



# MILF forces still adhere to ceasefire — MILF

**COTABATO CITY (Nov.4) – The ceasefire has not totally collapsed and is in fact still in place in most areas in Mindanao, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front said.**

Ghazali Jaafar, MILF vice chairman for political affairs, said hostilities between their forces and the military are, in fact, happening only in parts of Maguindanao, an indication that their fighters in other provinces remain adhering to the ceasefire.

“It’s our forces that are being chased by soldiers in areas where these hostilities are happening, not MILF forces attacking the military,” Jaafar said.

Jaafar said guerillas in their strongholds in Maguindanao have no way but engage soldiers intruding into their communities.

[MILF/p.11]



*Klaus Preschle (right), Country Representative of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and Lawyer Camilo “Bong” Montesa (left), of Institute on Autonomy and Governance, in a peace forum organized by IAG, funded by the German humanitarian outfit.[]*

## Media lash at 6<sup>th</sup> ID camp commander

**COTABATO CITY (Nov.3) – –** The Central Mindanao chapter of the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines today tagged as “persona non-grata” the camp commander of the Army’s 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and declared a “boycott” in covering of all the unit’s activities.

Members of the NUJP here have asked the official, Col. John Oswald Bucu, to apologize over local radio stations for his having maltreated a broadcast journalist, Loreto Rosario, at the height of the Friday dawn fire that razed a munitions storage facility of the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Support Service Unit at Camp Siongco, the command center of 6<sup>th</sup> ID.

Bucu is the commanding officer of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID’s Headquarters Service Battalion, which is the known keeper of the camp.

Bucu berated Rosario for getting too close to the

[MEDIA/p.11]

## IMT ends tour of duty on Nov. 30

**DAVAO CITY (MindaNews) –** Unless there is a new mandate, the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT) that oversees the ceasefire implementation between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will end its tour of duty in Mindanao on November 30 and its 29 members will depart for their respective countries by December 1.

Lt. Col. Badrul Hisham bin Muhammad, IMT chief of staff, said the Malaysian team, comprising 12, will likely leave by December 1 if there is no mandate for extension.

An extension can be done if both government and the MILF peace panels request it. But the Philippine government on September 3 dissolved its peace panel, barely a week after it sought, with the MILF, an extension

[IMT/p.10]

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## AFP says Murad marked for assassination

COTABATO CITY - The military Thursday claimed Moro rebels, led by Ameril Umbra Kato, had plotted to assassinate Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chieftain Murad Ebrahim.

Maj. Randolph Cabangbang, spokesperson of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom) based in Davao City, claimed Kato hatched the plot because he felt that the MILF leadership under Murad had already abandoned him.

The AFP is hunting down Kato for his alleged involvement in the July and August attacks in North Cotabato, in which a number of civilians were killed.

"Kato had expected that other base commands will come to his rescue but it did not happen. He was blaming Murad for this," Cabangbang claimed, without saying when and how he got the information.

"They are planning to assassinate Murad now that they are feeling the brunt of the military operations and without support from their comrades," he alleged.

But Eid Kabalu, MILF civil-military affairs chief, laughed off Cabangbang's claim.

He said Kato and other MILF leaders such as Abdullah Macapaar, alias Commander Bravo, remained committed to Murad's leadership.

"It's not true," he said.

MILF chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal branded the

[AFP/p. 7]

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The publication of this newsletter is made possible through the technical and financial assistance provided by the Institute for Autonomy and Governance and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The IAG is at the Alumni Center, Notre Dame University, Cotabato City and the KAS is at ALPAP 1 Building, 140 Leviste Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

## Kato says AFP is the one plotting to harm Murad, not him

Monday, 27 October 2008 (Copied and reprinted as is from MILF website [www.luwaran.net](http://www.luwaran.net))

Hated but popular among ordinary Moros, Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato, MILF 105st Base Command chief, told luwaran.com reporter that it is the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that is plotting to harm MILF chairman, Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, not him. "This is a clear indication that the AFP is hatching an evil plot to eliminate leaders of the MILF and blame it to so-called rogue commanders in the MILF." What reasons would I have to go to the extent of plotting to assassinate Murad, who is the legitimate head of the MILF recognized by our people and mujahideen?" he asked.

Speaking in Maguindanao and switching at times to Tagalog, Kato said he too recognizes Murad as his chairman and superior in the MILF-led struggle, but explained that it is quite natural that members of the same organization have tactical views that sometimes differ, without elaborating.

This is the first time that luwaran.net interviewed Kato, who carries a P10 million reward on his head, dead or alive.

Luwaran.net took much time to get in touch with the elusive MILF commander, who rarely allowed himself to be interviewed for various reasons including security. The interview was held in an undisclosed location in Maguindanao, but close enough to the scene of present skirmishes in the province.

On Thursday, October 23, Maj. Randolph Cabangbang, spokesperson of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom) based in Davao City, claimed Kato hatched the plot because he felt that the MILF leadership under Murad had already abandoned him.

"Kato had expected that other base commands will come to his rescue but it did not happen. He was blaming Murad for this," Cabangbang claimed, without saying when and how he got the information.

"They are planning to assassinate Murad now that they are feeling the brunt of the military operations and without support from their comrades," he alleged.

Both Mohagher Iqbal, MILF information chief and chief peace negotiator, and Eid Kabalu, MILF civil-military affairs chief, reacted immediately and denied the military allegation.

Iqbal branded the report as absurd, a product of speculation, and an evil scheme that the military might resort to in the future.

Kabalu, for his part, laughed off the said claim.

