



EDITORIAL

US military support aids Duterte's tyrannical regime

Recent pronouncements by the Duterte regime's officials that the earlier declared plan to terminate the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) will no longer push through came as no surprise. At the outset, it was clear that Duterte's "threat" to scrap it was only meant to demand additional military aid for his tyranny.

Duterte himself said, "if you want the VFA, then pay for it." This is in line with his principle "its all about money" that underpins his foreign policy. To Duterte, national sovereignty and freedom is measured by how much. Duterte took back the VFA termination and allowed the US to hold its biggest war exercise (Balikatan) after he was promised sales worth \$2.4 billion of military hardware.

Negotiations lasted more than a year and was overtaken by the pandemic and the change of government in the US. In the end, the

Biden government approved additional military aid to the Duterte regime despite the strong clamor of a number of US senators and representatives, as well as by the democratic forces in the Philippines and Fil-Am organizations in the US, to suspend this because of rampant cases of killings and human rights violations by police and military forces.

In reality, providing military aid also favors US imperialism since it will strengthen the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and its US-de-

"US..." continued on page 2

NPA mounts 11 offensives in conjunction with Duterte's SONA

UNITS OF THE New People's Army (NPA) mounted 11 offensives in Samar, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental and Sorsogon from June 15 to 29 as challenge to Rodrigo Duterte's last State of the Nation Address (SONA). Initial reports indicate that enemy units sustained 30 casualties with at least 26 killed.

Northern Samar. The NPA-Northern Samar ambushed soldiers scouring Km. 18, Happy Valley, San Isidro on July 23. Eleven soldiers were killed in the offensive. On the same day, an NPA unit ambushed another military unit in Catarman. These ambushes were mounted amid the enemy's focused military operation that it has been conducting for half a year.. These military operations are conducted simultaneous with forced surrenders and harassment campaigns in around 25 barangays under the guise of the Retooled Community Support Program.

On the day of Duterte's SONA, a police officer was killed while another was wounded during an NPA sniping operation in Barangay San Jose, Catubig. The NPA unit first encountered the police along the boundary of barangays Anongo and

"11 offensives..." continued on page 3

"US...", from page 1

signed counterinsurgency war. In fact, the war being waged by the US through the AFP aims to defend the economic and geopolitical interests of the US. The AFP serves as the principal pillar of US rule in the Philippines. The US has been training, advising, arming and funding the AFP. These are carried out under the 70-year old Mutual Defense Treaty and the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

The US gave Duterte his demand for more military aid, even if this meant supporting a regime that has paved the way for the increasing military presence in the West Philippine Sea by China, the US archrival in terms of the economy and hegemony.

As head of the semicolonial puppet state, Duterte bows to the policy-dictates of the US, especially in pursuing neoliberal economic policies, counterinsurgency and "anti-terrorism." However, he also kowtows to China and has given up Philippine exclusive rights to its seas

in exchange for the promise of loans and grants worth several tens of billions of dollars, as well as control of the illegal drug trade from China.

US imperialism has frowned over Duterte's two-timing. Especially in the face of intensifying US-China economic and trade conflicts, the US disfavors its Philippine puppet playing around with its rival. By providing more military aid in exchange for expanding its military presence in the Philippines and its surrounding seas, the US calculates that Duterte will ease on his pro-China posturing.

The US also hopes to tighten its control of the Duterte regime especially with the possibility that the fascist clique will remain in power beyond 2022. By doing so, the US role behind the tyrannical and ter-



rorist Duterte regime becomes clearer, and its human rights avowals are exposed as a sham.

But even as US imperialism continues to support Duterte, it also strengthens its links and support for other anti-Duterte factions of the ruling classes who are all pro-US to serve as reserve cards that it can play once the ruling tyranny starts to flounder. This is like how in the 1980s the US supported both Marcos and the then anti-Marcos factions in the face of widespread and sustained people's protests against the dictatorship.

