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Editorial

Drive out the big plunderers!

The serious and widespread devastation wrought by the recent back to back typhoons demonstrated the extent of the destruction, poverty and suffering that have befallen the people in the hands of the big foreign and local capitalist owners of commercial mining, logging and other plunderous businesses. This is a fact that has long been repeatedly proven in the country's history.

Despite the havoc they have wrought, however, it is these companies that have been prioritized by the ruling puppet state.

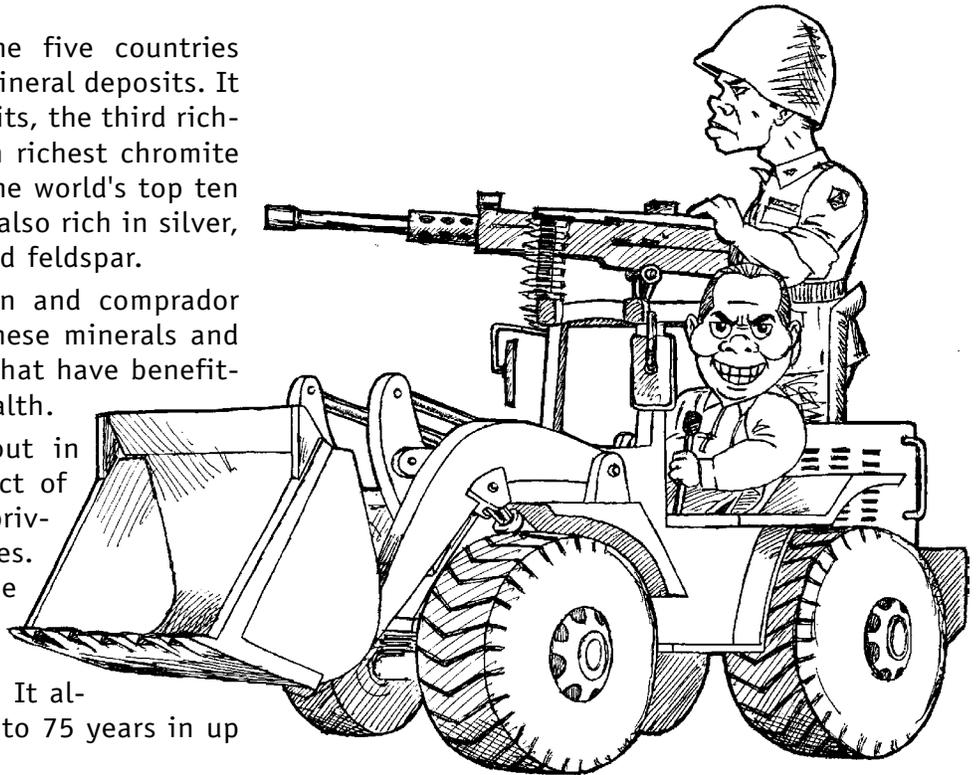
The Philippines is among the five countries worldwide that have the richest mineral deposits. It has the second richest gold deposits, the third richest copper deposits and the sixth richest chromite deposits. The country is among the world's top ten producers of these minerals. It is also rich in silver, nickel, marble, limestone, clay and feldspar.

But it is only the big foreign and comprador mining companies that extract these minerals and their cohorts in the ruling class that have benefited from the country's mineral wealth.

Gloria Arroyo has gone all-out in pushing the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, which provides even more privileges to foreign mining companies. The law, which has Arroyo as one of its authors when she was still senator allows the entry of 100% foreign-owned mining companies. It also allows them to operate for up to 75 years in up

to 81,000-hectare concessions or up to 400,000 hectares per company. Their investments are protected and they are allowed to repatriate 100% of their profits and capital. In 2003, Arroyo issued Executive Order 270 (National Policy Agenda for Revitalizing Mining in the Philippines) that made it even easier for the puppet government to approve applications of big foreign and comprador mining companies.

The widespread seizure of ancestral lands, the destruction of the environment and livelihoods that



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accompany large-scale commercial mining have spurred the people to mount their strong opposition.

In the face of all this, one of Arroyo's first official acts when she took power in 2001 was to conduct a security assessment of areas facing threats to "peace and order." More than 60% of such areas had large mining companies. Many of these places were also identified as areas of operation of the New People's Army. Counter-guerrilla military operations have thus been stepped up to protect big mining companies. People's protests and resistance in these areas have also been brutally suppressed.

In spite of this, there have been many acts of resistance by the people against the plunderers who have been destroying their livelihoods and putting them in danger during disasters. In many areas nationwide, various sectors have been uniting to take action against the operations of big commercial mining and logging interests.

