

ANG

Bayan

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Editorial

Lead the emerging anti-Arroyo united front!

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's successive measures and policies that she has implemented with no regard whatsoever for the people's welfare are further stoking the people's anger. With the intense suffering she has wrought, it is Arroyo herself who pushes the people to take action to oust her from power.

Feeling the most anger at the Arroyo regime are the workers and peasants. Also incensed are people from the middle social strata like students, teachers, government employees and professionals who are angry at the Arroyo regime's rampant corruption and their inability to cope with the intense social crisis.

Arroyo gravely fears the formation of a broad united front against her regime. Thus she relentlessly exerts efforts to divide the political opposition through secret deals and offers of positions in the bureaucracy. The fractious anti-Arroyo forces find it difficult to unite because they suspect their fellow reactionary oppositionists of having entered into clandestine deals with Malaca-

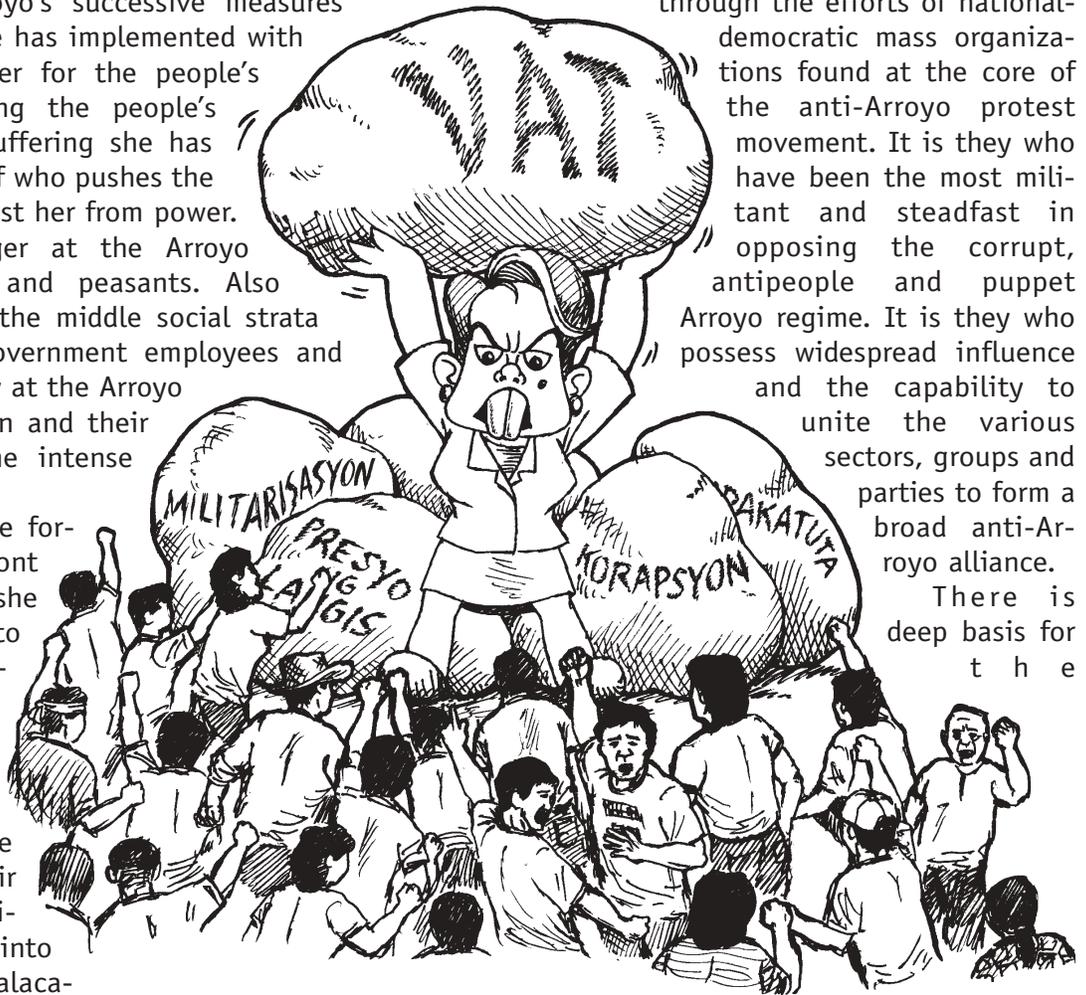
ñang. As for the generals in the AFP and PNP, Arroyo has gone all out to take care of them and is therefore assured that their loyalty would preempt any attempt to stage an uprising or a coup d'état.

It is not the anti-Arroyo elite opposition that will supply the forces and leadership necessary to oust the regime. The broad alliance that will topple Arroyo will emerge not from the efforts of elite politicians, but from the surging people's protest movement.

