NEWS CLIPPINGS

"THE NAVY: PROTECTING THE SEAS, SECURING OUR FUTURE"

Date: 14 OCT 2020

Copy for: OFFICE FILE

## A. NAVY NEWS/PHOTOS

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Philippine Navy developing maritime CAFGU for West Philippine Sea

Ian Fernandez

The Philippine Navy is in the process of developing capability for maritime Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) Active Auxiliaries (CAAS).

This was stated by Navy chief Vice Admiral Giovanni Carlo Bacordo during Senate Committee on Finance Subcommittee C hearing on the proposed 2021 budget of the Department of National Defense (DND) and attached agencies when asked about initiatives to protect fishermen in West Philippine Sea.

Vice Admiral Bacordo said “the Navy is developing the capability for the maritime CAFGUs or maritime CAAS, specifically for the Naval Forces Northern Luzon (NFNL) and Naval Forces West (NAVFORWEST).”

The Navy chief explained that the maritime CAFGU will be the counterpart of Chinese maritime militia. The maritime CAFGU will be patrolling the areas of West Philippine Sea and Bajo de Masinloc.

“Aside from data gathering, they will also be protecting our fishermen as they conduct their business of fishing in our EEZ,” Bacordo said.

He explained that the maritime CAAS will be sourced from CAAS under the control of Philippine Army.

“We are looking forward to expanding the scope of the CAAS,” Bacordo noted. “We will request for additional budget for 2022.”

Navy to deploy over 200 militiamen to West Philippine Sea

OCT 13, 2020 2:55 PM PHT
RAMBO TALABONG

INFO

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

'This is response to the Chinese, to their maritime militia in the West Philippine Sea,' says Navy chief Vice Admiral Giovanni Carlo Bacordo

The Philippine Navy is preparing to send over 200 militiamen to the West Philippine Sea to execute patrols and protect fishermen who have long been harassed by encroaching Chinese forces.

In a phone interview with Rappler on Tuesday, October 13, Navy chief Vice Admiral Giovanni Carlo Bacordo said they are set to deploy two Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) companies – around 120 men each – to the West Philippine Sea.

One company will be assigned with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Western Command, which watches over the Kalayaan Island Group, and another company to the AFP Northern Command, which secures Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal.

"The purpose of this is response to the Chinese, to their maritime militia in the West Philippine Sea," Bacordo said.

Filipino fishermen have been victim to harassment of Chinese naval and militia forces for years. Still, the Duterte administration has chosen to largely resort to diplomatic protests when these harassment claims surface.

The harassment came to a head in June 9, 2019, when a Chinese trawler rammed a Filipino fishing vessel then abandoned its 22 crew members to float in cold water, sparking a controversy over the alliance built by President Rodrigo Duterte with the Asian superpower.
The militia forces' deployment date has not been set, as they will first undergo training care of the Navy.

How do the maritime militias work?

The Navy militias were plucked from the militia of the Philippine Army from the same regional commands.

After their training, Bacordo said they will board motor boats and will be armed with rifles before being deployed.

Aside from protecting fishermen, the militia will be tasked to conduct intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations to obtain useful information for the Philippine military.

Their deployment to protect fishermen will also allow the Philippine Navy to focus its efforts on protecting the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Bacordo admitted 240 is still a small number, but he said the effort may be expanded in the future if the AFP deems it effective.

The Navy is also aiming to deploy one company each for the 6 regional commands of the AFP, but they are prioritizing the commands watching over the West Philippine Sea.

On Tuesday, AFP chief General Gilbert Gapay warned the area was "becoming more tense" and that it had become a "potential flash point" in the region. – Rappler.com

Hindi tumitigil ang mga tauhan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) sa pagtupad ng kanilang mandato na pagbabantay sa soberanya ng bansa.

Ayon kay AFP Chief of Staff General Gilbert Gapay, araw-araw ay nagpapatrolya sa karagatan at himpapawid ang mga tauhan ng Philippine Navy sa West Philippine Sea dahil na rin sa presenya ng mga warship ng China.

Ang regular aniyang pagpapatrolya ng Philippine Navy katuwang ang mga tauhan ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sa West Philippine Sea ay mensahe sa China at iba pang mga bansa na pinoprotektahan lang ng Pilipinas ang soberanya nito.

Sa ngayon, ayon kay Gapay ay stable ang sitwasyon sa West Philippine Sea pero sakali aniyang magkaroon ng panibagong tensyon sa pagitan ng Chinese Coast Guard, nais pa rin ni General Gapay na idaan ito sa mapayapa at diplomatikong paraan.

Matatandaang July 12, 2016 nang ianunsyo ng Permanent Court of Arbitration sa The Hague, Netherlands ang pagkapanalo ng Pilipinas sa kanilang historical claims sa West Philippine Sea.

Pero tila hindi kinikilala ng China ang ruling ng Permanent Court of Arbitration.

2 military personnel, 2 others slain in shooting incidents in Negros Oriental

By: Ruffy Cabristante - @inquirerdotnet
Inquirer Visayas / 03:31 PM October 13, 2020

DUMAGUETE CITY — Four men, including two military personnel, were killed in separate shooting incidents in Negros Oriental on Sunday and Monday.

In northern Guihulngan City, suspected rebels of the New People’s Army (NPA) ambushed and killed Reymond Fat, a member of the Civilian Active Auxiliary stationed in the village Hinakpan, last Sunday afternoon.

A report from the Negros Oriental Provincial Police Office said Fat was on his way home when waylaid and shot multiple times by four suspected members of the NPA’s Special Partisan Unit.

