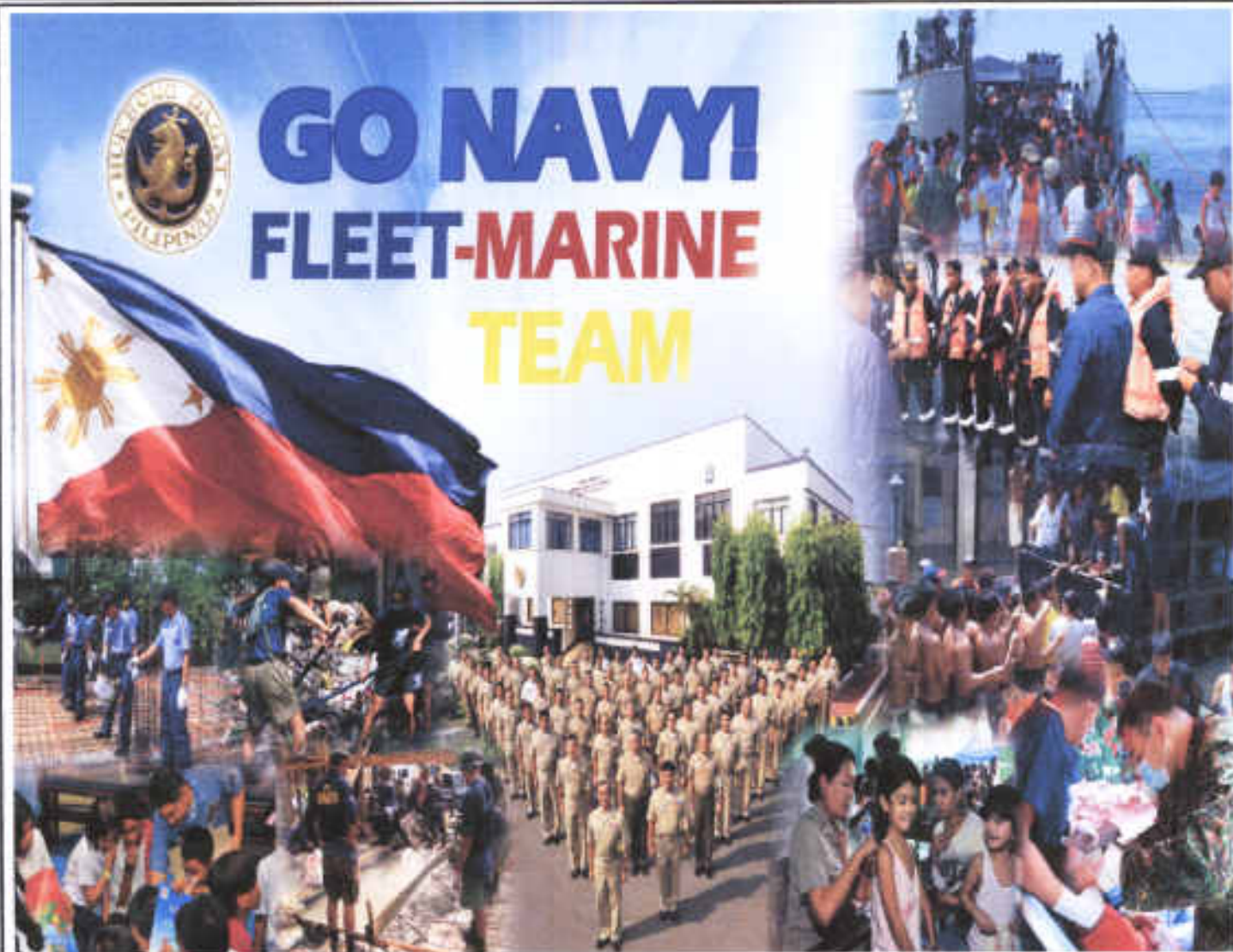




"NAVY 2020: STRONG AND CREDIBLE"

Headquarters Philippine Navy
Naval Station Jose V Andrada
2335 Roxas Boulevard, Manila



***"A Vital Partner for Peace, Security & Development
of our Maritime Nation"***

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Date: 06 FEB 2012

A. AFP – PNP RELATED ISSUES / NATIONAL SECURITY

	Title	Writer	Newspaper	Page
1	Lim cites Russian aid to PH sailors	I Cabayan	Tonight	3
2	Air Force XI wards off Navy		Philippine Star	23
3	President Approves Movement Of Generals	E Aben	Manila Bulletin	6
4	Noy approves minor revamp in AFP	M Mallari	Daily Tribune	3
5	AMWSLAI raises fund for fallen members' families		Tonight	7
6	Army's RDC marks 65 th foundation day	M Purification	Tonight	7
7	Sundalo tepok sa enkuentro	M Obleada	Police Files	3

B. MILF / MNLF / ASG / JI RELATED ISSUES

	Title	Writer	Newspaper	Page
8	'Dr. Abu' Planning Attack When Killed— Security Officials	E Aben	Manila Bulletin	4
9	Malaysia sending team to identify slain JI terrorists	R Pareño	Philippine Star	1
10	Terrorists planning attacks when bombed in Sulu	AP	Manila Standard	A2
11	AFP wants to exhume bodies of Abu fatalities of air strike	R Africa	Malaya	B4
12	Sulu air strike: PHL, DI 'SAFE HAVEN' NG TERORISTA—PALASYO		Saksi	2
13	Top terrorists may have evaded bombs	AP	PDI	A1
14	Gobyerno alert sa resbak ng ASG, JI-DILG		Saksi	2

C. NPA RELATED NEWS

	Title	Writer	Newspaper	Page
15	Soldier killed in clash with NPAs in Agusan	A Romero	Philippine Star	A-30
16	Leader captured	E Aben	Manila Bulletin	6
17	Military mum on talks for release of top Red leader	F Solmerin	Manila Standard	A3
18	CPP seeks independent probe into US role in Sulu air strike	M Mallari	Daily Tribune	2
19	Top NPA leader in Quezon nabbed	D Mallari	PDI	A18
20	NPA amazon captured in Quezon	E Aben	Tempo	5
21	Top NPA lider, 1 pa arestado	M Zoleta	Ngayon	8

22	Lider ng NPA natiklo	MO	Police Files	3
23	Another top Quezon rebel leader falls	G Formaran	Tonight	12
24	Soldier killed in Agusan	P Gutierrez	Tonight	13
25	Top Quezon rebel leader, aide nabbed	P Gutierrez	Tonight	13

D. EDITORIAL

	Title	Writer	Newspaper	Page
26	DEFENSE POLICIES	ATTY. RENE ESPINA	Manila Bulletin	11
27	Air Force Broncos or US Predators?	R Farolan	PDI	A15
28	No joke	AM Pamintuan	Philippine Star	14

E. PHOTOS

	Title	Writer	Newspaper	Page
29	Military trucks	EPA	Philippine Star	A-30

F. ONLINE NEWS

	Title	Link
30	PAL Interclub set in Davao	http://www.tempo.com.ph/2012/pal-interclub-set-in-davao/#.Ty-8J1xSR8s

Lim cites Russian aid to PH sailors

By **ITCHIE G. CABAYAN**

MANILA Mayor Alfredo S. Lim extended his utmost thanks, gratitude and appreciation to the Russian government for rescuing and helping Filipino sailors who get victimized by Somali pirates.

Lim made the pronouncements as he welcomed a Russian delegation that brought to the country the flagship of Admiral Panteleyev and two other ships, "Boris Botuma," a large sea tanker, and "Fotiy Krylov," a rescue tug.

The vessels arrived in Manila for a visit to promote friendly ties between the Philippines and Russia.

City officials led by Lim and chief of staff and media bureau chief Ric de Guzman visited the huge anti-submarine ship "Admiral Panteleyev" which docked at Pier 15 of the Manila South Harbor for a guided tour, which was followed by cocktails with the Russian Federation Ambassador, H.E. Nikolay Kudashov and the ship officers.