The broad anti-Arroyo forces will be unified only

through the efforts of national-democratic mass organizations found at the core of the anti-Arroyo protest movement. It is they who have been the most militant and steadfast in opposing the corrupt, antipeople and puppet Arroyo regime. It is they who possess widespread influence and the capability to unite the various sectors, groups and parties to form a broad anti-Arroyo alliance.

There is deep basis for
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people to unite in a broad anti-Arroyo front and launch a powerful surge of protests that will oust the regime.

This January, the Arroyo regime imposed a new series of burdens that further incense the people:

Through the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the regime ordered the dismissal of 35 leaders of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (CATLU) in accordance with the Cojuangco family's desire to crush the union and retaliate against the strikers. The regime's neutral stance was proven to be a pretense when it used the full might of anti-labor laws to declare the strike illegal. It has likewise discarded the workers' firm demand for a P100 increase in the daily wage and instead ordered an insulting P12 wage increase.

This will not only further fire up the CAT workers to continue their strike, but will elicit broader sympathy and support for their struggle.

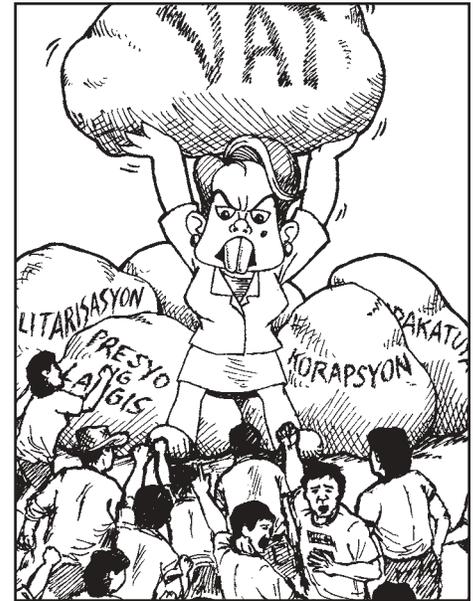
The Arroyo regime is going all out in pushing for a 20% value added tax (VAT) on top of other antipeople tax measures in accordance with the dictates of the

International Monetary Fund and other foreign creditors. The move will only further raise the prices of goods and services. Meanwhile, the government continues to prioritize military expenditures and the servicing of its onerous debts—moves that will surely lead to the further deterioration of public services.

The Arroyo regime is likewise blocking the passage of a bill calling for a P125 increase in the daily wage. It is plain for all to see that the Arroyo government upholds the interests of big foreign capitalists to the detriment of the Filipino people.

The Arroyo regime has further clamped down on Moro communities in Metro Manila and other areas in a frenzied move to push its alleged campaign against terrorists. It unleashed terror and trampled on the political rights of the Moro people when it arrested without warrant 17 residents of Moro communities in Manila and brought false charges on them regarding an alleged plan to bomb the Quiapo fiesta procession last January 9.

The Arroyo government wants to create a rift between the



Filipino and Moro peoples by intentionally inciting religious, cultural and political discrimination against the Moros. But Arroyo is powerless to prevent the growing unity of the Filipino and Moro peoples who both see the need to confront a common enemy—the oppressive Arroyo government.

These successive antipeople measures merely add to the Arroyo regime's growing list of crimes against the Filipino people. The prices of oil and other basic commodities are relentlessly on the rise; bureaucratic corruption has worsened, from the military top brass all the way to the Arroyo clan; expenditures for social services suffer continuing cuts and social services have been left to rot; wages and salaries are pegged at extremely low levels; genuine land reform is denied the peasantry; militarism has intensified; and the ferocity of human rights violations is unparalleled.

Conditions are ripe indeed to provide direction to the people's overwhelming anger. It is the national-democratic forces' responsibility to lead the Filipino people's struggle and unify the broadest possible forces to oust the despised Arroyo regime. **AB**



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Arroyo's barefaced lies

Already a liar and a toady, Arroyo has likewise done an Imelda Marcos. She has strained to prettify the Philippine economy's pathetic situation through repeated declarations these past few days that the people are not at all poor. One wonders what other insults Gloria Arroyo will be throwing at the Filipino people who are hungrier and more wretched than ever.