Cabangbang further claimed that before the plot was

[KATO/p. 7]

## COMMENT: Looking into SC Decision

by Patricio P. Diaz

GENERAL SANTOS CITY (MindaNews/23 October) — Retired Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban, in his *Inquirer* column last Sunday, declared as “*victory for the constitution*” the Supreme Court decision that the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front is unconstitutional. That cannot be disputed

However, it must be asked: *Who is the loser?*

North Cotabato Vice-Gov. Emmanuel Piñol, the first to file a petition against the MOA-AD with the Supreme Court, in rejoicing for the “victory” said, “... *we also fervently pray that peace would finally come to our troubled land.*”

Former Senate President Franklin Drilon, another petitioner, while celebrating the “victory” with the city officials of Iligan City, said, “*There is every reason that the peace process should be pursued because there are disagreements that should be settled.*”

What Piñol and Drilon said in “victory”, other petitioners, opponents and critics of the MOA-AD must also be saying. They have scuttled the vehicle of peace and are now praying for peace to come. In winning, they “pray” to recover the price of their “victory” – *the peace process.*

Who then is the loser? *Peace!*

Panganiban also described the *ponencia* or decision as “elegant, well researched and well cadenced”. That, too, cannot be disputed. It “elegantly” pinned down the MOA-AD for (a) lack of consultation and (b) violations of the constitution – the two main substantive issues..

### No Consultations

In failing to consult the people, the peace advocates, the civil society, the local government officials in Mindanao and members of Congress, President Arroyo, her peace advisers and negotiators violated not only Executive Order No. 3 and two laws but also the Constitution. For their sin of omission, Peace is in Limbo.

EO 3 mandates the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process to convene as his/her advisory body the National Peace Forum. To properly advise the PAPP, the NPF is tasked to conduct forums in the national and local levels about the progress of peace talks and other matters concerning the peace process. The NPF had not been convened, so no consultations on the MOA-AD had been done.

[COMMENT/p.6]

## MILF may strip Bravo, Kato of their commands

Wanted Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commanders Ustadz Amelil Umbra Kato and Abdullah Macapaar, alias “Commader Bravo” may be scrapped from their base command and stripped off their authority over Moro fighters.

This is among the possible disciplinary actions that could be sanctioned by the MILF central leadership against the armed leaders if an investigation will find them guilty of “committing excesses” when they attacked civilian communities in Central Mindanao last August, a Moro leader revealed.

MILF peace panel chair Mohagher Iqbal bared that the MILF central leadership has conducted its own investigation to prove that Bravo did not kill civilian residents during the atrocities in North Cotabato, Maguindanao, and Lanao provinces.

He noted that in August, the MILF central leadership created two separate investigating panels, which are composed of senior officers from the MILF military component, in order to instill discipline among their errant commanders.

“(Kato and Bravo) are still with the Moro Islamic Liberation, but (they) still have to be investigated. As a matter of fact, we are already winding up with our investigation for internal purposes,” Iqbal said.

“We need to investigate our erring members. Internally, the organization needs this for us to see who has to be sanctioned with disciplinary actions if somebody committed a crime,” he added.

If the investigating panel found Kato and Bravo guilty of going over the fence when they attacked civilian communities, Iqbal said that the MILF central leadership will subject the two wanted commanders under their policies similar to the military code of conduct.

The MILF chief peace negotiator said that if found guilty, Kato and Bravo may be suspended as leaders of the 105th and 102nd Base Commands and may be treated as ordinary members of the Moro rebel groups for more than a year.

Iqbal elaborated that the suspension as base command leaders means that Kato and Bravo would no longer have authority nor direct command over MILF fighters, which would be similar to the suspension imposed on Kato for attacking a military detachment in 2006.

He added that Bravo’s media interview where he admitted attacking Kauswagan and Kolambugan towns in Lanao del Norte “will be taken into consideration, but that’s not the heart of the issue.”

[MILF MAY/p.7]

## Evacuee death toll: 43 in Mamasapano, Datu Piang

DATU PIANG, Maguindanao (MindaNews/25 October) – At least 43 evacuees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) have died in Datu Piang and Mamasapano, Maguindanao, 23 of them children, records from the town hall and the rural health unit showed.

Of 43, 19 died in Datu Piang while 24 died in Mamasapano – two of the towns hosting evacuees more than their entire populations, as villagers from neighboring towns have also sought refuge in their towns.

Datu Piang, as of the October 21 report of information officer Eduardo Diestro, still has 11,846 family heads and 52,060 dependents in 28 evacuation centers.

Diestro says the number of deaths could be higher. His list of 19, 10 of them children 12 and below, however, involves only those with death certificates. Two of these are siblings who succumbed to measles – Jamer Merin, 3 and Janiha Merin, 1.

Datu Piang's population, according to the latest National Statistics Coordination Board is 49,971.

Mamasapano, according to municipal social welfare officer Expedita Catipay on Thursday, still has 7,622 families or about 38,000 evacuees.

Mamasapano's population is 29,285.

Sherwin Louis Petre Gerona, public health nurse in Mamasapano, said measles affected 89 persons, mostly children, but the disease has been controlled. One, however, died.

Of the 24 deaths in Mamasapano, 8 are due to dehydration due to diarrhea, he said.

Thirteen of the 24 who died in Mamasapano were children.

The number of deaths from diseases and gunshots or bombs is higher than 43 if records of the reporting units are validated with other reports.

The National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) in its October 23 report also reported 43 deaths in Maguindanao. But 16 of these deaths are from gunshot wounds, through mortar shelling, multiple injuries, and fragments from artillery.

