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Editorial

All-out neoliberalism and imperialist psywar under Aquino

Aquino's rule from 2010 has been six years of weaving illusions of growth and of all-out neoliberal perpetration. In his scheduled last state of the nation address (SONA), Aquino is again set to churn out empty rhetoric with the aim of fooling the people.

Aquino's "clean governance" is a fraud. Such an image was manufactured by US imperialism to lend credibility to its puppet government. Aquino's "daang matwid" ("straight path"), "anti-corruption" and "inclusive growth" are catch-phrases coined by American advisers who specialize in psywar and manipulating public opinion.

Aquino's six years at the helm of the puppet state form part of the big psywar operation of the US. This is in line with the US "counter-insurgency" plan aimed at destroying all those who challenge its global hegemony. US political intervention in the Philip-

supporting and directing its puppet state form part of the US efforts to protect its interests around the world.

The International Monetary Fund and its various agencies hype the Philippine economy as a "bright spot" amid continuing global crisis and give it high credit ratings in the desire to draw in foreign capital and loans.

A large component of the effort to paint the image of "growth" is the "pantawid pamilya" program (which received a 2015 budget that



KA PARAGO
1957-2015

The entire Central Committee, Military Commission and all cadres and members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the National Operations Command and all Red commanders and Red fighters of the New People's Army stand to execute their Red salute to Comrade Leoncio Pitao, the Filipino people's beloved Commander Parago, commanding officer of the NPA 1st Pulang Bagani Battalion.

- Central Committee,
Communist Party of the
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More on page 3



is seven-times bigger compared to 2009). This is carried out in line with the Oplan Bayanihan and the PAMANA and Kalahi-CIDSS programs directly implemented by the AFP and other agencies of the reactionary government. These are directed in areas where there is strong people's resistance. The aim of these programs is to deceive the people, disorganize and draw them away from the path of struggle.

In his upcoming SONA, Aquino will double efforts to fool the people because it is clear that they have gained nothing from the empty promises. He will again sing the tune of the "daang matwid" even though its corruption has been thoroughly exposed in the use of pork barrel funds, smuggling, Public-Private Partnership contracts and others.

Aquino will again sing hosannas to neoliberalism. The people will be told that three decades of liberalization, privatization, deregulation and denationalization are not enough and must be intensified even if it means sacrificing the 1987 constitution itself on the altar of

the foreign monopoly capitalists.

For the Filipino people, the US-Aquino regime failed to bring them better lives.

Unemployment continues to worsen. More than 12 million Filipinos seek jobs or more sources of income. Job-seeking labor migration has worsened. Since Aquino assumed power in 2010, the number of migrants leaving the country grew by two and a half times.

Exploitation of workers continues to intensify. Wages are extremely low. The daily minimum of P466 set for Metro Manila is utterly inadequate compared to P1,066 for the daily needs of average-sized families. There is no national minimum and various schemes to pull down wages are implemented.

Safety regulations are being removed resulting in increasing cases of accidents and deaths in factories, building construction and other workplaces.



Education continues to deteriorate. Under the K-12 Program, it will churn out more cheap semi-skilled workers to the benefit of the big capitalists. More will fail to complete high school because of the additional two years and due to the rising costs of tuition and other fees.

Quality of life continues to go down as prices of food and other commodities rise. The Aquino regime failed to act as prices of rice shot up in 2014 as well as in the face of clear manipulation of local prices of oil.


Public service infrastructure continues to rot as in the case of the train and metrorail system that cause daily sufferings to the people. There is grave lack of teachers, classrooms, books and other public school facilities. Public hospitals are being closed down while the rest are let to decay.

Aquino is pushing for further privatization of social infrastructure. The poor are driven away from their communities to clear the land for the big bourgeois compradors like the Ayalas, Pangilins, Cojuangcos, Tans, Sys, Consunjis and their partners among foreign big capitalists and bureaucrat capitalists.

Under Aquino, they have tightened their control of the electricity and power industry, telecommunications, water services, medical services, education, roads, trains, sea ports and airports. These are provided state funds and guarantees but are run as private businesses.

There is worsening landgrabbing by big landlords, developers and big foreign capitalists. There are worse forms of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation of the peasant masses through high feudal rent and prices of farm inputs; low buying price of palay, copra and other

continued at page 3

	
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<h2>Contents</h2>	
Editorial: All-out neoliberalism and psywar under Aquino	1
Red Salute to Ka Parago	3
Aquino-Binay at loggerheads	5
Victory at Sumifru	5
Massacre at Paquibato	6
Camp-protest at DepEd-Davao	7
10 soldiers dead in Paquibato	8
ST advances	9
Rallies in Bukidnon and Isabela	9
Rising Japanese militarism	10
US rushes TPP	11
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Red salute to Commander Parago

Long live the revolution! Long live the oppressed masses! These were the last shouts of defiance of Comrade Leoncio Pitao, the renowned Commander Parago, head of the 1st Pulang Bagani Battalion of the New People's Army (NPA), during the last moments of his life.