What is distinct in the current situation is the similarly active intervention of China and its challenge to the previously exclusive field of domination of US imperialism in Philippine reactionary politics. Some reactionary politicians, such as the ruling Duterte clique, seek bigger payment for their puppetry, even as they surrender the country's sovereignty. In the coming 2022 elections, we will likely see the real price and loyalty of Duterte's and unprecedented levels of foreign interference.

Duterte is like a barnacle holding on to power for his morbid fear of being made to account for his crimes against humanity and war crimes. He has unleashed all out brutality to suppress and paralyze all forces opposed to his tyranny

"US...", continued on page 3



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Contents

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Editorial: US military support aids Duterte's tyrannical regime	1
NPA mounts 11 offensives	1
Continuing US intervention	3
Duterte's lies in his last SONA	4
#DuterteWakasanNa	5
Metro Manila undergoes 3rd ECQ	6
Religious sector, willing to mediate peace	6
PH bags first gold medal in Olympics	6
Protests	6
The AFP will fail to crush the NPA in NCMR	7
AFP kills 4 farmers in Bicol	8
In short	9
Deceptive, divisive "reforestation" program	10
Fake reforestation	10

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Continuing US intervention

Rodrigo Duterte formally reneged on his threat to abrogate the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) after personally meeting US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on July 29. Thus, the unimpeded entry and exit of huge number of US troops, materiél and military equipment to and from Philippine sovereign territories was officially restored.

The push for the VFA and other military agreements with the US is in accordance to the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) between the two countries. In the past seven decades, the US was able to maintain its military power in the country through this unequal military treaty, as well as the VFA, Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) and Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P). Through these, the US was able to further tighten its operational control over the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Even when Duterte play-acted to abrogate the VFA, US military presence and activities continued unabated in the country. In April, it continued to launch the Balikatan exercises despite rising cases of Covid-19 infections in the country. It also held the three-week Salaknib exercises of the 1st Brigade Combat Team this July. Prior to this, the US delivered ₱48.5-million worth of

firearms to the AFP.

The unimpeded occupation of military facilities in at least five AFP camps by American soldiers is also maintained through the EDCA. American soldiers operating under the OPE-P were among those who transported the bodies of the casualties after the crash of an AFP C-130 plane in Sulu. Meanwhile, the US mounted at least three freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea during the first half of 2021.

The US has long been using the MDT to use the Philippines as a base in its saberrattling campaign in the Asia-Pacific region. Under this agreement, the Philippines deployed its own troops during the wars in Korea and Vietnam, as well as the US wars of aggression against people who are struggling for democracy and national liberation. Former US military bases in the Philippines were also used as bases in the US war of aggression in Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and Afghanistan. AB

"US...", from page 2

and his scheme to remain in power beyond 2022. To demonstrate to US imperialism that he deserves continued support, Duterte is waging a full-scale "war on terror." Behind this veil, it has mounted an intensified campaign of extrajudicial killings and suppression against patriotic and democratic forces, using the weapons and military aid from the US.

The Filipino people must intensify their resistance and stand against the Duterte regime's puppetry to US imperialism and for allowing the US to increase its military presence in the Philippines as part of its maneuverings against China. The Filipino people must intensify exposure of Duterte's fascist crimes and hold the Biden government to account for supporting the regime's tyranny and terrorism.

All democratic forces and those opposed to Duterte's tyranny must be brought together into the broadest front of the Filipino people to resist Duterte's evil scheme to remain in power. AB

"11 offensives...", from page 1

Hitapian on July 10 where two policemen were wounded. Red fighters also paid tribute to Ka Diwa, 24, who was martyred during an encounter last July 10 in Las Navas.

On July 29, the NPA-Northern Samar ambushed operating troops of the 83rd Military Intelligence Company in Barangay Dolores, Las Navas. Initial reports indicate that a military officer was killed while two others were wounded.

Negros Occidental. On July 21, the NPA-Southwest Negros mounted a harassment operation against operating troops of 15th IB

at Sitio Makapula, Barangay Cabaian, Candoni. The day before, Red fighters successively encountered the military at sitios Guinobatan and Moromanila in Barangay Caningay; and at sitios Lunoy and Catmon, Barangay Agboy. At least five soldiers were killed in the encounters.

