

EDITORIAL

Resist Marcos' complete surrender of Philippine sovereignty and security

The Marcos puppet regime placed the country's foreign policy and security under full foreign control and decision when it entered into a trilateral military and economic alliance last week with the imperialist US and its imperialist partner Japan.

Summoned by his master in Washington DC, Marcos fully shackled the Philippines to the "ironclad commitment" of the US to "defend" the Philippines should it be attacked by any foreign force, in clear reference to China which the alliance jointly condemned for its "aggressive behavior" in the South China Sea.

The US-Japan-Philippines alliance is essentially a military al-

liance that clearly serves the US geopolitical strategy of encircling China and containing its growing economic and military power. It is part of the US plan to station its military forces in the so-called "first-island chain" of islands and countries closest to China.

To firmly bind the Philippines to this alliance, the US and Japan declared plans to invest in the country's existing infrastructure projects

such as the Subic-Batangas railway system, as well as the Mindanao Railway, which were previously contracted to the Chinese government and corporations. The US is also seizing the opportunity to further expand investments by American companies to import minerals, increase exports of liquefied natural gas, and promote the sales of nuclear plants. Similarly, Japan is using the opportunity to increase investment in projects and programs, including in the transport sector, for the benefit of Japan's large corporations.

By formally joining the US-

Japan alliance, Marcos is further closing the door to peaceful means of resolving tensions between the Philippines and China. What should be a non-antagonistic conflict is becoming antagonistic as Marcos paves the way for the expansion of US military forces in the country, which is pushing China to further increase its military presence in the South China Sea and Philippine waters.

The trilateral alliance between the US, Japan and the Philippines was formed just days before the biggest ever Balikatan 2024 war exercises. For more than a month now, some 11,000 American troops and their warships, planes, tanks, jet fighters and other US weapons and equipment have been swarming the country, causing widespread restlessness. This is part of more than 500 training exercises by US military forces combined with AFP personnel.

Overflights and sea patrols in Philippine airspace and waters are being conducted left and right, with the aim of training the US military to use the country as a battlefield. US military forces will concentrate their combat training on the northern part of the Philippines, particularly in the Batanes islands, which are

closest to Taiwan. The US has long called for Taiwan's secession from China in order to provoke its imperialist rival.

The US uses its military bases within the AFP camps under the EDCA, as well as various facilities. The US wants to expand these with its plan to provide \$128 million in the next year. With the proposed five-year \$2.5 billion or ₱67.5 billion military aid to the AFP, the US also plans to increase the deployment of its weapons in the Philippines, and make the counter-revolutionary war more brutal and bloody, so that it can fully utilize the AFP in the name of "external defense".

Goaded by American advisers, the Marcos regime and its coast-guard have been carrying out "supply missions" to the BRP Sierra Madre in the Ayungin Shoal, in direct violation of previous agreements made by the Duterte regime, which had bowed to China's claim to

most of the South China Sea, including Philippine waters. This is coupled with US provocations over Taiwan. These are aimed at pushing China to become more aggressive and to make the mistake of using armed force against the Philippines or Taiwan, to justify US armed intervention under the guise of "defense."



By surrendering Philippine sovereignty, binding its foreign policy to the geopolitical strategy and military operations of the US, and using the country as cannon fodder in the US-China inter-imperialist conflict, the Marcos regime is jeopardizing the country's security and exposing it to the possibility of an outbreak of war. When this happens, the Filipino people will surely face great disasters and suffering.

The Filipino people should unite and fight for the country's sovereignty and security. They must promote genuine love for the country and peace, and oppose US war preparations and provocations, and Philippine involvement in them.

Demand the withdrawal of all foreign military forces from the country's land and seas, the dismantling of military bases and the abrogation of treaties that favor the US and trample on the country's independence. In accordance with the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in foreign affairs, Filipinos must push for the opening of all peaceful avenues to defend the interests of the Philippines in its conflicts with China, call for negotiations and international diplomacy as long as it takes to promote the national interest without resorting to war.