Ka Parago was in no position to fight when he was assaulted and mowed down by the fascist troops of the 6th Scout Ranger Company, under the 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion of the 1st Scout Ranger Regiment last June 28, 2015 at 2:30 p.m. in Barangay Pañalum, Paquibato District, Davao City.

Ka Parago, 57, was recuperating from hepatitis, diabetes and hyperthyroidism. Ka Kyle (Vanessa Limpag) who was caring for Ka Parago, was shouting that she was a medic, when she too was raked down by the soldiers. Both died instantly.

Tributes and recognitions by revolutionary forces in and out of the country streamed for Ka Parago.

The Central Committee and the Military Commission of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the National Operations Command of the New People's Army extended its Red salute to Ka Parago and recognized him as "a hero of the Filipino people".

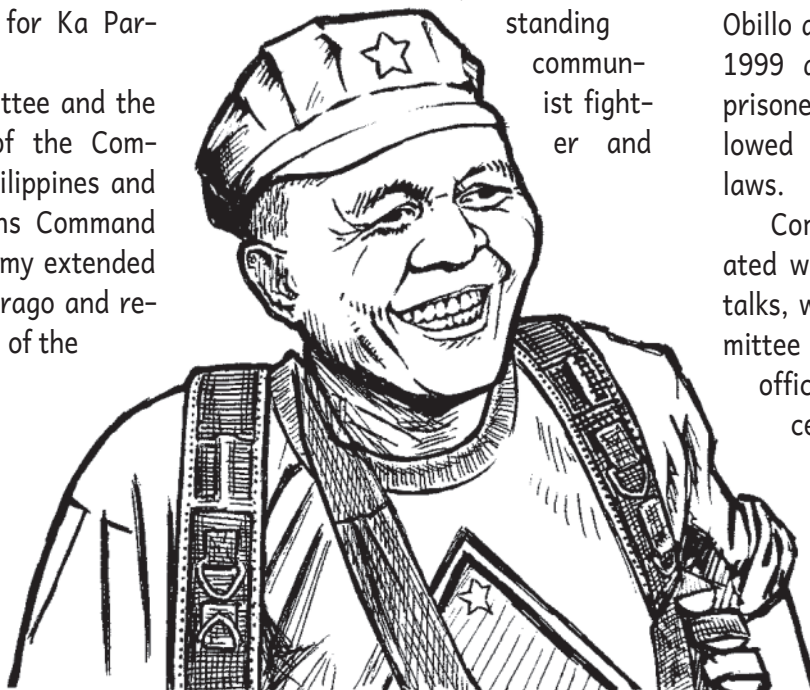
"Ka Parago's lifestory of nearly four decades of revolutionary struggle as Red commander and fighter is forever etched in the golden

history of the Filipino revolution," said the leadership of the CPP and NPA.

It added: "The entire people, especially the peasants and Lumad of Southern Mindanao, grieve over the death of Ka Parago. Affectionately called "Tatay" by the people of Paquibato who knew him, Ka Parago possessed unfailing love for the toiling people. His determination to serve the people's interests and welfare gave him the courage and strength to tread the difficult road of the people's war."

Comrade Jose Ma. Sison, Founding Chairman of the CPP, also praised Ka Parago. "He is a great patriot, out-

standing communist fighter and



revolutionary commander."

Ka Parago "was devoted to the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and applied it successfully together with other comrades and the people in Southern Mindanao Region. He excelled as a cadre of the Communist Party of the Philippines and as a commander of the New People's Army."

"He had a mastery of the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare," added Sison. "As a result of correct political line and his effective tactical command, the heroic and glorious First Pulang Bagani Company has grown into the First Pulang Bagani Battalion."

"Ka Parago remained strong and vigilant under no less than five reactionary regimes, from the Marcos dictatorship to the current US-Aquino regime," said the NPA Southern Mindanao Regional Command.

Commander Parago led countless disarming operations since the 1980s. He led in capturing a high official of the AFP Gen. Victor Obillo and Capt. Alex Montealto in 1999 and in detaining them as prisoners-of-war. He strictly followed international humanitarian laws.

Commander Parago cooperated with NDFP officials in peace talks, with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other officials to carry out the successful safe release of the prisoners. General Obillo and Captain Montealto praised Ka Parago for, according to them, humane treatment as prisoners of the NPA.

from page 2

farm produce; usury and low wages.

Under Aquino's "daang matwid", the local economy has further slumped. There are no new industries. Manufacturing is down. There are no improvements in the systems of production. Dumping of imported rice, garlic,

onions, poultry and other agricultural products worsen to the detriment of local production.