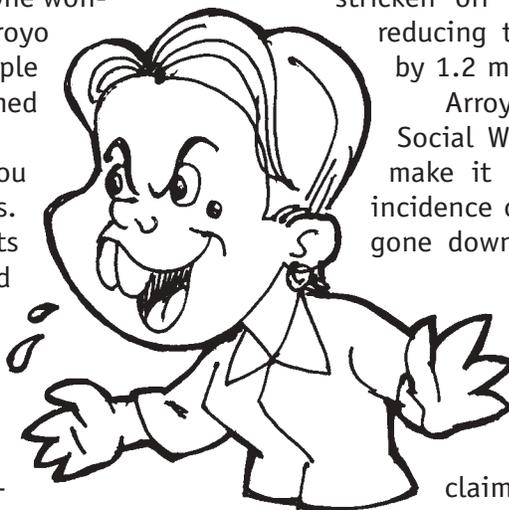
"Will you buy a cellcard before you buy rice?" Arroyo rhetorically asks. Tauntingly, she cites news reports stating that beer, gin and pre-paid cellular phone card consumption grew in the Philippines in 2004. The reports were based on growing sales of San Miguel, Smart and Globe and a separate survey conducted by AC Nielsen about consumption patterns in the country. What a shame for someone who prides herself in being an "economist" to misrepresent a list of the most marketable products in a particular period as an index of the real conditions of the majority of the people.

"It's not that bad after all," was what Arroyo said about widespread unemployment in the

Philippines after "economists" like her changed the basic definition of joblessness. Through statistical sleight of hand, those not looking for work (which includes millions of stay-at-home women) were stricken off the list of the unemployed, reducing the number of jobless people by 1.2 million in an instant!

Arroyo moreover commissioned the Social Weather Station this month to make it appear in a survey that the incidence of hunger among Filipinos has gone down. To the millions of families who try to get by with a pack of instant noodles every mealtime, it remains a mystery how in the world they came to that conclusion.

Arroyo has the nerve to claim that the Filipino people are "extravagant" and that "they are not poor after all" even as prices of food, services and petroleum products have gone on an upward spiral under her regime—and workers and peasants have been forced to get by with crumbs from the table of potbellied bureaucrat thieves and exploiters.



NPA punishes Col. Sebastian, inveterate fascist and war criminal

The NPA Ulpiano Anareta Jr. Command meted the death penalty on war criminal Ret. Col. Eduardo Sebastian, 61, on January 12 in Barangay Mayao, Lucena City.

Sebastian was punished because of his grave crimes and human rights violations against the people. He was among the Marcos dictatorship's most notorious henchmen. As AFP Southern Luzon Military Intelligence Group (MIG) chief, he was principally responsible for the mass arrest, torture, summary killing and abduction of activists under martial law from the 1970s to the 1980s.

Sebastian was personally responsible for the arrest, torture and

gang rape of Adora Faye de Vera from 1976 to 1977. He kept de Vera as a sex slave for several months before her release in 1977.

Sebastian was also involved in the abduction and forced disappearance of Rizalina Ilagan, Cristina Catalla and Erwin de la Torre in July-August 1977. He was likewise responsible for the disappearance of Modesto "Bong" Sison, Leticia Pascual Ladlad, Jessica Sales and Reynaldo Cruz.

According to Communist Party

of the Philippines spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, Sebastian's punishment forms part of the revolutionary movement's continuing effort to obtain justice for the victims of the Marcos fascist dictatorship.

Sebastian was an officer of the defunct Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police assigned to the Southern Luzon Command intelligence unit under Gen. Alejandro Galido. He became PNP provincial director of Oriental Mindoro from 1995-1996, and of Quezon from 1996-1997 before he retired.

Revolutionary advance in Quezon

There is no stopping the growth of mass support for the surging people's democratic revolution in Southern Tagalog and in Quezon province in particular. Thus said the secretary of the Communist Party provincial committee in Quezon in an interview with *AB* on December 28, 2004.

The organized masses, whose number grew by over 10% and basic mass organizations, which registered an increase of over 8%, conduct spirited education sessions on various social issues. The CPP continues to set up mass organizations on a wider scale and prepare certain requisites for the establishment of organs of political power. Agrarian revolution is advancing. *Resikada* (the fraudulent practice of subtracting a certain percentage from the weight of copra, purportedly to allow for moisture loss during storage) has been reduced and in some areas completely eliminated. Nevertheless, the people remain vigilant in the face of maneuvers by merchants to restore *resikada* through various means like paying very low prices for copra.

In other areas, the people waged successful struggles to attain higher wages for farm workers, raise the farmgate prices of agricultural products, institute changes in the sharecropping system, defend the right to occupy idle lands and set up settlements and oppose landgrabbing and the use of their communities as landfills.