Recovered from the crime scene were 14 bullets from a .45 caliber pistol.

The next day, motorcycle-riding assassins shot and killed Philippine Navy reservist Roger Alibiado, 40, at Datagon village of southern Siaton town.

Initial police investigation showed that Alibiado was on his way home with his live-in partner Monday afternoon when four motorcycle-riding gunmen ambushed them.

The perpetrators shot Alibiado in the head.

Alibiado was rushed to a hospital but attending physicians declared them dead on arrival.

Two more murders were reported over the past two days in Negros Oriental involving “habal-habal” driver Samson Doong, 61, in Siaton town; and Anthony Elnar, 33, at the village of Maninigbon in Bayawan City.

Doong suffered a gunshot wound in the head, reports from the Negros Oriental Police showed.

Authorities have yet to disclose further details about the four shooting incidents as they were still

Suspected NPA rebels also attacked a base of the Philippine National Police’s Regional Mobile Force Battalion-7 in Barangay Hinakpan, Guihulngan City Monday evening.

The attack lasted less than a minute. No one was killed or injured in the incident.

https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1347214/2-military-personnel-2-others-slain-in-shooting-incidents-in-negros-oriental#ixzz6anFK6cX1
Gapay: AFP modernization a key to ending terrorism

THIRD ANNE PERALTA-MALONZO
October 13, 2020

The continuous support of the government to the modernization of the military is the key to ending insurgency and terrorism in the country, said Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief-of-Staff General Gilbert Gapay.

"The AFP Modernization program provides us with the necessary tools in defeating internal and external threats. It particularly gives us the leverage in facing terrorist groups," he said in a statement.

"We cannot stress the importance of being well-equipped as we face all these adversaries in our territorial defense, counterinsurgency efforts, including humanitarian response. Enhancing our capabilities in terms of equipment and assets gives us the motivation and preparedness to overcome these challenges," he added.

Among the AFP's latest acquisitions are the six units of Super Tucano A-29B made by Brazil's Embraer SA for the Philippine Air Force (PAF).

Gapay said the fixed-wing light attack aircrafts are now being utilized by the 15th Strike Wing to support and eventually fully replace the remaining OV-10 Bronco and SF-260 attack planes of PAF.

"At least 14 air forces around the globe are using the said asset which has electro-optical infrared and laser-firing technology beneficial in counterinsurgency efforts of the military. The Super Tucanos will also complement the FA-50, which was used during the Marawi siege," he said.

In May, the Philippine Navy got its first missile-frigate named BRP Jose Rizal.

Another missile-frigate, which will be named BRP Antonio Luna, is expected to arrive in the country in the first quarter of 2021.

"The delivery of the second frigate was originally set this October but was delayed due to the prioritization of Covid-19 response. It is now expected to arrive in January or February of 2021 to boost anti-air warfare (AAW), anti-surface warfare (ASUW), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and electronic warfare (EW) operations," said Gapay.

The Navy said the acquisition of the vessel provides a significant boost to their fulfillment of the thrust of having a modern and multi-mission capable platform competent enough to conduct anti-surface, anti-air, anti-submarine and electronic warfare operations that the maritime nation can depend on.

It has a maximum designed speed of 25 knots, a cruising speed of 15 knots and a range of 4,500 nautical miles.

The Philippine Army (PA), meanwhile, recently received two R-44 Raven Light Training
Helicopters from anonymous individuals.

The light choppers will be used for aviation regiment training as the Army looks forward to acquiring additional aircraft in the coming years.

Under the AFP Modernization Program, the Army has light tanks and self-propelled artillery in the pipeline.

The military, as ordered by President Rodrigo Duterte is eyeing to finish terrorist groups by 2021, before the latter steps down from the office.

Aside from defeating the terrorists groups, Gapay said the newly procured military assets are also being used to boost the government’s effort against the coronavirus disease 2019.

He said since the pandemic broke, military vehicles were deployed to distribute 2.4 million food packs nationwide and accommodate stranded passengers here and abroad.

He said 1,094 military personnel, 1,054 civilians and 230 foreigners, and 781.8 thousand kilograms of cargoes were transported through 741 flight missions.

Gapay said naval vessels were also used to conduct sealift operations and transport military personnel, civilians and around 433 thousand kilograms of cargoes.

"Having the government’s support in the AFP Modernization program is the primary key that we need to fulfill our mandate of protecting the people, upholding our sovereignty and preserving territorial integrity," he said. (SunStar Philippines)

AFP to beef up WPS monitoring

posted October 14, 2020 at 01:00 am by Macon Ramos-Araneta

Armed Forces chief Gen. Gilbert Gapay on Tuesday described the situation in the South China Sea as "volatile and uncertain," adding the military would install one of the radar systems from Japan at the closed Matinloc gas platform off Malampaya, Palawan near the West Philippine Sea.

"You see, we (decided that) the Matinloc platform (will) be assigned one of the radars coming from Japan to beef up our monitoring capability in the West Philippine Sea," Gapay said in an online press conference with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP).

Gapay said these radar systems from Japan would be used to beef up the country's maritime domain awareness capability.

"Aside from radars, we are also looking at Japan as a source of (in) developing our cyber (capabilities). This is one aspect we are focusing on now and I think we can partner with Japan in this area, cyber-defense and security which is also one of their thrusts of the Japan Self Defense Force," he said.

Gapay explained the situation in the region had been uncertain because of what he described as the continuous aggressive actions of China and the United States' move to protect its interest in the area.