The subservience of the Marcos regime and increasing trampling of Philippine freedom by US imperialism underline the need to further advance the revolutionary struggle for national democracy. Only the achievement of genuine freedom will save the country from any threat of inter-imperialist war, and put it on the path of true peace and prosperity.



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The Ivatans don't want Balikatan

On April 8, the local government of Batanes issued a sober reminder to all visitors to the province to be considerate of their herds while touring the island. They ask them not to startle or stress the animals in the pasture and leave them alone on the roads and parks. Batanes is one of the peaceful and pleasant places in the Philippines that tourists flock to.

But this coming April 25 to May 9, the Ivatans and their herds will experience more than shock and stress. For the second time, the province will host the Balikatan, involving thousands of American troopers. Hundreds of aircraft, ships and cannons will be brought to Batan island to conduct war maneuvers such as Military Free-Fall/Fast Re-Insertion and Extraction, Forward Refueling Point/Island Seizure, HIMARS Insertion and Reconnaissance and Island Seizure. As an appeasement, the US withdrew plans of conducting live-fire exercises on the island, after residents complained about heavy gunfire during last year's Balikatan here. Instead, the US will conduct these maneuvers on Mavulis, the country's northernmost island.

Why Mavulis?

Mavulis Island, part of Itbayat, Batanes, is only 128 kilometers away from Cape Eluanbi, the southernmost part of the Taiwan island. It is closer to

Taiwan than Luzon. This is the farthest part of the Philippines where the US can build military facilities, ports and military equipment warehouses to serve as launching pad for the war it is provoking against China.

Between Mavulis and Taiwan's Orchid Island is the Bashi Channel, an important international passage that the US considers a strategic corridor for its ships coming from the Pacific Ocean going to the South China Sea. It holds 98% of the undersea communications cables connecting South and Southeast Asia to the rest of the world. All electronic, telephone and internet communications flow through these cables, including sensitive diplomatic and military information.

Since 2018, the US has been continuously building military facilities here, in collaboration with the AFP, under the guise of "external defense." A building, a water desalination plant, a helipad

and a lighthouse currently stand on the top of the island's hill. In October 2023, the AFP inaugurated a naval outpost here built into the hillside.