A encounter between the NPA-South Central Negros and 94th IB also took place on July 22 at Sitio Manulaya, Barangay Tana-uan, Kabankalan City. Three AFP elements were killed in action.

Negros Oriental. In Guihulngan City, the NPA-Central Negros harassed a CAFGU detachment in

Barangay Sandayao on July 21. The CAFGU and 62nd IB troops are notorious for harassing and threatening civilians, ransacking residences, and killing those whom they suspect of supporting the NPA.

Sorsogon. A policeman was killed in a sniping operation mounted by the NPA-Sorsogon at a checkpoint of the 2nd Police Provincial Mobile Force Company in Barangay Sta. Teresita, Bulan on July 21. The NPA-Sorsogon offensive was aimed to punish armed state elements who continue to perpetrate killings and suppression against Sorsogonans. AB

Duterte's lies in his last SONA

Rodrigo Duterte delivered his last State of the Nation Address (SONA) at the Batasang Pambansa Complex, Quezon City in the afternoon of July 26. Lasting around three hours, his speech predictably focused on his agenda for the military and counterinsurgency, as well as his bogus war against drugs, terrorism and corruption. He also laid out 12 priority bills, two of which have previously hurdled committee level at the Lower House, while six have counterpart bills pending before the Senate.

Prioritizing the military and police

Despite the raging pandemic, Duterte refused to prioritize public health and the welfare of health workers. Instead, his top agenda was to ensure legislations for the pension Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police, as well as free legal assistance for uniformed personnel implicated in crimes and anomalies. These bills aim to secure the loyalty of his soldiers and police to his tyrannical reign.

Duterte also lauded his criminal war on drugs despite widespread condemnation. People have long known how his campaign aims only to establish himself as the drug overlord in the country.

The Communist Party of the Philippines belied Duterte's claim that his counterinsurgency campaign is succeeding in "resolving" the root cause of the armed conflict. It dismissed Duterte's claim of 17,000 "surrendered" fighters of the New People's Army as "a big fat lie" pointing out that those are actually civilians. It also said Duterte's claim that 15 guerrilla fronts have been dismantled in the past five years is unfounded.

Bogus anti-corruption campaign

Duterte's claims regarding his bogus anti-corruption campaign are plain hogwash. This includes claims of "firing" 43 Bureau of Immigration (BI) officers involved in the "pastillas scheme" in 2020, and 200 other employees involved in corruption.

Contrary to his claim, the BI of-

ficers were only suspended and not sacked, and are already back at the agency without being held accountable. There are also no reports to prove his claim of sacking 200 other employees.

In 2020, he also ordered to restrict public access to public officials' statements of assets, liabilities and net worth which are usually scrutinized to probe whether an official is involved in corruption.

No plans for the pandemic

In his SONA, Duterte failed to lay out concrete plans to face the Covid-19 pandemic amid increasing threat of the Delta variant spreading across the country.

In his speech, he only ordered the National Employment Recovery Strategy Task Force to spearhead his so-called Reform, Rebound and Recover Program which purportedly aims to vaccinate qualified workers to fill in more than one million jobs. However, vaccine supplies remain inadequate as the regime continues to rely on paltry donations from other countries.

Duterte's order to establish the Center for Disease Prevention and Control and the Virology and Vaccine Institute of the Philippines is sanctimonious in the face of his regime's scarce public health funding.

As expected, Duterte ordered Congress to railroad the Foreign Investments Act, Public Service Act, and Retail Trade Liberalization Act to fully liberalize the economy un-



der the pretext of stimulating economic activity. These bills have already hurdled the committee level of the Lower House and already have equivalent bills pending before the Senate.

Other lies

Duterte bragged that the Philippines was "one of the fastest growing economies in Asia before the pandemic scourge." In reality, the gross domestic product growth of the country had dropped from 7.1% in 2016 to 6.1% in 2019.

