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Naval Station Jose V Andrada
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Choices narrowed for 3rd top military post

PRESIDENT Benigno Aquino III was expected to pick from the Air Force or the Navy the next deputy chief of staff, the third highest position in the Armed Forces, which was left vacant when the incumbent officer was re-assigned to another position, senior officers said Thursday.

The officers, who asked not to be named, said the top contenders were Navy Fleet Commander Rear Admiral Jose Luis Alano and Air and Education Training Command head Maj. Gen. Gregorio Macapagal.

"It's logical that the [position] would go to either the Air Force or the Navy to avoid the Army's monopoly of the top brass," one senior officer said.



MACAPAGAL



ALANO

The position of deputy chief of staff became vacant when Lt. Gen. Anthony Alcantara was appointed head of the Northern Luzon Command. Lt. Gen. Jessie Dellosa, the chief of staff, and Lt. Gen. Reynaldo Mapagu, the vice chief of staff, are both from the Army.

Macapagal, a native of Cabaldon, Nueva Ecija, is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1980. Alano, who is from Quezon City, is a member of the PMA Class of 1979.

Team Albay sumabak na sa Guihulngan misyon

LEGAZPI CITY --- Sumabak na sa panibago at ika-anim na mercy mission ang Team Albay na nasa Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental na ngayon, kung saan namalasa kamakailan ang isang malakas na 6.9 magnitude na lindol na nagdulot ng paggubo ng mga lupa.

Ayon kay Albay Gov. Joey Salceda, ang misyon ng Team Albay ay iyaking may ligtas na inuming tubig ang mga tao, paglikas at at 'psychosocial assistance' para mga taong nawalan ng mga tahanan, 'emergency pre-hospital and preemptive public health care,' at paghahanap sa mga nawawala at mga natatamban ng gumuhong lupa.

Inutos agad ni Salceda ang madaliang pagtulak ng team sa Guihulngan matapos niyang malanggap ang pakiusap ng mga opisyal ng Negros Oriental. Ang 86-kataong Team Albay at ang kanilang mga support staff, na pawang beterano ng mga nakaraang mercy missions, ay mula sa iba't ibang ahensiya.

Ang team ay binubuo ng mga espesyalista mula sa Office of Civil Defense V, Albay Provincial Health Office, Albay Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) unit, DOH Center for Health and Development V, Philippine Air Force Tactical Operations Group V, NAVFORSOL (Naval Forces in Southern Luzon) at ang 901st Army Brigade ng Philippine Army na ang mga sundalo ay sanay sa 'search, rescue and retrieval,' at armado ng mga modernong kagamitan.

Ang team ay inihatid sa Negros Oriental mula sa Legazpi City ng NAVFORSOL. Dala ng team ang 'water purifying machine' na kayang magsala at gawing dalisay ang 53,000 litrong maruming tubig bawat oras. Kaagad pinaandar ang makina matapos itong maikasa nitong nakaraang linggo para matugunan ang matinding kakulangan sa inuming tubig.

P-Noy not attending PMA homecoming rites?

By ARTEMIO DURLAO

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City - Cadets of the Philippine Military Academy are uncertain if President Aquino is gracing the biggest gathering of PMA alumnus starting today.

Aquino might go against the 100-year-old tradition of presidents speaking before thousands of graduates of the country's premier military training school.

PMA has not placed Aquino's name in the official program of the 113th homecoming rites, which end on Sunday.

Last year, Aquino graced his first PMA alumni homecoming as commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

In 2011, Aquino was invited to become the adopted "mistah" of several PMA classes. However, he declined, saying he did not want to "politicize the PMA."

Aquino's sisters Bally Cruz and Pinky Abellada were adopted as members of PMA Class 1980 in 2011.

Their two other sisters, Victoria Elisa Aquino-Dee and Kristina Bernadette Aquino, are adopted members of PMA Magitagan Class of 1980, to which Philippine National Police chief Director General Nicanor Bartolome belongs.

PMA Class 1952 is celebrating its diamond jubilee this year; Class 1962, its golden jubilee; and Class 1987, its silver jubilee.

Friday, February 17, 2012

Malaya B2

AFP brings battle to schools

THE Armed Forces is planning to partner with schools in a bid to inculcate in students democratic ideals and at the same time convince them to more actively support government programs.

"The basic objective here is how we can tap the studentry, the youth for the development of the country...how we can harness the potentials of the youth," said Brig. Gen. Rolando Tenefrancia, who assumed the post of chief of the AFP Civil Relations Service last Wednesday.

He said the plan to conduct information drives has no direct connection with the recruitment activities of the New People's Army in schools, but acknowledged the NPA recruits from schools where "idealism" is rich.

"We want to show that the coin is not one-sided. You also have to show (the government

side). Our youth are intelligent," he said.

"We want to present to them the programs of the government and understand them, that is our point...We want the idea of the government grasped by the youth, the student sector," he added.

Asked if the list of schools includes the University of the Philippines and the Polytechnic University of the Philippines where student activism is strong, he said it is the schools' decision.

Tenefrancia said the plan is in line with the military's internal peace and security plan called "Bayanihan."

The Bayanihan is the military's blueprint in winning the peace. It was launched in January 2011 and covers all threat groups – the NPA, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf. – **Victor Reyes**

'Sokol' combat choppers, dumating na

Dumating na sa bansa nitong Martes ang apat na bagong combat utility helicopter na gawa ng Augusta PZL Swidnik ng Italy at Poland na gagamitin ng Philippine Air Force.

Dumating ang mga brand new chopper sa Clark Air Base sa Pampanga at ito ang unang grupo sa walong helicopter na binili ng PAF mula sa Polish manufacturer.

Ikinatuwa ni PAF chief Maj. Gen. Catalino de la Cruz ang pagdating ng mga bagong helicopter.

Ang pormal na pagpapasituhang mga bagong helicopter ay iannunayon ng liderato ng PAF matapos makumpleto ang pagkakumpuni ng mga ito at pag-sagawa ng test flight.

Ayon kay PAF Public Information Office Director Lt. Col. Ernesto Okol, ang "Sokol" ("Falcon" sa wikang Polish) ay maaaring lagyan ng iba't ibang uri ng combat at search and rescue equipment, depende sa misyon na isasagawa ng PAF.

Mayroon ang mga itong Night Vision Goggle at SN 350 Autopilot system. Kumpara sa UH-1H "Huey" helicopter na gawang US, ang "Sokol" ay nasa matatag na gamit bilang combat utility chopper.

Kung ang Huey ay karamihan ay ng pitong pasahens, paliwanag ni Okol na ang "Sokol" ay kayang mangarga ng 10 tao na mayroong maximum takeoff weight na 14,110 pounds.