Mamasapano's listing of deaths, however, only had one due to bombing while Datu Piang's had one from gunshot wounds.

The Datu Piang listing does not include the death of six on September 8 – fisherman Daya Manungal and his five children, including his eldest, pregnant daughter, Aida, were killed allegedly by aerial bombing as they were fleeing to safer grounds from Barangay Tee.

The NDCC list includes only four of the Mandi-Manungal family members who died from "multiple injury." (Carolyn O. Arguillas/MindaNews)

## Scratching the Surface

**Editorial for the week of MILF website  
[www.luwaran.net](http://www.luwaran.net)**

(October 21-25) - The government never learns its lessons from past experiences in so-called solving the Moro Problem. Time and again, it repeatedly resorted to failed approaches that over-burdened the already failing Philippine economy. One such short-sighted approach is to buy out firearms of so-called rebels especially M-16 Armalite rifle from the original tag of P18,000 to now P50,000. This approach only attracts pseudo-revolutionaries, opportunists, or business-minded "rebels". It can also attract syndicates involving elements within the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to connive with prospective "contacts" within the rebel groups to surrender and bring with them those unserviceable firearms in exchange for an amount that can almost buy a new one. (In the current syndicate, an M-16 rifle costs P60 to P65,000).

The government is also guilty of repeatedly looking at the rebellion as caused by "poverty" – and therefore, the solution is economic amelioration of rebels. The usual catchword for this make-believe counter-insurgency approach is: "Arms to farms".

Well, while it is true that part of the solution to this insurgency is economic, but certainly, in the main, it is not, and will never be. Only those materialist, hedonist, adventurists, and secular-minded will be bought.

Both the National Democratic Front (NDF)-New People's Army (NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)-Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) are ideologically based liberation movements. They differ only in their ideologies: The former communist-based, while the latter is Islamic in orientation.

As such, they cannot be defeated by use of economic enticement, giving projects, etc. If this approach is the key, then there are no more rebels now, because this government "has been buying rebels" since the time of Pres. Ferdinand Marcos to this day. But surprisingly the number of those fighting the government swell in manifold rather than dwindle.

It is time the government held to be serious in the political settlement of the Moro Problem and the armed conflict in Mindanao. It is time it realized that the MILF will never agree to continue the unitary system of government in the Philippines, to integration to the national body politic, and to the Philippine Constitution as framework for the resolution of this conflict. The total relationship of the Filipinos and Moros must be redefined, after the latter had suffered hard from the oppression and exploitation of the former. This redefinition can well sum up to creating a state and sub-state in this country. Such an arrangement is not unique. The United States has so

## DPWH: Mindanao projects unhampered

### Contrary to reports of funds realigned for Luzon, Visayas

TANDAG CITY – The implementation of multi-billion government projects in Mindanao remained unhampered contrary to reports that funds have been realigned to Luzon and the Visayas due to the peace and order problem there, a ranking government official said.

“I would say that reports from some news agencies (not this paper) are not true. What is allocated for Mindanao will stay and all are on-going,” said Department Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Undersecretary Romeo S. Momo, during the recent 11th Mindanao Super Region Inter-Agency Meeting here where top government and regional officials, directors, governors and mayors were present.

Momo said the government, particularly the DPWH spearheaded by Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, Jr., has continuously been allocating funds to support peace and development efforts in Mindanao and in other conflict areas.

“This is one of the priority projects of President Arroyo,” he said.

“By implementing these infrastructure projects, particularly roads and bridges, it is the government’s strategy to end these conflicts, by opening access to these hinterlands, especially those known lairs of lawless elements,” he added.

Various multi-billion foreign and locally funded infrastructure projects spread all over Mindanao were presented by various concerned government agencies before the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MedCo) chaired by Undersecretary Virgilio Leyretana.

Also presented during the 11th Mindanao Super Region Inter-Agency Meeting is the continuing 0 million 5-year USAID-GEM program, and the 0 million Saudi Fund for Development.

These projects included roads, bridges, buildings, air and sea ports, energy power, livelihood and humanitarian aid to displaced villagers in areas of conflict in some parts in Central Mindanao and Zamboanga Peninsula.

“These economic development funds are now enjoyed by the Mindanaoans that were never enjoyed from the previous administration,” said Leyretana.

“Now we attain these mushrooming economic development during the Arroyo Administration,” he added.

The MedCo chair also claimed that “Mindanao is the future of the nation because of its vast natural

## **SCRATCHING** . . . from page 4

many states under its federal setup; Malaysia, Germany, Switzerland, and many more also have similar set-up. In terms of constitution, every state in the United States has its own constitution. Similarly, Germany has 17 constitutions.

Attempts to force the Moros to accept the status quo in this country would only prolong the agonies of both peoples and invite a more vicious and bloody confrontation in Mindanao. If the Constitution is the stumbling block, then let it be amended to accommodate this sub-state for the Moros. After all, the Constitution is not the Bible nor the Qur’an that cannot be amended or altered.

It is time the government must address the root of the Moro Problem, which is to restore the right of the Moros to govern themselves in the form of a sub-state. They are not demanding for a separate state, as what they were during the pre-Spanish, Spanish days, and at the coming of the Americans in 1898. This will rest the issue and the present generation of Moros and Filipinos and those coming after them would live in peace, harmony and progress, Insha Allah (God willing!).

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resources, saying, “all government programs in the island will continue without let up.”

In the same meeting, several economic and development programs for funding were presented by the governors and mayors.