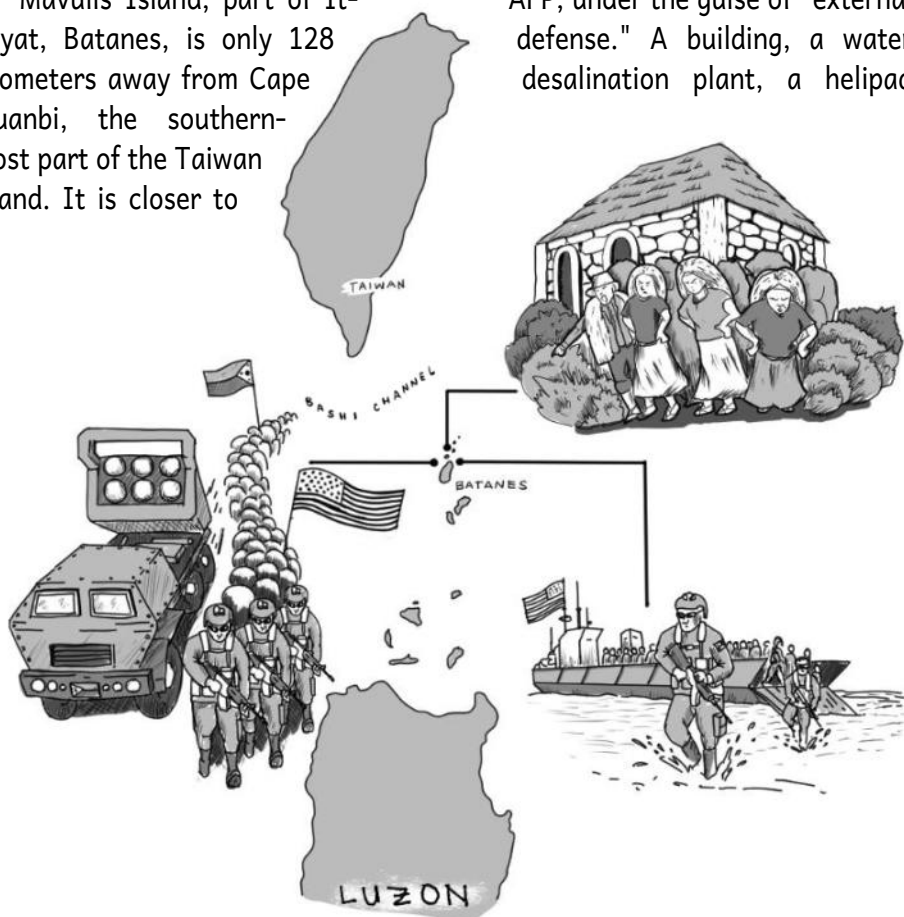
Ivatan distress

The Ivatans are dismayed that American troops will again swarm their islands. The 2023 Balikatan held here caused widespread anxiety, as residents went into a panic-buying frenzy when they learned that thousands of American soldiers would be arriving. The mayor of Basco, the provincial capital, himself said that the island is quiet and peaceful, and should be left alone by the Americans.

This year, they know China has already warned the Philippines to stop participating in the US forces schemes and to stop interfering in the internal affairs of Taiwan and China. But instead of taking heed, Marcos and the AFP dragged the country and the entire nation into the possibility of an armed confrontation between the US and China.

Not satisfied, the US, in cahoots with the Marcos regime, also wants to use the Ivatans as cannon fodder by drafting them as army reservists. Latest reports say that 109 reservists have been trained to face China's bombs or bullets if the war being provoked by the US erupts.

Balikatan has severely disrupted the Ivatans' livelihood. Many of them could not farm nor fish while American troops used their farms, pastures, coasts and seas for military exercises and saber-rattling on land and sea, using their cannons, tanks and warships. This has been the ordeal of Cagayan people when Balikatan was launched in Claveria, Aparri, Calayan Island and Sta. Ana. This comes on top of their suffering from low fish catch and loss of livelihood due to El Niño. AB





American troops are turning the Philippines into a battlefield

THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN troops and their vehicles landed in the country even before Balikatan began. At least 400 military vessels from the US Indo-Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii were offloaded from large ships in Subic Bay in March. On April 1, the US conducted combat maneuvers in Philippine waters with Australian and Japanese warships and small Philippine vessels. In the following days, the US even boasted of unilateral live-fire missile exercises, jet-fighter flights and other military maneuvers within the country's air and seas.

Also on April 1, the five-day military meeting began at Camp Aguinaldo where the AFP shared the Philippines' sensitive and internal security information with the US military in what was called the first "Information Warfare Exercise."

Three major war games opened simultaneously on April 8: Cope Thunder held at Central and Northern Luzon airports; MAREX 2024 in Maguindanao del Norte; and Salaknib 2024 at Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija.

In its early years in the 1990s, the Balikatan were bilateral "military exercises" to achieve for "interoperability" between the US armed forces and the puppet AFP. Since the US "pivot" to Asia, the US has opened it, as well as the sovereign territory of the Philippines, to other foreign troops. In the upcoming Balikatan, 14 other countries (Brunei, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) will take part or observe the US exhibition.

Thus, Balikatan and other US war games also serve as a huge arms expo where it showcases the weapons made by the monopoly American military companies. This year, the operation of the Israeli missile defense system being peddled by the US was made part of the Balikatan.

Cope Thunder exercises strike fear among Cagayanons

ALTHOUGH BALIKATAN 2024 has not yet officially opened, Cope Thunder exercises launched by the US Air Force and Tactical Operations Group (TOG) troops on April 17 have already sown fear and distress among the citizens of Cagayan and Apayao. Residents of Gattaran, Sto Niño, and Lasam in Cagayan said low-flying jet fighters caused mayhem in schools especially in daycares and kindergartens sending children scampering back to their homes. Infants were also awakened, livelihoods were disrupted, and even domestic animals were frightened and distressed.