They hold the Arroyo regime accountable in the main for the intensified plunder they have suffered these past few years.

The revolutionary forces are one with the people in defending the national patrimony and the environment.

In response to, and in support of, the people's struggles, the armed revolutionary forces have been meting punishment on the most destructive and most brutal foreign and comprador plunderers. These actions are necessary to stop the worst plunderers from lording it over the country, especially in areas where revolutionary power is exercised.

Thus, military, paramilitary and security forces employed by the plunderers to protect their destructive and antipeople enterprises are among the primary targets of the armed revolutionary forces.

The Filipino people and the revolutionary forces are determined to resist, cripple and drive out the plunderers and their fascist protectors. **AB**

Large-scale commercial mining

As of December 2008, the Arroyo government had approved 319 agreements for large-scale mining covering 722,000 hectares nationwide. Eighteen out of the 24 priority areas opened to large-scale foreign and comprador mining operations are ancestral lands seized from national minorities.



Up to 14.5 million hectares or almost half of the country's total land area are covered by various old and new mining applications: more than 2.7 million hectares are under Financial-Technical Agreements (FTAA), another 2.7 million hectares under Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSA) and more than nine million hectares under Exploration Permit Applications (EPA). More than 53% of these places are in national minority areas.

Most of the mines that opened in the last decade are engaged in open-pit mining, where wide areas of forestland and mountainous areas are excavated to find the targeted minerals more easily. Mining companies are likewise allowed to dig up



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forests and cut trees for the construction of roads, buildings and other needs.

These mines also throw away billions of tons of toxic waste, killing rivers, lakes and other bodies of water.

Meanwhile, the government has only been earning up to P5 million annually from the 1-2% excise tax paid by these companies. This is a drop in the bucket compared to the P114 billion in taxes collected annually from workers and ordinary employees.

The mining companies also have a minuscule contribution to employment. From 2006 to 2007, they added a mere 0.4% to the number of employed workers, from 141,000 to 149,000.

In stark contrast to the Filipino people's failure to benefit from these companies, the latter have been raking in gargantuan profits. In 2006, they registered a net profit of P72.5 billion, a 134% leap from the 2004 figure.

It therefore comes as no surprise that investments in the mining sector more than doubled during this period. From 2004 up to the end of 2007, foreign companies poured up to \$1.4 million into the mining sector.

Arroyo is among those who have personally profited immensely from large-scale mining. For the past nine years, she, her family and her cohorts have been raking in huge profits from lucrative contracts granted by her regime to big foreign mining companies and Arroyo's dummy companies like Nihao Mineral Resources International Incorporated which have entered into partnerships with these firms. All these belie the US-Arroyo regime's claims that large-scale commercial mining is "the country's economic savior." AB

Special paramilitary forces protect mining companies

The reactionary puppet regime is not content with setting up military camps of the AFP's regular forces near big mining companies and regularly conducting military operations as well as suppressing and terrorizing those who oppose large-scale mining operations. The AFP has also been recruiting and assigning military and paramilitary forces under the supervision of the Investment Defense Force (IDF) which was formed in 2008 to train and assist private security forces and hired goons of big mining companies.

In fact, elements of the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) assigned by the AFP to these companies and known as Special Civilian Armed Auxiliary (SCAA) actually serve as reinforcements for the private security forces of big mining companies.

One example is the arrangement between the 1st ID and Toronto Ventures Inc. Resource Development (TVIRD) in Zamboanga del Norte and another is that between the 7th ID and DMCI Mining Corp. in Zambales.

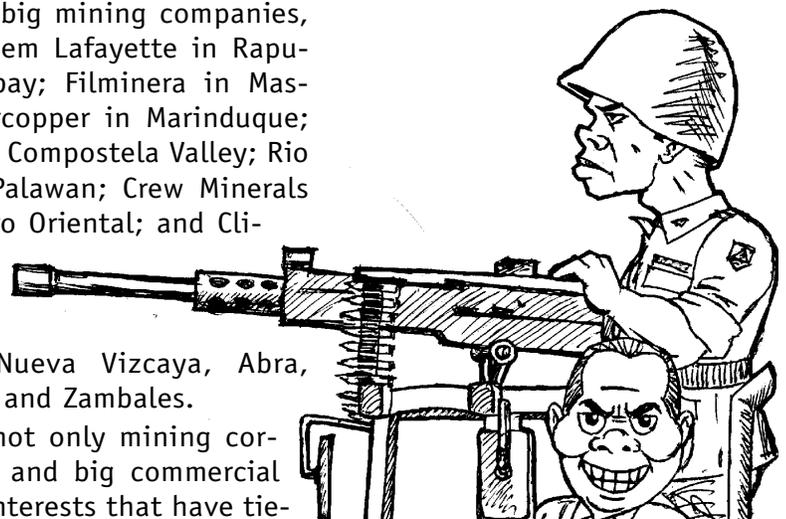
These forces jointly perpetrate saturation drives, maulings, abductions, intimidation and other abuses in communities around the mining sites.