"Situation in the South China Sea remains volatile and uncertain because of certain actions of certain actors in the area, particularly China and the United States," Gapay said.

"We have seen aggressive actions on the part of China, from reclaiming the area and deploying some warships there and their Coast Guard is very visible in the area. Their maritime militias are there. They're practically swarming most of the areas in the West Philippine Sea," he added.

"Here comes the United States, of course protecting their interests... in maintaining that sea lanes of trade and communications open and free and safe and secure, advocating freedom of navigation in the area," Gapay said.

Meanwhile, in the Senate, Senator Risa Hontiveros is skeptical of claims the situation in the West Philippine Sea is 'stable and manageable' as reported by the Department of Defense in its budget hearing.

The senator stressed that 'external' threats to the Philippines should not be downplayed amid China's repeated incursions in Philippine territory.

"I highly doubt that the situation in the West Philippine Sea is 'manageable.' Is it manageable that there are no more remaining fishes and natural resources? Is it manageable that Filipino fishermen no longer have their jobs? Is it manageable that we are slowly losing our sovereignty?" asked the senator as she urged the DND to reevaluate its national security threat assessment. Hontiveros stressed the primary mandate of the Armed Forces of the Philippines — which includes the Army, the Air Force, and the Philippine Navy — is to protect the Philippines from 'external' threats.
'Internal' threats, the senator said, should be largely addressed and managed by the Philippine National Police under the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Beijing's exercises in the South China Sea have contributed to a "tense situation" in the region, according to Gapay.

But he maintained all issues in the resource-rich region should be dealt with peacefully and in a diplomatic manner.

"It has even fired recently a missile, (to) which we have lodged a diplomatic protest on; and here comes United States displaying a show of force in the area so it's very tense and right now the effort really is multilateral action and talking about how to peacefully resolve these issues," Gapay said.

China has been claiming a huge portion of the South China Sea as part of its territory under the disputed nine-dash line.

On July 12, 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands delivered a major victory to the Philippines on its case against China and invalidated the latter's massive and historical claims over the South China Sea.

China has since refused to recognize the said ruling.

Facing senators in a budget hearing on Monday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the situation in the West Philippine Sea is "stable and manageable."

"We conduct naval and air patrols everyday in the West Philippine Sea. It involves seven Navy assets," Gapay said.

Gapay added the AFP was also interested in beefing up its unmanned aerial systems capability with Japanese assistance.

Earlier, the Department of National Defense announced it had signed the contract agreement and notice to proceed with a Japanese firm regarding the Philippine Air Force's Horizon 2 Air Surveillance Radar System (ASRS) acquisition project. The contract was signed by Lorenzana last August 14.

The project, which has an approved budget contract of P5.5 billion was awarded to Mitsubishi Electric Corporation (MELCO) with a total contract price of $103.5 million (around P5 billion). The ASRS is under a negotiated government-to-government procurement with Japan.

"This cooperation signifies Japan's first time to export Japanese-made defense equipment under a restructured government policy, permitting sales of defense equipment, as long as it is deemed for the promotion of international peace," DND spokesperson Arsenio Andolong earlier said.

This is also the first defense equipment and technology cooperation project between the two countries in realization of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of Japan concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology signed in 2016.

The recommended ASRS sites will cover large areas of the Philippine Rise, southern areas of the country, and the southern portion of the West Philippine Sea.
Operations from these strategically vital locations will enable the PAF to provide optimal airspace monitoring, aircraft control, perform its air defense mission and enhance the security in areas of interest identified by the DND.

Specifically, the ASRS will help to detect, identify, and correlate any threats and intrusions within the Philippine exclusive economic zone and deliver radar images to decision-makers and relevant operating units.

The ASRS package includes three fixed long-range air surveillance radars, each with building facilities and one mobile air surveillance radar, and are expected to be delivered to the Philippines starting 2022.

Hontiveros said: "Our lifelong fight for economic and national security will be all for naught if we don't take China's adventurism in our territories seriously," she added.

Hontiveros then questioned why the Department of Budget and Management only appropriated P5 billion out of the P13.2 billion that the AFP modernization program is entitled to receive from the Bases Conversion and Development Authority’s proceeds.

"Where’s the remaining P8.2 billion? Why is DBM not appropriating the full P13.2 billion to AFP already?" she further questioned.

She reiterated her Proposed Senate Resolution 520 that seeks a Senate-led 'comprehensive audit' of the AFP's use of its shares in BCDA's earnings over the years.

"We cannot afford a shortage of funding for the AFP modernization program, especially during a time when a regional and rising global superpower is unabashedly taking resources that are 100 percent ours." With PNA

LOOK: Rocco Nacino participates in NAVSOG activity for the first time

Published October 13, 2020, 6:19 PM
by Stephanie Bernardino

As a new member of the Naval Special Operations Group (NAVSOG), actor Rocco Nacino was ecstatic that he was able to join the recent activity of the group.

On Instagram, he shared that the activity was the “highlight” of his weekend.

Rocco Nacino (in military garb) distributing goods during the activity

“These are our real life heroes. Civilians with big hearts, and soldiers/ reservists who are always ready to protect and assist. Tondo may be one of our hot spots during this pandemic, but this didn’t stop good Samaritans from extending help to those who are in need,” he wrote as a caption to a series of photos taken during the relief operation.

He also congratulated PO3 Dennis Barradas of unit Team S.T.A.R.S. for spearheading the said activity; he also mentioned Officers Col. Almoite and Captain Biola for gracing their event; then Class Matatag mates, Charles Araneta of GNC Travel and tours for sponsoring them, and lastly Brgy. 213 Chairman Bolong Sy for providing them the assistance and location for the distribution.