Residents complained that they were not informed in advance, causing people to run and stumble in extreme fear since the exhibitions were staged right near schools and barangay halls. A mother said her 7-year-old son prevented her from leaving the house fearing she would be hit by a bomb. They also complained about the extremely loud rumble and deafening noise of jet fighters. "My chest felt like it was going to explode when it passed over us," said one.

Residents could not help but think of the possibility of a real war breaking out especially since the AFP has been actively recruiting in the barrios, even among the elderly. "This was just a drill, but what if it's true," worried a resident. Another commented that American soldiers will surely leave many women pregnant because of the presence of military bases in their area.

People in these areas are traumatized since these were also bombed by the 5th ID and TOG2 last year. It will be recalled that the residents of Sto Niño were evacuated in April 2022 in the middle of Holy Week when an airstrike using an OV10-Bronco was conducted to cover up the massacre of three Red fighters in Piat.

Baggao residents also suffered anxiety during Balikatan 2022. "We ran in fear. We thought we were going to be bombed. It seemed our roofs would tear off because the jet fighters flew so low and so close to the houses," said a farmer.

Presence of foreign troops in the Philippines stirs protests

VARIOUS GROUPS PROTESTED before the US embassy on April 11 to condemn the "trilateral summit" between the Philippines, Japan and the US held in Washington D.C. The groups know that this meeting was part of the US plan to expand its presence in the first-island chain under the guise of "security" and "freedom" in the South China Sea.

In the US, protests by Filipino-American groups greeted Marcos and the trilateral summit on April 11 and 12. They denounced the role of the US in funding and military support to the Marcos regime.

On April 9, various organizations marched to the Chinese consulate in Makati City to condemn China's continuous harassment of Filipino fishermen and ships and its seizure of territory in the West Philippine Sea. The groups called on China, as well as the US, to stop militarizing the WPS.

The face of the rectification movement in Masbate

Branches and committees of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA) units and the entire revolutionary movement in Masbate are striving to carry out the rectification movement initiated by the Central Committee in December 2023. Assessments and studies are in full swing since the first quarter of the year.

Study movement

As an initial step, the NPA and the masses held various consolidation and study meetings to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Party and the NPA. They also distributed pamphlets and posted as many as 1,000 streamers in many parts of the province. They took the opportunity to inform the masses and comrades about the call for the rectification movement.

On the anniversary of the Party and the Army, guerrilla fronts reported that eight joint cultural programs and mass meetings were held attended approximately by 300 people. They presented various cultural performances such as songs, dances and plays, that told the history of the revolutionary movement in the province.

Various local Party branches, mass organizations and Army units held studies on the Central Committee's statement on the 55th anniversary of the Party. Several front committees also studied the Party's statement on the 55th anniversary of the NPA. The campaign to renew pledges among Party branches accompanied this activity. Party units and committees are also reviewing the constitution.

Party committees at various levels also launched assessment meetings to include the rectification movement in their programs and action plans. These meetings included the study of important documents



summarizing the Party's experience in the past year and other documents relevant to the experience in the province.

Meanwhile, one front completed a batch of Basic Party Course this quarter.

Identifying errors and rectification

In line with the call of the Central Committee, various Party committees in the province sincerely identified the shortcomings of the movement in leading the revolutionary struggle of the Masbatenyos. Every committee and every Army command candidly assessed the internal weaknesses in various areas of work.

They outlined the initial summing-up of revolutionary work. They also launched the campaign to carry out a comprehensive social investigation and class analysis.

Front units of the people's army are also correcting the conduct of their maneuvers. The aim is to avoid unnecessary and defensive battles. Provincial units have also started expanding into areas they had not reached before. Comrades are slowly making their presence felt again among the masses in places where the people's army had not

been for a long time.

On the island of Ticao, helping the masses in production became part of the Red army's methods. The masses are pleased that comrades help them finish their copra production.

The revolutionary movement in the province now faces the challenge of intensifying the armed struggle to strengthen the Army and the mass movement. The Party committee called on all units of the Army to launch sustained tactical offensives to weaken and frustrate the reign of terror of the armed forces of the US-Marcos regimes.