Aquino's six years of reactionary rule succeeded only in implementing more neoliberal policy-dictates of its imperialist masters. Aquino has simply perpetuated the semicolonial and semifeudal system and administered the reactionary state amid worsening crisis. **AB**

Ka Parago also led the Davao Penal Colony raid without firing a single shot in April 2007 where they confiscated five M16s, 45 carbines, 46 shotguns and seven cal .38 pistols. He also led in numerous tactical offensives of the Pulang Bagani Company.

The NPA-SMR recognized Ka Parago's service to the national democratic revolution. "He spent the greater part of his adult life serving the people, in unstinting dedication to the cause of national democracy. As a Red commander, he led and trained so many young warriors in the art of guerrilla warfare."

Even when he was captured in 1999 and offered "reward money", he did not turn his back on the people and revolution. "He remained stalwart in his convictions and ever faithful to the communist spirit of defending the security of the revolutionary forces and the interest of the people."

Ka Parago exercised "political wisdom" even when he was grieving and agonizing over the rape and killing of his daughter Rebelyn by military agents in 2009. "The people in Southern Mindanao remember him as their most beloved son who was always at their side, ready to help them solve their problems—so unlike the AFP generals who do nothing but attack and burden the people."

"He lived very simply... Ka Parago's spartan life became an enduring example for every revolutionary who knew him or worked with him," added the NPA-SMR. "As a matter of fact, for many years since the onset of his illness, he declined the Party's offer of a sick leave. All he wanted to his last dying breath was to live with the masses and to serve them."

For his part, Ka Simon Santiago of the Regional Political Department of the NPA-SMR, said: "a tree falls but the forest lives forever. Ka Parago may be gone but a thousand Ka Paragos have risen."

He added, "as we grieve the demise of Comrades Parago and Kyle,

we turn this grief into an occasion to better understand and appreciate the challenges that lie ahead. We turn this grief into greater revolutionary passion and commitment. For as long as the basic problems of our people remain, the people's war continues."

Ka Luis Jalandoni, chief of the NDFP panel in peace negotiations, asserted that Maj. Gen. Eduardo Año and other officials of the 10th ID must be investigated under the international rules of war, the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAR-HRIHL) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) for killing Ka Parago and Ka Kyle who were both hors d'combat.

The NPA-North Central Mindanao Region gave its highest recognition to Ka Parago. Ka Allan Juanito, spokesperson of the NPA-NCMR said, the ruling classes and their henchmen are surely rejoicing for having murdered Ka Parago, but they will forever be haunted by the Pulang Bagani Battalion as the people's war advances towards the strategic stalemate to complete victory.

The environmental group Kalikasan Network expressed their deep respect to Ka Parago for firmly standing by the NPA policy against large-scale mining projects. It said, the tears shed for Parago is for the hundreds of thousands of hectares of mountains, forests and fertile lands in Mindanao that were and continue to be ravaged by big loggers, large-scale miners, and plantations."

Large numbers of activists, progressives, media-people, politicians and various sectors visited Ka Parago's wake. Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte also praised him as a friend and a fighter. Even some officials of the Philippine National Police saluted him as a soldier.

Commander Parago will be interred on July 10, 2015. **AB**

Banana plantation workers triumph once more

ON June 19, workers from Sumitomo Fruit Corporation's (SUMIFRU) Packing Plant 90 in Compostela Valley victoriously ended their nine-day strike. The Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Suyapa Farm (United Workers in Suyapa Farm or NAMASUFA) led the strike to demand the reinstatement of 147 workers the company arbitrarily dismissed last June 8.

NAMASUFA denounced the dismissal as an attack against the union especially since the workers have been active in the struggle against wage cuts under the piecework scheme last May. The workers have been successful in the fight against this scheme.

Simultaneous with the strike, workers from SUMIFRU's Packing Plant 92 launched a sympathy strike. Other plants launched work slowdowns and other protest actions in solidarity with the workers in Packing Plant 90. Operations in these plants have returned to normal. SUMIFRU is the largest employer among Philippine agricultural businesses.

SUMIFRU's management signed an agreement stating that it will not bring charges to those who joined the strike. The workers celebrated their successive gains. However, they are aware that it will not be long before SUMIFRU, which they call a "serial violator" of workers rights, attacks again. **AB**

Aquino and Binay at loggerheads

Political maneuverings between rival reactionary factions are intensifying as the 2016 elections draw near. The people should take advantage of these rivalries to further hold the Aquino regime responsible and make it accountable for its crimes and neglect of the people.

Last June 22, Vice-president Jejomar Binay resigned from Aquino's cabinet. For the past ten months, Binay has been under attack by Aquino's Senate allies in the guise of investigating corruption cases and anomalies in Makati City.