The masses utilized various forms of legal and illegal struggle, such as people's encampments, dialogues, rallies, negotiations and other protest actions. The revolutionary forces likewise established links with, and organized, elements from the middle forces and the ranks of professionals, individ-

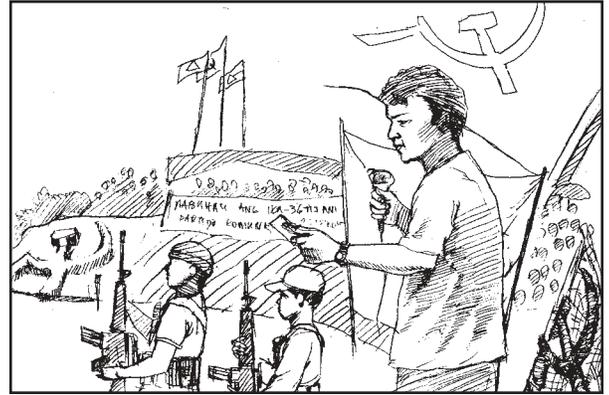
ual politicians and other higher strata of society.

They firmly faced head-on relentless enemy operations aimed at obliterating the mass base. Sparrow operations, sniping and raids against fascist troops were launched. The NPA in the Northern and Central Quezon guerrilla fronts launched 18 tactical offensives, killing 18 enemy troops and wounding 10.

There are vigorous efforts to recruit new NPA fighters and develop their capability to shoulder ever-growing responsibilities in advancing armed struggle. The NPA is also engaged in a continuing effort to develop good political relations between officers and fighters, have a firm grasp of the fighters' conditions and respond to their needs, and provide them politico-military training.

Party membership in the province is expanding, growing in 2004 by over 8% from its 2003 figure. The number of newly established Party branches in the localities grew by 7%. These branches are now spread over approximately 200 barrios, communities, factories, haciendas and schools, serve as the core and provide leadership in mass struggles in the countryside and cities.

Comrades in Quezon develop their skills and capabilities continuously and in an all-sided way in the face of intensifying militarization and enemy violence. They know fully well the need to be ready always for any violent



attempt by enemy soldiers and the state to crush the revolutionary movement.

The Party in the region foresees a shift in the enemy's priority operations from Mindoro and Laguna towards Quezon and the further intensification of the war. Thus, the more urgent need to deepen and broaden the mass base and intensify armed struggle. In particular, the revolutionary forces must invigorate and sustain the advance of agrarian revolution as the key to strengthening and consolidating the mass base in the countryside. They also aim to raise the current level of basic mass organizations and to continue to establish and consolidate mass organizations and organs of political power.

Launching tactical offensives and achieving victory both politically and militarily have become an even more critical task. The masses urgently demand that the NPA deal major blows on the enemy. To meet this demand, the NPA must struggle against traces of conservatism in military work. It must deploy units and set up, fill and strengthen its machinery in many other areas. There are a big number of new Red fighters that must immediately be given politico-military training to raise their knowledge of military tactics and techniques.

In carrying out these tasks, the Party provincial committee foresees the overall advance of revolutionary work in 2005. **AB**

A Red celebration

In December 2004, in a clearing in the Sierra Madre mountains, over 1,200 members of the Party and the people's army, members of mass organizations in the countryside, workers, students, fisherfolk and national minorities, among others gathered to celebrate the 36th anniversary of the Party's reestablishment. All around the site, flags of the Party, the NDFP and the NPA fluttered at the end of long bamboo poles. On one side, the hammer and sickle was etched on the earth with small CPP flags planted around it, each symbolizing a martyr who offered his life for the revolution. On the other side hovered a sculpture of the hammer and sickle made out of vines and *anahaw* (a kind of palm) leaves. It was tied to three tree branches ten feet above the ground.

"Consolidate the revolutionary mass base with all our might! Ever boldly intensify the people's armed resistance! Persevere in the all-sided advance of the revolution!" was the Quezon Party provincial committee's call during the celebration. Despite a strong downpour, the participants remained in high spirits, honoring the Party as the leading force of the Philippine revolution. The people milled around the area designated as the stage while Red fighters saluted the CPP flag. Using large loudspeakers, their firm and militant voices resonated on that special day. The celebration featured creative cultural performances, interpretative songs, dances, mimes, plays, poetry and murals that showed life and struggle in the revolution. Everyone was delighted with the presentations that assailed and exposed the rottenness of the state and the ruling class.

Various sectors expressed solidarity with the Party in its role of expanding and deepening support for the revolutionary movement from the broadest ranks of the oppressed and exploited masses. Comrades discussed the national situation, explaining the gravity of the crisis and ruling class exploitation in the current period.

Martyrs and heroes who had offered their lives for the people were memorialized and their sacrifices and contributions to the revolution honored. The CPP provincial committee imparted important lessons and victories attained in Quezon in 2004.

AB



The plight of peasants and farm workers in the cane fields of Batangas

Sugar is one of Batangas' main agricultural products. It is produced in 26 out of the province's 32 towns and cities. In 2000, the biggest cane fields could be found in the towns of Cuy, Calaca, Nasugbu, Balayan and Lemery.

