano pang kasunduan ang gawin ng gobyerno. Kung "all-out-war" ang banta ni President Duterte sa mga terorista, ipatupad na ng AFP.

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Bandilat
Ang Nangungunang Pahayagang Tagalog sa Bansa ₱8.00

SEÑOR SENADOR

Erik Espina

Babala sa MNLF

NANINDIGAN ang Sulu na hindi ito sasama sa itinatatag na Bangsamoro sa Katimugang Mindanao. Hindi pa natutunaw ang kandila sa Cathedral ng Sulu ay dalawang bomba ang sumabog dito noong Linggo, sa kasagsagan ng pagsamba doon. Tinatayang 20 katao ang nasawi, kasama ang ilang sundalo, habang 80 pa ang sugatan. Maraming espekulasyon kung aling grupo ang may pakana sa tinaguriang "terrorist act".

Kung napapailalim ang buong Mindanao sa martial law, dapat nang gamitin ang kamay na bakal upang habulin, bawiin, at ipahuli ang lahat ng ilegal na armas sa rehiyon. Hindi na natin papayagan na dalawang batas ang maghari sa ating Republika. Batas na mahigpit na ipinapatupad sa Luzon at Visayas at pinalabnaw sa Mindanao. Kailangang ipalisensya at iparehistro na ang mga nakatagong armas doon. Anong silbi ng martial law kung nananatiling gabundok ang matataas na kalibre ng baril sa Mindanao? Kailan pa natin lalagariin ang pangil ng mga iyan, kasama ang mga private army?

Ngayong nanalo na sa plebisito ang Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) na itinutulak ng Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), panahon na talagang ilabas din nila ang kanilang mga sandatang pandigma at pormal nang malisensyahan ng pamahalaan. Tinawagan ko ang ilang miyembro ng Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) na kilala at malapit kay Chairman Nur Misuari at nakipagpalitan ako ng kuro-kuro hinggil sa naganap na pambobomba. Wika nila, hinihintay nilang makipag-usap kay Presidente Rodrigo Duterte at umaasa silang magkakatotoo ang planong federal government.

Sa isip ko lang, kung magkakaganoon man, bakit minadali pa ang BOL? Kung maaaring maghintay ang MNLF, bakit kara-karakang isinabatas ang BOL? Hindi ba makapaghimpil ang MILF para sa federalism? Sa lakad ng itatayong Bangsamoro Transition Commission na karamihan ay patakbuhin ng MILF sa loob ng tatlong taon, at ₱50 bilyong pisong dag-dag pondo taun-taon, nawika ko sa kausap kong MNLF: "Bibilhin ang mga Tausog para bumaligtad!"

Ang inaasahan ng MNLF na dalawang federal state ay isa para sa mga Maranaw, Maguindanao, at iba pa at ang isa naman ay para sa mga Tausog, Samal, Badjao atbp., na siguradong tututulan ng MILF kasama ng kanilang amo, ang Malaysia. Bakit? Dahil nais ng MNLF na ibalik ang Sabah sa Pilipinas. Gets ninyo na ang laro?

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PMA bilang pandayan ng mga susunod na pinuno

MULING pinatunayan ng Philippine Military Academy (PMA) ang kalidad ng leadership training na ibinibigay nito sa mga kadete na maaaring magamit kahit saan – sa mundo ng pagnenegosyo o maging sa pamumuno sa pamahalaan labas ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

"We are trying to develop some more the character of our cadets," na bahagi umano ng apat na taong pagsasanay ng mga kadete na sumasailalim sa nangungunang institusyong pangmilitar sa bansa, ayon kay Lt. Col. Harry Baliaga Jr., PMA chief information officer.

Dagdag pa ni Baliaga, ang pagsasanay ng mga kadete ay nakaangkla sa Camp Curriculum, na sumasakop sa character development, academic development, military at physical development – mga salik na humuhubog sa magiging mga lider ng AFP at ng bansa.

Ang PMA, aniya, ay patuloy na lumilikha ng mga 'leaders of characters', na hindi lamang magaling bilang miyembro ng militar ngunit matagumpay sa pamumuno bilang lider ng mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan.

Kabilang sa mga prominenteng lider ng bansa na nagmula sa PMA si dating Pangulong Fidel Ramos, na nagsim[illegible]la bilang isang plebe cadet ng PMA hanggang sa makapasok sa United States Military Academy (West Poin[illegible] [illegible]ang exchange cadet ng Pilipinas.

"Mga magagaling na military leaders ang nakikita sa ngayon, karamihan sa mga leaders ng government agencies are products of PMA, sila yung tumutulong sa nation building," ani Baliaga.

Ang makita ang mga dating kadete ng PMA na matagumpay at nangunguna sa kanilang mga larangan matapos ang buhay militar ay hindi lamang isang dangal para sa akademya kundi gayundin para sa mga kadete, aniya.