In a related development, the Overseas Workers’ Welfare Administration (OWWA), Microsoft Philippines and the Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute launched its first technology learning center under the “Tulay Program” in Northeastern Mindanao (Caraga region).

The “Tulay Program” provides free computer courses to bridge the communication gap and provide self-employment and livelihood opportunities to overseas workers and their families.

OWWA officials called on OFW returnees and OFW families to take advantage of the free computer classes to upgrade their skills.

It was also gathered that the expanded phase of the Tulay Program was made possible by a grant from Microsoft’s Unlimited Potential program to the Blas F. Ople Policy Center which is the designated NGO partner for this year.

The Ople Center is in charge of the curriculum while OWWA provides the venue and students (By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO, from the Manila Bulletin, October 26, 2008)

## COMMENT . . . from page 3

Was it proper to sacrifice the peace process to atone for the sins of the Arroyo government?

Under the Constitution and laws the people have the right to be consulted. If for some reasons this right has been violated, is the violation enough cause to derail the peace process? Why did the Court not just order Arroyo, the PAPP and the GRP negotiators to conduct the consultations? It might be late but the purpose of consultations could still be satisfied. Whatever objections there would be could still be addressed in the negotiation of the Comprehensive Compact.

What happened is patently the court doctrine. A crime is not a crime – not a violation of law – no matter how serious if the evidence has been obtained illegally, in which case, technicality can mute justice for the offended to be just to the offender. What contradictions of rule of law in democracy! Technicality nullified the peace process.

### Must Go

The initial petition against the MOA-AD on July 23 filed by the governor and vice-governor of North Cotabato, followed by the city mayor and other officials of Zamboanga City, was to restrain the government from signing the agreement and compel it to furnish them official copies of the agreement. Unofficial copies had already been leaked to the media.

After the Court had issued a temporary restraining order on August 4 and the official copies had been furnished the petitioners, supplemental petitions were filed – with new petitioners filing their own – asking the Court to declare the MOA-AD unconstitutional, null and void.

In the pursuit of the peace process, rights had been violated and interests thrown in conflict. The petitioners were in no mood to dialogue to save the peace process but were bent on aborting it. Behind the petitions could be seen the ugly head of politics rearing.

To the Court, doing the judicial review was a duty. The issue of constitutionality must be resolved regardless of what would happen to the peace process.

To the petitioners? In the name of democracy, the MOA-AD and the peace process must go.

### Two Provisions

In its review of the four strands of the Ancestral Domain:

1. The Court appeared not to have considered in-depth *Concepts and Principles*. It noted that “the term ‘First Nation’ is of Canadian origin” but “departs from the Canadian usage of the term”. Later, it deemed “ancestral domain” in MOA-AD as contrary to the concept of ancestral domain in RA 8371 or the Indigenous People’s Rights Act.

2. It noted that in *Territory*, the BJE and the Republic of the Philippines “shall exercise joint jurisdiction, authority and management over all natural resources” in

BJE “territorial waters” but not in its internal waters; “the sharing of minerals on the territorial waters” is not similarly provided “with respect to the internal waters of the BJE”.

3. It had no comment on *Resources*.

4. In *Governance*, the Court noted the “associative” relationship “of the Central Government and the BJE” without comment although this would be discussed extensively later. Referring to *Consensus 7, Governance*, it commented: “As will be discussed later, much of the present controversy hangs on the legality of this provision.”

Indeed, *Consensus 4* and *Consensus 7, Governance* are the two provisions that dominated the discussions on constitutionality.

Are the Philippine Constitution, the Court and the offended petitioners that unforgiving that the GRP and MILF negotiators could not be given the chance to address the unconstitutionality of the two provisions, as well as of a few others, in order to balance Moro self-determination and Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity and to save the peace process?

### Five Counts

Of the second substantive issue – “Do the contents of the MOA-AD violate the Constitution and laws?” – the Court said: “The MOA-AD is inconsistent with the Constitution and law as presently worded.” The MOA-AD is guilty of unconstitutionality on five counts.

*First Count:* “[T]he powers granted to the BJE exceed those granted to any local government under present laws, and even go beyond those of the present ARMM.” The excessive power is attributed to the “associative” character – by “shared authority and responsibility” – of the relationship between the GRP and the BJE. (*Consensus 4, Governance*)

*Second Count:* “the concept of association is not recognized under the present Constitution.”

*Third Count:* The BJE “is not merely an expanded version of the ARMM, the status of its relationship with the national government being fundamentally different from that of the ARMM” – being “a state in all but name as it meets the criteria of a state laid down in the Montevideo Convention, namely, a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and a capacity to enter into relations with other states”.

*Fourth Count:* “The MOA-AD, moreover, would not comply with Article X, Section 20 of the Constitution.”

*Fifth Count:* “[T]he MOA-AD is also inconsistent with prevailing statutory laws, among which are R.A. No. 9054, or the Organic Act of the ARMM, and the IPRA (R.A. No. 8371).”

These specific sub-issues have been well discussed to prove the unconstitutionality of MOA-AD under the present Constitution beyond doubt. It has been declared

**AFP** . . . from page 2

report as absurd and a product of speculation.

Cabangbang claimed that before the plot was hatched, Kato had tried to rally other MILF commanders in a bid to dislodge Murad from the rebel group's top post.

He said this took place after the Supreme Court last October 14 declared the controversial memorandum on ancestral domain as unconstitutional.

Cabangbang claimed Kato was dismayed because Murad did not take a hard line stance against the decision.

Kabalu also laughed off the said claim.

He said MILF commanders remain united and that they are ready to join a renewed campaign against the government.