Karaang higit sa sampung oras

oras at 19 minuto at may maximum range na 402 nautical miles sa isang paglipad sa airspeed na 140.5 knots.

Maaari ring kabitan ang "Sokol" ng mga machine gun na ginagamit ng M60D-MG and kapag gagamitin sa search and rescue operation o kaya'y over-water operations, ito ay maaaring lagyan ng pilot-controlled Emergency Floatation Gear sa pinakamababang bahagi ng helicopter.

"The CUH project is worth P2.8 billion and has undergone the rigid screening process prior to its procurement," dagdag ni Okol.

Anjo Perez
Manila Bulletin

2 gunmen slain in clash with soldiers

By GIL AMAN

BGY, Antipolo, Rizal, Laguna — Two suspected armed men were killed in an encounter with members of the Army's Special Forces team operating in Magdalena-Majayjay-Liliw areas before dawn yesterday.

Reports said the troops were about to approach their target when they saw some men approaching. They then positioned themselves to observe.

The troops then saw a group of men armed with guns and flashlights as if searching for something.

At about 25 yards away, the soldiers were fired upon by the group, prompting the troops to return fire, triggering a five-minute skirmish that left two of the suspects killed and two others armed with two air rifles wounded. The slain suspects' identities were not immediately available as of press time.

The troops applied first aid to the wounded before they took them to the Majayjay Hospital. When asked why they were roaming armed in the wee hours, the two said they were hunting wild animals.

The operation was conducted amid reports of residents that unidentified men believed to be New People's Army rebels allegedly were conducting meetings in the area.

Subversive materials were later recovered at an unoccupied house some two kilometers away from the encounter site.

In a statement, Col. Ivan F. Samarita, commander of the Army's 202nd Infantry Brigade, expressed regret over the unfortunate incident. He discouraged civilians to roam the hinterlands during wee hours carrying guns.

On the culpability of the troops, he said, "We have started the process of investigating and conducting interviews to the involve troops, wounded civilians and residents and the result of which will be submitted to appropriate authorities."

With Zaida delos Reyes-Palanca

SC revives amparo suit filed by abducted Fil-Am

THE Supreme Court has revived the amparo and habeas data suit filed by Filipino-American activist Melissa Roxas seeking to bring to law the military officials behind her abduction and torture in 2009 despite the failure of the Commission on Human Rights to confirm her allegations of military involvement.

The high court, in September 2011, ordered the CHR, being the lead agency investigating human rights abuses, to conduct further investigations on the military's alleged abduction and torture of Roxas, who was suspected to be a member of the New People's Army.

In an 11-page resolution, the Court en banc said that while the investigation conducted by the CHR failed to sufficiently establish the identities of those behind her abduction and torture, Roxas' petition for the issuance of a writ of amparo and habeas data against key military officials should not be dismissed so as not to preempt the ongoing parallel investigation being conducted by the Philippine National Police in

pursuit of her supposed assailants.

"Dismissing the case right now may send the wrong message that any further inquiries as to the abduction and torture of petitioner must ipso facto (by the fact itself) be considered closed or terminated. It must be emphasized that the respondents, or their successors, remain accountable, even though still not found to be responsible," the Court said.

Roxas in her suit named former Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, former Armed Forces Chief of Staff Victor Ibrado, former Philippine National Police (PNP) Director Jesus Versoza, ex-Army chief Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit and Tarlac provincial police director P/Supt. Rudy Gumido Lacadin as respondents in her petition.

Former President Gloria Arroyo was initially among the respondents but the Court of Appeals already issued a ruling dropping her as a party because of her presidential immunity from suit. — *Evangelina C. de Vera*

SC defers ruling on activist's petition

By EDU PUNAY

The Supreme Court (SC) has deferred its ruling on a petition seeking to hold several military officials liable for the alleged kidnapping and torture of Filipina-American activist Melissa Roxas in 2009 despite adverse findings by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR).

In an 11-page resolution, the SC opted to first wait for the results of the parallel investigation by the Philippine National Police (PNP) before ruling on Roxas' petition for the issuance of a writ of amparo.

While the CHR investigation failed to sufficiently establish the identities of those behind the alleged kidnapping and torture, the SC said Roxas' petition for a writ of amparo and habeas data against key military officials should not be dismissed outright pending the

PNP probe.

"Dismissing the case right now may send the wrong message that any further inquiries as to the abduction and torture of petitioner must *ipso facto* (by the fact itself) be considered closed or terminated. It must be emphasized that the respondents, or their successors, remain accountable, even though still not found to be responsible," the SC said.

Roxas named former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, former Defense secretary Gilbert Teodoro, former Armed Forces chief Victor Ibrado, former PNP chief Jesus Versoza, former Army chief Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit, and Superintendent Rudy Gamido Lacadin, Tarlac police director, as respondents in her petition.

Writ of amparo filed vs AFP officers

By Benjamin B. Putta

A writ of amparo suit has been filed in behalf of three Muslim scholars allegedly abducted by the military shortly after 19 Special Forces personnel of the Armed Forces were killed in a clash with members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) last October.

Named respondents before the Supreme Court were AFP Chief of Staff Lt. Jessie Delosa and Brig. Gen. Cesar Ronnie Ordoyo Intelligence Service of the AFP Chief.

The three missing men — Najir Gumuntal Ahung,

Kasdie Bisita Kasaran and Yusup Caellus Mohammad — according to their lawyer Romel Bagares, were supposed to fly to Khartoum, Sudan, to take up a six-year course on the Arabic language at the International University of Africa on scholarships.

They never reached their destination. Their families have not heard from them since their disappearance last month.

Relatives of three Basilan residents filed the petition.

On Oct. 11, 2011, Army Special Forces men were ambushed by suspected units of the

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From page 1

secessionist MILF under Commander Laksaw Asnawi, near Al-Baraka, Basilan.

Nineteen soldiers were killed and 11 of them were beheaded by the alleged assailants, another 12 soldiers were wounded. According to reports, villagers joined the MILF units in the ambush.

Authorities later filed a complaint with the Basilan Prosecutor's Office against the MILF men behind the massacre. They also implicated 300 "John Does."

On Jan. 3, 2012, Ahung, Kasaran and Mohammad — all residents of Al-Baraka town — left Zamboanga City for Manila on a Air Philippines flight. They were supposed to catch a flight the next day for Khartoum, Somalia at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

The three were on their way to the International University of Africa in Sudan as scholars of the Arabic language.

Upon arrival at the NAIA I, one of the three, Ahung, sent a message to his brother Jamih Arawi, village chief of Barangay Guinanta in Al-Baraka, Basilan, to confirm the group's arrival at the international airport. That was the last time their families heard from them.