More military and paramilitary forces have also been embedded among private security forces of big mining companies, among them Lafayette in Rapu-Rapu, Albay; Filminera in Masbate; Marcopper in Marinduque; NMRDC in Compostela Valley; Rio Tuba in Palawan; Crew Minerals in Mindoro Oriental; and Climax Arimco/Oxi-ana in Nueva Vizcaya, Abra, Batangas and Zambales.

It is not only mining corporations and big commercial logging interests that have tie-

ups with regular military, paramilitary and private security forces. One of the first companies to maintain a special military and paramilitary unit in combination with private security forces is the Paper Industries Corp. of the Philippines (PICOP) in Surigao del Sur. Its special paramilitary force is known as "Picop Battalion" or "Armed Forces of the Picop."

So many killings, abductions, harassment and various other abuses by these forces have been documented by human rights advocacy groups. Many more remain unreported. Most of those affected are national minorities and poor peasants who have repeatedly suffered abuses and deprived of their rights and adequate livelihood. AB



Coal mining is at the root of militarization in Surigao del Sur

The extensive militarization and human rights violations in the various towns of Surigao del Sur this past year are linked to plans by big corporations to seize several thousands of hectares of forest and upland areas in Andap Valley Complex to mine for coal.

These past four years, various Manobo communities have been targets of military operations. The objective of these operations is to break the Manobo's determined opposition to plans to mine coal in their ancestral lands. The occupation by soldiers of the 58th IB of Manobo communities in Lianga, Surigao del Sur from July-August that resulted in the two-month evacuation of Lumad folk is the third since 2006.

In particular, the objective of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in militarizing Manobo communities is the recruitment of residents into Task Force Gantangan-Bagani Force (TFG-BF). Armed paramilitary groups like the TFG-

BF are formed by the military from the ranks of the Lumad.

By maintaining its presence in the area, the AFP wishes to instill fear among the Lumad in order to force them to give their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The FPIC, a document required under the Mining Act of 1995, supposedly signifies that the national minorities have granted permission to corporations to conduct mining operations in their ancestral lands.

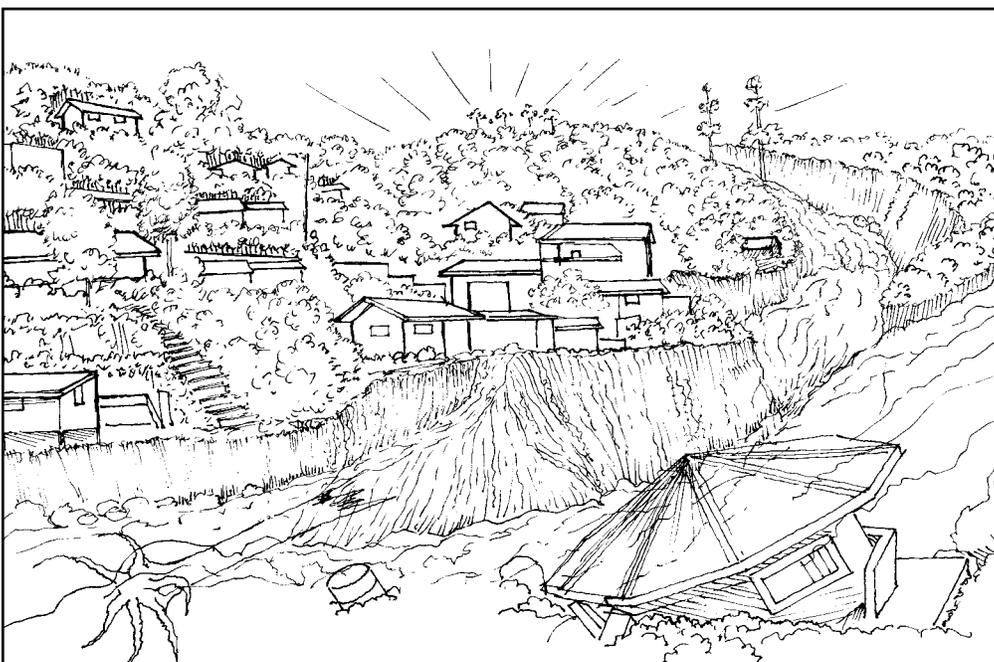
At least six big bourgeois comprador companies are targeting the Manobo's ancestral lands in the towns of Tago, Tandag, Lianga and San Miguel. These corporations were granted Coal Operating

Contracts (COCs) by the Department of Energy. Foremost among them is the Philippine National Oil Company-Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC), a subsidiary of the government-owned PNOC. The PNOC-EC is targeting the estimated 42 million metric tons of coal deposits in the area between Lanuza Bay and Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur.