The committee also specifically emphasized the need to launch anti-feudal struggles and livelihood campaigns as foundation for strengthening the Masbatenyos mass movement.

The revolutionary movement emerged in Masbate in 1983 with the arrival of three comrades armed only with two weak rifles. In the following few decades, the Masbatenyo masses proved that they could truly rely on the people's army and are their ally in reclaiming their land and defending their democratic rights. AB

Peasant struggles amid El Niño advance in Negros

Amid the drought induced by El Niño, the collective action of masses of peasants and residents in several barangays in Negros achieved success for just aid and support from the reactionary government. Hundreds of farmers have stepped forward and engaged in dialogue with local agencies for their demands.



In one barangay, nearly 500 peasants attended an assembly on March 30 to express their grievances and deliver their demands to barangay and town officials. They discussed their actual experiences and hardships caused by the drought. They appointed representatives from each sitio to address the assembly.

Farmers complained of widespread water shortages (for drinking and farming), crop failure leading to debt and extreme poverty, lack of food including rice, and ailments such as coughs, fevers, flu and others due to excessive heat.

In the face of strong peasant advocacy, the local government promised to provide the materials for constructing a centralized irrigation system. The system will service 33 sitios of the barangay and at least 8,000 people. The local government also promised to provide rice, seeds, fertilizers and financial assistance.

People in another village also won a centralized irrigation system after holding a dialogue with the local government. The three big sitios in the village immediately accepted the hose and other urgent aid such as rice, sardines and meager financial aid. This project will benefit 100 households or 500 people in three sitios.

The initial successes achieved by the farmers served as a spark and inspiration to the neighboring barangays in Negros. Farmers, both organized and spontaneous, are now taking action to fight for their rights and needed state support amid the drought caused by El Niño.

The peasant masses of Negros have a rich history in the struggle for land and their well-being. For decades, they fought against the fascism of the big landlords and the reactionary state. They have been successful because of their strong unity and unwavering commitment.

ACCORDING TO the Department of Agriculture on April 19, the damage caused by El Niño to agriculture in 11 regions has reached ₱3.94 billion. The department said 66,065 hectares of farms and 73,713 farmers have been affected. The hardest hit are the islands of Mindoro, Palawan, Negros and Panay. The estimated damage to rice crops (₱2.36 billion) is highest, followed by high-value crops (₱868.84 million) and corn (₱669.44 million). Fisherfolks have also suffered damages amounting to ₱33.83 million.



Successful transport strike. Piston and Manibela launched a transport strike on April 15-16 to demand the withdrawal of the April 30 deadline for mandatory consolidation of franchises and the return of their 5-year individual franchises. About 80% of major routes in Metro Manila were affected and several parts of Cavite and Laguna were paralyzed. On the first day, up to 400 jeepneys participated in the protest and caravan to LTFRB, where they spent the night. The next day, drivers and operators convoyed to the Welcome Ronda at the Quezon City and Manila border.

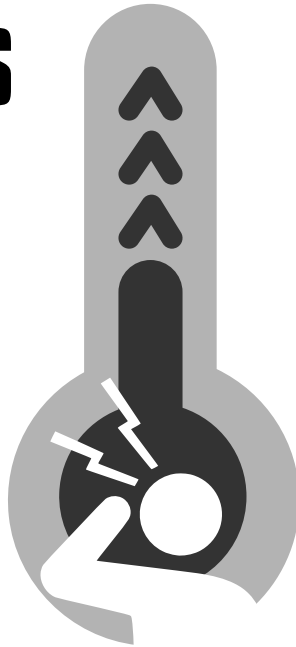
Similar transport strikes were held in Iloilo, Bacolod and Cebu, and protests in Davao. This activity is part of a series of actions planned by the two transport groups until the end of the month.

Call for dismantling of NTF-Elcac, reiterated. Members of the KMP and other peasant groups protested on April 12 before the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency in Quezon City to condemn the NTF-ELCAC's inclusion of the KMP among the 30 organizations tagged as Party and NPA "fronts". They say red-tagging is part of the Marcos regime's intensified harassment against legal and legitimate mass organizations, in line with counterinsurgency operations outlined in US guidelines.