A relative of Ahung, Sahid Ahung Hamid, another scholar already based in Sudan, was

supposed to fetch the three at the Khartoum International Airport upon arrival. He called Ahung's brother in Basilan after waiting for hours at the airport without seeing the three there.

Upon learning this, their families tried to contact them through their mobile phones. All they got were notices that their mobile phones were unattended and could not be contacted.

They subsequently sought the help of authorities to ascertain the whereabouts of the missing men.

On Jan. 26, 2012, at 2:30 p.m., a relative of the three men, Cpl. Yaser Ladjatua, a member of the Philippine Army and a resident of Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, filed a request with the Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit in Camp Karingal, Sikatuna Village, Quezon City to record in its blotter their disappearance.

Upon the representation of the petitioners, Mary Aileen Bacalso, secretary general of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearance, sought the assistance of airport authorities to establish through departure records whether or not the three indeed left the country for Sudan.

The Bureau of Immigration's Airport Operations Division, upon a check of its databases, returned a certification that its search yielded no records that the missing men left the country on the day they were scheduled to fly to Khartoum.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2012

The Philippine STAR

A-30

Boat carrying hot logs sinks

CALAPAN CITY – A motorboat reportedly carrying illegally cut logs and three crewmen capsized off Loooc, Occidental Minduro Wednesday morning, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said yesterday.

In a report, Lt. Cmdr. Algier Ricafrente, PCG public affairs chief, said the PCG station in Mamburao town got a radio message that the unregistered motorboat sank off Barangay Talao-Iao, Loooc town.

He said locals rescued the three crewmen while the hot logs drifted in different directions. — **Juancho Mahusay**

108 Surigao Boat Passengers Rescued

By JOHN CARLO M. CAHINHIAN

A total of 108 passengers were rescued and placed to safety after a motor boat encountered engine trouble at Surigao City recently.

Lieutenant Algier Ricafrente, Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) public affairs chief, said that personnel of Coast Guard Detachment San Jose received a report that M/B News MPC-1 encountered engine trouble while on its way to Dinagat Province and was stranded at vicin-

ity approximately one nautical mile from Barangay Zaragoza.

Personnel of PCG Detachment-San Jose immediately went to the area to assist the passengers and subsequently towed the stranded motor boat to the Port of Poblacion.

The team later arrived at the port. All passengers were declared in good physical condition and eventually brought to their respective destinations.

Personnel of the PCG detachment advised the master of M/B News MPC-1 to file marine protest.

M/B News MPC-1 has five crew members and 108 passengers onboard which departed from Surigao City when the incident transpired.

As this developed, a fisherman was rescued yesterday after his motor boat sank off Grande Island in the Province of Cavite.

Ricafrente said that Coast Guard Station Subic Port State Control office received the report that a certain Dondi Menson, 27, was rescued from a capsized fishing boat at vicinity Grande Island yesterday morning.

According to initial report, the

survivor was on fishing expedition onboard unnamed fishing boat when its engine exploded and was caught on fire.

"He was floating on water for more than five hours when he was rescued by M/V Cape," Ricafrente said.

The survivor was provided with food and transported by personnel of Coast Guard Station Subic and was properly turned over to Cresencio Cornelio Ramiro, barangay chairman of Mabayo in Morong, Bataan.

Parliament eyed for Moro self-rule

ILIGAN CITY—The Aquino administration has given its nod to a parliamentary form of government for Moros demanding self-rule in Mindanao, a Moro guerrilla peace negotiator said.

Officials who would run the autonomous government, however, should be elected directly by the people, according to Mohagher Iqbal, head of the negotiating panel of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

"No less than his excellency, President Benigno Aquino III,

agreed to the MILF proposal," said Iqbal in an opening statement at the resumption of talks with government peace negotiators in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

The *Inquirer* got hold of a copy of the opening statement yesterday.

The MILF had proposed a set of laws to govern the operation of a new autonomous setup designed to replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which the Aquino administration has described as a failure.

According to Iqbal, among the features of the set of laws proposed by MILF was the head of government would be a chief minister, similar to the heads of governments of Malaysia's federal states.

The MILF has dropped a demand for independence and

agreed to discuss broader autonomy.

The negotiations, Iqbal said, are moving forward although there are still disagreements on several issues, among them wealth-sharing, territory and power-sharing.

Members of the government peace panel expressed optimism over the progress of the talks.

"Now, we have moved at least a few feet," said Marvic Leonen, chief government negotiator, in a statement released by the Of-

fice of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

"The day will come, I hope very, very soon that we will be able to sign a peace agreement," said Leonen.

During the recent talks, peace negotiators of both panels also extended by another year the operation of the joint law enforcement mechanism they created to pursue suspected criminals in rebel strongholds.

A joint statement issued Wednesday said the parties "re-

newed the mandate of the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (Ahjag) for a period of 12 months beginning February 2012."

The extension of Ahjag's life, "which would have expired this month," came in the wake of the MILF's announcement that it has arrested and turned over to authorities eight suspected criminals in Lanao del Sur.

The next round of talks is scheduled next month. *Ryan Rosaura, with a report from Jeffrey Matem, Inquirer Mindanao*

Government-MILF talks gaining ground

BY AL JACINTO CORRESPONDENT

ZAMBOANGA CITY: The Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have ended three days of peace talks in Malaysia, with both sides agreeing to extend a joint anti-criminality campaign in areas where guerrillas are actively operating.

In a joint statement released by the government on Wednesday night, both sides said that they had

renewed the mandate of the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group for another year.

The government and the MILF forged an agreement in 2004 that paved the way for the Muslim rebel forces, through the joint action group, to help authorities hunt down terrorists and criminals in areas where the Muslim insurgents operate.

The joint action group is composed of eight members—four from the government side and four from the MILF. The group has five teams deployed in the provinces of Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Bukidnon, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga

Sibugay, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Sarangani, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental and Compostela Valley, and all its cities.

"The 25th round of exploratory talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front ended [on Wednesday] with both sides expressing satisfaction on the progress of their discussions, and recognizing the many challenges that have yet to be resolved in order to find a political solution to the Bangsamoro question and the armed conflict in Mindanao," the statement said.

"The parties acknowledge the need to explore creative approaches that will address the political, legal and other dimensions of the problems," it added.

Peace negotiators, led by the government's Marvic Leonen and the MILF's Mohagher Iqbal, agreed to resume talks next month in Malaysia.

Kuala Lumpur is brokering the peace negotiations in an effort to end decades of bloody fighting in southern Philippines, where rebels are demanding a Muslim sub-state.