“Sana ay nabigyan namin ang mga residente ng Tondo, Manila ng kasiyahan nung araw na yun,” he ended his post.

“A Snappy salute to all of you!”

Note that NAVSOG is a unit of the Philippine Navy trained in special operations, sabotage, psychological and unconventional warfare.
Late last year, after he graduated from his basic civilian-military training, Rocco attended the
cathedral and official donning of ranks of the Philippine Navy as 3rd Class Petty Officer.

Meanwhile last March, the actor marked his 33rd birthday by “boosting the morale” of military
personnel working amid the public health crisis by providing them food and water.

time-2/
Baron Geisler to train with Philippine Navy

OCT 13, 2020 11:23 AM PHT
RAPPLER.COM

INFO

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

The actor posts photos from the Naval Reserve Center in Cebu City

Baron Geisler will be joining the military reserve force as he trains with the Philippine Navy.

In an Instagram post on October 11, the actor posted photos of him at the Naval Reserve Center in Cebu City.

“My day was such a blessing. Thank you, Abba Father for leading and guiding me to the right path. My Life is purposed to serve YOU and the people I meet on this journey,” he wrote in the caption.

“Thank you for protecting me and my family. I love You!” he said.

In a reply to a comment Baron confirmed that he was going to train with the Navy.

The actor is the latest in a string of celebrities that trained to become military reservists, among them Dingdong Dantes, Rocco Nacino, Matteo Guidicelli, and Winwyn Marquez.

Baron has been based in Cebu City where he lives with his wife, Jamie Marie Evangelista, and their daughter Talitha, born in January. – Rappler.com

Velasco takes over as Cayetano steps down as Speaker

By DELON PORCALLA

The slugfest over the leadership of the House of Representatives finally ended yesterday after more than 200 members of the chamber "ratified" their election of Rep. Lord Allan Velasco as the new Speaker.

Before the proceedings, supporters and allies of the lone Mindanao representative had to force open all the doors to the House plenary hall, which supporters of his predecessor Taguig Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano had closed.

Reps. Arnie Teves (Negros Oriental), Esmail Mangudadatu (Maguindanao), Bem Noel (An Waray), Wes Gatchalian (Valenzuela City), Bernadette Herrera (Bagong Henerasyon), Doy Leachon (Oriental Mindoro) and Koko Nogales (PBA) worked their way to enter the plenary hall.


"Let us show our countrymen that loyalty and fidelity to the promises we make are not mere conveniences for us. Let us be good examples of palabra de honor and

Turn to Page 2
Lord

From Page 1

it has spawned — is being sacrificed before the altar of personal greed and political ambition," Velasco said.

**Changing tune**

Before noon, Cayetano appealed to his supporters to back President Duterte’s call for the swift passage of the P4.5-trillion national budget for 2021 — after unilaterally suspending sessions until Nov. 16.

"I love this institution. I’ve been here since 1998. I’ve faced many Go-Go-thals," he warned the Velasco camp, whom he called "saboteurs."

"If you are bent on destroying and burning down the House, I will not allow you to burn this House down. Remember that," he said.

"If you try to burn this House down, you’re in for one hell of a fight," he declared.

He had earlier said his term-sharing deal with Velasco — brokered by President Duterte — became moot after the rejection by 184 House members of his offer to resign. Cayetano will celebrate his 50th birthday on Oct. 28.

But his statement on Facebook appeared to be the exact opposite of what he had been doing for weeks. "From the start I have always said that I will abide by what the President, as leader of our coalition, will say," he wrote.

"Today, given the untenable political situation that Congress has been placed and the possible damage to the country if the 2021 budget is not passed on time, I take his admonition to put aside all politics and focus on the budget to heart and with this, tender my irrevocable resignation as Speaker effective immediately," he added.

Cayetano — criticized by his political foes and netizens for his theatrics and frequent invoking of biblical verses — declared in his press statement that "he is leaving his post with a clear conscience."

"I have done my best, I have given my all, I leave with no regrets and I hold no rancor in my heart towards anyone," the former senator and one-time foreign affairs secretary said.
In a press statement issued before noon, Cayetano described Velasco's election as "illegal and unprecedented," quoting his ally San Juan Rep. Ronaldo Zamora in the latter's interview over a radio station.

"It's hard to say that the session at the Celebrity Sports Plaza was authorized. We have to be in session because of the proclamation of the President of a special session. Changing the Speaker requires nominal voting. Votes and manifestos are needed for it to be valid. The voting should take place in a session," Zamora said.

In a related development, reports also have it that Duterte's congressman-son Paolo has resigned as House deputy speaker for political affairs. There was no immediate confirmation of the report, however, as congressmen were still busy with the turnover.

Members of the minority bloc, meanwhile, said they can work with whoever is sitting as Speaker, as they have "consistently committed to working with our colleagues in the majority in order to craft legislation aimed at benefiting our people."

"This we pledge to do regardless of who occupies the office of the Speaker – the holder of which is determined by those who belong to the majority," House Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante Jr. said in a statement.

"As we move forward, we hope to work with our colleagues to quickly and thoroughly thresh out the details of the national budget, conscious of our mandate to come up with an appropriations measure that addresses the adverse impact of the pandemic on the lives of our countrymen," the group added.

Meanwhile, Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto lauded what he called Cayetano's short but spectacular stint as Speaker.