Red Friday protest for wages launched. Workers launched the first Red Friday Protest for higher wages and against the pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist PUVMP on April 12 in Marikina City, and at Monumento, Caloocan. They condemned Ferdinand Marcos Jr who they say constantly prates about cha-cha (charter change) but remains silent on the issue of wages. They stressed that wage increases granted by regional wage boards last year are too little and too late.

46° Celsius

the highest temperature recorded in the Philippines this summer. A temperature of 42°C-46°C is considered "dangerous" because it can cause heat stroke, cramps, swelling, sunstroke and lethargy.



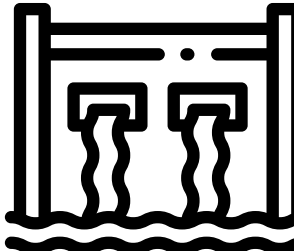
Source: PAGASA

\$222,900


or ₱12.22 million for a Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS) missile to launch the HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) that the AFP wants to buy from the US. Each HIMARS (\$10 million or ₱55 million) loads six missiles. The missiles and vehicles are manufactured by Lockheed Martin.

₱501 the real value of the ₱610 minimum wage in NCR due to the ever-increasing prices of food and commodities.

100 hydropower projects



> approved by the DoE to be built along Cordillera rivers that will constrict them and drown several hundred hectares of forest and agricultural land.

23,614 

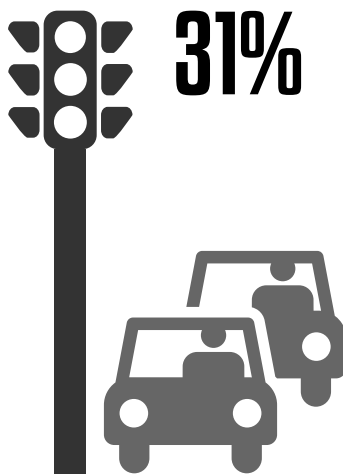
number of barangay health centers, which is half the number of barangays (42,034) nationwide. There is only one barangay health center for every 41,477 Filipinos.

58.7% increase in the sale of regular rice in the market in March 2023-2024.

> Wholesale prices rose by 31.2% during that period. The increase was steepest in Davao City.


Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

31% increase in car sales in 2021-2022, worsening the country's traffic situation.



> In 2023, among 387 cities worldwide, Metro Manila was #1 with the slowest traffic.

1% of the world's total coral suffer from coral bleaching. In extreme heat, corals release these organisms, which serve as source of nutrition and give it color. If prolonged, it can lead to the death of corals.



Source: Coral Reef Watch

2 farmers killed in succession in Masbate

This April, two farmers were murdered in Masbate. They are the 27th and 28th farmers killed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the island under the Marcos regime.

Four CAFGU members abducted Elorde Almario, 43, from his farm in San Carlos, Milagros on April 2. His relatives found him dead later that day. According to his family's report, his body bore gunshot wounds and showed traces of torture.

On April 4, the same CAFGU group abducted Nonong Monteseban, former barangay captain of San Carlos. After being beaten, he was released by the fascists allegedly because of a mistaken identity.

On April 11, the AFP killed Jimmy Pautan in Sitio Tadloy, Barangay Luna, Placer. As in many cases, the AFP falsely claimed Pautan was a Red fighter killed in an encounter.

Meanwhile, elements of the 4th IB shot Jay-el Banay Maligday, a student at Grace Mission College and a resident of Sitio Soryawon, Barangay San Roque, Bulalacao,

Oriental Mindoro on April 7. The military falsely claimed that he was an NPA member after a platoon of soldiers stormed his house.

Abduction. William Lariosa, known organizer of Kilusang Mayo Uno-Southern Mindanao, was abducted and has not yet been surfaced by military agents. Lariosa, 63, was abducted on April 10 in Barangay Butong, Quezon, Bukidnon. Lariosa and his family have long been harassed by the military, prompting him to seek sanctuary in Bukidnon.