In the following days, Binay criticized what he called the "indifferent and incompetent" Aquino regime. He identified issues that the people had long endured, including poor MRT/LRT services, high costs of social services, the bungled police operations in Mamasapano and others.

He also called Aquino's much vaunted "righteous path" a sham. Binay denounced attacks against him on corruption issues, whereas

not a single Aquino ally who received funds from the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP) and Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) has been indicted.

Aquino's allies counter-attacked by suspending Junjun Binay as Makati City mayor. This is the second time Ombudsman Conchita Morales, an Aquino appointee, ordered the younger Binay's suspension. The Binays defied the order but ceded the following day after their supporters and the police featured in a clash.

The issues Binay hurled against Aquino are not actually new. He is, thus, being chastised for denouncing the Aquino regime when he had



just sought the regime's support for his candidacy in 2016.

However, Binay's criticisms of the Aquino regime confirm what people have long railed against the regime's "incompetence and indifference". He should be challenged to likewise denounce Aquino's blatant puppetry to US imperialism and fascist brutality.

Statements from the Binay camp and the Aquino regime's counter-maneuvers highlight the intensification of rivalries and contradictions among the reactionary class, and the bankruptcy and inutility of the upcoming reactionary elections.

The people should take advantage of the intensifying rivalries by pushing forward with their struggles to denounce and oppose Aquino's neglect of basic services, high prices of goods, unemployment and decent housing, and for other people's issues. The movement should persevere in ousting Aquino and demand all prospective candidates to join the call to further isolate and exclude the ruling clique. **AB**



AFP massacres 3 civilians in Paquibato

In the past weeks, cases of unrestrained killings of peasant leaders and their families inside their own homes in Mindanao are on the rise.

Davao City. Three civilians were killed and a 12-year old child was wounded when elements of the 69th IB strafed Aida Seisa's house in Barangay Paradise Embac, Paquibato District last June 14. Seisa is the spokesperson of Paquibato District Peasant Association (PADIPA) and secretary-general of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas-Southern Mindanao Region.

Those killed were Datu Ruben Enlog, Randy Lavarcon Carnasa and Oligario Quimblo, all community leaders. Datu Enlog is chairman of

Nagkahiusang Lumad sa Paquibato (United Lumads in Paquibato) while Carnasa and Quimbo are members of PADIPA.

Seisa's daughter who was then celebrating her birthday was left wounded. Rosita Sandola, Seisa's mother, was spared, while Seisa, her husband and two children managed to get out of the house.

Families, progressive organizations and human rights groups strongly condemned the killings. They also denounced assertions of the 69th IB and 10th ID that the

massacre was a legitimate encounter between their troops and the New People's Army (NPA.) Families and barriomates belied AFP claims that those killed were NPA members, and slammed the planting of bombs, grenades and firearms beside their corpses to make it appear that they were not civilians.

According to Sandolan, the military interrogated her about Leoncio Pitao (Ka Parago) and another Red fighter while ransacking the house and getting Seisa's things. Numerous soldiers went in and out the house from midnight to dawn. They cordoned the house and prevented the wounded child from getting out. Police belatedly responded to the incident at noon the following day.

The 69th IB which carried out

the massacre is known as the "Palparan battalion." This AFP unit was involved in the Hacienda Luisita massacre in 2004 and the abduction and torture of Raymond and Reynaldo Manalo in Bulacan in 2006. Eduardo Año, 10th ID commander, is also a Palparan henchman involved in the abduction and forced disappearance of Jonas Burgos in 2007.

In June 17, KARAPATAN and Katribu staged a protest in front of Camp Crame to condemn the killings. In Davao City, members of KARAPATAN-SMR and Lumad groups also launched a rally to express their indignation of the massacre. Progressive representatives plan to bring up the result of their own investigation to Congress.

Compostela Valley. Elements of the 66th IB fired on Bello Tindasan's house in Sitio Mambusao, Barangay Ngan, Compostela last June 21. Tindasan is the chair of Compostela Farmers Association (CFA), a local peasant group.

The CFA has been opposing operations of the Agusan

Petroleum and Minerals Corporation (Agpet). Two days before the crime, Tindasan led the barricades at the gates of the Agpet mining site to force the company to stop operations. The CFA had earlier barricaded Agpet's mining site in March, then again in May.

Tindasan's wife and small children were inside the house when soldiers fired at it. His son was wounded. Tindasan was not in the house during that time. The military asserted that the strafing was a legitimate encounter between their troops and the NPA.