People were also outraged by Duterte's false boast that he "took away the misery of commuting" with the help of his grandiose road and skyway projects. This is far from reality as commuters daily suffer from the lack of public transportation due to restrictions imposed on jeepney operations.

He also lied when he claimed that he is "pursuing" an independent foreign policy when people are well aware of his puppetry to China and the US. He did not discuss his treasonous policy of selling out the Philippines' sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea to China in exchange for support for his regime, and his policy of using the Visiting Forces Agreement to obtain bigger military aid from the US. **AB**

#DuterteWakasanNa: Filipinos clamor to end Duterte's reign

According to reports, around 6,000 protesters marched along the Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City on July 26 in conjunction with Rodrigo Duterte's fifth and last State of the Nation Address (SONA). Organizations from Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon participated in the protest. With the theme "Duterte, wakasan!" (End Duterte) and "Goodbye Duterte," they demanded an end to Duterte's reign and to hold him accountable for all his crimes including mass killings, selling out the country's sovereignty, failed pandemic response, and widespread corruption. Similar protests were mounted in Cebu, Bacolod, Davao, Iloilo, Bayombong in Nueva Vizcaya, Roxas in Capiz, Kalibo in Aklan, and Naga City. Protests were also held in various cities in the US, Canada and Hongkong.

Prior to the SONA, various sectors mounted a series of protests and activities to discuss the people's concrete situation and assessment of the regime's five year reign and its failures.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno held the State of Labor Address on July 23 with the theme "END Duterte" to criticize his failure to deliver his promise to end contractualization. It noted that approximately 9.2 million to 13.5 million individuals are unemployed amid the pandemic.

On July 25, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas held the State of the Peasant Address to condemn the Rice Liberalization Law and the regime for neglecting the agricultural sector. It pointed out that rice farmers lost ₱90 billion in income due to liberalization. They demanded a ₱15,000-production subsidy amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"No justice, no peace." This was

how human rights alliance Karapatan described the five-year reign of the dictator Duterte. On top of the 30,000 victims of the regime's "war on drugs," it also perpetrated 414 cases of extrajudicial killings, 2,725 cases of illegal arrests which further increased during the militarist lockdown, and numerous cases of harassment against progressive individuals and activists. The group also documented 25 massacres under the regime.

Teachers also gave Duterte a failing grade. "We have not seen a clear program for education," pointed out the Alliance of Concerned Teachers on July 23. "He cannot claim any achievement in the education sector." The alliance also gave a failing grade to Sec. Leonor Briones of the Department of Education (DepEd). It said that the DepEd's blended learning program only caused huge hardships on

teachers, students and their parents.

In their State of the Youth Address on July 19, participants issued their #DutertePalpak (Duterte A Failure) judgement. The youth criticized the regime's inaction and lack of plans to ensure the safe reopening of schools amid the pandemic. Around 2.73 million students or 10% of the total 27.77 million enrollees dropped out from school during the academic year 2019-2020. The youth also criticized the continuing attacks of the fascist regime on academic freedom and campus press.

The hardships suffered by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) amid the Covid-19 pandemic were doubled due to the regime's inaction. Only 2% or 250,000 of the total 12 million OFWs were aided by the regime. Hundreds of thousands OFWs who were forced to return to the country after losing their jobs abroad were squeezed into cramped quarantine facilities. Before the pandemic, OFWs were also levied an increase in mandatory contributions for PhilHealth membership and premiums amounting to ₱24,000 during the first year, as well as increase in mandatory contributions for SSS membership and premiums.

Environmental groups held an online forum to condemn the dirty and pro-foreign environmental policy of the regime. The church sector also demanded an end to attacks and illegal arrests against their ranks. Media groups also labeled the Duterte regime as an enemy of press freedom. In Mindanao, Moros criticized the failed rehabilitation of Marawi City which Duterte ravaged in 2017, and the lack of compensation for evacuees.