Benguet Corporation also has a COC to mine coal in the towns of Lianga, Marihatag and San Miguel and the Great Wall Mining & Power Corporation also for the towns of San Miguel and Tandag. Lodestar Holdings Investment Corporation also bought the COC of Abacus Consolidated Resources & Holdings Inc. and is currently a partner of Oriental Vision Mining Philippines Corp. (OVMPC), which is owned by Salvador B. Zamora II, who has invested P300 million in this project.

In September, a COC was granted to the Oriental Energy and Power Corporation which is planning to invest up to P50 million in its operations in Surigao del Sur. ASK Mining and Exploration Corp. also has a COC for the towns of Cagwait and Marihatag, Surigao del Sur.

The Manobo Lumad are thoroughly opposing these mining projects in their ancestral lands. They are aware that these corporations will destroy the environment and their livelihoods. Because of the opposition of the Lumad masses, these corporations have not yet started with their plans of plunder. With the Lumad people's show of determination to oppose mining in their ancestral lands, they will continue to defeat the plunderers and defend the country's patrimony. **AB**



Fight against large-scale mining in Panay intensifies

Various groups in Panay and Guimaras have united in their efforts to further the campaign against large-scale mining which is destroying lives, livelihoods and the environment. They reaffirmed this unity in a multisectoral gathering at the Bethel Temple in Iloilo City on October 7. This was attended by Defend Patrimony-Panay, Madias Ecological Movement, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Global Baptist Peace Network, Young Christian Workers, Promotion of Church People's Response, Convention of the Philippine Baptist Churches, Karapatan, Bayan Muna and BAYAN-Panay. After this, the Capiz chapter of Defend Patrimony was formed in Roxas City on October 10.

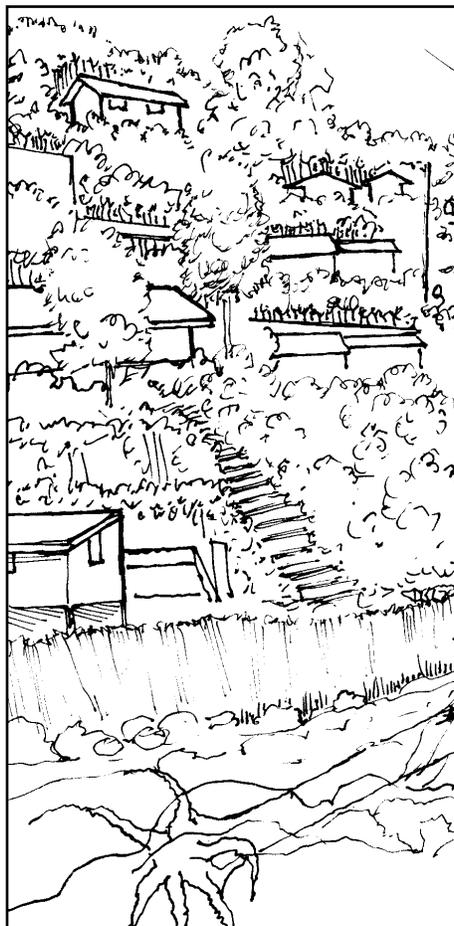
Geobelyn Lopez of the Madias Ecological Movement said that based on records of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as of August 2009, a total of up to 22.6 thousand hectares in Panay and Guimaras have been opened to commercial mining. The largest of these can be found in Capiz where 10.5 thousand hectares were awarded to Teresa Marble Corporation, Quarry Ventures Philippines, Inc. and Walter Mining and Industrial Development Corporation. This is followed by Iloilo (8.9 thousand hectares); Guimaras (1.8 thousand hectares); Antique (1.04 thousand hectares); and Aklan (334.8 hectares).

The three sister companies Teresa Marble Corporation, TMC International Corporation and Quarry Ventures Philippines, Inc. were awarded Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSA) by the DENR covering more than 16,000 hectares. It is initially involved in the exploration of gold and copper. These companies (which are owned by the big business family Dee) control 71% of all approved mining applications in Panay.