"The peace process with the MILF has moved forward. Now, we have moved at least a few feet. The day will come, I hope very, very soon that we will be able to sign a peace agreement," Leonen said.

"We always believe that it is always possible to find solutions to a problem, review it, adjust and later on achieve the kind of peace that is permanent, that is founded on justice for all that are concerned on the ground," he added.

Iqbal described the talks as "very emotional, because it affects the collective future of our people."

PEACE PROCESS

BUTUAN CITY - "The peace process with the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) has moved forward," government chief negotiator Marvic Leonen said at the conclusion of the peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the MILF in the Malaysian capital on Wednesday. "Now, we have moved at least a few feet," Leonen said, as he maintained optimism that the government will meet its timeline to finalize an agreement with the Moro group this year. "The day will come, I hope very, very soon that we will be able to sign a peace agreement," he said. (Mike Crismundo)

Gov't-MILF talks end in consensus

Negotiators of the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fighting for independence in Mindanao have reached consensus on many points during the February 13 to 15 peace talks in Malaysia but there was no breakthrough.

A reliable source privy to the 25th Formal Exploratory Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of the Muslim country, said that

though the two peace panels have narrowed down their differences on the substantive issues, they still have to achieve a breakthrough.

The government and the MILF have been engaged in the peace process since January 1997.

They have yet to strike a comprehensive peace deal in 15 years of on-and-off negotiations under three presidents, punctuated by

two all-out wars, and many other eruptions of violence.

The administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III, the fourth to negotiate with the MILF, wants to finish the negotiations before its six-year term ends in 2016. Aquino in October last year laid down his all-out justice policy.

It appears, though, that striking a comprehensive deal is still long in coming. **(Edd K. Usman)**

Casualties in 'clash' turn out to be civilians

BY VICTOR REYES

ARMY Special Forces soldiers shot it out yesterday with four men in a remote area in Magdalena town, Laguna.

Two died and the remaining two were wounded.

The "group of armed men" opened fire at the soldiers with air guns at around 1 a.m., said Col. Generoso Bolina, spokesman of the military's Southern Luzon Command.

He also said the two injured claimed they were "local hunters" but the soldiers believed they were members of the New People's Army.

Bolina said the soldiers were responding to reports about the presence of armed men at the tri-boundaries of Magdalena, Majayjay and Lirio towns. The fighting which lasted about five minutes occurred in Hayang village in Magdalena town which Bolina said is a "traditional area" of the NPA.

Two air rifles were recovered at the scene of the encounter.

Bolina said the identities of the four and their claim of being hunters are being verified.

"The WIA (wounded in action) alleged they are local hunters... but that is being determined (by the military) if that is credible...

It's hard to believe (the claim) because they were there during the wee hours," said Bolina.

Bolina said the operating troops are convinced the four are NPA members, citing prior information received indicating NPA presence in the general area.

However, he could not give a categorical answer as to why the four, if indeed they are NPA rebels, would carry with air guns.

"We don't know why they (soldiers) recovered air rifles," he said.

Bolina did not give the names of the four but a military source identified those killed as Jessie Perez, 15, and Christian Lucena, 38, and the wounded as Gino Ibanez, 15, and Francis Abanilla, 18, who are now confined at the AFP Medical Center in Quezon City.

Capt. Gene Orense, spokesman of the Army's 202nd Brigade, said 202nd Brigade commander Col. Ivan Samarita has "expressed regret over the unfortunate incident."

Orense said Samarita also appealed to "civilians" not to roam the hinterlands during the wee hours, especially with weapons.

It appeared the four are not NPA members who are usually referred to by the military as "CIs" or "communist terrorists."

KMU hails arrest warrant issued for 25-year old Olalia slay

By Jerome Aning

THE KILUSANG Mayo Uno (KMU) welcomed the An-

tipolo City Regional Trial Court's issuance of arrest warrants against the 13 suspects in the

torture and murder of the militant labor group's leader Rolando Olalia and his aide Leonor

Alay-ay more than 25 years ago. "We will push for the prosecution and jailing of those re-

sponsible for the torture and death of our comrades," KMU chair Elmer Labog said in a statement.

Labog said KMU remained "firm in the belief" that elements from the Re-

bolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa (RAM) were responsible for the torture and death of our comrades. He said the Olalia-Alay-ay slays were part of the so-called "Oplan God Save the

Queen," a destabilization plot against the government of then-President Corazon Aquino.

The labor leader, however, said KMU also believed that the Aquino administration was behind

the resurrection of the case.

"President Aquino's government revived the Olalia-Alay-ay case to put pressure on senator-judges in the impeachment trial of Chief Justice Renato Corona, namely

senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Gringo Honasan who are known leaders of the RAM," Labog claimed.

The issuance of arrest warrants against the 13 suspects—soldiers and former military officers—all came after a fake KMU press release circulated in the media wherein the labor group was appealing for the government to reopen the case.

"We will continue to fight for justice for our comrades Olalia and Alay-ay. Given the circumstances within which their cases have been revived, however, we are not expecting much from this process," Labog said.

CPP brands troops rotation as ploy to put up new US base

By **Mario J. Mallari**

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) yesterday branded the planned rotation of thousands of United States troops to the Philippines from Okinawa, Japan as meant to establish another Subic, thus providing military base for the American forces.

The CPP, in a statement, noted pronouncements made by US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta before the US Senate, announcing ongoing negotiations between the Philippine and US governments for a "rotational presence" of more than 3,000 American troops from Okinawa to the Philippines.

"US plans to setup a mini-Subic military base, service facility or exclusive dock in the Philippines have become increasingly apparent as officials of the Obama government announced it is going to rotate at least 3,900 troops from its Okinawa base in Australia, Singapore, Hawaii

and the Philippines," the CPP stated. The plan, the CPP said, will only bring back US bases in the country which were thrown out in 1991.

"The plan to set up facilities in the Philippines for the regular docking of American warships will practically bring back American military bases in the country," said the CPP.

"The US wants to use the Philippines as a platform for its power-projection, China-containment and interventionist operations in the Asia-Pacific region," it added.

Worse, the CPP said the administration of President Aquino is willing to provide US troops with facilities.

"The biggest problem of the Filipino people is that the Aquino regime is all too willing to provide its masters with all the facilities it needs," the CPP said.

According to the CPP, the matter of providing facilities for American troops on rotation in the Philippines was discussed in the Strategic

Defense Dialogue (SDD) meeting earlier last month between officials of the US government and the Aquino regime.

"Aquino's officials have promised the American government that it would come up with concrete proposals for this plan," the CPP said.

The CPP called on the Filipino people to vigorously oppose the plan.