Agpet is owned by Benigno Aquino III's uncle, Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

Davao Oriental. Elements from the 67th IB killed Ricky Basig in his house in Kaputian, Mahan-ub, Baganga last June 25. Basig was then sitting on his veranda when soldiers under the command of a certain "Pfc Maca" open fired. Basig is a member of Barug Katawhan, an organization of typhoon Pablo's survivors. Basig was one of those who led protests against the Aquino regime's neglect and inutility in the past two years. AB

Lumads hold camp-out protest at DepEd office

Since June 16, parents and students of Salugpongan Ta' Tanu Igkanugon Community Learning Center (STTICLC) have camped out in front of the Department of Education (DepEd) Regional Office in Davao City to protest the closure of STTICLC schools. The Save Our Schools (SOS) Network and members of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) participated in the protest.

Datu Doloman Dawsay, spokesperson of Salugpongan Ta' Tanu Igkanugon, said they remain outside the DepEd office until the the DepEd revokes its order to close 36 Salugpongan schools in Talaingod and Kapalong, Davao del Norte, in Malibago and Taytayan, Cateel, Davao Oriental, and in Mangayon, Compostela, Compostela Valley. The closure order is part of the continuing harassment by the 67th IB of Lumad schools that started last May. STTICLC and schools run by the Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation Inc. (Misfi) are tagged by military and some local officials as NPA schools.

According to Datu Benito Bayaw, member of the Salugpongan Ta' Tanu Igkanugon Council, the Lumad people have long been asking the DepEd to build schools but

have been ignored. "Now that our community has built its own school, they want to close it down."

Ronnie Garcia, administrator of STTICLC, scored Sec. Dinky Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), for the severe neglect of the situation of the Lumad. "Since August last year, we have reported the harassments, the red tagging and the threats. But, where were the DSWD and the NCIP [National Commission on Indigenous Peoples]?" he said.

In all callousness and ignorance, Soliman said children should not be used in rallies, and instead should be in school. Said Garcia, "it merely shows that Soliman does not know what she is talking about. First, there is no school to go back to. The Salugpongan schools are being attacked."

Despite numerous witnesses and video footages showing military encampments within the schools, the DepEd denied that they are ordering the closure of Lumad schools. It insisted that the permit simply expired because the schools have failed to comply with the new requirements. DepEd has added as requirements a free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) clearance from a tribal council, now controlled by the paramilitary group Alamara; and the endorsement of the provincial peace and order council, which includes high-ranking military officers in the area.

According to Garcia, a permit was already shown them by the DepEd Regional Office XI last June 22, but they were not given a copy. They are also worried that even with the permit, the military will still harass them because neither the DepEd nor any other government agency has issued a stand against continuing militarization of Lumad villages.

AFP attacks on Lumad schools

The government has violated its own laws through the DepEd and AFP's directive of allowing soldiers to use schools for civilian-military operations. RA 7610 prohibits the use of schools for military purposes.

They are also violating international laws that expressly prohibit the use of schools for military purposes such as command posts, barracks, detachments, and supply depots.

On March 2014 in Davao del Norte, 309 Talaingod Manobo families fled their homes after two helicopters and four warplanes dropped bombs, destroying school establishments including their homes.

On March 27, a paramilitary group, Alamara, did not allow the Mindanao Interfaith Services Inc. (Misfi) Academy to hold moving-up ceremonies in Sitio Patil, Barangay Gupitan, Kapalong, Davao del Norte. They also disallowed this even when parents tried to continue the ceremonies at Sitio Muling. The Misfi Academy was only able to hold it in Davao City last May 25. This school remains closed because the teachers are being blocked entry by the paramilitary group Alamara.

Meanwhile, teachers and students of other Misfi schools that were able to assert their operation this school year are still being harassed by soldiers of the 67th IB and accused of being NPA members.

In Sitio Mantapay, Limot and Barangay Bagangan,



Binondo, Baganga, Davao Oriental, soldiers threatened parents that they will be denied government subsidy under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program if their children continue to study at Misfi Academy. Soldiers also told DepEd teachers not to give school documents to parents whose children were transferring to Misfi.

In Sitio Kaputian and Sitio Kasunugan, Barangay Mahan-ub, Baganga, Davao Oriental, soldiers threatened parents against enrolling their children in Misfi schools and coerced tribal leaders and village officials to stop the construction of the schools. Its two teachers were also tailed by 67th IB intelligence operatives. Threats also continue against schools in Sitio Cogonon, Barangay Salvacion, Trento, Agusan del Sur.

Last month, the office of the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural Development in Barangay Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur was ransacked and vandalized by military elements.

Lumad organizations and communities and the SOS network decried all these violations in a series of protest actions from Mindanao to Manila. AB



12 soldiers killed, 10 wounded in Paquibato

The 1st Pulang Bagani Company ambushed elements of the 69th IBPA last June 17, at about 3:40 p.m. in Sitio Pag-asa, Barangay Paquibato Proper, Davao City. Twelve soldiers were killed and ten wounded.