He said this all-out war could take place once the MILF central committee decides to terminate the MILF peace panel.

"The situation will be more complicated. There will be no line of communication because the government already disbanded its panel," he said.

Kabalu said the resumption of the peace talks appears to be uncertain because the "government's position right now is totally unacceptable." (By Jeffrey Maitem, Philippine Daily Inquirer)

**MILF MAY** . . . from page 3

Saying that the investigation will be finished "very soon," Iqbal, however, noted that the two investigating panels have not included testimonies from local government leaders nor that from the civilian residents of the conflict-affected areas in Central Mindanao.

Meanwhile, the all-out campaign by government security forces against the lawless MILF group gained momentum after an alleged deputy field commander of Commander Bravo voluntarily surrendered to operating units somewhere in the Gadungan area, Madalum town, Surigao del Sur, an Army official reported yesterday.

Bravo's deputy commander gave himself up to Lt. Col. Jed Motus, commanding officer of 65th Infantry Battalion (IB) of the 9th Infantry Division in Balindong town of that same Muslim-dominated province.

Identity of the alleged MILF commander was temporarily withheld while tactical interrogation and debriefing is still going on at the headquarters of the 65th IB.

Capt. Ralph Dela Cruz, officer-in-charge of the OG7 of the First Infantry (Tabak) Division, said the MILF deputy commander surrendered after peaceful negotiations were exerted by the unit through the 65th IB's Civil Military Operation (CMO) activities aimed at improving the relationship and peace and order within

**KATO** . . . from page 2

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"contrary to law and the Constitution". Any hope for it – now dead – to animate the peace process is moot. But what chance could it have had the Court been a little liberal? [To Be Continued]

*("Comment" is Mr. Patricio P. Diaz' column for MindaViews, the opinion section of MindaNews. Mr. Diaz is the recipient of a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Titus Brandsma for his "commitment to education and public information to Mindanawons as Journalist, Educator and Peace Advocate." You may e-mail your comments to [patpdiaz@mindanews.com](mailto:patpdiaz@mindanews.com) This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it) – a reprint from [www.mindanews.com](http://www.mindanews.com), October 25, 2008 edition.*

the community.

Dela Cruz said the surrendered MILF member is the deputy commander of the 212nd MILF Brigade of the 101st Base Command of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF).

The MILF deputy commander also yielded his M14 U.S. rifle with Serial No. 202031 and one magazine loaded with live ammunition.

"He is now under the custody of the unit and being utilized as negotiator for possible surrender of his followers," added De la Cruz.

The Army spokesman also said the captive rebel decided to return to the folds of the government after realizing that they are fighting for a wrong cause which includes violation of human rights of innocent civilians by the MILF adding that there is an on-going rift between the MILF factions that is demoralizing its followers.

"The MILF deputy commander's surrender only manifests that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is open to peaceful approach to solve the security problem in the Lanao provinces," Dela Cruz said. (By RIO ROSE RIBAYA and MIKE U. CRISMUNDO, Manila Bulletin, provincial page, October 25, 2008)

**SPENT** . . . from page 12

suffered 41 deaths and 153 wounded so far.

The military has said several hundred MILF fighters had been killed in the operations — a figure disputed by the MILF that put its losses at less than a dozen.

Kato and Macapaar went on a rampage after the Supreme Court stopped the signing of a deal on an expanded Bangsamoro homeland on Aug. 5 following protests by local executives. The court later said the deal was unconstitutional.

**OCD spending**

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said aid to more than 600,000 internally displaced people had reached P78 million, or roughly P130 for each IDP, mostly women and malnourished children.

Len Bartolome, OCD information officer, said yesterday that the government had spent about P41 million for food and nonfood items for 1,894 displaced families in North Cotabato. The amount, Bartolome said, includes medicine and other health-related assistance.

Gilmar Lao of the OCD in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao said the cost of assistance to evacuees in Maguindanao, Shariff Kabunsuan and parts of Lanao del Sur had reached P37 million so far.

In Maguindanao alone, at least 25,000 families have fled to safety since clashes erupted.

Thousands of the displaced are in squalid evacuation shelters of plastic tents donated by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Encampments are rife with diseases and are without basic sanitation and potable water.

Evacuees are exposed to the elements in this current monsoon season. Pregnant mothers give birth in open fields without medical assistance.

**Situation remains grim**

The situation was particularly grim in Maguindanao, according to a Philippine Daily Inquirer team that visited the area last month. Aid workers told the Inquirer over the weekend that there had been little improvement in the conditions in the Maguindanao evacuation sites.

Other OCD sources said the money spent on relief assistance could still increase as evacuees had to spend more time in temporary shelters.

Military commanders have said the hunt for Kato and Macapaar will continue until they are captured.

Despite the scale of the operations, with an estimated 10,000 soldiers involved, Kato and Bravo remain scot-free. The government has put up a reward of P10 million each for the capture of the two MILF leaders.

**Some AFP accomplishments**

The military noted there had been some accomplishments, like the capture of some MILF commanders allegedly involved in the attacks, such as

[SPENT/p.11]

**REPORTER** . . . from page 12

me when he found me inside the camp near the ammunition dump," Loreto Rosario of Church-run Radio DXMS, told the Philippine Daily Inquirer (parent company of INQUIRER.net).

He identified the official as Lt. Col. Aswald Bucu, 6th ID camp commander.

Bucu could not be reached for comment but Col. Julieto Ando, 6th ID spokesperson, apologized for and in behalf of Bucu.

"I would like to apologize to Mr. Rosario," Ando said, adding that the situation at the time of the fire was "high and there was a state of confusion."