"The Filipino people must fan the flames of patriotism and stand up against the imperialist machinations of the US to use the Philippines as a platform for their hegemonism," said the CPP.

Under the 1987 Constitution, foreign military bases are banned in the country. However, the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) allows US troops temporary stay in the Philippines through joint military exercises.

The US is downsizing troops stationed in Okinawa after Japanese called for the shutting down of US base in Japan. **Mario J. Mallari**

PEACE TALKS

The Government of the Philippines (GPH) peace panel said yesterday that the key in resuming peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF) is for them to comply with the terms of the Oslo Joint Statement (OJS) which the two groups signed on February 21, 2011 following their first round of formal negotiations. The GPH peace panel made the declaration in response to NDFP Chairman Luis Jalandoni's assertion that compliance with the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees or (JASIG) is the key in the resumption of the negotiations. In a statement, the GPH peace panel said that although they agree that the JASIG is important, it reiterated that JASIG compliance requires verification without which the process lacks integrity. (Francis T Wakefield and Edd K. Usman)

Burmese days

JUST ABOUT the one bright spot for Philippine diplomacy would be its policy toward Burma, compelling Rangoon all these years to release Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, to democratize, and to live up to the commitments it had made when it joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in 1997. The policy has borne much fruit. Last Feb. 9, Foreign Secretary Alberto del Rosario met the pro-democracy leader in her Rangoon residence. She was no longer under house arrest but running for parliament and hoping to earn the right to lead her country to full democratic restoration.

EDITORIAL

del Rosario met the pro-democracy leader in her Rangoon residence. She was no longer under

house arrest but running for parliament and hoping to earn the right to lead her country to full democratic restoration.

In the meeting, Del Rosario "expressed his sincere wish" that the opposition leader would win in Burma's parliamentary by-elections scheduled for April 1. They "held a brief exchange of views" about the coming elections and about "political and socioeconomic reforms and the rule of law," according to a foreign department spokesperson. The two leaders also declared their support for the lifting of international sanctions against Burma.

The day before, Del Rosario had called on Burmese President U Thein Sein and held discussions with Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin. He congratulated his hosts for the "political, economic and social reforms they have undertaken." For his part, Thein Sein urged the Philippine business community to "invest in various sectors of the Burmese economy, such as oil and gas, agriculture, mining, forestry and timber products, development of deep sea ports, and infrastructure," among others. The two countries' Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation is scheduled to meet in Manila in early June.

Indeed, the pace of social, political and economic reforms has been breathtaking. Only in 2007, the Philippines was forced to host the Asean summit after Burma forfeited its right to the rotating presidency of the regional organization because of widespread protest over its human rights record. The summit was held in Cebu. Manila had historically been critical of Burma. It was joined by Singapore later that year, during the group's passage of

the first Asean charter, in scheduling a briefing by the United Nations special representative to Burma, only to be overruled by the majority of the Asean leaders who sided with Burma, worried that the briefing would violate the Asean policy on non-interference of each member's internal affairs.

The Philippines was for a long time the lone voice in the Asean wilderness. Since mainly an economic club, Asean is a gathering of tightly controlled regimes that do not want to pressure too much the Burmese junta lest their own political tight-fistedness be exposed.

But the Philippines held firm against the military depredations so that by 2010, the military junta was promising to hold elections, the first in 20 years. Many had expected it to be a sham, especially since Suu Kyi's party boycotted the election. In fact, the Philippines had warned Burma that a less than credible election would undermine Asean unity. But lo and behold, Thein Sein came into power and quickly implemented reforms that have led to what we may call now as the Burmese spring.

Burma is instructive for the Philippines in particular and the Asean in general. The Asean would risk losing its credibility and imperiling its own respective member's attempts at democratization and liberalization if it lets renegade regimes continue with their depredations. Now that members have signed the Singapore accord, which seeks to bring regional economic integration into a higher level, similar to the European Union's, but also with the promise of political reforms, there's no turning back at democratization. The charter commits Asean members, including Burma, "to strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law and to promote human rights and fundamental freedom."

Long a thorn on the side of Asean, Burma has become a showcase of Asean's policy of engagement and of Manila's policy of firm rapprochement with Rangoon. Democracy and human rights should not be sacrificed on the altar of geopolitical expedience, as what Philippine diplomacy did when it boycotted the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies at the bidding of China, which was protesting the awarding of the prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. The Burmese lesson shows that diplomacy should be practiced based on principle, not compromise.



EDITORIAL

Deadly career

Being a woman, she would not be harmed. That was what officials in the Cagayan Valley regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources thought when they assigned forestry specialist Melania Dirain to coordinate with local governments in places considered to be hotspots for illegal logging.

They thought wrong. Last Tuesday night, a gunman entered Dirain's office in Sanchez Mira town in Cagayan and pumped her with bullets from a .45-caliber pistol as she was talking with an office messenger. The gunman fled as Dirain, a widowed mother of three, lay dying.

As team leader of the DENR's Community Environment and Natural Resources Office, Dirain was tasked to supervise the apprehension of undocumented lumber, fitches and other forest products. Last Jan. 27 in Alcala town in Cagayan, her team had confiscated 118 pieces of hardwood lumber being transported in a truck belonging to the Philippine National Police Regional Mobile Group. The

lumber and truck are impounded at the DENR's field office in Alcala.

The possible involvement of PNP members in a retaliatory attack should prompt authorities to turn over the probe of Dirain's murder to the National Bureau of Investigation, or at least to another police team outside the region. Dirain is not the first forestry worker to be murdered. Other custodians of the country's dwindling forests have lost their lives or faced harassment in the past years. Members of non-government organizations as well as journalists supporting efforts to stop illegal logging have also been killed or threatened with harm.

The DENR's executive director for Region 2, in a report to the head office, said that because of Dirain's gender, "we thought they would not harm her." Obviously, her killers did not care about niceties such as gender. President Aquino should instruct authorities to ensure that Dirain's murder is not added to the country's long list of unexplained killings.

BY ALITO L. MALINAO
XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

MILF condemns kidnappings as talks with Philippine gov't ends with no peace pact

MANILA: The separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has been waging an interdecade war in the Southern Philippines since the mid-1970s, has condemned the recent spate of kidnappings in Mindanao.

In an editorial published in the MILF's official website "Luwaran.com," the rebel group said that kidnapping local residents or foreigners is "an unconscionable act that deserved to be denounced and condemned in the highest degree."

The editorial was issued on the eve of the resumption of the peace negotiations between the government and the MILF in Kuala Lumpur which ended Wednesday.