There are still pending mining applications—63.2 thousand hec-

tares in Capiz and 34.7 thousand hectares in Guimaras (or 60% of the latter's entire land area).

The initiation of these mining companies' operations will put the environment and the livelihoods of the people in Panay and Guimaras in grave danger, according to Lopez. This will finish off



the already denuded forests. Panay island's forest cover is down to only 17.2% while that of Guimaras is only 0.6%. This will lead to more landslides and immense flooding during typhoons, as what occurred in 2008 when typhoon Frank ravaged the region.

50-year moratorium on mining. The awarding by the DENR of permits to these big mining companies is in violation of a resolution adopted by the Capiz Provincial Board, said Defend Patrimony. In 1999, amid the heat of protest actions against mining in Panay, the Provincial Board passed a resolution to suspend large-scale mining in Capiz for 15 years. In 2002, the Board amended the resolution and extended the moratorium to 50 years. The moratorium on mining was the first ever in the history of the antimining struggle in the country.

When the Mining Act of 1995 was passed, the Madias Ecological Movement led an all-out struggle against this destructive law. The mass actions slowly led to the denial of mining applications in Panay and Guimaras. But when the US-Arroyo regime completely opened the country to foreign capitalists, mining applications once again increased.

The local government of Capiz closely guards the entry of big mining corporations in the province. But the big foreign and local capitalists still manage to find means to worm their way into the province. Their accomplice is the DENR national office which approves the mining applications. To skirt criticism, the DENR has only been granting permits for small-scale mining to these companies, but the permits cover contiguous areas.

In the face of such maneuvering, the Madias Ecological Move-

ment is calling on the people to defend the victories they have achieved against commercial mining and environmental destruction.

Teresa Marble Corporation has now started exploring for copper and gold in the barangays of Aglimucon, Quinabunlan and Canapian, all in Maayon town and Barangay Tina in the town of Dumarao, Capiz. Thousands of residents in these areas have signed a petition letter which was sent to the Provincial Board. Their education campaigns, information dissemination and protest actions against the mines have been ongoing since 2008. In particular, the town council of Maayon has passed a resolution in support of the people's actions.

In Guimaras and other islands. The struggle of Guimaras folk against commercial mining is also ongoing. On March 26, the town council of Nueva Valencia passed a resolution against the mining operations of Fil-Asian Strategic Resources and Properties Corp. (FASRPC), a subsidiary of the Australia-based Rusina Mining NL.

Nueva Valencia is a town in southwest Guimaras and was the site of a massive oil spill in 2006. Nine of its 20 villages are included in the FASRPC's 2,400-hectare gold and copper exploration area. The island's rich resources which have yet to recover from the devastation caused by the oil spill are now in danger anew. A signature campaign against the mining activities has been launched by all of the town's 20 villages.

The FASRPC also has a pending application to mine 621 hectares in Pan de Asucar Island in the town of Concepcion, Iloilo.

Mining in Negros

Aside from sugarcane, Negros is rich in mineral deposits. There is an estimated 590.6 million metric tons (MT) of primary copper ore and 25.2 MT of primary gold ore in Negros Occidental. There are also rich deposits of silver, molybdenum and other minerals with agricultural and industrial uses. Negros Oriental is also rich in gold, copper, sulfur and magnesium.

Large-scale commercial mining was begun in 1957 by the Marinduque Mining and Industrial Corporation (also known as Maricalum) in Sipalay, Negros Occidental. This was followed by Philex Gold which started commercial mining in 1994. The operations of these two big companies devastated many areas in the countryside as well as fishing grounds. Entire villages were forced to evacuate as a result of the mining operations and destruction of the environment. Protests eventually intensified and Maricalum Mining was forced to close in 2001. Philex Gold also stopped its operations in 2002.

But when the US-Arroyo regime completely opened the country to giant foreign capitalist interests, the big mining companies returned to Negros. Mining applications already cover 47% of Negros' total agricultural land area.

Based on data from the Mining and Geosciences Bureau as of January 2008, Mineral Production Sharing Agreements of the following companies have already been approved: Oriental Quarry and Development Corp. in Basay, Negros Oriental (770 hectares); Negros RR Cement Corp. in Guihulngan and La Libertad, Negros Oriental (3,100 hectares), which are both involved in exploration activities for limestone and shale; Vulcan Industrial and Mining Corp. in Hinobaan, Negros Occidental (477

hectares), which is involved in the exploration of copper and gold; Philex Gold Philippines, Inc. in Hinobaan and Sipalay, Negros Occidental (2,673 hectares) which is involved in commercial copper and gold mining; Silicon Development Corp. in Babiera and Sagay, Negros Occidental (109.51 hectares), which is exploring for silica, sand and quartz; and Colet Mining and Development Corp., which is exploring for gold, silver, copper and molybdenum.