According to Rigoberto Sanchez, spokesperson of the NPA-Southern Mindanao Region, this attains revolutionary justice for victims of the strafing perpetuated by the 69th IBPA at the house of peasant leader Aida Seisa where Datu Ruben Enlog, Gary Quimbo, and Randy Carnasa were killed and the 12 year-old child of Seisa was wounded. (See related article on page 6). The NPA gave honors to Ka Janjan and Ka Marlo, both Red fighters who gave their lives during this military action.

In related news, NPA units in Agusan del Norte, Bukidnon and Camarines Sur launched military ac-

tions.

Bukidnon. Thirteen firearms were seized by Red fighters of the NPA-South Central Bukidnon Subregional Command during a raid on a detachment of the 69th IB in Sitio Mahayag, Barangay Namnam, San Fernando last June 14. Among the firearms confiscated were one machinegun and one M203 grenade launcher. The military troops have long been occupying the Sitio's village hall. They were deployed to guard a company constructing the Valencia-Davao Highway.

Agusan del Norte. Three members of the Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) were killed in separate

military actions carried out by NPA-Western Agusan Norte-Agusan Sur (WANAS) Subregional Command last June 9, 2015 around 7 p.m. in Barangay Olave, Buenavista. The ambush was launched as a reaction to the enemy operations in the area. Meanwhile, the people's army suffered no casualties.

Camarines Sur. The NPA - Tomas Pilapil Command (NPA-TPC) meted revolutionary punishment to the destructive Bicol Chromite and Manganese Inc. operating in Brgy. Himagtocon, Lagonoy, Camarines Sur last June 18, 2015 around 6 p.m.. The NPA operatives torched one backhoe, one bulldozer, one owner-type jeep, and generator sets all estimated to cost around P10 million.

Residents of the mountain villages of Himagtocon, Pinamihagan, Del Carmen and Bocogan in Lagonoy municipality have long been complaining against the said mining company. AB

Armed struggle advances in ST

From mid-2014 until May 2015, armed struggle in the Southern Tagalog Region has continued to advance.

The New People's Army (NPA)-Southern Tagalog carried out a total of 49 tactical offensives and military actions from June 2014 till May 2015. Red fighters confiscated 32 high-powered firearms including 15 M16, one baby M16, five M14, one M1 carbine, six shotguns and two cal .22 rifles and 12 pistols (among them one cal .45, four 9mm, and three cal .38), ammunition, magazines, ammo pouch, backpack, sniper scope, and other military matériel from the enemy.

Most significant among these was the NPA raid last November 2014 against the Public Safety Maneuver Battalion (PSMB) and the 76th IB at the police station in Paluan, Occidental Mindoro where 24 firearms were seized. The commander of the 76th IB was relieved as a result.

On the part of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, 34 were killed in action, 25 wounded and 13 surrendered and captured by the NPA. Among the targets of the military actions were the detachments and troops of the 76th IB and PSMB of Region IV-B, along with the 85th IB, 1st IB, 16th IB, 4th IB, 4th Marine Battalion Landing Team, and the 59th IB (Cadre Battalion of the 2nd ID). AB

Peasants rally in Bukidnon and Isabela

Around 2,500 peasants demonstrated last June 9 in Kitaotao, Bukidnon to assert their rights to the municipality's calamity fund. Led by the Kahugpungan ng Mag-uuma sa Kitaotao-KASAMA Bukidnon, farmers from 11 barangays marched to the municipal hall to address their grievances to the mayor regarding their difficulties and hunger brought about by the drought over the past six months.

Kitaotao has been under a state of calamity since May but until June, the local government has not released any funds.

At the same time, peasants also demanded the immediate removal of the 33rd IB from their barangays because of rampant human rights violations by the soldiers. Violations included the mauling of Emilio Ruplo, a barangay councilman, which resulted in his death last May 15. The soldiers came upon Ruplo in a farm near the site of an encounter between military troops and Red fighters last May 4. (See Ang Bayan, Special Issue, June 1, 2015). The soldiers encamped at the barangay hall and the school, in violation of the rules of war.

Meanwhile, hundreds of farmers under Danggayan dagiti Man-nalon ti Cagayan Valley (Danggayan-CV) staged a rally in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) office in Isabela and Cagayan last June 8 to oppose the earlier planned economic charter change (amendments to some economic provisions of the 1987 constitution) and the extension of the anti-peasant Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). They also protested the Land Bank's anomalous charges on lands that have already been distributed under the phoney CARP while they are already paying rent to the landlords.



According to Bino Abrogena, chairperson of Danggayan-CV, until now, the rights of farmers to the land they have been tilling for so long are still not recognized. Worse, they are being driven

away from their land to give way to the expansion of foreign-owned plantations of cassava, coffee, rubber and sugar cane.