Attempted eviction. A local resident of Lupang Tartaria in Silang, Cavite was injured and lost consciousness on April 16 when guards from Jarton Security Services forcibly entered the farming community.

Guards stormed Tartaria and forced back residents in an attempt



to fence off the land. The guards serve as private goons of the Ayala-Aguinaldo tandem, who have long been laying claim to the land. The farmers say the fencing is illegal while the decision on land ownership is still pending in the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Supreme Court.

Demolition. The combined forces of the National Housing Authority and Quezon City police illegally demolished the houses in San Isidro, Quezon City on April 18. About 700 families are affected by the demolition in the community behind the Philippine Children's Medical Center. A parking lot is set to be built in this area. AB

Former UP student turned fighter, extrajudicially killed by the AFP in Bukidnon

THE 48TH IB extrajudicially killed Kaliska Dominica Peralta (Ka Rekka), a Red fighter of the New People's Army who was hors de combat, in Barangay Butong, Quezon, Bukidnon on April 10. She was a former student of the University of the Philippines-Diliman.

Ka Rekka was unarmed when captured by the 48th IB. Witnesses say she was taken to another part of the barangay after her capture where she was tortured, then shot and killed. Three others, including an infant, were arrested by the AFP. No gun-battle occurred, contrary to military and police statements. Democratic groups called to investigate the 48th IB for the extrajudicial killing of Ka Rekka. She was honored by her fellow activists, friends and students at UP-Diliman on April 20.

Ka Rekka decided to join the people's army in 2016. She was first assigned to NPA-Eastern Visayas before she was transferred to NPA-Southern Mindanao. The Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA honored her for her efforts and contribution to the armed revolution at a time when great hardships and sacrifices were required to advance it.

Iran unleashes missiles against Zionist Israel

IRAN UNLEASHED AT least 200 missiles and drones against Zionist Israel on April 13 hitting the country's military bases and airports. Iran says this attack was in retaliation to Israel's bombing of its embassy in Damascus, Syria on April 1. The bombing of the embassy killed 18, including senior Iranian army commanders.

The attack was conducted on the strength of international law pertaining to legitimate self-defense, Iran stated. It considered the matter "closed" and warned Israel and the US against launching retaliatory attacks.

Iran is holding the US accountable for the Zionist regime's monstrous actions, while directly holding the "child-killing" Israel accountable for its genocide against Palestine.

Indiscriminate bombings, a scourge on Agusanons and Surigaonons

Last year, the New People's Army-Northeast Mindanao recorded at least five incidents of indiscriminate bombing and strafing by the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Agusan and Surigao del Sur. Information gathered by the NPA-NEMR in the affected communities said one civilian was injured and another remains missing. The bombings left residents, especially children and the elderly, traumatized as well as it damaged their crops and the environment. This further infuriated the Agusanons and Surigaonons against the abusive soldiers.

The bombings coincided with intensive and coordinated military operations and deceptive programs called the Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP) and Enhanced Community, Livelihood and Integration Program (E-CLIP). These programs serve as cover for military harassment and intimidation of peasants, as well as illegal arrests and secret detentions, and forced surrenders. (*Read the article Military "quarantine," prison of "surrendered" civilians in Surigao del Sur in the April 7, 2024 issue of Ang Bayan.*)

These operations are behind the AFP declarations that Agusan and Surigao del Sur are "insurgency-free". These are serious violations of international humanitarian law and protocols that value the welfare and safety of civilians during armed clashes.

Incidents

On March 15, 2023, at 6 p.m., the military fired a rocket and for six times strafed the farms and mountainous areas of Barangay Pili, Bayugan, Agusan del Sur. Bombs from helicopters fell near homes leaving bomb casings in their land. Because of the danger, residents were forced to evacuate to the barangay gymnasium.

Earlier, on March 14 at 2 p.m., the NPA opened fire on the 65th IB troopers operating in Barangay Pinanggalaan, in the said province. Two soldiers were killed.