Subsequently, Lim presented the symbolic keys to the



Manila Mayor Alfredo S. Lim receives a framed photo of the Large Anti-Submarine Ship "Admiral Panteleyev" from Captain Andrey Saprikin, senior commanding officer, during the Russian delegation's courtesy call on the mayor. The Russian guests were led by Ambassador Nikolay Kudashov, of the Russian Embassy.

Photo by JERRY S. TAN

city to Kudashov and Captain Andrey Saprikin, senior commanding officer, during the Russian delegation's courtesy call on the mayor.

There, the mayor reiterated the country's gratitude for the help being extended to Filipino sailors against Somali pirates. The inci-

dents were unreported to the Philippine authorities by the ship owners.

In turn, Lim was presented with a framed photo of the anti-submarine ship. The Russian guests were accompanied to Manila City Hall by Philippine Navy Fort Bonifacio, Taguig headquarters

representative Lt. Lloyd Aynayan.

The said Russian warship, with its glorious history, is part of the Russian Pacific Ocean Fleet that was deployed in 2009 as part of their operations to help combat piracy at the Somalia coast.

PASARGAD PLAYS GILLIGAN TO SCORELESS DRAW

Air Force XI wards off Navy

Defending champion Air Force Phoenix leaned on striker Ian Araneta's heroics as it turned back Navy Red Juice, 2-1, to keep its slim hopes alive in the First Division of the United Football League at the University of Makati field over the weekend.

Pasargad, meanwhile, held a heavily favored Stallion Gilligan side to a scoreless draw, establishing Loyola Meralco Sparks, which downed LBC-backed Kaya, 2-0, at the Rizal pitch, to seize the solo lead with 12 points.

Stallion settled for 10 points behind Loyola, spearheaded by Phil and James Youngusband, while Kaya stood just a point behind Stallion with nine points on three victories in four outings following that heartbreaking loss in Loyola.

Pasargad improved to two points.

Koman Lee Joo Young, who currently leads the league in goals scored with six ahead of the Youngusbands with four apiece, failed to get on a scoring act against the tough Pasargad defenders.

Araneta, meanwhile, unleashed a pair of goals in just a nine-minute span early in the second half to power the Airmen, also the Cup titlists, to their first win after two stinging setbacks and a draw.

The victory thus propelled the Air Force Phoenix from a share of ninth to solo seventh with four points.

The Navy men tried to salvage the match following a goal by Marlon Pirero just a minute left in regulation but failed to knock in the equalizer in injury time for their third loss against a draw.

President Approves Movement Of Generals

By ELENA L. ABEN

President Benigno S. Aquino III has approved the new designations of five generals and senior officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, a military spokesman said yesterday.

This developed as AFP Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Jessie D. Delloso, is set to formally hand over today the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) to its new commander, Lt. Gen. Anthony J. Alcantara, during a change of command ceremony at Camp General Servillano Aquino in Tarlac City. Defense Secretary Voltaire T. Gazmin is guest of honor and presiding officer.

Alcantara, the AFP Deputy Chief of Staff, will assume the post as the 43rd commander of Nolcom.

On the same day, a joint change of chief of office of the internal auditor and retirement ceremony in honor of Maj. Gen. Rolito B. Abad will be conducted at the AFP general headquarters building in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City. Abad is a member of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) "Makatarungan" Class of 1978.

Col. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos Jr., AFP spokesman, said the President

has approved the new designations of five armed forces generals and senior officers.

Brig. Gen. Rolando B. Tenefrancia, member of the PMA "Matapat" Class of 1979, will be the new commander of the Civil Relations Service (CRS), AFP. He is the current chief of staff of the Philippine Army.

To take over Tenefrancia's position as Army chief of staff is Brig. Gen. Maximo G. Caro, commandant of the PMA Cadet Corps. He is a member of the PMA "Sandigan" Class of 1982.

Brig. Gen. Nestor P. Deona will be the new commander of 2nd Air Division of the Philippine Air Force (PAF). He is the current deputy commander of the 2nd Air Division based in Mactan-Benito Ebuena Air Base, Lapu-lapu City, and is a member of the PMA "Mapitagan" Class of 1980.

To replace Deona as the new deputy commander of the 2nd Air Division is Brig. Gen. Edwin Manuel F. Remotigue. He is the current Wing Commander, Air Defense Wing, PAF based in Floridablanca, Pampanga, and is a member of the PMA "Dimalupig" Class of 1981.

Replacing Remotigue as the new Wing Commander of the Air Defense Wing is Col. Raul Del Rosario. He is

the current Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Intelligence and is a member of the PMA "Maharlika" Class of 1984.

Brig. Gen. Ricardo Itainier G. Cruz III will be the new commander of the 1st Infantry Division (1ID), Philippine Army. He is the current assistant division commander of the 10th Infantry Division (10ID) based in Mindanao. He is a member of the PMA "Mapitagan" Class of 1980.

To replace Cruz as the new assistant division commander of 1ID is Brig. Gen. Leonilo P. Bongcawil, current commander of the 701st Infantry Brigade and is a member of the PMA "Sandigan" Class of 1982.

To assume Bongcawil's post as the new commander of the 701st IB, 7th Infantry Division (7ID), is Col. Rey Leonardo B. Guerrero, commander of Task Force Davao. He is a member of the PMA "Maharlika" Class of 1984.

"The change of leadership in our institution's units and offices is part of our continuous dynamism, which is important in performing our mandate effectively and efficiently. It is part and parcel of our progressive changes as we continue to strive to be a more responsive and professional military organization," said Delloso.

Noy approves minor revamp in AFP

A minor reassignment in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was approved by the commander in chief President Aquino affecting five key positions in the 125,000-strong organization.

Brig. Gen. Rolando Tenefrancia, a member of the ruling Philippine Military Academy (PMA) "Matapat" Class of 1979, was tapped as incoming commander of the AFP-Civil Relations Service (CRS) which was vacated by the appointment of Maj. Gen. Eduardo del Rosario as Army 2nd Infantry Division (ID) chief recently.

Tenefrancia will relinquish his post as Army chief of staff to Brig. Gen. Maximo Caro, the outgoing commandant of cadets of the PMA. Caro is a member of the PMA "Sardigan" Class of 1982.

The President also approved the promotion of Brig. Gen. Rainier Cruz III, of PMA "Mapitagan" Class of 1980, as new commanding general of the Army's 1st ID. He will relinquish his post deputy commander of the 10th ID to Brig. Gen. Leonilo Bongcawil.

Bongcawil, of PMA Class of 1982, is the outgoing commander of the Army's 701st Brigade. He will be replaced by Col. Rey Leonardo Guerrero, outgoing commander of Task Force Davao and a member of PMA "Mahatika" Class of 1984.

At the Air Force, the President approved the designation of Brig. Gen. Nestor Deona (PMA Class of 1980) as

commanding general of the 2nd Air Division. He was the deputy commander of the Air Force command prior to his promotion.

Promoted as deputy 2nd Air Division commander was Brig. Gen. Edwin Manuel Remotigue, of PMA Class of 1981 and former wing commander of the Air Defense Wing based in Florida Blanca, Pampanga.

The incoming commander of the Air Defense Wing is Col. Raul del Rosario, of PMA Class of 1984, the outgoing Air Force assistant chief for intelligence or A2.

"The change of leadership in our institution's units and offices is part of our continuous dynamism which is important in performing our mandate effectively and efficiently. It is part and parcel of our

progressive changes as we continue to strive to be a more responsive and professional military organization," AFGP Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Jessie Dellosa said.

Meanwhile, AFP Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Anthony Alcantara will formally assume as Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) chief today during ceremonies scheduled in Camp Gen. Servillano Aquino in Tarlac City. Defense secretary Voltaire Gazmin will preside over the change of command rites.

