



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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VOL II NO 11

31 MAY 2020

EDITORIAL Method in Madness

At the start of Rodrigo Duterte's term in the presidency, he startled not only the local but also the international community by demanding "Go to hell, Obama" in a formal speech in Beijing.

Surprise turned to shock as Duterte went on to insult the Roman Catholic Pope, the entire Roman Catholic Church and even the Christian God, rant at the United Nations, International Criminal Court and harangue its officials, threaten the revolutionary forces and the masses, as in ordering his armed minions into shooting women guerillas of the New People's Army in the vagina and, during the current Covid-19 pandemic, kill quarantine violators.

People did not find it hilarious when he, in a public speech in front of cameras, vaingloriously boasted about the size of his manhood.

It seems crazy. But like Hamlet, there is method in his madness. But the similarity ends there. Duterte's method is the systematic gross violation of human rights to instill fear in the populace in his grab for total power.

On top of the extrajudicial killings of more than 27,000 drug suspects and increasing poverty due to government corruption and exacerbation of the chronic underdevelopment crisis, the people have to suffer widespread unemployment, hunger and deaths as the Duterte regime resorts to the severe militarist lockdown approach instead of the medical approach amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Combat-ready soldiers with assault weapons man the checkpoints. Killings of activist leaders increase by the week.

But enough is enough.

Trade unions, peasant associations, human rights groups, students and academics, urban poor and the general public are rising up in myriad forms of opposition. As the Communist Party of the Philippines asserts in its 28 May statement, "If Duterte refuses to heed the people's clamor, it is incumbent upon the Filipino people to unite and act collectively to cause the ouster of the tyrant Duterte." **UP**



Duterte stockpiles on military arsenal amid Covid-19 crisis

The government of President Rodrigo Duterte proceeded with the procurement this month of various military arsenal from the US and Israel totaling up to PhP79 billion (US\$1.56 billion), amid the unabated health and economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

His government issued a notice on 12 May to proceed with the procurement of PhP2.4 billion worth of artillery systems from

Israel company Elbit Systems. The contract covers two ATMOS 2000 155mm self-propelled gun system, with six mobile firing units and associated support systems.

Earlier, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) of the US Department of State approved the request of the Duterte government to buy six AH-64E Apache Attack Helicopters, 200 AGM-114 Hellfire II missiles and other weapons totaling to PhP75 billion.

These expenditures of public funds come amidst the ever worsening Covid-19 crisis in the country that the Duterte government has been unable to effectively solve. The weapons procurement activities is being fueled by the 'Modernization Program' of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, aimed at fulfilling Duterte's announced ambition to "decimate" the armed revolutionary movement before the end of his term in June 2022.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) however pointed out that using these weapons for conducting aerial bombardment and strafing is ineffective against the highly mobile guerrilla units of the New People's Army. It noted that in the past, the use of heavy artillery and helicopter gunships resulted instead in the indiscriminate destruction of communities and the environment, endangered community residents' lives and livelihood, and caused untold psychological trauma especially on children.

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The CPP reminded Duterte that his government is signatory to international treaties explicitly prohibiting the indiscriminate use of weapons or methods of combat “that are apt to cause unnecessary suffering or superfluous injury or inflict excessive incidental harm on civilians or civilian objects.”

The Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), signed in 1998 by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) also prohibits “indiscriminate aerial bombardment, strafing, artillery fire, mortar fire, arson, bulldozing and other similar forms of destroying lives and properties” of civilians.

Filipino patriots and peace advocates within and outside the country oppose the arms sales. US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar (Democratic – Minnesota) wrote the US Department of Defense to pause the deal until Congress can provide necessary oversight. Her call has been echoed by Americans, including Filipino-Americans, campaigning against the deal. **UP**



*Children killed by mortar shelling.
Photo: Rasul Akmad | mindanews.com*

Eid'l Fitr celebration marred by 81mm mortar fire

While celebrating the end of Ramadan Eid'l Fitr in Maguindanao province in southern Philippines on 24 May, the family and relatives of Boy Tambak were hit by an 81mm mortar shell, immediately killing 7 year-old Sadim Tambak, while 10 year-old Aslamia Tambak died in the hospital.

The children's mother Moraisa was critically wounded and rushed with 8 other wounded to the Cotabato Regional Medical Center. Eleven persons were also rushed to the Maguindanao provincial hospital in Datu Hoffer town.

Their house is in Kitango village, Datu Saudi Ampatuan town in Maguindanao province. Boy Tambak is a radio operator and cameraman of the town hall in Datu Saudi Ampatuan. He could hardly hold his tears as he demanded justice for his children, his wife and the rest of the wounded.