The Kuala Lumpur meeting, the 25th round of formal exploratory talks, failed to resolve contentious issues, making it impossible for both sides to craft a peace agreement within the first quarter of this year, which the government has looked forward to.

In their joint statement issued at the end of the talks, both sides merely expressed "satisfaction on the progress of their discussions and recognizing the many challenges that have yet to be resolved in order to find a political solution to the Bangsamoro question and the armed conflict in Mindanao."

The two parties also acknowledged "the need to explore creative approaches that will address the political, legal and other di-

mensions of the problems." They agreed to meet again next month, also in Kuala Lumpur.

In the MILF editorial, the rebel group said that it is always bad to kidnap anybody but when foreigners are the victims, it becomes doubly difficult because sometimes it is linked to the issue of international terrorism.

"It feeds into the appetite of those who want the conflict in Mindanao attached to the global war on terrorism," the editorial said.

There are allegations that the MILF are aiding or giving sanctuaries to terrorist elements in Mindanao, including those with links to the terror group Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah.

The MILF, however, have denied these allegations although it has admitted that some former MILF combatants have joined lawless groups known as "lost commands."

The MILF editorial viewed kidnapping not just an act of barbarity but also a grave sin in the eyes of the Almighty.

"In its lesser level, it is an anti-people activity that whosoever does it earns the wrath of the people," the MILF said, adding that all the kidnappers that they knew ended up not only as hated men but also poor and penniless despite getting millions from their "industry."

It mentioned some notorious kidnappers, such as Abugado "Gado" Mubarak Tahir Alonto, and Abu Sabaya, who are all dead now.

The MILF also advised foreigners visiting Mindanao to be "extra careful" because, according to the group, no one has absolute control over this region, not even the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) nor the MILF.

"This region can be classified as 'ungovernable territory' hence, the proliferation of kidnappings," the MILF said.

It also called on foreigners to coordinate with them if they want to visit areas in Mindanao where they have influence "so that we can give them pertinent advice or provide them with escorts."

The MILF described the kidnappers as "difficult creatures to deal with and have one-tracked minds with only the glare of money, especially dollar, in their minds."

The rebel group also frowned on the giving of ransom to kidnappers because this would only add difficulty in negotiating for their release. "Chances are that those who participate (in the negotiation) stand the chance of being linked to the kidnapping," it said.

According to the MILF, at least three foreigners are still in the hands of their abductors in

Mindanao: Elwold Horn from Holland, Lorenzo Vinciguerra from Switzerland, and Warren Rockwell from Australia.

The exact fate and whereabouts of the three are still unknown although in the case of Rodwell, the MILF said he is already in the hands of the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan of which they had no contact whatsoever.

The abduction last Feb. 1 of Horn and Vinciguerra in Parangan, Panglima Sugala, Tawi-Tawi by armed men, has prompted the embassies of the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, and Canada to issue advisories to their citizens not to travel to Mindanao.

The two foreigners, reportedly wildlife photographers, were seized while on board a pump boat along with a certain Ivan Sarenat, a local guide, who was able to escape.

Rodwell was kidnapped by five gunmen disguised as policemen in December last year from his home in the seaside town of Ipil in Zamboanga Sibugay province and was brought to Basilan.

His kidnappers have demanded US\$2 million ransom from his Filipino wife Mirafior Cutang, 27, but Cutang said they cannot afford to pay.

Both the Philippine and Australian governments have rejected the ransom demand as well.

kartada 5

Opisyal mahilig 'sumawsaw'

Ado naman kaya ang kinataman ng isang opisyal na ito na nasa Palasyo at iniiimpluwensiyahan niya umano ang ginagawang imbestigasyon ng pamunuan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) hinggil sa nangyaring madugong labanan noong Oktubre ng nakaraming taon sa Al-Baraka, Basilan.

Ikaw ale ba, hindi lamang honorat ang magaganap sa iyo kundi kukuyugin ka pa ng mga madulo dahil sa pag-impluwensiyang mo sa mga taong humahusisi sa nangyaring insidente.

Ang usapin ay ang hindi inasahang pagkamatay ng 19 na Army Special Forces at 14 na iba pa ang sagutan ng kuyugin sila ng mahigit 300 na pinagsanib na powerul

ng Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) at Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) sa isang araw na labanan.

Kung matatandaan natin, apat na opisyal ng Special Operations Command (SOCOM) ang sinibak sa kanilang puwesto at nasa floating status dahil sa command responsibility.

Mantakin mo namang gusto raw ipabilay ang apat. Pero ayon sa spy ni Mang Teban ay napag-unanin lamang daw siya ng



mas matatag nang opisyal ng Malucanang.

Sa nasagap na impormasyon ni spy ni Mang Teban, ang-fax pa umano si opisyal sa pre-trial officer para tuluyan na ang apat!

Sana naman kagalanggalang na opisyal, e respetuhin naman natin ang kakayahan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines na gampanan ang kanilang trabaho para busapilin kung talagang may pananagutan o wala ang apat.

Sabi nga ng AFP, itayo ninyo po kami sa mga pulitiko, pero eto naman si opisyal na naniniko para impluwensiyahan ang mga imbestigador.

Pintanhan n'yo siya: Hindi pa siya nakikita sa personal ni Mang Teban dahil nasa palasyo ang kanyang lagga. Chai ang kanyang trabaho ay may kinataman sa pulitika con standard.

EDITORIAL EDITORIAL

Investment ang moderno at magaling na AFP



Inamureyo ng ating hukbong sandatahang lakas na dumating na ang dalawang bagong combat choppers na binili ng ating bansa mula sa Italy at Poland.

Ito ay habagat umano ng pagkaba natin ng walong choppers na nagkakahalaga ng P2.8 bilyon na may kaugnayan sa Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) modernization program. Ang mga nating heli-copter ay sinusabing may night-vision goggles at SN 350 Autopilot. Sa binaw pa lang ng balitang ito ay mukhang 'high tech' 'iku nga ang mga nabanggit na sasakyang panghimpapawid.

Bagama't malit na bansa lang naman tayo kumpara sa ibang military superpowers sa mundo ay malaking bagay ito upang itinatag natin ang kalidad ng mga kagamitan ng ating sariling militar sa pagsabuk sa mga pakikipagbarkaban sa mga masasamang loob.

Ayon kay AFP deputy chief for plans and programs Maj. Gen. Roy Deveratura, maaaring gamitin ang mga chopper na ito sa paghahatid ng mga tropang sundalo sa kanilang mga misyon, or evacuation ng mga nasusugatang kawal e maging sa pagtugon sa mga pangangailangan ng ating mga kababayan sa panahon ng mga kalamidad.