"We are proud, even the cadets realize that they were not wrong in choosing to study at PMA to be molded as future leaders of the country that is because they can see that the country's leaders come from this institution."

Nagbibigay ang PMA ng matibay na pagsasanay upang mahulma ang karakter ng isang tao at nagbibigay din ng kaalamang pang-akademya at pagsasanay sa paghawak ng mga sitwasyon, gayundin ang paghahanda sa katatagan ng tao upang malampasan ang anumang pagsubok sa labas ng tarangkahan ng akademya.

"Diyan naka angkla lahat ng pinapagawa sa kadete araw-araw para masiguro na paglabas nila, they are competent, and capable to lead organizations, and units in the field," pagbabahgi ni Baliaga.

Aniya pa, isinasabuhay sa lahat ng asignatura ang 'values formation" at sa lahat ng ginagawa ng mga kadete. Ang mga humahawak ng mga pagsasanay ng mga kadete ay sinanay din at pinagkalooban ng kakayahan upang maging [illegible]masahan sa pagbibigay ng tamang pagsasanay sa mga susunod na lider ng bansa.

Iginiit din ng opisyal na walang lugar sa akademya ang hazing at pagmamaltrato.

"It is part of the character development program of the academy where the cadets are molded to be 'strong', 'sturdy' without subjecting them to physical contact," dagdag pa niya.

"That's our goal, to guide and to direct these young cadets to become successful in their career but they just pass in the academy's halls for four years," ani Baliaga.

[illegible] pa niya, "we cannot claim that the bad attitudes some have were obtained in PMA. They just pas[illegible]e in PMA, four years lang sila dito, nasa kanila kung gusto nilang i-absorb, isabuhay ang trainings na [illegible]ngay PMA sa kanila kasi the remaining years of their lives and the years before they enter, is with their families, with their community, in some other places so maybe masasabi natin na hindi nila masyadong nainculcate ang values, culture ng PMA."

Itinatag ang PMA bilang isang institusyong pangmilitar, 120 taon na ang nakalilipas.

Sa mga nakalipas na taon, marami nang pagbabago ang ipinatupad sa sistema upang makasabay sa pagbabago ng panahon.

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Suicide bombing angle in Jolo blast 'questionable': DND chief

By Priam Nepomuceno January 30, 2019, 6:14 pm

MANILA -- The theory that suicide bombers are behind Sunday's bloody twin bombings in Jolo, Sulu remains hanging as the alleged terrorist groups that might be behind the attack are yet to claim responsibility for the incident.

"The theory of being a suicide bombing or not is (still) hanging in the air. It appears to be a suicide bombing *dahil maraming* (there were so many) body parts but we are still waiting for confirmation, *kasi* normally *yung mga* (because normally, the) ISIS (Islamic State), they will immediately identify the person, martyr, the cause," Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said during a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City Wednesday.

The DND chief admitted that he was initially poised to believe that the attack was done by suicide bombers.

"It appears to be a suicide bombing and I was also convinced immediately *na baka* (that it might be a) suicide bombing. But *kapag kasi sa*suicide bombing *na yan* (if it really is a suicide bombing), somebody will immediately claim *na itong tao ito, naging martir* (that this person became a martyr). *Wala naman tayong nakikitang ganon* (We do not see anything like that), although the ISIS, in their website claimed that the 21 Filipino crusaders died, *hindi naman niya sinasabi na si taong ito, ganito martir siya* (it did not say that this person became a martyr)," Lorenzana said.

As this developed, the DND chief added that they are still trying to identify a half-blown face recovered in the crime scene.

"*(May) kalahati ng mukha ng tao nasa* (There is this halved face which is at) SOCO (Scene of the Crime Operations) (that) you cannot identify, nobody (is claiming him yet). *Wala pa eh* (There is no update yet). So we're trying to have his DNA tested *para malaman natin* (so we will know) how we're going to find out. Maybe we can find out the nationality, Pilipino *ba o* (Is it a Filipino or) foreigner, *kasi may nagsasabi na* foreigner *daw yung nag*-suicide bombing *diyan. Wala pa namang Pilipino na nag*-suicide bombing *eh* (because there are those who say it a foreigner conducted a suicide bombing there. No Filipino has ever done a suicide bombing). So questionable pa yan (That is still questionable)," Lorenzana said. ***(With reports from Darwin C. Pesco, OJT, PNA)***

www.pna.gov.ph

DND won't recommend BOL poll suspension despite Jolo blasts

By Priam Nepomuceno January 30, 2019, 3:35 pm

MANILA -- Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Wednesday he would not recommend the postponement of the second Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite on February 6 despite the twin explosions that hit a church in Jolo, Sulu over the weekend.