In Barangay Maitom, San Martin, Prosperidad in the same province, peasants quickly left their homes after four bombs were dropped from a Super Tucano while cannons were fired an estimated five times on May 18, 2023. It happened at a distance of 200 meters from

their huts.

In Barangay Bigaan, Tagbina, Surigao del Sur, the Philippine Air Force dropped two bombs in July 2023. A resident says one of their villagers was injured when the bombs exploded near his house. Another resident remains missing to date. Fearing public exposure of their crime, the AFP asked the local government secretly to treat the wounded civilian. After the incident, the police forced residents to evacuate by scaring them about being used by the people's army as "human shields." Before the bombing, the NPA fired at the 67th IB troops in the mountainous part of the said village killing two and wounding another.

In September 2023, the powerful explosion of four aerial bombs shook residents who were out in their fields. The explosion happened a mere 300-500 meters away from their huts. The farmers immediately fled the field for fear of being hit.

In Barangay La Purisima, Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur, coconut, banana and other fruit crops were destroyed in farms that were hit by four bombs using a Super Tucano in the early morning of September 30,

2023. Eight artillery shells were fired in the direction of an NPA unit's resting place. After the bombing, the NPA encountered the 3rd Special Forces Company troopers where two corporals, a sergeant and a Private First class were reported killed.

AB



Schemes to illegally dismiss workers

Forced leave, floating status, furlough, on-call basis—these are just a few of the capitalists' various flexible labor schemes that allow the widespread illegal dismissal of workers. In these provisions, the capitalist reduces the worker's shift by one day to six months. Enforced leaves may be partially paid, but workers generally do not receive wages for these days or months.

Such flexible provisions are part of neoliberal labor policy. As early as 1985 the state allowed capitalists to deliberately reduce regular working days on the pretext of "salvaging business." They only need to report that orders or projects are slow or insufficient to be authorized to suspend work.

The law states that these provisions should be temporary, but earning no wages for months, many workers are forced to resign to find other sources of income. Their resignation allows capitalists to circumvent its responsibility to provide benefits such as severance pay and avoid the issue of illegal lockout or factory closure. This provision also hides the reality that thousands of workers categorized as employed are in fact, unemployed.

These provisions intensified during the pandemic when many companies suspended or reduced their operations. Capitalists took advantage of the crisis and pushed for the extension of the reduction of working days for up to a year. This scheme has become rampant in business process outsourcing (BPO or call centers), apparel, electronics and information technology industries. In the BPO sector alone, 4 out of every 10 workers are placed on "floating status" without pay. Many of them were never reinstated.

When the economy was "re-opened", the capitalists used the pretext of a lack of "orders" or

project slowdown to temporarily or permanently lay off workers. This includes thousands of factory workers in Mactan Export Processing Zone that were placed on floating status before they were completely laid off in 2022-2023.

In Laguna this April, Nexperia Philippines subjected 54 workers to "temporary termination" for the next six months. An additional 72 will be placed in the same status in September. This maneuver is the latest in a series of layoffs at the factory on the pretext that the company's production has "slowed down".

In Pampanga, 1,000 factory workers of Luen Thai Philippines, a company that manufactures expensive bags, were put on forced leave with no wages from January to March. To avoid liability, the capitalist declared that factory production has decreased despite maintaining the existing level of production.

To make up for the lost time, the capitalist raised the quota of remaining workers to 130-180 handbags per day. Those who do not meet the quota are also threatened to go on forced leave. The capitalist gave no guarantee that

those subjected to this scheme would be reinstated.

In Bataan, workers of Universal Weavers Corporation, a medical equipment and clothing factory, have been on "forced leave" for over a year. The company's pretext is that it no longer receives "production requests and order" and, thus, claims it no longer needs workers in the factory.

The workers believe that the company receives orders but prefers to bring production to Cambodia, where wages are lower and can be pushed down even more. The company also avoids its responsibility to pay their 13th month benefits and others.

The management even asked them to sign a waiver stipulating that it agrees that workers can look for other jobs while they are on forced leave. This runs counter to the law prohibiting such a step. In effect, it allows the capitalist to expunge the workers' years of service and legally fire them from the factory without getting separation pay.