The operations of these mining companies cover 9.4 thousand hectares. Altai Philippines Mining Corporation also has pending applications for the exploration of sulfur and other minerals covering three towns in Negros Oriental.

Meanwhile, the livelihoods of the fisherfolk are being ruined due to the dumping of mine tailings in the rivers and creeks that empty towards the ocean. An investigation in October 2007 of offshore mining has revealed that fish kills in Tañon Strait (between Negros Oriental and Cebu) have occurred each time a seismic survey is conducted by mining corporations in the seawaters off Guihulngan, Vallehermoso and San Carlos in Negros Oriental. More than 100 *payaw* (fish-aggregating devices) have also been ruined and the fisherfolk lose their livelihood every time they are prohibited from fishing within the five-kilometer radius near the areas affected by the fish kills. ■

Mining is behind the devastation in the Cordilleras

The widespread devastation that transpired in the Cordilleras in October has further strengthened the people's call to end the destruction and plunder wrought by big foreign mining corporations. The extensive denudation of the mountains is the main reason behind the flooding and landslides that occurred.

The worst and most extensive calamity in the history of the Cordilleras occurred at the height of typhoon Pepeng on October 8. As many as 309 were killed, 114 were injured and 36 went missing from the floods and more than 100 from the landslides. More than a billion pesos worth of agricultural products and infrastructure were destroyed. Up to 52,225 families or more than 255,000 people fled to evacuation centers.

The most number of victims came from Benguet, where more than 200 were killed. Flood waters were as high as 10 feet in several places in Baguio which for several days were isolated due to the destruction of roads leading to those areas. The towns of La Trinidad, Mankayan, Bakun, Atok and many others were also devastated.

Large-scale and destructive mining in the Cordilleras. The damage caused to the environment by the big foreign mining corporations and corrupt agencies of the reactionary government are the number one cause of the widespread flooding and landslides in the Cordillera.

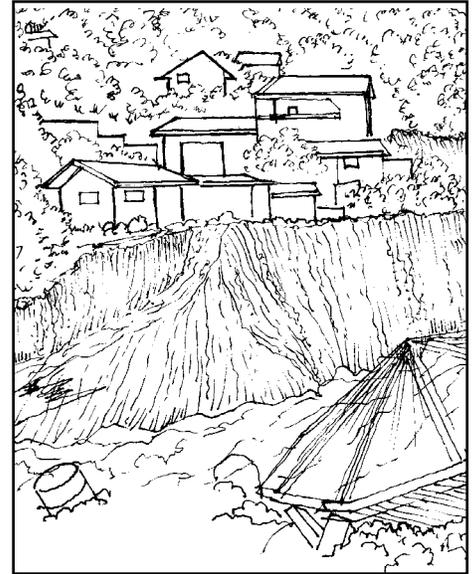
According to the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), "extensive commercial mining in the Cordillera has already caused irreversible destruction to the environment". It also pointed to, and criticized, the capitalist production predominant throughout the world and its ex-

ploitation of the environment and world's resources. It lambasted the government for passing and implemented laws that contributed to worsening climate change and natural calamities.

The Cordillera region makes up only 6% of the country. But 25% of the country's gold reserves and 39% of its copper reserves can be found in the region, despite a century of mining activities by big foreign corporations. The larger reserves can be found in the province of Benguet.

Thus, almost 66% of the entire land area of the Cordilleras is already covered by various mining applications. Five out of the 24 priority projects granted permission by the Arroyo regime to conduct large-scale mining can be found in the region. These are Far-Southeast, Teresa Gold and Victoria Project of Lepanto; Project 3000 of the Itugon-Suyoc Mines; Pacdal Copper Expansion of Philex Mining; and Batong Buhay in Kalinga.

Benguet has long been plundered by giant foreign mining corporations. Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corporation has been mining gold in the town of Mankayan for 73 years since 1930. Currently, mining exploration is being carried out by the British-owned company Bezant in Ginoang, Mankayan. Philex Mining Corporation has been mining in the town of Itogon for a decade.



This has caused severe dislocation among the people as well as destruction to agricultural land, the denudation of forests and the loss of lives and livelihoods.