"This is just a pit stop in Alan's long career. He will be back – I doubt if he'll ever leave the political scene as a leading voice. It will be ages before we will come to read the requiem for this heavyweight. Not today," said Recto.

"His stint as House leader may be short, but it was spectacular. He passed all the bills the Palace requested, plus those which are products of the House's policy ingenuity, which he harnessed in full," he added.

"While he had changed chambers, he was constantly in touch with his old colleagues in the Smaller but Smarter House. He is always welcome here, and the polls show that it will be a walk in the park for him," Recto said.

Recto said when Cayetano accepted the demotion from senator to foreign affairs secretary, he made it a point to be always accessible to any worker in distress.

"I have referred many OFWs in distress and he made it a point to personally attend to all of them," Recto said.

"I am writing this to thank him for his service to the nation as House leader. Old school it may sound, but in this age when the new is hailed and the old is forgotten, I believe that the courtesy of appreciating the good a person had done should continue as an honored tradition," he added.

- With Cecille Suerte Felipe
By Melvin Gascon
@melvingasconNQ

Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Velasco on Tuesday officially took over the reins at the House of Representatives, ending weeks of a leadership crisis that has threatened to delay the passage of the P4.5-trillion proposed national budget for 2021.

Velasco took the Speaker’s podium shortly before noon, after the majority of House members ratified his election on Monday by an assembly held in a sports club in Quezon City.

His election gave him the right to assume the speakership, as stated in a 2019 term-sharing agreement with his predecessor, Taguig Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano, whose refusal to let go of power caused the crisis.

"All is well"
President Duterte, who had brokered the deal, summoned Velasco and Cayetano to Malacañang after noon on Tuesday and told them to work together to pass the budget on time, according to Sen. Christopher "Bong" Go.

"All is well," Go, the President's former longtime aide, told reporters in a Viber message and shared photos of the meeting at the Palace, which took place before the House opened a special session called by Mr. Duterte for the passage of the spending bill.

"[The President] is like a father. He spoke with his children. He advised them to unite [like a majority coalition] and pass the budget on time for the Filipino people," Go said.

Last week, the President threatened to step in if the House failed to resolve the leadership row. He did not say what exactly he would do, but later indicated that he wanted Cayetano to give way by allowing the Palace to tell the press that he had told Velasco in a meeting that the Marinduque congressman had the right to seek the speakership, as stated in his term-sharing deal with the Taguig representative.

It is believed that the President’s daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, worked the phones during the weekend to help tilt the House majority toward Velasco.

The last indication of Palace support for Velasco was the Radio Television Malacañang broadcast of the closed assembly at Celebrity Sports Plaza, which Cayetano still refused to recognize by questioning Velasco’s support.

But his fall became clear on Tuesday morning after 186 members of the 301-strong House voted to ratify Velasco’s election as Speaker the day before.

"Cayetano later tendered his "irrevocable resignation."

"More than 200"
Pampanga Rep. Juan Pablo Bondoc, who acted as majority leader, announced that "more than 200 members" had signified their intention to vote for Velasco but were unable to do so because of coronavirus travel restrictions or connectivity
problems for those attending the session online.

"But in the interest of truth, we will retain the number 186, which was the number who elected you during the election," Bondoc said, addressing Velasco.

In his speech after taking his oath of office, Velasco took a swipe at Cayetano and his allies, who gave the House the public perception of "putting political expediency above public service."

"This perception has scandalized the nation to a point wherein no less than President Rodrigo Duterte himself was prompted to deliver a wake-up call for this august body to shape up or ship out," Velasco said.

He said he decided to stand his ground to save the budget, the passage of which Cayetano had imperiled by refusing to honor their term-sharing agreement.

After sitting for the special session, the House reopened debates on the budget by retracting the approval on second reading declared by the Cayetano leadership last week and proceeding to tackle the appropriations for 14 agencies left hanging after Cayetano suspended the session until Nov. 16 in an attempt to stop Velasco from pursuing their term-sharing deal.

Among the agencies whose budgets were not taken up by the Cayetano chamber were the departments of social welfare and development, agrarian reform, transportation, education, tourism, health, foreign affairs, and public works and highways.

Budget passed by Friday

In a statement, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said the President was optimistic that the budget would be passed on third and final reading by the end of the special session on Friday with the resolution of the House leadership crisis.

"The President is very optimistic that it will be passed, since the politics has been set aside and they can now concentrate on passing the budget in the House," he said.

Congress goes on a break after Friday. It will return on Nov. 16.

Budget Secretary Wendel Avisado also said he expected the House to be able to pass the budget by Friday.

"We cannot afford a reenacted budget at this time when we are fighting the pandemic," Avisado told a televised news briefing.

The 2021 budget contains new spending for the government's coronavirus response. The Department of Health has proposed a budget of P2.4 billion, up from P1.85 billion this year.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III said the change of leadership in the House would not adversely affect the budget process in his chamber.

"All the House has to do is approve the budget on third reading, then print and submit it to us," Sotto said. --with reports from DJ Yap, Marlon Ramos, Aurelio and Ben O. de Vera.
AFP to beef up WPS monitoring

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

ARMED Forces chief Gen. Gilbert Gapay on Tuesday described the situation in the South China Sea as "volatile and uncertain," adding the military would install one of the radar systems from Japan at the closed Matinloc gas platform off Malampaya, Palawan near the West Philippine Sea.

"You see, we (decided that) the Matinloc platform will be assigned one of the radars coming from Japan to beef up our monitoring capability in the West Philippine Sea," Gapay said in an online press conference with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP).

AFP...