Metro Manila undergoes third ECQ

FOR THE THIRD time, the Duterte regime placed Metro Manila and Laguna under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ), the strictest form of lockdown, from August 6 to 20 to purportedly stop the spread of the more infectious Delta variant of Covid-19. The lockdowns in Cagayan de Oro and Iloilo, which have been under ECQ since July, were also extended.

Many were surprised when this was imposed even as NCR residents were given a week to "prepare" for the lockdown. Many establishments will again be shuttered and the number of small and medium enterprise bankruptcies is expected to rise further. These enterprises comprise around 80% of the total businesses which have been affected by repeated implementation of ECQ. The NCR is set to lose ₱105 billion in income per week and 444,000 jobs because of the lockdown.

Last year, 62.1% of households experienced food insecurity and malnutrition due to these restrictions.

The regime's failed pandemic response is clearly the reason why it continues to resort to implementing these economic restrictions which make majority of the people suffer from hunger. On July 31 and August 5, progressive groups protested in Quezon City to demand aid amid the ECQ. Workers also demanded price controls of basic commodities, and temporary suspension of payment of electricity, water and other utility bills.

Religious sector expresses willingness to mediate peace negotiations

DESPITE THE RESOLUTION issued by the Anti-Terrorism Council declaring the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) as a "terrorist" organization, the religious sector expressed its willingness to mediate peace negotiations between the NDFP and the reactionary government of the Philippines.

The Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) announced its plans to conduct public consultations and campaigns to support the resumption of negotiations with the people's chosen newly elected leaders come 2022. In the upcoming elections, the group urged the people to consider aspiring candidates' willingness to engage in peace talks.

On July 22, the PEPP criticized the resolution declaring the NDFP a "terrorist" group. They raised alarm over the possibility of organizations, such as theirs, being tagged as "terrorists" for supporting peace negotiations.

Philippines bags first Olympic gold medal

ATHLETE HIDILYN DIAZ bagged the Philippines' first Olympic gold medal on April 26 in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. She won the women's 55-kilogram category in weightlifting, defeating Chinese athlete Liao Qiuyun. This victory is a result of her work despite the lack of support from the reactionary regime for athletes' training.

This was first exposed in 2019 when Diaz solicited financial support from private sponsors noting that she was already "hard up." Because of this exposé, she became the target of the regime's trolls on social media. She was also maliciously implicated in the "Oust Duterte matrix" which was released by the regime on the same year.

Meanwhile, boxers Nesthy Petecio and Carlos Paalam both bagged silver medals (second place) in their respective fights on August 3 and August 7. Boxer Eumir Marcial also bagged a bronze medal (third place). This was the Philippines' first time to bag more than one medal in the Olympics.



Fight for the safe reopening of schools. Member organizations of the Back to School Network-Panay submitted a petition at the local office of CHED and DepEd in Iloilo City on July 22 to demand the safe reopening of schools. They also demanded the regional agencies to provide a ₱10,000-aid to all students.

Students of the Holy Angel University (HAU) protested in front of their school campus in Angeles City, Pampanga on their first day of classes on July 15. They insisted that administration should heed their five-point list of demands for remote learning. Student leaders also appealed at the office of the university president on the same day.

Solidarity amid ECQ. The Defend Jobs Philippines mounted a campaign called Flag Brigade PH last August 6 wherein they conducted house-to-house dropping and collection of food donations. The group earlier distributed flaglets with various colors (orange for those who will donate; red for those who need donations) to indicate the particular needs and contribution of approximately 200 families in Sampaloc, Manila. The group said that the campaign is part of the movement to hold the regime accountable for its failure to aid residents amid the third enhanced community quarantine in Metro Manila.

Rollback oil prices. Workers under the Kilusang Mayo Uno mounted a picket protest near Philcoa in Quezon City on August 4 to condemn the new round of increases in prices of petroleum products and LPG. The price of gasoline increased by ₱1.05/liter, and ₱0.75/litro and ₱0.80/litro for kerosene and diesel respectively.