Based on data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, there are now only 665,603 hectares of forest remaining in the region, down from 1,553,599 hectares. This has aggravated air and water pollution and has led to the destruction of major river systems. An example is the severe pollution of the Abra River as a result of the dumping by Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corporation of toxic waste. The pollution of the Abra River already extends to the China Sea.

Severe air and water pollution has also resulted in a 60% reduction of rice production in the region.

Foreign mining corporations have already made billions of dollars worth of profits from almost a century of operations. Despite this, the people of the Cordilleras remain poor and agriculture, fishing and logging are still their main sources of income. The government's own census shows that Cordillera is the fifth most impoverished region nationwide. **AB**

SUDECOR: Destroyer of the forests

Stop SUDECOR! Thus demanded the people of Caraga against the company responsible for the denudation and destruction of the last remaining forests of Surigao del Sur. Within the company's concession are the only remaining virgin forests in Surigao, which have been vastly reduced from 69,000 hectares to a mere 3,000 hectares. Cutting down *lawaan* (shorea) trees is rampant in the area.

SUDECOR has been depriving both the Lumad and non-Lumad of livelihood for four decades. Owned by the big comprador bourgeois Puyat family, SUDECOR has been conniving with the bureaucrat capitalists in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the unbridled plunder of the mountains and forests.

SUDECOR uses bulldozer dragging, which is an illegal logging method. On a daily basis, over 30 bulldozers cut down trees, drag them and destroy everything in their path. As a result, rivers are rapidly being destroyed due to siltation from landslides. The rivers also dry up during droughts and swell up during the rainy season, causing severe flooding. In addition, the streams have also been drying out and animals have been losing their habitats. Such devastation has been wreaking havoc on the lives of the Lumad people, farmers and workers because of the destruction of their livelihood.

In order for them to keep amassing exorbitant profits, the Puyat family formed the Special Civilian Auxiliary Army. A company under the 58th IB has also been a virtual fixture within SUDECOR. **AB**

Massive flooding in Laguna and Metro Manila

Massive floods submerged hundreds of barangays around Laguna de Bay after typhoon Ondoy unleashed its fury. Ondoy brought floods of up to 10 feet high that inundated hundreds of communities and affected more than 700,000 residents.

Laguna de Bay is the Philippines' biggest lake. It is bounded on the north by Rizal province, on the south by Laguna province and the west by Metro Manila. It empties into Manila Bay via the Pasig River. After typhoon Ondoy, water levels in Laguna de Bay rose and flooded surrounding towns.

But the floods could not be blamed solely on typhoon Ondoy. Long before the typhoon unleashed its wrath, areas in the vicinity of the lake have already been experiencing floods.

One of the culprits of the floods: the closure of the Napindan Hydraulic Control Structure (NHCS).

The NHCS was built in 1983 at the endpoint of the Napindan Channel, which lies at the upstream portion of the Pasig River that connects Laguna de Bay to Manila Bay. It was built to prevent the periodic entry of salt water from Manila Bay to Laguna de Bay, and in accordance with plans by the reactionary government to convert the lake into a primary source of potable water.

It has been years since the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) opened the NHCS, resulting in water accumulating in Laguna de Bay. In addition, water from the Marikina River is likewise being diverted towards Laguna de Bay through the Manggahan Floodway in Pasig, thus causing water levels in the

lake to rise further.

Typhoon Ondoy only hastened the occurrence of a grave tragedy that was bound to happen as a result of the NHCS's closure. Members of the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) in Rizal and Laguna said that even before the havoc wrought by the typhoon, fisherfolk and residents have already noticed the lake's rising water level that consequently caused flooding in over 30 towns of Rizal, Laguna and Metro Manila.

During typhoon Ondoy's height and its aftermath, hundreds of barangays in 20 towns in Laguna practically vanished. The affected towns were Bay, Biñan, Cabuyao, Calauan, Kalayaan, Los Baños, Lumban, Mabitac, Paete, Pakil, Pangil, Pila, San Pedro, Siniloan, Sta. Cruz and Victoria, not to mention the cities of Calamba and Sta. Rosa. Some barangays in Pagsanjan and Sta. Maria were flooded as well and so were the towns of Cainta and Pateros and the cities of Marikina, Pasig and Taguig. A week after the typhoon, towns surrounding Laguna de Bay remained submerged in water.

The Social Action Center of the Diocese of San Pablo reported on October 4 that up to 13 died and 750,248 or 30% of Laguna's 2.5 million residents were forced to flee due to the floods.