Alcantara will take over the command from Dellosa, his mistah from the PMA Class of 1979 who was named as AFP chief last December. **Mario J. Mallari**



CHECK — DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo and Sr. Supt. Ronald Vicente hold the check donated by AMWSLAI to the families of fallen soldiers and policemen. Looking on are AMWSLAI Chair and President Col. Ricardo L. Nolasco Jr., PAF (ret.) and his board of trustees.

AMWSLAI raises funds for fallen members' families

THE Air Materiel Wing Savings and Loan Association, Inc. (AMWSLAI), a non-stock firm servicing uniformed members and personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of National Defense, recently raised funds for families and dependents of fallen soldiers and cops through a song competition featuring 11 singing masters from the AFP.

AMWSLAI Chairman and President Col. Ricardo L. Nolasco, Jr., PAF (ret.) turned over the proceeds of the first ever AMWSLAI AFP/PNT Singing Soldier

Battle of the Champions to Interior and Local Government Secretary Jesse M. Robredo towards the end of the contest held Thursday evening at the Music Museum.

Retired Navy Ensign Mel Surrillano, Eat Bulaga's first AFP Singing Soldier champion, rumped away with the top prize of P150,000, beating TSgt. Wilhelmo Celestial and PFC Malou Villanexo-Eslaga both of the Philippine Army. Celestial, also a former Eat Bulaga Singing Soldier winner, placed second and Eslaga third, respectively.

Former President Joseph Estrada, Madame

Imelda Marcos, U.S. Consul General Mike Schumel, Mrs. Mary Rose Dellosa, Cory Quirino Tapalla, and arts patron and philanthropist Jenny Napoles sat as judges, with Prof. Raul M. Sunico of the UST Conservatory of Music as chair.

Completing the board of judges were Joseph Calata of the Calata Group of Companies, Central Affirmative President and CEO Joel Cruz and entertainment editors Emma Velarde of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Crispina Martinez-Belen of Manila Bulletin, Ricky Lo of the Philippine Star, and Eugene Asis of People's Journal.

Army's RDC marks 65th foundation day

THE Research and Development Center (RDC) of the Army Support Command under the leadership of Col. Victor Bayani, QMC (GSC) PA, celebrates its 65th foundation tomorrow, February 7, and continues to perform with zeal and dedication its mission to conduct research and development to enhance Philippine Army capabilities in furtherance of the self-reliant defense posture (SRDP) program.

The accomplishment of the RDC has become a public record considering the various projects undertaken under the SRDP program and vast number of items produced not only by the AFP as a whole but also other government agencies which were tested and evaluated by the center to determine compliance with required specifications.

Recently, the center completed the sensor and sight modules for assault and reconnaissance technology (SSMART) include the remanufactured ammunition (CTG, 7.62 mm ball and CTG, 5.56 mm ball) and modular gun mount for truck, 1 1/4 ton troop carrier.

At present, it is supervising the implementation of other SRDP projects such as voice scrambler, security and escort armored vehicles and localized backup battery pack.

Marlon Purificacion

Sundalo tepok sa enkuentro

NASAWI ang isang sundalo makaraan maka-engkwentro sa isang grupo ng mga armadong kalalakihan sa Sibagat Agusan del Sur kahapon ng umaga.

Nakilala ang unang sundalo na si SSgt. Gomersindo Dabato nakatalaga sa 26th Infantry Battalion ng Philippine

Ayot kay Col. Leopoldo Gabon, spokesman ng Eastern Mindanao Command, dakong 5:30 ng madaling-araw ng maka-engkwentro ng mga elemento ng 26th IB ang limang armadong kalalakihan sa Brgy. Magkalape, Sibagat, Agusan del Sur.

Nabatid na nagtagawa ng operasyon ang mga sundalo matapos na makatangap ng report mula sa mga residente kuugnay ng pangitkil ng pitong armadong kalalakihan para sa mga biktima ng bagyong Sendong.

Nasabi ng mga sundalo ang mga suspek na lumamang sa limang minutong balahikan sa ikinasawi ni Babato nang bala ng bala sa dibdib.

Mabilis naman tumakas ang mga suspek na bibit ang ilang mga pagatan kasamahan. Narekober ng mga sundalo ang (2) M14 rifle, AK 47 sa pinangyarihan ng insidente.

Patuloy naman ang pagbagit ng militar laban sa mga namakan na mga suspek. (Mark Obledo)

'Dr. Abu' Planning Attack When Killed – Security Officials

By ELENA L. ABEN and AP

Two Philippine security officials said yesterday that key Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) commander known as "Dr. Abu" was planning terror attacks when he was killed in a United States-backed airstrike last week.

The officials said Abu Sayyaf commander Umbra Jumdailm, also known as Dr. Abu, who was killed Thursday in a jungle hideout on Jolo island, Sulu, was harboring Southeast Asian terrorist figures providing funds and bomb-making training.

Jumdailm, also known as "Dr. Abu" and "Abu Pula," is a known founder of the Abu Sayyaf.

Col. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos Jr., Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman, said top Jemash

Islamiyah (JI) terror network suspect Zulkifli bin Hir, alias "Marwan," from Malaysia and Singaporean militant Abdullah Ali were killed along with Jumdailm and 12 other gunmen.

Ali, who has the alias "Muawiyah," is a JI personality believed to be the contact of top Bali, Indonesia bombing suspect Umar Patek.

Two security officials, however, said the two are still alive and not in the area that was bombed.

A sample specimen believed to be that of JI's Marwan is now in the custody of United States authorities for DNA testing, a military official said on Sunday.

Marwan is among the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) most wanted terrorists and carries a \$8 million bounty on his head.

"Mauiyah" also carries a \$50,000

bounty on his head while Jumdal has a reward of \$140,000.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has also identified eight more of the 15 killed during the air raid, including a third JI member who had entered the country in December, a certain alias "Jumong."

The other slain militants were Moammad Jumdal also known as "Ting", son of Dr. Abu; Tati Jamhali, alias "Leong", alias "Teng", alias "Muin", alias "Julpe", and Tuan Nash Lipae - all ASG members.

Statements made by the military to the media indicate that not one body of the 15 Muslim extremists allegedly killed during the surgical military operation in Barangay Duyan Kabau, Parang, Sulu.

However, Burgos said at a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo that they have already identified the areas where the slain militants were believed to have been buried by their comrades following the air raid.

Burgos added the AFP will be coordinating with Malaysian authorities, as well as, families especially of the slain terror leaders for the conduct of a DNA test.

But a military official told the Ma-

nila Bulletin that sample specimen believed to be that of "Marwan" was already submitted to United States authorities for DNA testing.

The official said the conduct of a DNA test is necessary as this will provide the scientific proof that the top terror leader was indeed among those killed in military operation in Sulu province.

He added this is also needed considering the United States government has offered a large amount of bounty for the capture of Marwan, Mauiyah, and Dr. Abu.

The official further said the military is definite on its report about the death of the three senior JI and ASG leaders.

"The AFP statement is based on the testimony ng source on the ground who confirmed the presence of the three terror personalities during the air strike," said the official, adding that Thursday's operation was the result of an intense intelligence build up.

He added no bodies were recovered because the impact of the four 500-pound bombs dropped by two OV10 aircrafts of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) may have obliterated its

targets, including the terror leaders.

"Mga human flesh na lang ang na-recover from the site and sample specimen were already sent to Hawaii for DNA testing," said the AFP official.

A US official in Washington has earlier also reportedly confirmed that Pentagon provided assistance to the air strike on a jungle of Parang, Sulu where some 30 militants were temporarily camped before dawn on Thursday.

This was also confirmed by the AFP official, although he stressed that the assistance provided by the US during the operation was purely technical.