Why the AFP will fail to crush the NPA in NCMR

Presidential Communications Operations Office Sec. Martin Andanar's boast that the revolutionary movement in North Central Mindanao Region (NCMR) is near collapse is a big lie. According to him, 2,517 members of the New People's Army (NPA) have surrendered, 618 Red fighters have been "neutralized" and 10 guerilla fronts have been dismantled in 2020 alone. He further said 77 more barangays were "cleared" and are thus eligible for funds from the anomalous Barangay Development Program. Andanar is the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict's coordinator for Region 10.

In reality, no guerilla front or center was dismantled in NCMR in 2020. Some areas were temporarily vacated but NPA units managed to maintain presence in strategic areas of the region. There have been Red fighters who surrendered but they are few and mostly due to pressures exerted by the enemy on their families.

From March 2020 to March 2021, the people's army launched 102 tactical offensives where 94 soliders were killed and 84 wounded. At the same time, 18 Red fighters died in battle and for other reasons.

In the midst of heavy encounters, units in there region managed

to launch agrarian campaigns to increase wages for farm workers and for higher farmgate prices.

Focus region

Since March 2018, the AFP identified NCMR as one of its focus regions. After two years of failed campaigns to crush the NPA, the 4th ID reorganized its forces in 2020 to focus five brigades (three full and two shared) in what it considers to be subregional centers.

The AFP deployed one to two battalions per front. Its operations consist of soldiers occupying supposed "cleared" barrios combined with putting up a network of detachments to encroach or encircle

suspected bulwarks of the people's army. (Towards the end of 2020, the AFP had 169 CAFGU detachments and 19 regular military camps in the region.)

At the same time, focused and sustained combat operations using a thousand troops supported by jetfighters and helicopters, drones, mortars and cannons were launched. No less than 23 aerial bombing incidents using FA-50s and helicopters were reported from December 2018 to August 2020. In 2020, the AFP used the Covid-19 pandemic to intensify its rampage in the countryside and control the people's mobility.

Countering heightened attacks

In general, NPA units in the region employed guerrilla tactics of shifting and fluid warfare to maintain initiative and flexibility in waging war.

Guerrilla forces strove to raise the politico-militar capacity of its commanders and fighters to repel enemy attacks and raise the level of warfare. They assessed and gleaned lessons from extensive encounters, as well as attacks and counterattacks between its units and the AFP.

In the midst of heightened attacks, the need for the NPA to conduct extensive and intensive guerrilla warfare became more imperative. The consolidation and expansion of guerilla base areas and zones is key. To do this, commanders and officials of the people's army need to master waging systematic agrarian revolution and other campaigns to organize and mobilize the masses and address their needs



"Why..." continued on page 8

State forces kill four farmers in Bicol

Four farmers were killed in Bicol, and four others were arrested by state forces a few days prior to Rodrigo Duterte's State of the Nation Address.

Policemen gunned down Jemar Palero, member of the Organisasyon ng mga Magsasaka sa Albay, and Marlon Naperi of the Albay People's Organization, in the evening of July 25, in Banao Bridge, Maharlika Highway, Guinobatan, Albay. The activists were painting a protest slogan "Duterte Ibagsak!" ("Down with Duterte!") along the highway when they were killed. The police made it appear that the victims fought back, a claim belied by the their relatives. They were last seen being shoved into a van by the policemen.

Elements of the 83rd IB killed Louie Austria and Benjamin Delos Santos in Sagñay, Camarines Sur on July 20. Soldiers made it appear that the victims were killed in an encounter. They also claimed to have seized 12 high powered rifles.

Illegal arrest. The military arrested four farmers at Sitio Buscad, Barangay Tuban, Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro on July 19 and charged them under the Anti-Terror Law. They accused Miguel Manguera, Fe Marinas, Sherlito Casidsid and Allen Dela Fuente of supporting the New People's Army (NPA) and were implicated in an encounter between the AFP and people's army on July 5. Two of them were also charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives, while the two others were charged with obstruction of justice.