In Batangas can also be found the Central Azucarera de Don Pedro or CADP and the Batangas Sugar Central Inc. (BSCI), two of the country's largest. Sugar centrals engage both in sugar cane milling and sugar manufacturing. The CADP comes third after Victorias Milling Corporation in Negros Occidental and BUSCO in Bukidnon in terms of overall sugar production in the country. CADP and BSCI's combined output is equivalent to 53% of Luzon's entire sugar production.

Like other major cane fields in the Philippines, the cane fields of Batangas are controlled by only a handful of families. Based on the reactionary government's own records, only 16 families and corporations own over 26,000 hectares of cane fields in the province. Estimates place the number of farm workers at over 63,000. Regular farm workers are found in large sugar cane plantations and receive regular monthly wages. Seasonal farm workers are found in haciendas, mortgaged lands and wherever they are needed.

Small planters account for a considerably more limited area. A little over 10,000 hectares are owned by over 9,000 small cane planters (with each owning an average of only one to one-and-a-half hectares). The

tenancy and the crop-sharing systems are more widespread, covering over 18,000 hectares. Tenants number over 15,000. In tenanted lands, planting products other than sugar cane is strictly prohibited.

Unjust system of sharing, high production costs. Peasants suffer intensified feudal and semi-feudal exploitation as the country's economy, and the sugar industry in particular, suffer through a worsening crisis.

The usual system of sharing is 50-50, covering the costs of certain aspects of production and proceeds from the sale of tons of sugar cane. Cost of labor, which is shouldered by the peasants, is not included in the computations.

Tenants are always on the losing end under the 50-50 system. They shoulder all the costs of soil cultivation and preparation while landlords contribute nothing even in the expenses for tilling and weeding and for tending the crop. Landlords and tenants usually share expenses only for fertilizer and harvesting.

Land hunger and unjust sharing are exacerbated by high production costs, such as for fertilizer. The absence of government subsidies are a big factor in rising production costs. For one, prices of fertilizer doubled upon the withdrawal of government subsidies for this particular input.

Over 58% of total earnings per hectare goes to production expenses. The landlord's share is then deducted from the remainder.

The peasants' production costs shot up even more due to successive increases in the prices of fertilizer and pesticides consequent to the liberalization of agriculture in the country.

High interest rates and land reconcentration. In dire straits, tenants are forced to borrow money from landlords, usurers, merchants

and banks despite the high interest. They are thus forced to mortgage or have liens (*aryendo*) placed on their lands.

There are two kinds of *aryendo*. In the first category, the usurer administers the cane fields within an agreed period. For example, in exchange for a P20,000 loan, a peasant entrusts his cane field and all its earnings to a usurer for three milling seasons. In the second category, the mortgaged land remains with the usurer until the peasant is able to pay him the full value of the loan.

This system is prevalent in cane fields covered by the reactionary state's sham Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) in Nasugbu, Batangas, which is part of the Roxas family's extensive landholdings.

The big landlords have effectively used usury to recover the parcels of land distributed to farm workers and tenants under the sham CARL.

One case involves farm workers in the Roxas family-owned Hacienda Banilad who were given lands under the CARL. Because of the peasants' unpaid debts, 70% of the distributed lands have reverted to the Roxas family's control. More than half of these lands were reacquired by the Roxases due to CLOAs ceded by the tenants as payment for loans while the others are under the *aryendo* system.

Low wages and other forms of exploitation and bondage suffered by farm workers in the cane fields. Farm workers in the cane fields receive extremely low wages. Regular farm workers in the haciendas do not receive any benefits whatsoever. This, despite the P98 regularly deducted from their daily wage supposedly for benefits and bonuses.

Caretakers of lands under lien are paid P100 per day. The wage

for plowing is P250-260 per day and for planting cane cuttings is P0.30 per cutting or P300 per thousand planted.

For those under the *kapatas* or *kabo* system (where teams of farm workers are hired through an individual labor contractor who negotiates directly with the landlords), teams numbering 10 or more charge landlords P130-140 per ton. The *kapatas*, however, passes only P120-135 per ton to his team, thereby earning P5.00 to P10.00 per ton.

The more big-time *kapatas* pay migrant workers from other provinces only P60-100 per ton, but charge the landlords P140 per ton. In such situations, the *kapatas* earns up to P60-80 per ton.

Aside from receiving very low wages, farm workers usually get their pay two weeks late. In some instances, it takes several months before accounts are settled and the actual net value of the migrant workers' earnings is determined.

In this case, migrants borrow money from their team leader or *kapatas* to meet their daily needs. Local or migrant farm workers under the *kapatas* system are usually cheated in the accounting. At times, the computations are manipulated to show that they had borrowed more than the value of their wages.