From A1

Gapay said these radar systems from Japan would be used to beef up the country's maritime domain awareness capability.

"Aside from radars, we are also looking at Japan as a source of (in) developing our cyber (capabilities). This is one aspect we are focusing on now and I think we can partner with Japan in this area, cyber-defense and security which is also one of their thrusts of the Japan Self Defense Force," he said.

Gapay explained the situation in the region had been uncertain because of what he described as the continuous aggressive actions of China and the United States' move to protect its interest in the area.

"Situation in the South China Sea remains volatile and uncertain because of certain actions of certain actors in the area, particularly China and the United States," Gapay said.

"We have seen aggressive actions on the part of China, from reclaiming the area and deploying some warships there and their Coast Guard is very visible in the area. Their maritime militias are there. They're practically swarming most of the areas in the West Philippine Sea," he added.
Gapay: Situation in SCS volatile and uncertain

By MICHAEL PUNONGBAYAN

With China and the United States still countering each other’s moves, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Gilbert Gapay believes that the situation in the South China Sea remains volatile and tense.

During an online forum of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines yesterday, Gapay said the Philippines is keeping its presence in the South China Sea and pushing for a code of conduct that will ease tension in the region.

Gapay said Beijing and Washington as well as its allies have shown aggressive actions in the South China Sea, with China’s warships “practically swarming most of the areas in the West Philippine Sea” and the US protecting its interests by advocating freedom of communication and navigation.

“The situation in the South China Sea remains volatile and uncertain because of actions of China and the United States,” he said.

Gapay said China recently fired a missile in the West Philippine Sea, which prompted the Philippines to file a diplomatic protest against Beijing.

“The United States also displayed a show of force in the area. So it’s very tense and right now, the effort really is multilateral action and talking about how to peacefully resolve those issues,” he said.

Gapay said the AFP is doing its part in protecting the country’s territory as the military regularly conducts naval and air patrols in the West Philippine Sea with the help of the Philippine Coast Guard.

Part of such presence involves “improving our facilities in the nine occupied features in the West Philippine Sea where military troops are deployed and are building monitoring stations and other facilities,” Gapay added.

He said there is also coordination and cooperation with other claimant countries, which forms part of the national government’s strategy to peacefully and diplomatically resolve issues in the region through bilateral and multi-lateral approaches.

Gapay expressed hope that the code of conduct being drafted would be finished by the end of the year or early next year that would prevent miscommunications, hostile actions and armed conflicts.
Gapay: China-backed telco eyes 22 military camps as tower sites

BY VICTOR REYES

ARMED Forces chief Gen. Gilbert Gapay yesterday said China-backed company Dito Telecommunity Corp. has proposed to put up communication towers inside at least 22 military camps throughout the country.

The proposal is being reviewed by the military, Gapay said in an online press briefing organized by the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines.

The defense department recently allowed Dito, a joint venture between state-run China Telecom and a tycoon close to President Duterte, to put up towers inside military camps despite security concerns raised by some quarters.

"Initially, there are 22 sites they are proposing and this will be evaluated one by one. It's not en masse, 22. They will be reviewed one by one and its a tedious process, what kind of equipment here, what kind of equipment there, their capacity," said Gapay.

"There are still two, three steps before finally they could put up facilities inside camp, just like the process we adopted when we allowed Globe and Smart to locate (towers) inside military bases," he added.

There are concerns that the towers to be installed by the country's third telco firm will be used by China to spy on the country. China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan are involved in a territorial dispute over the South China Sea.

Gapay said the military conducted an assessment of risks from the establishment of Dito towers inside military camps.

"As far as the security aspect is concerned, putting up of towers and communication facilities inside camps poses a low risk," he said.

Gapay noted the Armed Forces is using its own communications system in disseminating classified information. "We are utilizing commercial ones only for unclassified information, so this is one of the safety measures we are adopting in the Armed Forces," he said.

He said it is "better" if Dito towers are put up inside military camps because could have unannounced inspection, we could inspect them midnight, anytime of the night, early morning, wee hours, we can do that if they are inside. So there is that full control of their operations."
Gov't to repair three Marawi mosques

By Rio N. Araja

HOUSING czar Eduardo del Rosario said Tuesday the rebuilding of the three mosques destroyed during the 2017 Marawi City siege will begin soon after the release of the funds for it.

“[We] (Task Force Bangon Marawi) have already issued the checks for mobilization of the three contractors for the three mosques,” Human Settlements and Urban Development chief of staff Zyril Carlos said.

“So it’s not just a memorandum of agreement. Now it’s already a project.” Carlos recently visited Marawi City to inspect the development of each project in Marawi’s most affected area.

Del Rosario, who leads the inter-agency TFBM, vowed to continuously affirm that the rehabilitation of the country’s only Islamic city remained on track and that it would be completed by December 2021 as promised by President Rodrigo Duterte.

After a thorough assessment of the sites, Carlos said the rebuilding process remained well within the government’s December 2021 timeline despite the heightened restrictions imposed within the city due to the Modified enhanced community quarantine.
SCHOOLS SA MINDANAO BANTAY SARADO SA AFP KONTRA TERRORIST RECRUITMENT

Bantay sarado sa Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) ang mga paaralan sa Mindanao dahil sa pag-recruit ng mga terrorist sa mga estudyante. Ito ang sinabi ni AFP Chief of Staff General Gilbert Gapay sa nakaraang ugnayan na sila sa Department of Education (DepED) sa mga eskwela-han sa Mindanao, mga local government unit at iba pang concerned agencies para mapigilan ang ginagawang pagrecruit ng mga grupo ng terorista sa bansa.