In Sorsogon, police arrested couple Ruel Llamera and Annie Jean Castillo, members of the Sorsogon People's Organization, on July 8 while travelling home to Sorsogon City. Trumped-up charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives were filed against them.

Harassment. Elements of the 62nd IB and 16th Scout Ranger Company indiscriminately fired

their guns in Barangay Banwage, Guihulungan City, Negros Oriental on July 15. They also lobbed a grenade at the house of Alo Lojanio at Sitio Kapudlusan.

In Northern Samar, soldiers coerced officials of at least 17 barangays in Las Navas, 14 in Silvino Lobos, six in Pambujan, one in Catubig, and all barangays in Matuguinao to sign resolutions declaring the NPA as persona non grata.

Shelling. From July 20 to 21, the 87th IB shelled the forested areas between Km. 14 and Km. 17 in San Jose de Buan, Western Samar. The military shelled the area 20 times within two days which ravaged the farmlands of residents and forced the residents Sitio Salvacion, Barangay San Nicolas to evacuate.

In Northern Samar, two houses were hit when elements of the PNP-Special Action Force fired its grenade launcher at Barangay Hitapian, Catubig on July 10. The policemen claimed that they targeted an NPA unit which mounted an offensive on the same day. Simultaneously, policemen stole pineapples which residents sell. They also threatened barangay officials.

Evacuation. Larab reported last July 30 that residents of Barangay San Jose, Las Navas, Northern Samar evacuated due to indiscriminate bombings perpetrated by the military in the area. Almost all residents of the barrios of Sag-od, Epaw and San Jose in the said town left their homes due to military occupation. Residents in the barrios of Senonogan de Tubang, Hiyaot, and Balod in Silvino Lobos also evacuated, as well as residents of barangays Ligaya and Carolina along the boundary of Matuguinao, Western Samar.

AB

"Why...", from page 7

and welfare. This became more important in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and its threat to the countryside where health infrastructure is minimal, if not absent.

The people's army also understood the need to urgently combat the enemy's gradual constriction and encirclement tactics by attacking its detachments and launching coordinated offensives at the front and subregional levels. This is to counter the enemy's plan to cut mass support for its units, isolate them in interior areas and force them into a purely military situation. It is also apparent that military abuses and brutalities run rampant in barrios where there are detachments.

Towards this goal, the Party committee has ordered the army to firmly grasp the platoon's basic orientation and operate in its set cluster of barrios. At the same time, Party units must firmly guide the masses' armed movement and utilize this and units of the people's militia to support regular forces and assist in launching tactical offensives.

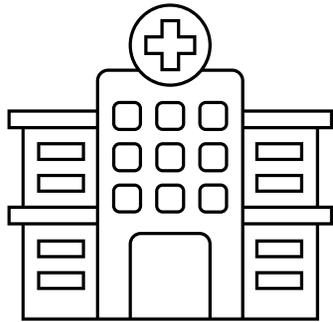
Comrades in the region are confident that the AFP will not crush the NPA and the revolutionary movement in Duterte's remaining year in office. They have lessons learned from decades of revolutionary struggles and intense warfare, especially in the last three years. These have produced cadres, commanders and personnel who have solid ideological grounding, rich military experience, high degree of readiness to sacrifice and face hardships and possess an unwavering fighting spirit.

AB

—IN—SHORT

Only ₱6.3 billion

of the **₱28 billion** that 200 **private hospitals** claim the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) owed them since 2020 has been paid by the regime.



Source: Private Hospital Association of the Philippines

-1.2

score received by the Philippines in relation to its capacity for economic recovery by 2025.

This said score was the lowest among 14 countries covered by the study.

Source: Oxford Economics

₱70.9 million

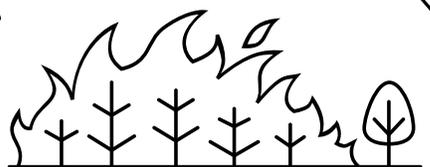
will be squandered by the regime to **arm firemen** while their equipment for firefighting remains inadequate and backward.