"They helped us by providing information and through signal intelligence and electronic intelligence, but the actual operation was conducted purely by the AFP," according to the source.

He further said the DNA process may take some time before the result will be known, even as he echoed the AFP statement that Marwan, Mauiyah, and Dr. Abu are already dead.

"All we need now is scientific proof to support our claim and that will come once we get the result of the DNA test," he stated.

Malaysia sending team to identify slain JI terrorists

ZAMBOANGA CITY - The Malaysian police is sending a team of experts to help identify the terrorist leaders killed during the airstrike Thursday in Sulu province, the military said yesterday.

Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) chief Maj. Gen. Noel Coballes said they welcome the assistance

By **ROEL PAREÑO**

provided by the Malaysian police to identify the remains of the 15 terrorists killed during the airstrike.

"Westmincom will provide the necessary support if it is a government-to-government agreement," Coballes said.

He said Malaysia's help is important since one of the terrorists killed during the airstrike is Zulkifli bin Abdul Hir alias Marwan, a Malaysian.

Marwan was a US-educated Malaysian engineer and a top leader of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). He also formed a terrorist group in Malaysia, the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia.

Aside from Marwan, the airstrike also killed top terror leaders Muhamda Ali alias Muawiya, and Abu Sayyaf leader Gumbahali Jumdalil alias Dr. Abu Pula, a founding leader of the terror group.

Also killed during the air strike were Abu Sayyaf members Abdulla Aziz, brother-in-law of Marwan, Ben Wagas, Haiji Tatti, close aide of Dr. Abu Pula, Muammar, Apo Mike, Abu Daud, Tuan Nas, alias Ainal, and a certain Sissan.

Indonesian JI members known only as Saud and Hajan were also believed to have been killed in the attack.

Marwan coordinated closely with the Abu Sayyaf as its top trainer in bomb making, and he was a close associate of Umar Patek, a JI leader arrested in Abbottabad in Pakistan a few months before the raid on top terrorist leader Osama bin Laden.

Marwan was on the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's most wanted list with a \$5-million bounty on his head.

Jumdalil, on the other hand, was believed to be responsible for multiple kidnappings, beheadings, and atrocious violence around Mindanao.

Ali, meanwhile, was a Singaporean senior leader of JI involved in the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people.

The military has yet to secure the bodies of the slain terrorists. Militants were believed to have retrieved the bodies of their casualties and buried them hastily.

Burgos, however, maintained that the information about the 15 terrorists' deaths was credible.

"We stand by our information relayed by our people on ground. All these information corroborated each other," he said.

Burgos said their field units are working closely with local officials to determine the location of the bodies.

"We already have information as to where the bodies were brought. We are still verifying them," he said.

The air strike was launched by two Air Force OV 10 planes with night flying capability at around 3 a.m. Last Thursday at Barangay Duyan Kaban in Parang town.

Officials said the terrorists had not been able to resist as they might have been sleeping during the attack.

Only 11 of the 15 slain militants have been identified. There was no information yet on the whereabouts of the 15 other bandits who were also in the area when the raid was conducted.

Coballes stressed that while it is important for the authorities to positively identify the terrorists who were killed in the operation "Optan Nemesis," he said the verification will be conducted in a manner that will not violate the Islamic culture and tradition on burial.

Coballes also said they would assist the mother of Marwan when she is permitted by the government agencies to retrieve the remains of the militant leader once the location is pinpointed.

- Alexis Romero

Terrorists planning attacks when bombed in Sulu

A KEY Abu Sayyaf commander killed in a US-backed airstrike in Sulu was planning terror attacks, including new kidnappings of foreigners and bombings, when he was slain, security officials said Sunday.

The pre-dawn military bombing offensive on Thursday killed longtime Abu Sayyaf commander Umhra Jumdal and several other militants while they slept in huts and hammocks in a jungle hideout on Jolo, officials said.

Military spokesman Col. Ar-

nulfo Marcelo Burgos said Jumdal's death was a major blow to his al-Qaida-linked group because he harbored several Southeast Asian terrorist figures, who have provided funds and bomb-making trainings. He had a larger civilian following compared with the more brutal Abu Sayyaf commanders that helped him evade military offensives.

"He had the charisma and was the real link used by foreign militants," Burgos said.

"He was a big loss." *Next page*

Terrorists...

From page 1

Jumdal's group was planning some kind of terrorist attacks when he was killed, Burgos said, adding intelligence indicated that six Malaysian militants traveled to Sulu in December and joined his group for unspecified reasons.

Two security officials said future plots by Jumdal's group included kidnappings of foreigners and bombings.

A few villagers, who were secretly working for the military, traveled to Jumdal's hideout and pretended to seek medical treatment to be able to bring in and leave some kind of sensor, which was later used by the bomber planes to zero in on the Abu Sayyaf lair, one of the officials said.

Jumdal, who was also known as Dr. Abu Pula, had knowledge of medicine and had drawn support from poor villagers and the loyalty of his men partly by treating ordinary illnesses and performing surgeries on combatants, the official said. **AP**

AFP wants to exhume bodies of Abu fatalities of air strike

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

THE Armed Forces yesterday said it would seek permission from Muslim religious leaders, and exhaust all legal means, to be able to exhume bodies of terrorists killed in air strikes last week in Sulu in a bid to establish their identities.

Lt. Col. Randolph Cabangbang, Western Mindanao Command spokesman, said based on information on the ground, the fatalities were buried in different sites in Parang, Sulu last Thursday, the same day they were killed.

The military has reported 15 dead, including three prominent personalities - Abu Sayyaf leader Gumbahali Jumdale alias

Dr. Abu, and Jemaah Islamiyah personalities Zulkifli Abdul Hir, a Malaysian, and Mumamda Ali, a Singaporean.

Cabangbang said, "It's very imperative on our part na ma-identity at ma-recover lahat ng patay, but we are considering ang ritual nila when it comes sa patay."

Based on the Muslim faith, the dead should be buried within 24 hours and before the sun sets.

The military conducted the air strikes around 5 a.m.

Reports quoting unnamed security officials said the two foreign terrorists were not in the area during the military attack on the terrorist lair in barangay Duyan Kabau in Parang town.

The Associated Press quoted

security officials with knowledge of the operation that new intelligence showed Jumdale along with his son and seven other militants were killed but Marwan and Muawiyah were not in the vicinity.

The officials were further quoted as saying future plots by Jumdale's group included kidnappings of foreigners and bombings.

A few villagers, who were secretly working for the military, traveled to Jumdale's hideout and pretended to seek medical treatment to be able to bring in and leave some kind of sensor, which was later used by the bomber planes to zero in on the Abu Sayyaf lair, one of the officials said. - *With AP*

Sulu air strike: **PHL, DI 'SAFE HAVEN' NG TERORISTA-PALASYO**

HINIGYANG din ng Malacañang na malinaw ang mensahe ng gobyerno kaugnay sa pagkakatutay ng tatlong lider ng terorista.

Sinabi ngayon ni Deputy Presidential Spokesperson Abigail Valte, patunay ito na hindi 'safe haven' o lungga ng mga terorista ang Pilipinas.

Ayon kay Valte, hindi tingnan ng puwersa ng pamahalaan ang mga terorista hangga't hindi sila uluyang napopulbos.

Pinupuri naman ng Malacañang ang maayos na 'execution' ng air strike kung saan walang

nadamay na abdyan.

Ngayong weekend ay magbibigay umano ng kabuuang briefing si AEP Chief Jesse Dellosa hinggil sa ininagawang operasyon.

"Tiwala po tayo dito dahil doon sa mga ginagawa din talaga ng ating Hukbong Sandatahan. Nakita naman po natin 'yung nakaraan nilang pagwawagi doon laban sa mga terorista nga na air-strike ho nila na mabilis, malinis, wala lang mga abilyan na nadamay. Doon po pala sa mga nagmamong, the President will be briefed more extensively on the result of the operations this weekend by General Dellosa," ani Valte.