Among these are the farmers of Hacienda Dimzon and Hacienda Zulueta in Benito Soliven and San Mariano in Isabela. Last 2013, these were planted with sugar cane for ecofuel production. Also included were the farmers of Hacienda Isabel and Hacienda San Antonio in Ilagan, Isabela. Some of them are planting tobacco and cassava for ethanol of big agribusiness. Some farmers have lost their lands because they could no longer afford to pay amortizations.

In Cagayan, peasants have increasingly lost lands and descended into destitution and hunger due to CARP. Among them are the tillers of the 3,000-hectare Hawkins Estate in Amulong West and the haciendas of the Madrigal, Lorenzana and Puzon families.

Last June 10, farmers from Cagayan and Isabela joined the rally in front of Congress. They opposed the bills for economic cha-cha and the extension of CARP, both of which were yet to be approved by Congress. AB

Rising Japanese militarism

Naval exercises were held in Palawan by the Philippine Navy and the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force last June 22-25. The modern maritime surveillance aircraft Lockheed P3-C of Japan was used, along with a Philippine warship and helicopters.

The said Philippine-Japan military exercises were synchronized with the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) between the US and the Philippines conducted in the same area last June 18-30. Some 600 American and Filipino troops were involved, utilizing the littoral combat ship USS Fort Worth, (a warship capable of operating in shallow waters), US patrol aircraft and missiles, and Philippine naval warships and helicopters.

The said military exercises are part of the continuing militarization of the South China Sea and Philippine maritime territory. The US and Japan have taken advantage of the Philippine-China conflict to justify increasing military intervention of US and Japan in the region.

Japan's involvement in the Philippine military exercises last June comes at the heels of the first joint military exercises between Japan and the Philippines last May 12. Two Japanese destroyers and the Philippine's newest second-hand warship conducted the maneuvers some 300 kilometers from the Scarborough Shoal that is being claimed by China.

The latest military exercises are part of the Philippines-Japan Visiting Forces Agreement signed by Benigno Aquino and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last June 8 when Aquino visited Tokyo.

Japanese militarism

Under US imperialism's aim to strengthen its military position in Asia, Japan has expanded its military through the modernization of its military hardware and more frequent participation in joint maneuvers outside its country.

When Abe came to power in the last part of 2012, one of his chief

priorities was to do away with the pacifist stance of Japan towards what he calls normalization of its position on military issues. This would entail amending the Japanese constitution to remove the restraints on Japanese involvement in war.

Abe termed this as the "right to collective self-defense," wherein Japan's Self-Defense Forces would not be limited to a defensive role, and limitations on the military budget would be removed. The US openly supported these proposals to give way to a bigger role for Japan in enhancing US military presence in Asia. The US is also interested in Japan's purchase of military hardware from the US.

The constitutional amendment did not prosper due to the Japanese people's vehement protests, thus the changes were done through laws. Parliament in 2013 passed the State Secrets Act and the creation of a National Security Council.

In 2014, changes to the US-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines were permitted. The military budget was increased to \$42 billion in 2015, the highest since World War II. The bulk of the budget was for the purchase of 30 amphibious vehicles, three unmanned reconnaissance planes and six stealth fighters from the US.

On August 6, 2014, Japan launched the \$1.24 billion DDH 183 Izumo, one of the largest aircraft carri-

ers in the world with its own fleet of counter-submarine helicopters and modern warplanes to be bought from the US. The government also strongly supported the expansion of Camp Schwab, a US military base in Okinawa.

Japan's rising militarism has been condemned by the peoples of China, Korea and Japan. Last month, some 35,000 Okinawans including local officials of the island rallied against the Japanese national government's approval of Camp Schwab's expansion.

People from other countries invaded by Japan during World War II also protested the Abe government's efforts to revise history in school books to cover-up the atrocities committed by their soldiers back then. During the first anniversary marking his coming to power, Abe visited the Yasukuni Shrine, a war memorial of the soldiers who committed crimes during the war, to whip up militaristic "nationalism".

China lodged a protest on what they said was Japanese intervention on the issue of the West Philippine Sea and its posture in the East China Sea.

BAYAN condemned the simultaneous military exercises in the West Philippine Sea. Last June 23, it held a rally in front of the Japanese embassy in Pasay City.

Lila Filipina-Gabriela, an organization of "comfort women" or women oppressed by Japanese troops during the 2nd World War, joined the protest. AB



US rushing TPP

The US Congress approved last June 23 a process that would fast-track or hasten negotiations for the creation and approval of the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP is an agreement for “free trade” between the US and no less than 12 countries in the Pacific Rim. The US seeks to use this to form an economic block against China.

Under the TPP, all impediments to investments and trade between participating countries will be dismantled giving way to unfettered accumulation of profit by corporations. It is an agreement to implement widespread deregulation and liberalization wherein the interests of monopoly capitalist business overrides any national law.