Ando explained that Bucu was the camp commander and he would like to make sure nobody who was not allowed at the camp could come closer to the ammunition dump where the fire started at 4:15 a.m.

"There's no problem if I was told to distance myself from the fire scene," according to Rosario, a body-builder and known among media persons here as "Mr. Macho" for winning Mindanao-wide body-building contests.

"What dismayed me was his yelling at me as if I am his subordinate, as if I were a criminal, as if I did not present my press card."

"You are an intruder, it's good that my men did not shoot you," Rosario quoted Bucu as telling him.

"If they have shot me, that was their problem, I did not violate any rule," he said.

Rosario maintained that he came to the camp as a reporter with proper identification cards to report what was going on when there was a 30-minute powerful and continuous explosion.

"I coordinated with Maj. Abaja, deputy spokesperson, and he allowed me entry," Rosario said.

"Besides, the main gate was open when I arrived so I proceeded to the fire scene," Rosario, who has been covering the 6th ID beat for the past five years, said.

Rosario also accused Bucu of taking his two mobile phones and press card and handed them over to his men. But Rosario grabbed them and left. He proceeded to the office of Ando.

Bucu, with his heavily armed bodyguards in tow, followed Rosario at Ando's office.

There he berated Rosario anew in front of Ando and accused him of being an "intruder."

Ferdinand Cabrera, secretary general of National Union of Journalists of the Philippines-Cotabato chapter, condemned Bucu's actuation and called for an investigation.

"That was very unprofessional and uncalled for an Army officer," Cabrera said.

[REPORTER/p.9]

**CATHOLIC** . . . from page 12

The same process of consultations will reportedly be held among the respective constituents of the Protestant, Ulama and indigenous peoples sectors in the BUC.

Meanwhile, the Catholic bishops will undertake general community consultations on aspirations for peace, development and justice among the Lumads, and Islamic and Christian communities, particularly the 23 indigenous peoples tribes and the Bangsamoro people.

The bishops' consultations will start at the diocese level of each of the jurisdictions of the 13 Catholic bishops in Mindanao, involving the clergy, religious and the laity.

The results of the consultations on the diocese level will then be brought by the bishops to the ecclesiastical provinces of sub-regions of the Catholic church in Mindanao.

A regional conference or congress for justice, development and peace will be held wherein the results of the diocesan and sub-regional consultations will be collated and presented.

In the same congress, bishops and their respective group of Church leaders will approve a "final document" that would be presented to the President and the MILF leadership.

The Mindanao bishops' consultation plan also indicated it would also be possible that the result of their consultations will be integrated with the results of the other BUC sectors after the Ulama, Protestant and the IP groups have conducted their own separate summit or congress.

For many peace advocates in the South, the 11-year-old government-MILF peace overture virtually collapsed with the aborted MOA-AD.

The MOA-AD outlined the government and the MILF's bilateral setting up of a Muslim homeland in Mindanao and its proposed governing mechanism, the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity.

The Supreme Court, acting on petitions by certain local officials in Mindanao, restrained at first the government panel from signing the MOA-AD and subsequently dismissed it as unconstitutional.

The SC ruling sparked renewed fighting after MILF forces led by radical commanders, among them Ameril Umbra Kato and Abdullah Macapaar, attacked villages in Mindanao.

The conflict has displaced thousands, many of them still languishing in the adjoining provinces of North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Shariff Kabunsuan.

**'Contained and isolated'**

The military assuaged fears of villagers in the borders of two Lanao provinces as the frequency of

**REPORTER** . . . from page 8

It was the second case of media harassment inside the 6th ID.

Last week, about 10 policemen assigned with the police station of Mother Kabuntalan, Shariff Kabunsuan were berated and given a dressing down by an Army lieutenant of the 6th Infantry Battalion.

The Army lieutenant, known as Lt. Capuyan, has been relieved and is undergoing investigation, according to Ando. *Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

hostilities between government troops and rogue MILF forces has increased.

Maj. Gen. Nehemias Pajarito, chief of the Army's 1st Division told the villagers to stay calm amid threats issued by wanted MILF leader Abdullah Macapaar alias Commander Bravo that he would not surrender while warning to intensify attacks.

While the rogue faction of Macapaar has the capability if given the chance, the military said the group has been "contained and isolated."

"It was very clear that even if he continues to challenge us, we knew it's all propaganda for him because he is afraid his followers would desert him," Pajarito said.

The military official also assured the civilians that the operation is only directed at the group of Macapaar, who is carrying the reward of P10 million posted by the government for attacking the civilian communities in Lanao that has resulted in the death of more than 40 people and the destruction of properties.

The assurance came even as the military was seeking to de-list some 20 names in the MILF from being in the rogue group that perpetrated the Aug.18 atrocities in the towns of Kolam-bugan and Kauswagan towns in Lanao del Norte.

**UN help sought**

Some 50 representatives of various Moro-led non-government organizations and cause-oriented groups have asked the United Nations to help resolve peacefully the conflict in the South.

The group sent UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon a letter the other day, drafted after a dialogue in Davao City, calling on the international body to intervene in the armed conflict.

"Towards our collective end of addressing the conflict in the Southern Philippines, we earnestly appeal to the Office of the UN Secretary-General for a continuing support to the Civil Society's efforts in peace-building, conflict prevention and transformation," the group said in their letter. - *Edith Regalado, Roel Pareño, a reprint from [www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com), October 26, 2008*

**IMT** . . . from page 1

of the IMT's tour of duty.