Tulad din ng ibang mga sektor ng ating pamahalaan, ang mga masayon na kagamitan sa AFP ay pangamahing sangkap na pagpapabuti ng serbisyo.

Mahirap ang trabaho na puro mano-mano. Kahit sa pagsasaka ay matagal na tayong namulit sa ginawa at bilis sa dulot ng paggamit ng mga makina at ito ay isang daan tango sa kaundaran.

Ang pagpopondo sa mga kasangkapan ay kaakibat ng paghahangal natin ng kahusayan sa mga bagay kung saan man napapabilang ang isang sektor ng ating lipunan.

Wala itong iniwan sa nag-aaral na gumagamit ng computer at hindi. Malaki ang kaibahan at nakatungos ang tinutawag na 'teki'.

Alam nating marunong pinagkakagastasan ang ating bansa kabilang na ang paghahanda sa mga kalamidad at pagpapambalik sa normal na takbo ng buhay ng mga mamamayang nanapektuhan nito, ngunit kailangan ding bigyan ng prayoridad ang pangangailangan ng AFP dahil matagal na rin nating pangarap ang makalaya sa mga dispalinghadong helicopters na napapalal na humabagpak dahil sa kahumasan at kahinaan.

Kasabay ng pagkakamit natin ng mahuhusay na gamit ay proalit-ufit din nating binahanggit ang pagkakaroon ng hanay ng militar na hindi nababahiran ng anumang anomalya.

24



Photo released by the Philippine Air Force shows combat utility helicopters from Augusta-Swidnik of Italy and Poland parked at a hangar shortly after their arrival at Clark Air Base in Pampanga.

AFP

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P.M.S.E.A. AT NEGROS ORIENTAL – Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) President Louie Sarmiento (2nd from left) personally monitors the search and rescue operations being conducted by the 'Pusong Minero' team from PMSEA member company, Apex Mining Co. (foreground), at the landslide area in Barangay Solongon, La Libertad, Negros Oriental. 'Pusong Minero' teams from member-companies, as well as its Portable Water Filtration System which is capable of producing 30 gallons of drinking water per minute, were immediately deployed at Negros Oriental after a 6.9 magnitude earthquake hit the province. Also in photo with Sarmiento at the search and rescue site are (from left) La Libertad Mayor Lawrence Limkaichong, PMSEA Director Roger Casido, and Apex Mining Co. Safety Manager Tony Asis.

A-7

Top US exec concerned over killings

A TOP official of the US Department of State has expressed serious concern over extrajudicial killings involving security forces in the Philippines.

But Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, told last week's hearing of the US House of Representatives subcommittee on terrorism, nonproliferation and trade that "the pace of killings has declined."

Campbell noted, however, that "trying and convicting perpetrators remains an ongoing challenge" for Philippine authorities.

He noted that "over the past years, some members of the security forces have been involved in politically motivated murders."

"As you are aware, the US Congress has withheld \$3 million in foreign military financing to the Philippines pending progress toward accountability regarding these killings," Campbell said in his testimony that was posted on the website of the US Embassy in Manila.

Citing Washington's "longstanding advocacy for human rights and specifically the concerns we have had about extrajudicial killings," Campbell said the United States was providing support to the Philippines through the Asia Foundation "to help build

capacity and streamline these cases which would help further advance accountability."

"President Aquino, whose father was the victim of the country's most infamous extrajudicial killing, has spoken publicly on the issue. Justice Secretary Leida de Lima has shown herself to be a long-time, ardent advocate for human rights," he said.

During the Feb. 7 congressional hearing, Campbell also reported that the Philippines "acknowledges issues that weaken our trade relationship and impede equitable, broad-based economic growth for Filipinos."

"Primary among these is corruption, though there is reason to be optimistic as President Aquino's campaign to root out corruption is beginning to take hold through public disclosure of violations, placing new leadership in oversight institutions, public antagonism to cronyism and through nascent initiatives that—if implemented effectively—offer the opportunity for gradual but effective change," he said.

Campbell said that "as one of the eight founding governments of the Open Government Partnership launched last September in New York, the Aquino government is committed to a global effort for more transparent, effective and accountable governance with institutions that empower citizens and are responsive to their aspirations."

"If President Aquino and his administration remain committed on this track, I firmly believe the Philippines can continue to improve its global standing, its ranking in the various indices of corruption and its chances of attracting job-creating investment by American and international companies," he said.

Jerry E. Esplanada

Philippines to get one more ship from US



THE US Congress has approved the transfer of a second Coast Guard ship to the Philippines, an official said Friday, as Washington shifts its military ties with Manila that has been engaged in a territorial dispute with China.

Assistant US State Secretary Andrew Shapiro told reporters he would consider a Philippine request to have the warship turned over with as much military equipment as possible.

That drew a sharp reaction from the Communist Party of the Philippines which on Friday said the US military was preparing the Philippine Navy as its front-line force against China in connection with the brewing conflict over the Spratly Islands.

"The transfer of another cutter from the US government serves the purpose of US military buildup in the South China Sea," the group said in a statement.

"Through such, the US is able to employ the Philippine Navy as an augmentation force in the course of its operations to permanently project its military presence and power in the area and secure the trade routes and Asian markets in the interest of US monopoly capitalist companies.

Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin on Monday confirmed there had been talks about the Philippines acquiring another Hamilton-class cutter.

The Philippine Navy acquired its first cutter from the US Coast Guard last year and renamed the 1967-commissioned ship BRP Gregorio del Pilar. The Navy then deployed the ship to the West Philippine Sea to patrol the area.

The CPP said the transfer of a second cutter to the Navy would further heighten the tension in the disputed Spratlys and provoke China.

On Thursday, officials of the US congress announced that its Foreign Relations Committee was about to wrap up its decision to transfer the US naval cutter Dalius by the end of the week and planned to sail it to the Philippines soon thereafter, the group said.



But defense and military officials have said the acquisition of war equipment is part of the Armed Forces' long-stalled modernization program, and that it has nothing to do with the dispute over the Spratly Islands.

The government had earlier announced it was also negotiating with the US government the acquisition of several F-16 fighters.

Last week, Gazmin and other officials went to Italy to sign a five-year contract to acquire fighter-bomber jets, frigates and destroyers and unmanned surveillance aircraft.
<http://weapons.technology.youngster.com/2012/02/philippines-to-get-one-more-ship-from.html>

BFP acquires new ambulance

Published : Thursday, February 16, 2012 00:00

THE Bureau of Fire Protection acquired a brand new ambulance which will be shipped immediately to Rio Grande Basin in Mindanao for medical operations.

BFP acting commander Chief Supt. Samuel Perez said that the new ambulance was the latest share to the flood-stricken area after the two rubber boats.