Women and child workers suffer even worse exploitation. Women, who usually plant cane cuttings, get only P120 per thousand planted (men are paid P300 for the same work). For weeding or cutting cane, they are usually paid P120-150 per day without meals or P100 with meals. Children in their Fifth or Sixth Grade (10 to 12 years old) receive P200 for every *lawo* or parcel of land cleared on a package deal basis. They get P120 if paid on a daily basis, with the amount divided among several children. **AB**

The US Armed Forces

Monsters in uniform

In a reprise of US troops' brutal treatment of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the US has set up Camp Xray in its military base in Guantanamo, Cuba as an international prison where more than 600 suspected "terrorists" from 40 countries have been detained without charges for over two years.

Among the tasks of American soldiers assigned to these detention facilities is to torture prisoners to extract valuable information. Their superiors, who have given them the go-signal to "do whatever is necessary," feign ignorance regarding the atrocities to which the prisoners are subjected. The prisoners are repeatedly hit, kicked, slapped, forcibly injected with drugs, deprived of sleep, have guns brandished at them, and hooded. They are blasted with loud music, made to squat for long periods, and are locked up naked in their cells.

Worse, the soldiers have had no qualms about baring their brutality, publishing pictures of their acts on the internet to brag to their friends and family.

There were pictures of a newly captured Iraqi being kicked by an American soldier and being urinated upon by another. In another group, the Iraqi prisoners were hooded, stripped naked and piled one on top of the other in pyramid-like formation. Some pictures showed a number of US Navy SEALs sitting on top of Iraqi prisoners who were stripped naked and masked. Other scenes showed soldiers hitting an Iraqi's bloodied head with a rifle butt and pressing their boots on another captive's chest. Video footage exposed sexual

abuse on entire groups and a female prisoner being ordered to expose her breasts.

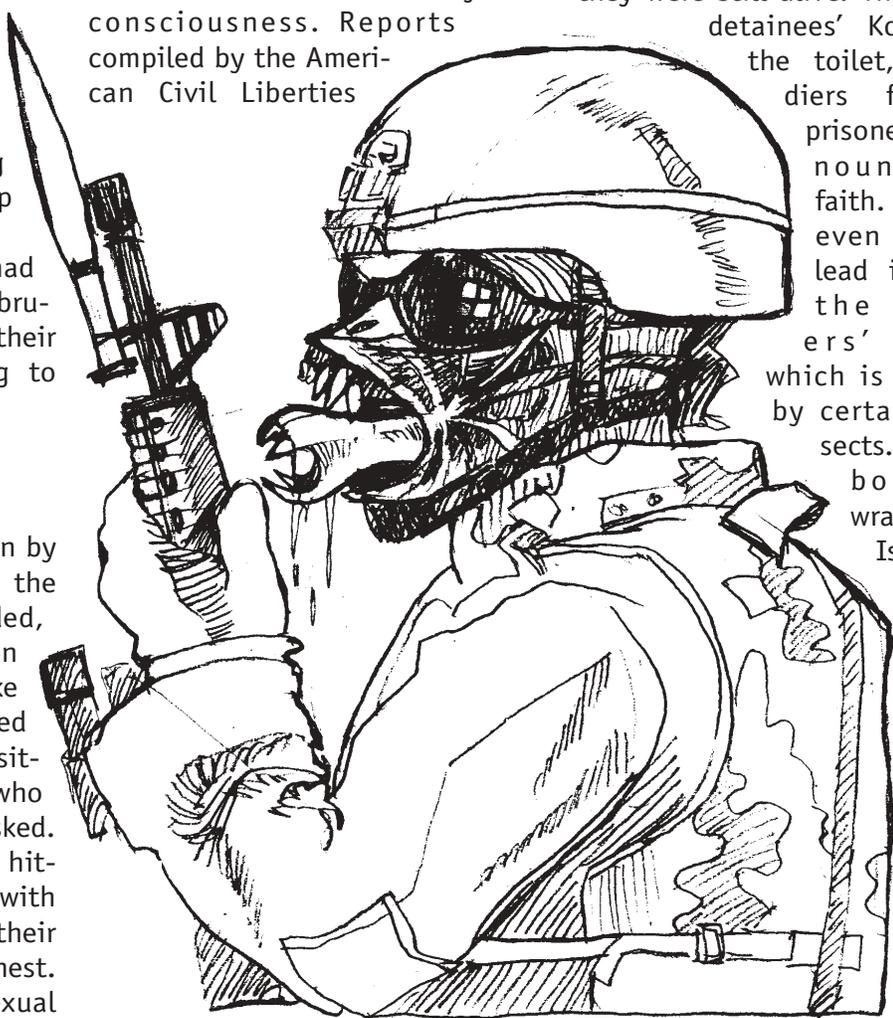
Particularly gruesome details have come from the sworn testimonies of other soldiers. Inserting lighted cigarettes into the prisoners' ears is a common occurrence. The prisoners are tied to posts, shot with rubber bullets and left under the hot sun until they lose consciousness. Reports compiled by the American Civil Liberties