The IMT's stay is usually for one year. There have been four IMT batches since October 2004: IMT 1, IMT2, IMT3 and IMT4 whose stay, supposedly until August 31, was extended for three more months from September 1 to November 30.

Until the departure of the first batch in May, there were 57 members of the IMT, 41 soldiers from Malaysia, 10 from Brunei, five from Libya and the lone development specialist from Japan.

Today, the IMT has 29 members – 28 of them soldiers – 12 from Malaysia, 10 from Brunei, six from Libya and the only non-soldier member, from Japan.

Tomonori Kikuchi, Senior Advisor for Reconstruction and Development of Mindanao and concurrent First Secretary of the Embassy of Japan, is the new IMT member. He arrived in the Philippines last week of August and has been based in Cotabato City.

Kikuchi told MindaNews he may have to move to Manila by December 1 if there is no new mandate for the IMT.

Badrul told MindaNews in a telephone interview that they continue to monitor the other areas where there are no operations against what the military claims to be "recalcitrant" MILF commanders Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato, Abdullah Macapaar aka Commander Bravo, and Aleem Solaiman Pangalian.

"We went to Davao, Bukidnon, Iligan, Zamboanga, General Santos," he said.

Brig. Gen. Rey Sealana, deputy commander for peace process of the Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom) and head of the government's Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) told a forum in early October that punitive operations are being enforced in the PALMA Alliance (Pigcawayan, Alamada, Libungan, Midsayap and Aleosan) and Pikit in North Cotabato; Maasim and Kiamba in Sarangani; portions of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan, and portions of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.

Sealana said there is no ceasefire against these three commanders and their men, he said, but ceasefire continues between government forces and the 16 other base commands of the MILF.

He cited the main reasons behind the punitive action as follows: "to uphold the rule of law; implement the mandate of government to protect the people; to give justice to all the victims of the criminal and terror acts of the MILF;" and "resorted to as a last option."

From only eight recorded armed skirmishes between the military and the MILF in 2007, 128 skirmishes had been recorded as of September 30 this year, Sealana said.

Seventy-seven of the 128 skirmishes happened in

August, shortly after the aborted August 5 formal signing of the MOA-AD.

The number of skirmishes dropped to 39 in September. He attributed this to the Ramadhan, the Islamic month of fasting.

Sealana presented a table that showed that from a high of 698 incidents in 2002, the number went down to 569 in 2003 even as there was a war then in the Buliok area and neighboring towns. In 2004, the year the IMT came, the number went down to 16; down to 10 in 2005; up to 13 in 2006; down to eight in 2007 and 128 in 2008.

In 2008, Sealana said, the joint CCCH of the government and MILF recorded one incident in January, zero in February, March and April, two in May, four in June, five in July, 77 in August and 39 in September.

The government peace panel has been dissolved but Sealana said the government's CCCH is presently under the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

At least half a million persons have been displaced by the renewed hostilities between the government and MILF forces.

Then government peace panel chair Rodolfo Garcia and MILF peace panel chair Mohagher Iqbal, respectively, went to Kuala Lumpur on August 27th and 28th to seek extension of the IMT's tour of duty.

No joint communiqué was issued by both panels whose members were all in Putrajaya, Malaysia in early August to formally sign the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), the last of three agenda items prior to the discussion on the political settlement.

The MOA-AD was initialed by Garcia, Iqbal and Philippine Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Hermogenes Esperon on July 27 but a temporary restraining order (TRO) was issued by the Supreme Court afternoon of August 4, preventing the government peace panel chair from signing the MOA-AD morning of August 5.

Malaysia's The Star online reported evening of August 28 that Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Rais Yatim said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had agreed to requests for Malaysia to continue to participate in IMT "for a short term of 'at least three months.'"

Yatim said the Philippine government and MILF had requested Malaysia "to extend its presence pending the Philippines Supreme Court's decision on the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on ancestral domain."

"We are not fixing a deadline but that is how long we hope it will take both parties to be able to sign the agreement, which was cancelled early this month," The Star online quoted Yatim as saying.

On October 14, by a vote of 8-7, the Supreme Court ruled the MOA-AD was unconstitutional. (*Carolyn O. Arguillas/MindaNews*)

**MILF** . . . from page 1

Jaafar said thousands of MILF fighters in many parts of Central Mindanao, the Zamboanga Peninsula, Sulu and in Basilan remain restrained in their camps.

Jaafar said their peace panel has not been disbanded yet and its ceasefire committee is still working closely with its government counterpart to maintain the fragile peace in areas that remain peaceful despite the raging hostilities in at least three towns in Maguindanao.

Soldiers and MILF rebels have only been fighting in three – Datu Piang, Datu Saudi, and Masapano of Maguindanao's 22 towns.

Jaafar said the MILF has remained open to a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the so-called Mindanao problem, or quest of the Moro communities for self-governance.

Lt. Col. Julieto Ando, spokesman of the Army's 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, said hostilities again erupted the other day in isolated areas at the border of Datu Piang and Mamasapano between renegade MILF forces and soldiers running after them.

Ando said they have received feedback from local officials that six rebels were killed in the ensuing firefights, seen being dragged away by their companions from the scene as they fled in haste.

Ando said the military's hunt for Ameril Ombra Kato, chief of the MILF's 105<sup>th</sup> Base Command, and his men in the three Maguindanao towns will continue unless ordered otherwise by the AFP's General Headquarters.

Kato now carries a P10 million reward on his head for leading bloody attacks in North Cotabato after the aborted August 5 signing of the memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain by the GRP and MILF panels.