95,000 HECTARES

of forests were ravaged by wildfire in **Turkey** since July 28. The wildfire is yet to be contained.

Wildfires are also raging in thousands of hectares of forests in **Greece** burning down houses and killing animals.



August 7, 1998

date when the **Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian law** was formally signed by former Pres. Joseph Estrada. It was first signed by Mariano Orosa, former chairperson of the NDFP National Council, on April 10, 1998.

202,200

individuals from 480 barangays evacuated due to floods in various parts of Luzon since the third week of **typhoon Fabian**. It resulted in **₱102-million** damage to agriculture.

Source: National Disaster Risk Reduction management Council

Deceptive and divisive "reforestation" program

Barrio "Sulong" is among the barrios covered by the reactionary government's bogus reforestation program called the Enhanced National Greening Program (E-NGP). The state is using this program, with the help of the military, to grab the lands of farmers and intensify its counterinsurgency campaign.

The level of corruption of this program was evident during a meeting organized by occupying soldiers in the name of Rerooled Community Support Program (RCSP) in February. During the meeting, the military partnered with the local office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to push for the planting of commercial trees in at least 68 hectares of farmlands. The DENR imposed the planting of rosewood and naga trees within three years, and bamboo after these are harvested.

The DENR appointed barrio leaders to distribute ₱250 daily wages to residents who will be made to plant trees. Tillers of the affected land were given no compensation. The agency only promised them that they will be able to use the wood to

construct their houses and for other needs. It also promised to have their lands titled.

The agency insisted on planting these trees even if the areas covered by the program have long been productive. In these lands, residents used to plant coconut, sweet potatoes and other important crops which are needed by the community. In the name of reforestation, the DENR obliged farmers to demolish their farms to pave the way for the planting of trees with a gap of one square-meter in between.

In reality, the DENR is only using reforestation as pretext to grab the lands which have long been cultivated by farmers. The agency reclassified the agricultural lands as forest lands to reconcentrate own-



ership of these to the state, and allow these to be leased or sold to foreign commercial plantations, big landlords, and their bureaucrat counterparts.

The ₱250 daily wages promised to farmers is measly and temporary. It is even lower than the legislated ₱295-minimum wage for agricultural workers in the region. (In Leyte, caretakers are paid as low as ₱11 per day.) Farmers who accidentally damage trees are fined ₱6,000 or imprisoned.

Civilian agencies such as the DENR are made to serve the reactionary government's counterinsurgency campaign through its whole-of-government approach. In some cases, reforestation mapping is used as a tool for surveillance. The RCSP troops also use the NGP to justify military presence in barrios.

Measly budget allocations often result in misunderstanding among barangay residents. Instead of promoting collectivity, the DENR is encouraging farmers to go their own ways which destroys their solidarity and discourages mutual aid.

Barrios such as Sulong face the challenge of exposing the deceptive nature of the E-NGP and should be wary of the entry of agroforestry companies in their areas. They need to do this in order to effectively defend the victories they have won through agrarian revolution in their villages.

(Excerpt from Larab, July 21, 2021.)

AB

Fake reforestation

THE NGP WAS first implemented in 2011 under the Aquino regime. This was extended and expanded in 2015 through Executive Order 193 (E-NGP) despite being declared a failure. It was continued by Duterte's officials because its funds (more than ₱5 billion) serves as a milking cow for politicians.

The DENR bragged in 2019 that two million hectares were planted with 1.7 billion seedlings under the E-NGP between 2011 and 2019. However, it could not offer any proof when this was questioned in the Senate. Worse, according to experts, the country's seven million hectares of remaining forest cover remain unchanged from 2011 to the present.

Reforestation is not the real aim of the E-NGP. The trees being planted, such as bamboo, coffee and falcata, are not endemic to local forests. This contradicts scientists' recommendation that endemic trees should be planted to ensure ecological balance. These commercial trees are planted not to revive the forests but to be harvested and exported.