Nakabahala na umano sila sa pagdami ng mga suicide bomber sa bansa lalo't may mgt Filipino na sinasanyang ang mga foreign terrorist para imang suildre bomber.

Matatandaan mo na 2019 nag kampanyahan ang AFP na sa ka mas unahin hang pagkakataon ng isaang Pinoy ang nagugulat sa mga posting suicide bomber sa katawan ni Norman Lasuca sa Indanan, Sulu na inintamatsu ng wala kahit ang tatlong sandalo, dalawang bombers habang12 na iba pa ang nasugatan -Doris Franche. 2
Aksidenteng napakawalan sa landing zone
Rocket ng PAF attack helicopter sumabog mula airport

Maguindanao

Nagdulot ng takol sa mga residente nang sumabog ang isang rocket matapos na aksidenteng napakawalan ng MG520 Attack Helicopter ng Philippine Air Force (PAF) habang nasa landing zone ng paliparan sa Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao kahapon ng umaga.

Ito ang kinumpirma ni 8th Infantry Division Spokesperson, Lt. Col. Amhuvic Atillano.

Ayon kay Atillano, lumalabas sa inisyal na imbestigasyon ng 6th-ID na dakoong alas-8:15 ng umaga habang

nasa landing zone ang MG520 attack helicopter sa Cotabato Airport nang aksidenteng napakawalan ang isang rocket at sumabog ito hindi kalayaan sa firing range ng 6th Division Training School kung saan walang tao at mahayag sa mga kabahayan kaya't wala ang nakalat na namalay o nasugatan sa aksidente.

Iisa sa mga nasasagawa para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF para matulungan ang PAF.

Nagsasagawa pa ng imbestigasyon ang PAF para matulungan ang dehilan kung bakit aksidenteng napakawalan ang rocket ng naturang military helicopter na ginagamit sa air strike.
Pandemic gives Gonzaga long rest

BY BEA MACALLER
@tribuneephl_bec

If there's something positive that happened during the long break caused by the coronavirus pandemic, it's the fact that Jovelyn Gonzaga finally got a chance to rest and recuperate.

In the latest edition of The Athletes' Tribune, Gonzaga admitted that playing for two leagues with national duties and military assignments in between stretched her thin last year.

She said she had a blast fulfilling those roles, but the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic really gave her a chance to pause and regain her bearings for the tough tasks ahead.

"What I used to do last year was different this year because -- as you all know -- my last year was full-packed," she said during the weekly online sports show of Daily Tribune.

"Victories and setbacks, I really went through a lot last year."

True enough, the year 2019 really tested Gonzaga's mettle.

Aside from filling the void in the opposite spot for Cignal in the Philippine Superliga, Gonzaga also saw action for Pacific Town Army in the Premier Volleyball League and for the national team in the 30th Southeast Asian Games.

Victories and setbacks, I really went through a lot last year.

She also manned the fort for the Philippine Army, especially when the government imposed nationwide community quarantine due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Gonzaga said the seven-month lockdown works to her advantage as she is now reduced to doing Zoom training with her HD Spikers teammates.

"In my opinion, it became an advantage to me because my schedule was really full last year," said Gonzaga, who is looking to represent Cignal together with Fiola Ceballos in the PSL Challenge Cup beach volleyball tournament at the end of this year.

"It was like that my body is not yet fully recovered from a very strenuous 2019. I am just thinking that maybe this is God's way of giving me a rest."

Gonzaga, however, admitted that she is itching to step back on the court.

"What I am doing is to regularly watch volleyball games on YouTube just so I will not miss volleyball that much," she said.

"Good we have a gymnasium in Fort Bonifacio so our fitness training as well little volleyball exercises, still continue."
Army counts as blessing newborn baby of former NPA amazon

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY – A former New People’s Army (NPA) amazon, who has been under the care of the military since May, has given birth to her first child at a hospital here last October 9.

Eighteen-year-old “Ka Wena had been three months pregnant when she was rescued by soldiers of the 23rd Infantry Battalion (23rd IB) last May 16 in Barangay Guinabsan, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte, according to 23rd IB Civil Military Operations (CMO) officer First Lt. Roel T. Maglalang.

With her then was another pregnant NPA amazon known only as “Ka Apay”.

And since then, the men and women of the 23rd IB have been taking care of them at their headquarters.

“Ka Wena” and “Ka Apay” stayed at the 23rd IB’s Masigaig Happy Home where they were assisted and monitored by the non-commissioned officers, especially during their prenatal, ultrasound, and other necessary activities to make sure that they will be able to safely deliver healthy babies.

“The unit also made sure that they can avail of all the assistance and benefits offered by the government for the former rebels (FRs),” Maglalang said.
We own Sabah, but...

The West Philippine Sea (WPS) was dragged into center stage with the stunning speech of President Rodrigo Duterte before the United Nations General Assembly resurrecting the 2016 arbitral award that he unilaterally set aside while trying to extract from Chinese President Xi Jinping much-needed resources for his Build, Build, Build infrastructure program. It is now apparent that his gambit failed. That speech sends a message to China in no uncertain terms of the primacy of the rule of law. But the WPS is not the only international issue that involves Philippine territorial claims. One such predicament, the Sabah question, has been festering, striking at the gut of our nationalism even before we were a formally structured country. Each past Philippine administration has tried to pass this on to subsequent regimes unable to provide solutions or too politically complicated to handle.