The agreement was to serve as basis for the bilateral setting up by the government and MILF of a Moro homeland in the south, to be managed by the front's proposed governing mechanism, the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity. []

**SPENT** . . . from page 8

Tony Angne, alias Commander Mercury.

Col. Antonio Benito de Leon, commander of the Army's 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade based in Lanao del Sur, said Angne was wounded and captured during a gun battle in Barangay Riray in Madalum town on Oct. 26.

On Monday, the military conducted more ground operation and air strikes in Maguindanao, leaving 13 rebels dead, according to Maj. Randolph Cabangbang, spokesperson of the military's Eastern Mindanao Command.

One soldier also died in the skirmishes near the Liguasan Marsh, he said.

**MILF on defensive mode**

Mohagher Iqbal, MILF chief negotiator, said the clashes in Maguindanao were initiated by the military and that

**MEDIA** . . . from page 1

fire scene, called him an intruder, and told him his men could have shot him had he ordered.

Suprisingly, however, Bucu allowed a crew of a local television outfit to position themselves at the scene and huddle with ranking officials of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID as the fire destroyed some P10 million worth of old ammunition stored inside the facility.

Rosario is a reporter of a much popular outfit in Central Mindanao, the Notre Dame Broadcasting Corporation, which has more than a dozen stations in the South that pioneered "peace and conflict journalism," as a strategy in propagating of Muslim-Christian solidarity in Mindanao.

Bucu confiscated Rosario's press identification card and his mobile phone and brought him to the office of 6<sup>th</sup> ID spokesman Col. Julieto Ando, where he continued to reprimand the radio reporter.

"I was reprimanded as if I was a terrorist who was caught doing something bad inside the camp," Rosario said.

Ando has apologized for Bucu's misbehavior over Catholic station dxMS here last Saturday, but the commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID, Gen. Raymundo Ferrer, and Bucu himself have both remained silent on the issue.

Ferrer, who is popularly known here for his special study on conflict resolution at the Asian Institute of Management, has also been silent on the manhandling some two weeks ago by a drunken lieutenant in the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion of policemen at the municipal police station in nearby Kabuntalan, Shariff Kabunsuan.

Reeking with liquor, the officer, 2Lt. Christopher Capuyan, arrived at the police station searching for the town's police chief and after learning he was out, ordered the policemen on duty to do push ups and sit ups and even stepped on their backs and heads as they kissed the ground.

Bucu first hogged the airwaves when he branded as "member" of the New People's Army the president of the NUJP in Kidapawan City, Malu Cadelina Manar, public affairs chief of the Catholic station dxND in North Cotabato, during a gathering of reporters at the headquarters of the Army's 602<sup>nd</sup> Brigade in Carmen, North Cotabato some three years ago.

The NUJP's chapter here, in a statement, said its members will only resume covering the activities of the 6<sup>th</sup> ID only if a new division commander takes over from Ferrer, who is due to leave soon for a higher post in the Philippine Army. []

the rebel forces there had to defend themselves.

"It's difficult to prevent them from fighting if that is the situation," Iqbal said. *With reports from Jeffrey Maitem, Edwin Fernandez and Richel Umel, Inquirer Mindanao*

## Reporter hits harassment by Army colonel

COTABATO CITY – A radio reporter here has complained of harassment by an Army colonel who allegedly berated him for entering the 6th Infantry Division at the height of a fire that razed an ammunition dump Friday.

“He was yelling at me, his eyes as if on fire, and berated

[REPORTER /p.8]

**CRATER?** --- This meter-wide crater, about 40 meters east of the ammunition storage depot inside Camp Siongco and destroyed by a mysterious fire last October 31, has stirred suspicions on the real cause of the conflagration, which ate some P10 million worth of old munitions.[]



# Catholic bishops to hold peace consultations in Mindanao

DAVAO CITY – Catholic bishops in Mindanao are planning to hold community peace consultations following stalled peace negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“The Mindanao Bishops’ Consultation Plan” reportedly stemmed from the request of the government that the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC) lead in community consultations after the peace talks were held up over the botched signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) between the government and the MILF.

The Mindanao Catholic bishops came up with the final draft of the plan during a gathering here last month.

The consultation plan is basically aimed at healing Christian-Muslim relations in Mindanao wherein certain guidelines will serve as parameters in the conduct of the community consultations.

Results of the consultations will be presented to President Arroyo and the MILF leadership for consideration.

The same consultation plan will reportedly also be shared with the other BUC convenors, the Protestant and the Ulama sectors. The indigenous peoples groups will also hold their own consultation, as they are also official observers in the BUC.

Press Secretary Jesus Dureza earlier said the planned community consultations would provide new dynamics to the stalled peace process.

[CATHOLIC /p.9]

## P500M spent in hunt for Bravo, Kato

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY – The government has spent P500 million hunting two Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commanders, but only P78 million for 600,000 civilians forced from their homes because of the operation, or roughly P130 per person.

Still, military pursuers aren’t anywhere near Ameril Ombra Kato and Abdullah Macapaar, alias Commander Bravo.

These wily MILF leaders have even either appeared on YouTube – a hugely popular video-sharing website – or posed for newspaper photographers, in moves that seemed to mock the military initiative that began over two months ago.

Lt. Gen. Cardozo Luna, deputy chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, told local officials on Saturday at the Pryce Hotel here that the total expenditures for fuel for vehicles and aircraft had reached P227 million.

For bullets, he said the military had already spent P286 million in operations in Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Lanao del Sur.

“In the total expenses, financial assistance for the families of our dead and wounded men is not yet included,” Luna said, adding that the military has

[SPENT /p.8]