Union (ACLU) said that prisoners were chained hand and foot and made to stay in a fetal position from 18 to 24 hours. In some instances, they were deliberately irritated with loud music and subjected to blinding white light. An agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) witnessed the strangulation, whipping and incarceration of prisoners in cold cells. A US Marine electrocuted a prisoner with the cord of an electric transformer.

The Islamic faith is desecrated to further shame the prisoners and make them suffer. Witnesses have testified that boisterously laughing and whistling soldiers forced Muslim prisoners to eat pork, drink liquor and thank Jesus Christ that they were still alive. Throwing the

detainees' Korans into the toilet, the soldiers force the prisoners to renounce their faith. A general even took the lead in shaving the prisoners' beards, which is forbidden by certain Muslim sects. Prisoners' bodies are wrapped with Israeli flags which symbolize the Jews.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has also confirmed





the US military's deliberate use of psychological and physical torture on prisoners in various places. Under severe torture, prisoners are usually forced to admit to the charges against them (usually involving supposed involvement in al Qaeda) even if they are innocent. Many prisoners subjected to such abuse have died.

In an attempt to deny the systematic maltreatment of civilians and prisoners, the Bush government has blamed the crimes on a small group of soldiers. The names of generals and other officers involved in the cases have already been stricken off the reports. Camp Xray commander Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, for instance, has not been punished and has instead been quietly reassigned.

Even before these cases of abuse had been disclosed, Bush had established an illegal group of special operatives under a "special access programme." Not bound by international law, the clandestine group is tasked with capturing or assassinating identified al Qaeda members anywhere in the world. The "special access programme" also calls for the establishment of secret interrogation centers where the cruel treatment of prisoners is permitted.



Fascist contractors

Aside from the US Armed Forces, US imperialism also extensively employs some 20,000 military contractors in its "counter-terrorist" operations in Iraq. Usually former generals and soldiers hired by the US government, they are paid up to \$200,000 to perform functions formally prohibited within the military, such as the torture and killing of captives.

One such contractor, former Special Forces operative Jonathan Keith Idema, avers that everything he did was coordinated with the CIA and supported by the US military's top brass. On July 5, 2004, Afghani police entered a private prison that he ran and found three men hanging from the ceiling. Five others were badly beaten and bound inside a small and dark room.

David A. Passaro, also a former Special Forces operative was ordered by the US government to extract information from Abdul Wali, an accused terrorist, in Afghanistan. When Wali insisted that he knew nothing, Passaro beat him to death with a metal flashlight.

In recent years, contractors have been involved in various cases of brutality, ranging from racist abuses in Croatia to sex trafficking in Bosnia. Although Idema and Passaro are now facing criminal charges, nothing stops the imperialist government from contracting thousands of others to replace them. AB

One of the US' latest means of forcing the Iraqi people to their knees was the assault and destruction of Fallujah, an Iraqi fighters' bastion. The so-called second "shock and awe" attack has claimed the lives of over 6,000 people, wounded thousands and forced over 250,000 people to flee the bloody imperialist assault. The US Armed Forces ransacked homes and rounded up all the menfolk. Markets, hospitals, mosques, streets and other information and communication infrastructure were leveled. Sources of water and electricity were the principal targets. The US tried to impose a media blackout to conceal its reprehensible operation in Fallujah from the world.

The US practically used its entire arsenal, including F-16s, C-130s, Abrams tanks and Apache helicopters. Soldiers shot at ambulances and American snipers target-

ed even children. The Pentagon admitted to the use of napalm (an incendiary chemical) against entire communities.

The soldiers were calm and collected as they snuffed out the people's lives, reported a journalist who witnessed these events. In one incident, soldiers did not even batt an eyelash while firing at a wounded victim who was already writhing in pain on the ground.

US imperialism has obliterated tens of thousands of people in its greed-driven and desperate war. Not a few US soldiers have grown demoralized, lost their minds or sought means of escaping from the brutal imperialist mission to invade, harass and kill. More and more soldiers have opted to leave the military.

Meanwhile, the imperialist armed forces face the Iraqi people's just, ever-expanding and ever-intensifying anger and struggle. AB

Significant tactical offensives in Mindanao

ARMED revolution continues to gain strength in Mindanao in the face of the country's worsening crisis.