Top terrorists may have evaded bombs

SECURITY officials have given different accounts of whether or not top Southeast Asian terror suspects Zulkifli bin Hir from Malaysia and Abdullah Ali from Singapore were killed in a recent military air strike on an Abu Sayyaf hideout in Jolo.

Not a single body was recovered by police from the hilly jungle lair near Lanao Dakulah, fueling speculation on just who had been killed.

Regional military commander

Maj. Gen. Noel Coballes on Thursday said that Bin Hir, who used the name Marwan, and Ali, known as Muawiyah, were slain along with Abu Sayyaf commander Umbra Jumdal

and 12 others when their camp was bombarded by two Philippine Air Force OV-10 Broncos delivering 227-kg bombs.

Two Philippine security officials with knowledge of the operation, however, told The Associated Press that new intelligence showed Jumdal along with his son and seven other terror suspects were killed but Marwan and Muawiyah were not in the vicinity.

The United States had offered a \$5 million reward for the capture of Marwan, a US-educated engineer accused of involvement in deadly bombings in the Philippines, organizing terror training and plotting attacks.

Philippine security officials on Sunday said Jumdal and his group were planning new terror attacks, including kidnappings of foreigners and bombings, when they were slain.

Military
spokesperson Col.

Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos said Jumdal's death was a major blow to his al-Qaida-linked group because he had harbored several Southeast Asian terrorist figures who provided funds and bomb-making training.

Charisma, big loss

"He had charisma and was the real link to foreign militants," Burgos said of Jumdal. "He was a big loss."

A few villagers, who were secretly working for the military, went up to Jumdal's hideout pretending to seek medical

treatment in order to leave some kind of sensor, which was later used by the bomber planes to zero in on the terrorists' lair, one of the officials said.

Jumdal, also known as Dr. Abu Pula, had a knowledge of medicine and had drawn the loyalty of his men and poor villagers by treating ordinary illnesses and performing surgery, the official said.

The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters. **AP**

Gobyerno alerto sa resbak ng ASG, JI- DILG

TINIYAK ngayon ng gobyerno na nakahada sila laban sa anumang paghibiganti ng Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) at Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) kasunod ng pagkakapaslang sa tatlong lider.

Una ng sinabi ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) na inalerto na nila ang mga tropa lalo sa Mindanao laban anumang retaliatory attacks ng mga

terrorista.

Sinabi ngayon ni DILG Sec. Jesse Robredo, laging nakaalerto naman ang PNP upang hindi makapagsamantala ang mga kalahan ng estado.

Pero ayon kay Robredo, hindi maaring pag-usapan ang kanilang ginagawang preparasyon bilang baliug ng standard operating procedure (SOP).

Wala namang nabanggit si Robredo na intelligence report hinggil sa tangkang paghibiganti ng ASG o ng JI.

Soldier killed in clash with NPAs in Agusan

A soldier was killed yesterday in an encounter with suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) in Sibagat, Agusan del Sur, the military said.

Col. Leopoldo Galon, spokesman of the Armed Forces' Eastern Mindanao Command, said members of the 26th Infantry Battalion clashed with seven armed men in Barangay Magkalape, Sibagat town at around 5:50 a.m. yesterday.

The five-minute firefight resulted in

the death of Army S/Sgt. Gomersindo Babanto, who sustained a bullet wound in the chest. His remains were airlifted to Butuan City.

In a related development, a female NPA leader facing various criminal cases was nabbed by soldiers last Saturday in Lopez, Quezon.

The military said NPA leader Miguela Piñero had four warrants of arrest for murder, frustrated murder, malicious

mischief, and robbery.

Army troops seized from her a caliber .45 pistol with magazine, seven bullets, a grenade and four mobile phones.

Piñero is reportedly the commander of the Operations Command of the NPA's Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee.

In Sallapadan, Abra, three NPA rebels were killed as Army troops overran their camp Friday. — Alexis Romero, John Unson, Edith Regalado, Charlie Lagasca

LEADER CAPTURED

Army troops captured Saturday a known female leader of the New People's Army (NPA) during an operation at Lopez town in Quezon, a military spokesman said. Col. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos Jr. said elements of the Army's 201st Brigade based in Quezon province captured insurgent leader Miguella Piñero, also known as "Ka Migs," around 1:15 p.m. at Barangay Calintapayan in Lopez town. Piñero was arrested by virtue of four warrants of arrest for murder, frustrated murder, malicious mischief and robbery in band. The Army troops also recovered from her possession a .45 caliber pistol with magazine and seven ammunition, a fragmentation grenade, and four mobile phones. (Elena L. Aben)

Military mum on talks for release of top Red leader

By Florante S. Solmerin

THE military is tightlipped over reports that some personalities close to President Benigno G. Aquino III are allegedly negotiating for the release of a 63-year-old ranking member of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army who was arrested last year and currently detained at the Philippine National Police's Custodial Center in Camp Crame in Quezon City.

"I don't have information not even details on [such report]. Hence, [I] cannot comment on it," Col. Domingo Tutuan Jr., head of the Armed Forces' Human Rights Office said.

Alan Jazmines, alias Dex/Tomas/Arthur, will have spend one year in detention on February 14 after he was arrested a year ago at around 6:30 p.m. by combined elements of the local police and of the Army's 56th Infantry Battalion in Villa Aurea in Barangay Subic, Baliuag, Bulacan.

"We know for a fact that some leftist allies of the government are now negotiating for the immediate release of Jazmines as one of the requisites demanded by the National Democratic Front for the peace talks," ranking military officers who requested anonymity said.

The military said Jazmines has 13 warrants of arrest issued by Judge Rodolfo Garduque of Regional Trial Court Branch 63 in Calauag, Quezon for murder, and RTC Branch 59 in Lucena City for rebellion.

CPP seeks independent probe into US role in Sulu air strike

By Mario J. Mallari

An independent investigation should be conducted to look into the supposed involvement of United States military in the air strike in Sulu province last Thursday that resulted in the killing of at least 15 Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) militants, including three top-ranking leaders, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) yesterday said.

The CPP, in a statement, also expressed doubts over the claims made by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that top Abu Sayyaf commander Abu Jundail, alias Dr. Abu; Malaysian Zulkopli bin Abdul Hir, alias Marwan, and Singaporean Muhammad Ali, alias Muawiya, were killed during the air assault.

"There should be an independent investigation to look into the involvement of American soldiers belonging to the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) in the planning, provision of intelligence and surveillance information, actual execution and logistical support to the military operation leading to the air raids," it stressed.

The US has been providing intelligence support to the AFP during previous operations against high-value terrorists. The military acknowledged that the Americans

Turn to page 3

From page 1

continue to provide technical support to the Filipino troops.

"Such involvement of US troops violates Philippine national sovereignty. Claims that American military troops and advisers only get involved upon the request of the Aquino regime and the AFP only makes it worse," it noted.

"An independent investigation should look into violations of human rights, including the indiscriminate bombing and militarization of nearby communities," the communist group added.

The CPP also noted the military's previous "distorted" statements, raising doubts about the killing of Dr. Abu, Marwan and Muawiya, citing there has been no independent verification on the ground regarding the killing of the three top terrorists.

"All the information has come from the AFP which has been

known to issue distorted and self-serving statements," it said.

The AFP claimed to have killed 15 ASG-JI militants during last Thursday's air strike in Barangay Duyan Kabau in Parang town despite no bodies were recovered from the supposed Abu Sayyaf lair.

AFP spokesman Col. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos Jr. said the deaths of the terrorists, including the three top ASG and JI leaders, were confirmed by ground troops that subsequently conducted clearing operations.

He added the bodies were taken from the site immediately after the air strike.