**Sulu sultanate and Sabah**

The now-defunct Sulu sultanate are a collection of provinces that are now part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). But its claim to Sabah, transferred constitutionally to the Philippine Republic, is legitimate. As a backgrounder, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Sultan of Brunei who owned a large part of Borneo gave a chunk of this territory to the Sultan of Sulu, who in turn gave part of this to another Sultan, eventually passing this on to the Dutch — becoming part of Indonesia. What was left of the territory still owned by the Sulu Sultan, known as Sabah, was leased to the British North Borneo Company (BNBC) in 1878. An annual lease was paid to the Sultan of Sulu and his heirs at an annual rate of 5,000 Malaysian dollars, later increased to 5,300 Malaysian dollars.

Complications started long before World War 2 when three colonial powers, the British, the Dutch and Spain, began to shed their colonies in the Far East and Southeast Asia, allowing them the seeds of self-government. Indonesia emerged from the Dutch holdings, Malaya (later the federation of Malaysia) evolved from British rule, and Spain had to cede Filipinos to the new kid on the block, the United States, when the former lost the Spanish-American war.

**Annexation by Malaysia**

Controversy arose when Sabah, under lease to BNBC, a private company, was given British crown colony status in 1946 after WW2. After the British let go of its colonies in Southeast Asia, Malaya, Singapore and Sarawak and Sabah in Borneo joined the Malaysian Federation when it was constituted in 1963. But even before Malaysia incorporated Sabah into its federation, President Diosdado Macapagal's administration formally revived the Philippines' longstanding claim to the territory (the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu had ceded full sovereignty, title and dominion over Sabah to the Philippine Republic).

It was unsuccessful as Malaysia declared it as a "non-issue."

"Malaysia cited the Oct. 23, 2001 decision of the International Court of Justice on a case where the Philippines asked the tribunal to intervene on the matter. In that case, Judge Thomas Franck offered the opinion that Manila's historical claim to Sabah is not sustainable, especially after people in the disputed area (Sabah) exercised their right to self-determination in accordance with international law." *(The Manila Times, JI Ismael, Aug. 30, 2020)*

The Philippine position is unequivocal, that we never relinquished our sovereignty. Upon the "annexation" of Sabah by Malaysia, annual rent payments continued — stopping only when the Sultan of Sulu Esmail Kiram asked for an increase in the lease payments and when the Sabah territorial issue was raised by the Philippine government.

**Autonomous initiatives**

Unlike the WPS problems with China where the arbitral award bestowed legitimacy to our claims, we never had a clearly similar decision handed down over our Sabah claim. But what separates the two issues is that with the latter, we resorted to unilateral actions with unexpected consequences. President Marcos in 1967 decided to wrest Sabah from Malaysia by stealth, initiating a clandestine operation called "Operation Merdeka." The concept was to destabilize Sabah, fomenting an uprising from within, principally among the large community of Filipinos Tausug and Sama clans living there, persuading them to secede. The ensuing unrest would then give the Philippines the pretext to intervene. The chances of success would rest on two assumptions: Sabah was a newly structured political unit and incorporated into a still weak Malaysian federation; and the Filipino community that Marcos was confident could be persuaded to support Philippine initiatives.

A Filipino commando unit code-named "Jabidah" was trained to infiltrate and destabilize Sabah. From Sulu, young Muslims were recruited and trained in Simunul in Tawi-Tawi. Such well-laid plans for the Philippines' first-ever unilateral
initiative at solving an international conflict began to fall apart from within the Philippines itself with deadly political repercussions.

Rumors began to leak in the Manila media of a massacre of a group of young Muslims in Corregidor [where the recruits had been transferred from Simunul]. Marcos did try to hide Operation Merdeka from the public, but the political opposition then blew the whole thing out in the open. Reports of these recruits were killed for various reasons: from the recruits refusing to continue their training upon discovery of the real reasons for it; to their resort to mutiny because of the poor living conditions and delay or non-payment of allowances.

A feeding frenzy ensued in the media, producing a cascade of political dominoes swamping the Marcos regime and forcing Marcos to shelve what could have been the best alternative for a final solution to the Sabah question in the Philippines’ favor. The Filipino Muslim communities were in an uproar over this reported massacre of their young. Cotabato political leaders joined Datu Udrog Matalam in the Muslim Independence Movement, Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi, one of our major oil suppliers, expressed concern. And there was a general noise from Muslim countries in the Middle East. With all these plus the left’s growing communist insurgency, Marcos declared martial law in September of 1972. And the shit hit the fan!

Fake news

It turned out that there may not have been a “Fabidah Massacre” after all. It could have been an elaborate hoax. Romes have been written since then arguing both sides (TIMT, Tigrak, March 19, 2018; Marites Dañgulan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao, 2000).

But the damage had been done. Deception or not, the whole affair given wide latitude in media, awakened the long dormant but simmering anger on the disparities between the minority Muslim and majority Christians — igniting the Moro Insurgency. This found articulation in the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), subsequently the Mindanao Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and, eventually, BARMM. The creation of the latter may be a blessing in disguise as it gave impetus to our minority Muslim group’s yearning for the creation of their “bangsa” through self-determination while its umbilical cord is still tied to one Filipino nation. This could be the template for empowering the regions outside the purview of our highly centralized government — a longing for decentralized structure towards an eventual federal system of government.

But the Sabah question remains unresolved. This government, its hands tied down by the slow pace of justice, may have to pass this on to the next administration, ad infinitum. But under the Constitution, Sabah is ours. We can take it through the exigencies of international law. Or by other means!

(To be continued)

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