"No. Because *malayo naman ito sa mga pinangyarihan. Malayo sa* Zamboanga, *malayo sa* Basilan, plus remember these six municipalities in Lanao del Norte. *Wala namang nakikitang kaguluhan diyan*, in connection with the BOL plebiscite. *Pati na yung* 67 barangays *sa* North Cotabato, we don't see any problems there (The area where the blasts occurred is far from where the plebiscite will be held. It is far from Zamboanga, far from Basilan, plus remember these six municipalities in Lanao del Norte. We don't see unrest there, in connection with the BOL plebiscite. And also the 67 barangays in North Cotabato. We don't see any problem there)," Lorenzana said in a press briefing.

He said a more solid reason for the Jolo bombing is the fact that military units in Sulu are cracking down hard on Abu Sayyaf elements in the province.

"*Wala naman sigurong* connection *sa* BOL. *Ang isang* reason *na binigay sa atin ng* military *sa* Sulu *ay* continuous operation *sa kabundukan ng Jolo at nako*-corner *natin yung mga* Abu Sayyaf *doon* (It has nothing to do with the BOL. One reason which was given to us by the military in Sulu is the continuous operation in the mountains of Jolo where they were able to corner Abu Sayyaf brigands). It could be diversionary tactics," the defense chief said.

Meanwhile, Lorenzana said he has yet to see any connection between the twin bombings in Jolo, Sulu and the grenade-throwing incident at the Zamboanga City mosque at 12:20 a.m. Wednesday that left two persons dead and three others wounded.

"*Wala naman kaming makitang* connection *kasi* dahil even in the past *na binobomba yung mga* churches *natin sa* Davao and Cotabato. *Wala namang naggagantihan* after that. *Yung* connection *na baka may gantihan, wala. Sabi naman ni Presidente nun sa* Jolo, Christians and Muslims have been co-existing for almost 100 years. *Wala namang alitan dun* (We do not see any connection because even in the past, there had been incidents of church bombings in Davao and Cotabato and there was no retaliation afterwards. As the President said before, in Jolo, Christians and Muslims have been co-existing for almost 100 years. There has been no dispute there)," he added.

Sunday's twin blasts at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral occurred barely a week after the first BOL plebiscite on January 21.

Sulu was the only province of the Autonomous Region Muslim Mindanao that voted against the measure which seeks to create the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The second BOL plebiscite will be held in the province of Lanao del Norte, except Iligan City; the municipalities of Aleosan, Carmen, Kabacan, Midsayap, Pikit, and Pigkawayan in the province of North Cotabato; and the 28 barangays to be included in the region.

The military has deployed more than 10,000 troops and support units to help secure the BOL plebiscite, alongside the Philippine National Police. ***(With reports from Darwin C. Pesco, OJT/PNA)***

www.pna.gov.ph

Airstrikes being conducted vs. ASG targets in Sulu: DND

By Priam Nepomuceno January 30, 2019, 12:51 pm

MANILA -- The military has conducted airstrikes against Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) targets in Sulu on Tuesday.

"(Yes), we did airstrikes yesterday (Tuesday). (I'm) not sure if there are (any) now," Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said in a message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA) Wednesday.

Lorenzana said the airstrikes were in retaliation for the twin bombings in the province's capital town of Jolo, which left 21 persons dead and 97 others wounded last Sunday.

"(I) don't know how many sorties (were conducted)," the Defense chief said when asked how many bombing missions were carried out by the military against the ASG rebels.

Reports said government troops launched airstrikes against the ASG in the towns of Patikul and Indanan in Sulu, following President Rodrigo Duterte's order to pulverize the terror group.

Calls for calm

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) called on the public to exercise sobriety and calm in the light of the recent attacks.

"Let us not be swayed by the recent developments that seem to project a religious complexion in the recent tragic incidents: in Jolo on Sunday (January 27) and on January 30, 2019 (Wednesday) around 20 minutes past midnight," AFP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Edgard Arevalo said in a statement.

Three days after the deadly attack at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, a grenade blast inside a mosque in Zamboanga City killed two persons and injured three others.

"The AFP Chief of Staff, Gen. Benjamin Madrigal Jr., conveys the sincere condolences and deep sympathies of soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines to the victims of the attack against civilians inside a mosque at Barangay Talon-Talon in Zamboanga City," Arevalo said.

He assured that government troops are currently conducting an investigation to determine the motive of the attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.

"Your security forces have assisted the victims even as the investigation is ongoing to get to the bottom of this incident. We exhort our citizens, for your help and cooperation with your government security forces in addressing these evolving challenges," Arevalo said.

Arevalo also urged citizens to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity or the presence of unfamiliar persons in their areas.

"Gen. Madrigal assures that the best AFP commanders are on the ground and that, in cooperation with the PNP and other agencies of government, are firmly committed to neutralizing these threats. But we can best attain that if we have the unequivocal support of our people in every sitios and barangays since they are more familiar in their localities," he said. ***(PNA)***