The military stressed the killing of Dr. Abu, Marwan and Muawiya was a big blow to the terrorist groups, citing their role as leaders of the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist organizations.

Acknowledged as the Abu Sayyaf top commander in Sulu, Jumdal was tagged in the 2000 kidnapping of more than 20 mostly

European tourists from the island-resort in Sipadan, Malaysia, and the 2001 snatching of 21 tourists, including three Americans, from the posh Dos Palmas resort in Palawan.

Jumdal is listed in the Philippines' and US lists of most wanted terrorists with P7.4 million and \$140,000 reward, respectively, for his neutralization.

Marwan, tagged in the 2002 deadly Bali bombings in Indonesia, is listed as 29th in the list of wanted terrorist by the US' Federal Bureau of Investigation with \$5-million reward for his neutralization. The Philippine government is also offering P7.4 million for Marwan's head. He is the JI leader operating in southern Philippines.

Muawiya, on the other hand, is a former member of the Singaporean military with the rank of major, and wanted by the US with \$50,000 bounty on his head.

Top NPA leader in Quezon nabbed

LUCENA CITY—A suspected leader of the New People's Army in Quezon who allegedly led the daring assault at the provincial jail four years ago was captured in Lopez, Quezon, on Saturday, said Col. Eduardo Año, head of the Army's 201st Infantry Brigade.

Miguela Piñero, 45, alias "Ka Migs/Lala," was arrested by police and Army soldiers in Barangay Calantipayan, Lopez, at around 1:15 p.m., he said.

Año described Piñero as the "top commander of all NPA forces in Quezon" and a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines-NPA Southern Tagalog regional party commission, according to Año.

Año said a villager tipped off the authorities about the location of the wanted NPA leader.

As the government forces were serving Piñero's four warrants of arrest for murder charges, her aide identified as Joey Ortiz opened fire at the arresting team and escaped, Año said.

Piñero is detained at the police jail in Lopez town, he said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

NPA amazon captured in Quezon

Army troops captured Saturday a known female leader of the New People's Army (NPA) during an operation at Lopez town in Quezon, a military spokesman said. Col. Arnulfo Marcelo Burgos, Jr. said elements of the Army's 201st Brigade based in Quezon province under the 2nd Infantry Division (2ID), captured insurgent leader Miguela Piñero also known as "Ka Migs" around 1:15 p.m. at Barangay Calintapayan in Lopez town. Piñero was arrested by virtue of four warrants of arrest for murder, frustrated murder, malicious mischief and robbery in band. **(Elena Aben and Danny Estacio)**

Top NPA lider, 1 pa arestado

QUEZON — Dalawang rebeldeng New People's Army kabilang na ang top ranking official na nakabase sa Quezon ang nadakima ng militar sa bahagi ng bayan ng Lopez, Quezon kamakalawa ng hapon.

Kinilala ang mga suspek na sina Miguela Pifero, 45, gumagamit ng alyas Migs, Migan Wares at Alexia Lala, kumander ng Guerilla Unit Squad-Bondoc Peninsula at Joey Ortiz y Quidor na may alyas Ka Greg.

Sa record ng militar, si Pifero ay miyembro ng executive committee ng Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee sa Brgy. Calantipayan.

Nasamsam sa dalawa ang 1 cal. 45 pistol, granada, 8 cell phones, 2 smart broadband, 1-globe tattoo, 2 1GB flash disk, 1 8GB Flash disk, 5 micro SD memory card, 51 smart sim, 15 TNT sim card, 4 globe sim card, 5 TM sim card, & 1 tattoo sim card.

Ang dalawa ay inaresto sa pangunguna nina Col. Eduardo Añon ng 201st Brigade ng Phil. Army at P/Senior Supt. Ericson Velasquez sa bisa ng apat na warrant of arrest na inisyu ng Gumaca Regional Trial Court Branch 65, 62 at Candelaria Municipal Trial Court kaugnay sa mga kasong pagpapalang pagmamakaw, pananabotaha at illegal possession of firearms and explosive devices.

Kasalukuyang sumasailalim sa tactical interrogation ang dalawa sa kampo ng 85th Infantry Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division sa Barangay Sari Isidro bago dalhin sa himpilan ng pulisya para sampahan ng kaukulang kaso. **Michelle Zoleta at Tony Sandoval**

Lider ng NPA natiklo

ARESTADO ang isang matatag na lider ng New People's Army makaraang salakayin ng pinagsamih na elemento ng militar at pulisya ang hide-out nito sa Lopez Quezon kamakalawa.

Nakilala ang madakip na suspek na si Migdale Pinero alias Mig Lala Comdr Guerrilla Unit Squad Bundoc Pansitula at miyembro ng Executive Committee Southern Tagalog Regional Party.

Ayon kay Col. Genecoso Dolina, spokesman ng Southern Luzon Command, dakong 1-15 ng hapon nang madakip ng pinagsamih na elemento ng 201 Infantry Brigade at Quezon Provincial Police Office ang suspek sa Brgy. Calantiguyan, Lopez Quezon.

Si Pinero ay inaresto sa bisa ng apat na warrant of arrest sa kasong murder, frustrated murder, malicious mischief at robbery in hand.

Nasansan mula kay Pinero ang (1) est-45; (1) granada; (8) cellphone, mga broadband at simcard.

Sinabi ni Dolina na si Pinero ay kinalakayang nasa kustodya ng 85 infantry Battalion at somasalamat na imbestigasyon. (MO)

Another top Quezon rebel leader falls

By GEMI FORMARAN

LUCENA City -- Joint military and police operatives on Saturday arrested a rebel leader responsible for the raid of a municipal police station that resulted in the death of its police chief in Bgy. Kalantipuyan, Lopez, Quezon.

Reports reaching the office of Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) under its commander, Lt. Gen. Roland Detabati, identified the arrested rebel leader as Miguale Pinero, alias Mig, a member of the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee, and the commander of the New People's Army's Guerilla Unit Squad operating in the Bondoc Peninsula (3rd district).

Solcom spokesman Col. Generoso Bolina said Pinero was arrested by joint elements of the Army's 201st Infantry Brigade under Col. Eduardo Año and Quezon police under Senior Supt. Ericson Velasquez, at around 1 p.m. on the strength of four warrants for murder, frustrated murder, malicious mischief and robbery in band.

Pinero yielded a caliber .45 pistol, hand grenade, eight cellphones and various sim cards and different mobile phone and laptop computer gadgets.

Pinero was first brought to the headquarters of 85th Infantry Battalion in Lopez, for custodial debriefing before he was turned over to Lopez Police Station for investigation and filing of cases, Bolina said.

According to Bolina, Pinero led a group of rebels who raided the Lopez Police Station in 2002, which left its commander, Supt. Cesar Santander, dead. The rebels also wounded some policemen during the attack before they took all their firearms.

Only last week, the same military and police units arrested Fidel Tarazona Holanda, a member of the local executive committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines operating in Southern Quezon, and a male employee of the Lucena City government by virtue of a warrant for murder.

The duo yielded nine improvised bombs, a laptop computer and four mobile phones during the arrest.

Soldier killed in Agusan

ANON-COMMISSIONED officer (NCO) from the Philippine Army's 28th Infantry Battalion based in Agusan del Sur was killed yesterday after his group caught up with a group of New People's Army guerrillas whom they have been chasing for the last two days.

Col. Leopoldo Galon, spokesman of the East Mindandanao Command (Eastmincom) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said the latest encounter occurred in Bgy. Magkalape, Sibugat, Agusan del Sur and resulted in the soldier's death after he got hit in the chest and died while being airlifted to a local hospital.

The victim's name is being withheld pending notice to his next of kin.

Another soldier, Pfc. Lemuel Altamero, was earlier wounded when the two groups initially encountered each other that resulted in a firefight in Bgy. Del Rosario last Saturday.