According to town administrator Musib Tan, the military explained to him that it would be impossible for them to commit a mistake in coordinates, claiming they aimed the mortars on enemy position. “We will have to check this with the brigade because there are no operations today,” said Major General Diosdado Carreon, commander of the 6th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

A report from the area stated that there were other mortar attacks, resulting in the displacement of 1,282 families consisting of more than 7,600 individuals.

To assuage the many Muslim families in Mindanao, General Carlito Galvez, former AFP Chief of Staff and currently Head of Duterte's Peace Panel and Task Force for Covid-19, has promised an ‘impartial investigation’.

Duterte's military officials have started to blame the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) for allegedly carrying out attacks against the AFP. It is however well known that the AFP has the 81mm mortars in their arsenal. **UP**

100% foreign ownership in public services condemned

The Duterte government's House of Representatives approved on 9 March House Bill 78, allowing 100% foreign ownership in power generation, transportation, communications and other public services.

Labor groups condemned the bill saying that foreign ownership of public services would only intensify the exploitation of Filipino workers. Consequences of the implementation would result in cheaper wages, labor flexibilization schemes, job security issues, among other concerns.

House of Representatives member Sarah Elago (Kabataan Party List) opposed the bill, deploring the laxness of nationality restrictions. She said this would lead to excessive foreign control over critical telecommunications, power generation and transport utilities”.

The 1987 Constitution of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines prohibits 100% foreign ownership of public utilities. It stipulates that ownership, control, operation and management of public utilities are the domain of citizens or corporations with at least 60% ownership by Filipinos. Foreign investors are only allowed 40% ownership.

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*Rep. Sarah Elago opposed the bill granting 100% foreign ownership of public services.
Photo:facebook.com*

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The proposed law avoids the constitutional prohibition by making a distinction between ‘public utility’ and ‘public service’. Firms classified as public services are exempt from the nationality or citizenship requirements of the Constitution.

Prof. Jose Maria Sison, Founding Chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines and Chief Political Consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines said, “The overall scheme of Duterte is to clinch the support of foreign monopoly investors with his brutal anti-communist campaign and to please them with the complete de-nationalization of the Philippine economy.”

Prof. Sison said, “Duterte wants to amend the 1987 Constitution to allow foreign investors 100% ownership of corporations, acquiring and exploiting land and natural resources and all other kinds of business enterprises. The

charter amendment is very simple with the mere insertion of the phrase ‘unless otherwise provided by law’ in the constitutional provisions that assure the Filipinos of the protection of the national patrimony and Filipino control of the economy. In the meantime, the Duterte-controlled Congress is already passing bills that allow 100% foreign ownership of power, transport and communication enterprises and other enterprises previously reserved to Filipinos.”

The proposed law is pending approval at the Philippine Senate before Duterte can sign it into law. **UP**



*NPA unit in a rural village in the Philippines.
Photo: ndfp.org*

Revolutionary villages show the way in relief distribution

Poor peasants from Northern Samar province in central Philippines collectively solved the problem of the Duterte government’s limited financial support for those affected by the Covid-19 crisis. Through their revolutionary mass organizations, they ensured that every family from their villages could receive assistance.

In Ipil-ipil village, only 38 out of 64 households were on the list of beneficiaries who would receive money from the so-called Social Amelioration Program (SAP). As in other villages, local officials of the Manila government imposed a quota system to limit the beneficiaries.

The village peasant organization, however, decided that all families must receive financial aid, whether or not their names are listed. To achieve this, the beneficiaries pooled together the amount they received and divided it for all the families in the village. They were able to pool together Php190,000 (US\$3,750) and provided each family Php2,368 each. They were also able to buy some basic supplies for distribution to village residents.

In another village, 12 families were not included in the SAP list of the local government. Through the guidance and education campaign of the village peasant association, the beneficiaries decided to contribute Php600 per family for distribution to those left out by the Manila government.

In Ipil-ipil, the organization conducted a village-wide meeting to explain to the residents why they need to help their neighbors who were left out of the SAP list. The organization also helped village officials in managing the funds in order to prevent corruption. Members of the local branch of the Communist Party of the Philippines guided the organization in coming up with the decision. A local unit of the New People’s Army also helped in forging the unity of the villagers.

The organization ensured the secrecy of the meeting and aid distribution to prevent the municipal government from interfering. The local government officials, still loyal to the Manila government, prohibit initiatives that are not in line with their ‘distribution protocols’ even if the initiatives benefit the people.

Organizations from other villages are already replicating the aid distribution initiative. Meanwhile, the revolutionary mass organization in Ipil-ipil is already preparing to spearhead other campaigns against Covid-19, including food and herbal medicine production. *[From Ang Bayan / Larab, May 2020]* **UP**