The NPA launched around 60 tactical offensives last year, seizing over 150 high-powered firearms. In Southern Mindanao, up to 57 enemy troops were killed and 54 were wounded. In Northeastern Mindanao, 41 enemy soldiers were killed and one wounded.

On the other hand, the NPA lost a number of cadres and comrades during fierce enemy attacks. They included two regional commanders and some company- and platoon-level military and political officers. The entire revolutionary movement honors their supreme sacrifice.

Following are some of the victories in the armed struggle:

January. Raid on the Highway Patrol in Antongalon, Butuan City.

February. Seizure of initiative from attacking enemy troops in Tampacan, South Cotabato.

March. Encounter with the 27th IB in Danlag, Tampacan, South Cotabato. Raid on the

Marsmann Detachment, Maco, Compostela Valley. Ambush in Mahanog, Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte; and on the 25th IB in Kiblawan, Magsaysay, Davao del Sur.

April. Raid on a detachment in Nabunturan, Compostela Valley. Disarming of enemy soldiers in Anislagan, Tagbina, Surigao del Sur; Tambulig, Zamboanga del Sur; and Loreto, Agusan del Sur. Ambush on a 25th IB convoy in Malapatan, Sarangani Province.

May. Ambush in Leon Postigo, Zamboanga del Norte and in Concepcion, Misamis Occidental.

June. Raid on a PNP station in Bayugan, Agusan del Sur and on the municipal hall of New Corella, Davao del Norte.

July. Disarming of a Philippine Navy unit in Bulawanon, Rosario, Agusan del Sur.

August. Ambush in Guinabsan, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte.

September. Rescue of Ka Joven, a political prisoner, in Nabunturan, Compostela Valley.

December. Ambush in Salaysayan, Nasipit, Agusan del Norte.

BAYAN condemns relentless killings in Davao City

THE Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) in Southern Mindanao strongly condemned relentless summary killings in Davao City that have claimed 22 victims in 15 days.

The most recent victims were Anakbayan members Alberto Canedo and Jun Rey Reducto, who were killed by bicycle-riding vigilantes.

The two youths did not have criminal records in their community.

BAYAN said the murders are an attempt to condition the people's minds to accept the extrajudicial killing of drug pushers and petty criminals. BAYAN also expressed concern that with the killing of Canedo and Reducto, summary exe-

cutions would become the means of eliminating leaders and members of progressive organizations.

BAYAN also assailed the Philippine National Police (PNP), Task Force Davao (TFD) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for their failure to apprehend the perpetrators.

Abbas sworn in

NEWLY elected Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud "Abu Mazen" Abbas was sworn in on January 15 in the West Bank. The ceremony was held immediately after Abbas won an election on January 9 held to choose a successor to the late Yasser Arafat.

Abbas, who also replaced Arafat as chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), garnered

62% of the vote.

One day before Abbas' inauguration, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon cut off links with Abbas and the Palestinian Authority supposedly due to attacks by Palestinian groups. This, despite Abbas' call for continued talks between the two countries to resolve their conflicts.

US wraps up WMD search in Iraq

WRAPPING up its nearly two-year search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, the US' Iraq Survey Group (ISG) led by Charles A. Duelfer has returned home. The ISG, composed of 1,700 personnel, was commissioned by the US in May 2003 to search for WMD in Iraq.

The end of the search for WMD proves the flimsy basis of the US' war on, and occupation of, Iraq. It proves that supposed US intelligence data that Saddam Hussein harbored nuclear, chemical and bio-

logical weapons were a mere pretext to plunder Iraq's oil.

Despite the failure to find any WMD in Iraq, Bush stubbornly insists on the correctness of the US invasion.

It was October last year when Duelfer issued a report stating that Iraq had no WMD when the US bombed the country in March 2003. In January 2004, former ISG head David Kay resigned, declaring that there were no WMD in Iraq.

Most Americans opposed to war of aggression on Iraq

MAJORITY of Americans are now opposed to the US war of aggression on Iraq, according to two separate surveys published on January 18. The results contradict President George W. Bush's view that his reelection demonstrated the American people's support for the war.

A *Washington Post*/ABC News survey showed that 55% of Americans believe it was wrong to have launched the war against Iraq as opposed to 44% who approved of it. Fifty-five percent of Americans do not believe that the Iraqi government will stabi-

lize after an election is held. A *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup survey had similar results, with 52% of Americans not in favor of sending occupation troops to Iraq.

Meanwhile, criticisms mounted on Bush's lavish inaugural on January 20. Up to \$60 million was spent on nine inaugural balls. Of this, \$20 million was spent to secure the White House. Some 6,000 uniformed and plainclothes police forces and 2,500 soldiers were deployed in Washington, DC to keep a huge anti-Bush demonstration at bay.