Paul M. Gutierrez

Top Quezon rebel leader, aide nabbed

GOVERNMENT troops on Saturday nabbed another ranking official of the communist movement in Southern Tagalog responsible for all rebel military operations in the province of Quezon after a brief firefight.

The initial report to Lt. Gen. Roland Detabali, chief of the Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, identified the suspects as Miguela Pinero, a.k.a. "Ka Migs/Ka Lala," 45, who hails from Bgy. Recto, General Luna, Quezon; and her companion Joey Quidor Ortiz.

Col. Ed Aña, chief of the 201st Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, said his men, together with elements of the Quezon Police Office under Senior Supt. Eric

ason Velasquez, arrested Pinero and Ortiz at a house in Bgy. Calantipsayan, Lopez.

The suspect has several pending warrants of arrest before various courts for murder, attempted murder, robbery in hand and malicious mischief, among others.

Official documents revealed that Pinero led or participated in several raids and ambushes staged by the New People's Army (NPA) in Quezon since joining the underground movement in 1983, subsequently rising to command its dreaded "Palabang Yunit Gerilya."

These incidents include the 1998 ambush of soldiers

from the 76th IB in Padre Burgos, 2001 raid of the Agdangan municipal town, 2002 raid of the Lopez municipal town, 2004 ambush of soldiers from the 74th IB in Mulanay, 2008 raid of the Quezon Provincial Jail and the 2009 raid of the Mulanay municipal town in 2009.

Aña credited the information provided by local residents in the area that led to the suspects' subsequent arrest.

He added a .45 caliber pistol, a fragmentation grenade and subversive documents were also recovered from the suspects.

Paul M. Gutierrez

*Never on a Sunday***DEFENSE
POLICIES**By **ATTY. RENE ESPINA***Former Senator*

WE congratulate the AFP for the elimination of three terrorist leaders and 12 of their group in Duyan Kabaw, Parang, Sulu. The following were reported killed: Abu Pula aka Dr. Abdul Umbra,



Abu Sayyaf leader; Malaysian Zul Kifli bin Hir, aka Marwan, Al Qaeda-Jemaah Islamiyah; and Singaporean Muhanda Ali, aka Mauwiya Anjala of Jemaah Islamiyah.

Of more significance is the report I received of a new AFP evolving policy which in a nutshell, is described as: 1) "Defeat the Abu Sayyaf" and their allied terrorists like JI and Al Qaeda, 2) "Credible deterrence" against the MILF, 3) "Sustained pressure" against the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF). I have nothing to say about slogans to characterize operation plans against enemies of the State, especially if they are as effective as the recent Sulu operation against the terrorists.

I am more concerned with the reports coming from reliable sources which said that allegedly the AFP would reduce the number of Infantry Battalions from 85 IBs to 54 IBs; from 31 brigades to 18 brigades; and from 10 Infantry Divisions to 6 divisions. I am wondering whether this

proposed policy decision is merely to streamline operations by reducing the number of units without reducing the number of personnel. I ask the question: Would this reduce the number of our soldiers to less than what we currently have?

Recently I had a talk with a retired high-ranking AFP officer who revealed to me that in Negros Occidental some years ago when he was in command in that area, he succeeded in reducing the NPA activities to insignificant numbers. However, when two of his battalions were transferred to Mindanao, there was a corresponding increase in NPA presence in his area. From the viewpoint of sources in the Armed Forces, the strength of the AFP is barely enough to secure our internal as well as our external security. There is, therefore, a need to maintain the current strength of troops. I fully concur with such an idea.

Speculating on reports of future downsizing of personnel, I wonder whether the reports, if true, are caused by the demands to acquire better equipment for the Navy and the

Air Force, i.e., three US Coast Guard second-hand cutters to patrol the West Philippine Sea and F-16 fighter planes. If there is such a program, then Malacañang should propose a special budget to Congress for the purpose of acquiring second-hand US equipment. In the build up of such a program, the AFP budget should also be increased. To me the whole idea of deploying better equipped AFP forces in the Palawan West Philippine Sea is welcome. However, let no one ever believe that our forces could stand alone without the cooperation and assistance of the US in accordance with our Mutual Defense Pact and the Visiting Forces Agreement.

Finally let me emphasize that an equally important aspect of our security is to have adequate forces for internal security in order to once and for all remove the threat of the CPP-NPA-NDF and the Abu terrorists. What is also needed is to expand and not to eliminate the civil-military operations which are an effective and essential tool in defeating our domestic enemies.

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Air Force Broncos or US Predators?

LAST WEEK, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Jessie Dellosa announced that "in an air attack that lasted only a few seconds, government war planes killed one of Southeast Asia's most wanted terrorist leaders as well as a senior Abu Sayyaf commander and a Singaporean guerrilla." Also killed were 12 followers of the terror leaders. Asked for proof, Dellosa said "I am sure because I will not easily issue a statement here."

The three leaders were Malaysian Zulkifli bin Hir, also known as "Marwan" and a leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror network; Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) Commander

Umbra Jumail, known as "Doc Abu"; and, a Singaporean, Muhamda Ali of the JI group. However, as of yesterday, the bodies of the 15 terrorists had not been recovered.

According to news reports, the air strike was carried out by two PAF OV-10 Broncos that dropped four 227-kg bombs over a "thickly vegetated area under the cover of coconut trees in Parang, Sulu province." The planes struck at 3 a.m., catching the terrorists sleeping in their tents.

We must congratulate our pilots for the proficiency and skills shown in delivering their bombs on target with pinpoint accuracy. Credit must also go to the intelligence work that provided the necessary information leading to this operation.

Almost four months after the massacre and mutilation of our soldiers in Al-Barka, Basilan, I was hoping the priority targets of our intelligence operations would be those involved in the massacre, but unfortunately, there appears to be little progress in that direction. We can kill Abu Sayyaf and JI terrorists in the country, but we cannot get the murderers of our Marines and Scout Rangers in Basilan. To refresh our memory, in July 2007, 14 Marines were killed in Al-Barka, Basilan. In October last year, 19 Scout Rangers were also massacred in the same locality. In both cases, the men were beheaded; their bodies mutilated, showing signs of torture. As I said earlier, we owe it to our soldiers—living and dead—to effect closure to the Al-Barka massacres. If we can track down Abu Sayyaf and JI personalities, why can't we do the same with MILF terrorists? By the way, whatever happened to the investigations that were supposed to be conducted by ceasefire committees established by the peace process?

Is it because there are substantial rewards being offered by the Philippine and US governments for certain terrorists that our attention is focused on these priority targets? A rogues gallery released jointly by the Philippine military and the US Embassy shows pictures of 24 terrorist leaders wanted for murder, extortion and kidnapping, with corresponding rewards for their capture. The reward poster reads, "The Philippine Government with the US Government is offering rewards from US\$2,500 up to US\$10 million to the citizens of the Philippines who provide the Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF), AFP or US Embassy with information or assistance that leads to the arrest or capture of the following terrorists..." 24 pictures are included in this poster. Dan Asnawi, the head of the MILF group that be-

headed our soldiers in Al-Barka, is not included even as Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin vowed before a press conference in November to capture him. Where is our sense of priority? Does the AFP have a dedicated unit whose sole objective is to find, capture or kill the Al-Barka terrorists? The US Navy Seal team that got Osama bin Laden was not concerned about Pakistani sensitivities. Its mission was to get Bin Laden—dead or alive. At times, I get the feeling we are more concerned about US targets (Marwan is high on the FBI list of wanted terrorists), about freeing kidnapped foreigners, especially Westerners, rather than bringing to justice those who murder our soldiers. Shades of our colonial mentality.

Let me now bring up a subject that may be disturbing to many of our people.