Railroaded secret agreement

The Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) was approved by the Senate and Lower House of the US Congress at the end of June. The TPA grants authority to the US president to enter into trade deals, such as the TPP, that cannot be amended by Congress. It can only be approved or rejected. This aims to give the US leverage to fast-track TPP negotiations.

The TPP has been enveloped in extreme secrecy. Only US Congressmen and select staff are permitted to read the 29 chapters of the proposed TPP agreement. No notes, pictures or copies can be made, and no discussion of the contents to the public are allowed. The best estimate of the number of congressmen who have read the agreement is in the single digit.

The TPP was formed by 566 advisers from US corporations and none of the discussions was disclosed to the public and media. The level of secrecy surrounding the agreements is unparalleled, wherein paramilitary teams scatter outside the premises of each round of discussions while helicopters circle overhead.

TPP: Mega-Free Trade Agreement

The US seeks to include in the TPP 12 countries: United States, Japan, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Chile, Singapore, Peru, Vietnam, New Zealand and Brunei Darussalam. These 12 countries account for 40% of global Gross Domestic Product and a third of world trade.

It is meant to enforce and consolidate a set of standards to serve the interests of monopoly capitalists and big capitalist countries to the detriment of billions of workers and people as well as developing countries. It has been described by the International League of People's Struggle as “an attack on the sovereignty, environment and livelihood of Asia-Pacific peoples.”

The TPP is the economic arm of US imperialism's “Asian pivot.” The US aims to set the rules and dominate trade in a large part of Asia, then use this to contain China. The US lures in economies through the promise of unrestricted access to US markets. In turn the US ropes in

strategic economies into a legally binding corporate-governance regime.

The TPP is a mega-Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in terms of the large number of countries to be deeply integrated into it. In 2013, there were already 252 FTAs. Among these FTAs was the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the US, Canada and Mexico.

FTAs arose after negotiations under the World Trade Organization collapsed due to the protectionism of the US and other big capitalist countries, along with the assertion of national interests by the rising large economies of China, India and Brazil.

Neoliberal provisions

In 2013, in spite of the secretive construct and deliberation of the TPP, details of some of its chapters were released in the internet (through the Wikileaks website). Among these were the provisions on intellectual property and issues related to health and food.

The revealed provisions include permitting capital to freely and easily enter a country; for profits to be just as easily repatriated; for wholesale privatization of public enterprises; and for proposals to allow corporations to sue govern-



ments in global secret courts if national laws are passed that challenge any provision of the TPP.

Most threatening is the TPP provision on Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) wherein the right of an investor to make profits could not be hindered as countries who enact laws can be sued by corporations who feel these laws have restricted their potential profits.

These suits will no longer be done in domestic courts. Any limit on corporate profits, e.g. a ban on child labor, new minimum wage, building codes and others, can be overturned. There will be the additional likelihood of fines against those who insist on defending forests, rivers, and mountains with nonviolent action or with lawsuits. Worse, the merit of the lawsuit would be judged by a panel of arbitrators to be chosen by the plaintiffs themselves.

Through the mechanism of the ISDS, TPP brings neoliberalism to a new high wherein the accumulation of profit by banks and corporations will be accelerated and removes restrictions over and beyond what FTAs achieved.

Under TPP, laws that require companies to label foods with content from genetically modified organisms (GMO) will be illegal. Such laws were fought for by advocates of consumer rights to know if food taken from the shelves contain ingredients that could be harmful to their health. Under TPP, internet termination for households, business and organizations will be an accepted penalty for copyright infringement. This will bring about stifled research, increased education cost and even making it a criminal offense to temporarily store files on a computer without authorization.

With the provisions on intellectual property rights, the TPP would make it harder for nations to provide access to generic medications for their citizens.

TPP would make it impossible to ban regulations against trading or activities that may bring about financial crisis similar to what occurred in 2008.

US-China rivalry

US fast-tracking to create the TPP signals the continuing intense

competition of the main centers of capitalism. The US fears that China will sweep in a good number of the 10 countries in the current TPP negotiations outside of the US and Japan. China has been seeking to negotiate the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which has been referred to as “China’s TPP.”

China is also pushing for the Free Trade Agreement on Asia Pacific (FTAAP) as an alternative to the TPP during the APEC meeting in Shanghai last 2014. Under this proposal, both China and Russia will be included aside from the 12 composing the TPP.

Obama's camp ascribes the need for the TPP to the reality that 95% of consumers of US products are to be found in other countries. In addition, if the TPP fails as its economic pivot, then the US military and political pivot, wherein 60% of US armed forces will be focused on Asia, would become irrelevant.

An estimated 75% of Americans think that TPP should be rejected. Nearly two-thirds favor some form of trade restriction such as against the NAFTA. AB