The H1000 Hyundai ambulance was donated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines Mutual Benefits Association Inc.

In a simple turnover ceremony, AFPMBAI president Retired BGen Ricardo Morales said that the association decided to give away donations to other institutions after its assets have reached the P10 billion mark.

AFPMBAI also donated six ambulances to the General Headquarters Office; two to the Philippine Army and one each to the Philippine Navy and Air Force.

The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Philippine National Police and Philippine Coast guard also received one unit each.

Morales said that the association will continue to share their benefits to other agencies of the government.

Joel dela Torre

<http://www.journal.com.ph/index.php/news/national/24048-bfp-acquires-new-ambulance>

**Army troopers give
1-day allowance
BY GILBERT BAYORAN**

The Philippine Army has raised P2 million for the earthquake victims in Negros Oriental, representing the one-day subsistence allowance of its 80,000-strong soldiers, its regional spokesman, Capt. Reylan Java, said.

Java said the amount was used for the purchase of P2 million worth of relief goods, which include mineral water, noodles and biscuits, among others, and were turned over to Gov. Roel Degamo and mayors of affected local government units in Negros Oriental.

Degamo lauded the effort of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, especially the Army, who supported Negros Oriental, not just during the earthquake, but during the tropical storm "Sendong", that hit the province in December last year.

A member of the army receives a monthly subsistence allowance of P2,700, and one day equivalent is P90.

Java said the P2 million forms part of the amount taken from the subsistence allowance of the 125,000-strong Armed Forces of the Philippines, deducted from them last year, also for donation to "Sendong" victims in Negros Oriental and Mindanao in December last year.

Col. Francisco Patrimonio, commanding officer of the 302nd Infantry Brigade, also acknowledged the support of the Philippine Navy, Air Force and Army engineers, who immediately responded after the magnitude 6.9 earthquake hit Negros Oriental last week.

"It would be very hard for the ground troops to facilitate and hasten rescue, retrieval, and relief operations without the support of these units. It was indeed a rare display of the Filipino spirit of bayanihan that united us into one common goal of helping the people," Patrimonio said.

Patrimonio assured that the army troopers will continue the search and retrieval operations in the vicinity of the two different landside incidents in Barangay Solonggon,

La Libertad, and Barangay Planas in Guihulngan City.

"Our combat operations in pursuing the armed rebels were temporarily cancelled and were shifted into disaster rescue, relief and retrieval operations when the earthquakes occurred", he added.

Degamo, in a statement issued by the 3rd Infantry Division, appealed to the people, especially to local politicians, to unite and work together to help the people and to fast-track the rehabilitation of affected communities.

About 300 Army soldiers were mobilized by the 3rd Infantry Division in the retrieval operations, especially in the landslide areas of La Libertad and Guihulngan City.

The turnover of relief goods were also witnessed by Col. Jonas Sumagaysay, deputy commander of the 3rd Infantry Division; Lt. Col. Ramil Bitong, commanding officer of 11th Infantry Battalion; Lt. Col. Rene Honasan, commander of the Air Force Tactical Operation Group 6; Mayor Nestor Reyes of Guihulngan City; Mayor Lawrence Limkaichong of La Libertad, and Director Minda Morante of the Office of Civil Defense.*GPB

<http://www.visayandailystar.com/2012/February/16/negor4.htm>

Manila gets second U.S. Coast Guard ship

Published: Feb. 16, 2012 at 6:29 AM

MANILA, Philippines, Feb. 16 (UPI) – The Philippines navy soon will receive its second decommissioned U.S. Coast Guard ship amid concern that the move sends the wrong signal to China.

Final U.S. approval for the sale of the USCGC Dallas, a Hamilton class cutter, is under way and the 378 foot-long, 3,250-ton vessel should soon sail for the Philippines.

The Dallas was commissioned in 1967 at the Avondale Shipyard in New Orleans. It carries a crew of 167 and can stay at sea for around 45 days, making it a high-endurance vessel.

Armaments included one OTO Melara MK-75 76mm gun, two MK-38 25mm machine gun systems and two MK 36 SRBOC systems. It also had a Phalanx CIWS missile defense gun, along with other mounted machine guns.

The ship is being sold as an excess defense article through the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act 1961.

But the Communist Party of the Philippines said the sale indicates the United States is preparing the Philippines navy as its de facto fighting force against China as the tensions increase in the South China Sea, a report in the Philippines newspaper Business Mirror said.

"The transfer of another naval cutter from the U.S. government serves the purpose of U.S. military buildup on the South China Sea," the CPP said in a statement.

"The United States is able to employ the Philippine navy as an augmentation force in the course of its operations to permanently project its military presence and power in the area and secure the trade routes and Asian markets in the interest of U.S. monopoly capitalist companies."

The CPP also said the acceptance of the Dallas makes the navy a target by enemies of the Philippines.

A report in The Philippine Star newspaper confirmed the sale of the Dallas soon will be completed.

"I'm pleased to report that the congressional review process for another ship – Coast Guard cutter Dallas – wraps up this week," U.S. Rep. Ed Royce, R-Calif., told a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs hearing on U.S.-Philippine relations. "It should soon be on its way to Manila."

The Dallas joins the former U.S. Coast Guard vessel Hamilton – renamed the Gregorio del Pilar – which was decommissioned in March and taken over by the Philippines navy in May.

Royce said the Dallas will bolster the Philippines navy's efforts to maintain its territorial integrity.

Aggressive Chinese claims on the South China Sea – or the West Philippine Sea as it is referred to in Manila -- are driving the nations of southeast Asia to seek closer U.S. ties," Royce said.

Philippines military spokesman Col. Amulfo Burgos Jr. said the backing of U.S. politicians by agreeing to military sales helps increase Manila's defensive capabilities, the Star report said.

"This is a welcome development for the armed forces of the Philippines which continues to strive to be more efficient and effective in fulfilling its constitutional mandate of protecting the people and upholding the sovereignty and integrity of its national territory," he said.

The Philippines Business Mirror quoted Andrew Shapiro, U.S. State Department assistant secretary for Political and Military Affairs, saying the Philippines's internal security threat has shifted from terrorism to maritime concerns. The reason is Manila's concern over Chinese intrusions in the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, said Shapiro.

Philippines and China dispute ownership of the Spratly Islands, although they are under Manila's control.

Shapiro also said "the United States hasn't taken a position on the claims, we believe it will not be resolved through the use of force," the Business Mirror report said. "We will continue to press that point to all the parties, that's been the U.S. policy under the Obama administration."

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2012/02/16/Manila-gets-second-US-Coast-Guard-ship/UPI-79141329391740/