During the last few years, the United States has increasingly relied on drone attacks on suspected terrorist hideouts in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) that carry armaments such as Hellfire missiles. Originally conceived for use in reconnaissance and forward observation roles, the drones were modified and upgraded for combat operations. The MQ-1 Predator is the primary UAV currently being used by the US Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. "M" stands for multi-role; "Q" refers to an unmanned aircraft system. It has been used with success to kill a number of prominent al-Qaida operatives. However, its use has also resulted in civilian deaths. The missile does not distinguish between a terrorist and a noncombatant. Part of the current friction between the United States and Pakistan stems from drone attacks that have often resulted in civilian casualties. One could say that instead of winning friends for the United States, the use of drones creates even more enemies because of the collateral damage inflicted on innocent men, women and children who may be bystanders in the conflict.

According to Wikipedia, two civil-registered, unarmed MQ-1s have been operated by the office of the National Security Advisor in the Philippines since 2006.

Were US Predator drones used in the Sulu air strike? The Philippine Air Force vehemently denies this, saying that our pilots are quite capable of delivering their ordnance on target as reported. Shortly after the Al-Barka incident, PAF planes were also sent against terrorists fortifications in Zamboanga Sibugay. Nothing much happened. How do we explain the wide discrepancy in the performance of our airmen, bombing with uncanny accuracy at nighttime in the Parang, Sulu strike, but virtually failing to hit any significant target during a daytime raid in Zamboanga Sibugay?

Under the current Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), a rotating force of some 600 US servicemen has been deployed in Mindanao for the past several years. Next month, high-level talks between the Philippines and the United States on expanding US military presence here are to be held in Washington. This is an election year in the United States, and as President Barack Obama faces an uphill battle to win a second term, he has to show the American people that the United States continues to score in the war against terror. Robert Warshaw of the Heritage Foundation calls the Sulu operation a "big victory" for American and Philippine forces.

REVEILLE

Ramon
J. Farolan



Sketches

By ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

No joke

Tell people that the provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi will be great for tourism, and the reaction is laughter.

But it's no joke. I've visited all three provinces a few times, going there from Zamboanga City by helicopter. The first thing you notice from the air are the outlines of coral reefs near the islands, which would make great snorkeling and diving sites. The country's western part is dotted with such reefs.

Island-hopping in the three provinces could be great fun, to borrow our current tourism buzzword. Tawi-Tawi alone, which includes the Turtle Island group, covers 307 islands and islets, and I don't think the number is altered by the tide level. Its southwestern tip is a few hours' ride by motorized banca to Sabah, Malaysia.

Sulu has 157 islands and islets. Basilan has one main island plus a few smaller ones.

When I visited Tawi-Tawi about three years ago, the local government was proudly showing off the province's seafood industry, presenting large lobsters to visitors, and putting on display the distinctive Islamic culture. Tawi-Tawi and Sulu are part of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Basilan, with its larger Christian population, as well as Sulu have lush forests that would be ideal for camping and other nature trips. I've often been told that Basilan has one of the country's best varieties of coffee, but during my visits I couldn't find a place that served it or sold the beans.

The ones who told me about Basilan coffee were non-residents, mostly Filipino and American soldiers who were served the coffee in offices or private homes in the province.

Protracted armed conflict has of course taken its toll not only on coffee production but also all aspects of life in Basilan. Its jungles, like those in Sulu, continue to serve as sanctuary for the Abu Sayyaf and its allies belonging to Jemaah Islamiyah, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and its breakaway factions, and rogue elements of the Moro National Liberation Front.

People have been waylaid by bandits while simply taking boat rides between the Zamboanga peninsula and Basilan. Only the foolhardy will want to go snorkeling in the reefs surrounding the province, no matter how inviting the scenery.

In Sulu, security officials did point out to me the picturesque mountains just a short hike from Jolo's main commercial area, but only to warn me not to stray near its slopes. The mountain teemed with Abu Sayyaf, I was told, and the bandits had supporters in the capital.



Similar warnings were given to me during my visits to Basilan. Stay away from the trees at the foot of the slopes, I was told, because unseen hands could grab me and drag me deep into the jungle, and pursuit would be difficult in the forbidding terrain.

No such warning was given to me when I visited Tawi-Tawi. There was only exasperation expressed by residents about their province being lumped together with Basilan and Sulu as a zone of armed conflict.

Local officials even showed me brochures promoting their province as a tourism destination unique in the Philippines.

The tourism marketing campaign apparently worked on Elwold Horn, 52, of the Netherlands and Lorenzo Vinciguorre, 47, of Switzerland. The two went to Tawi-Tawi for bird watching - a popular activity in our tropical country. There are tourists who come here principally for this activity. Dutch Ambassador Robert Brinks is himself an avid bird watcher.

Last Wednesday in Barangay Parangan, Panglima Sugala town, armed men seized the two tourists together with their Filipino guide, Ivan Sarenas, dragging them to a pump boat as they fled to sea. Sarenas said he managed to jump off and swim to safety.

I doubt if the two Europeans would be singing praises about having fun in the Philippines. If they had been left in peace in their bird watching and had enjoyed their visit, they could have served as tourism marketing agents for the Philippines and Tawi-Tawi in particular.

The European tourism market is still largely untapped by the Philippines. It's a shame because Europeans travel a lot, and they're all over Southeast Asia. Why are they teeming in Bali, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh, Siem Reap and Singapore but not in Philippine destinations?

European Union Ambassador Guy Ledoux, who visited **The STAR** last week with political counselor Julian Vassallo, told us that European awareness of the Philippines as a travel destination is low compared with their awareness of other Southeast Asian countries.

Ledoux and Vassallo have the impression that hotel capacity in the Philippines is inadequate particularly in popular destinations.

The lack of direct flights from Europe can also be a problem when other Southeast Asian destinations have them. Several of our neighbors are even competing to become the regional hub for air travel.

Diplomats of other countries have often told me that the principal concern of their citizens when considering a visit to the Philippines is personal safety.

About an hour after the EU diplomats left our office, we received reports about the kidnapping of Horn and Vinciguorre.

Their experiences in Tawi-Tawi would have been priceless in the effort to bring development to the province through tourism.

You know the war has been won in that area when you portray it as a tourist destination - and no one thinks you're joking.

★



PAL Interclub set in Davao

Posted by Online on Feb 5th, 2012 // No Comment

Manila, Philippines – The Philippine Airlines (PAL) Interclub golf championships return to Davao City starting Feb. 15 with the holding of the Seniors' event at the Apo Golf and Country Club and Rancho Palos Verdes.

Defending champion Canlubang heads a cast of 92 teams, including 42 international squads in the four-day seniors' event.

Last year, the Sugar Barons completed a runaway 28-point victory over great rival Luisita, posting 620 points in Cagayan de Oro City.

Manila Golf won the Founder's championship, edging the Cebu Country Club by a single point while Chamorro topped the Sportswriters class over Fil-Am Hawaii and Philippine Navy which tied for second place.

The Friendship bracket went to Zamboanga Golf while Southern California Red Hawks went home with the international trophy.

The seniors' play will end on Feb. 19, two days before the start of the regular Interclub event where Del Monte is the defending champion.

A total of 75 teams, 34 of which from overseas, are entered in the regular Interclub which will miss many-time titlist Canlubang which took a leave of absence this year.

Del Monte is expected to be challenged by Cebu Country Club which tied Canlubang for second place last year.

Also returning are Founders winner Alabang Golf, Sportswriters champ Eagle Ridge, Friendship titlist PGA British Columbia and international champion Southern California Red Hawks.

The Men's Regular event runs from Feb. 22 to 25.

The Platinum sponsors for this year's PAL Interclub include Mareco Broadcasting Network, Radio High, Stargate Media and Media Five; while the major backers are Asia Brewery, Business Mirror and Airbus. Also lending support are Philippine Graphics, Boeing International Corp., GECAS, Bombo Radyo, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, Moevenpick Resort & Spa Cebu, Plantation Bay and Radisson Blu Hotel.

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