For its part, Pamalakaya has

long been demanding that the LLDA open the NHCS, or tear it down altogether. But these demands fell on deaf ears. The LLDA management claimed that it would not be easy for water from Laguna de Bay to flow to Napindan Channel in Taguig towards the Pasig River because of the presence of thousands of urban poor families along the channel's banks.

Strong criticism has prompted the reactionary government to announce recently that it would be reopening the NHCS. In exchange, however, the Arroyo government, through the LLDA and the Department of Natural Resources is pushing for the forced evacuation of residents by the lakeside in Muntinlupa, Pasig, Taguig, Cainta and Taytay. They are all small fisherfolk and urban poor families who have long been living in the area.

The truth is that the severe flooding and the NHCS' closure are being used as pretexts to push through with the forced evacuation of urban poor families living in the lake's vicinity. There are plans to reclaim some 5,000 hectares from the lake in Muntinlupa, Pateros and Taguig to pave the way for the construction of an international airport, several condominiums and posh hotels as well as six roads and dikes. The DENR and the LLDA are also planning to reclaim other areas of Laguna de Bay in Muntinlupa, Taguig and Los Baños, Laguna.

These destructive projects will only worsen flooding in Laguna, Rizal and Metro Manila because they will block the flow of water.

The opening of the NHCS will likewise be done at the cost of evicting thousands of families living along the Napindan Channel and Manggahan Floodway. **AB**

Timely assistance for victims in the National Capital Region

Metro Manila was among the most severely affected by typhoon Ondoy's rampage in September, claiming 123 lives and forcing hundreds of thousands of families to flee their homes.

But right at the height of the typhoon, progressive organizations in the National Capital Region (NCR) exemplified readiness and timely response when they assisted the victims and provided services to them.

On September 26, at the height of typhoon Ondoy, an activist group in Maybunga, Pasig City was quick to launch relief operations. Two groups were dispatched to save residents caught in the flood. They used a jeepney to transport the victims and converted a barangay hall into an evacuation center. Even non-progressive groups were encouraged to help out in evacuating the people. The activists even pulled together their remaining funds to buy half a sack of rice to make porridge for the victims at the evacuation center.

The following morning, other pro-

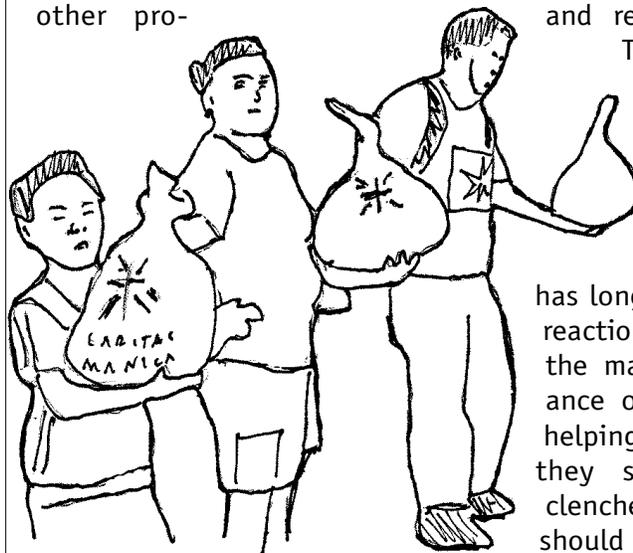
gressive organizations and political parties in the NCR also launched relief operations. They immediately formed Kilusang Bayanihan—a broad disaster response movement. They were able to solicit donations for food, medicines and other items from several institutions led by CREST (Community Response for Enlightenment Service and Transformation) and other organizations.

The youth, on the other hand, formed the Serve the People Brigade to manage relief operations in other areas. They recruited fellow youth as volunteers from schools and communities. They launched relief operations and cleanup drives in Tumana and Malanday in Marikina. Residents, meanwhile, helped each other out in cleaning up their areas.

A manifesto was also passed around to determine the needs and requests of the victims.

These simultaneous efforts elicited a positive response from gratified residents especially on the issues of livelihood and basic services whose provision

has long been neglected by the reactionary government. When the masses saw the perseverance of activist volunteers in helping their fellow Filipinos, they shouted, raising their clenched fists, "That's right, we should fight."



These activities also provided an opportunity for the progressive parties and organizations to recruit more volunteers and members.

They proceeded to Pasig to launch the succeeding relief operations.

Meanwhile, Akap-Bata Philippines and Akap-Bata sectoral organization also launched a series of relief operations. Task Force Akap-Bata began in Sta. Lucia, Pasig City on September 29. On September 30, they went to Panghulo in Malabon and San

Roque in Navotas City. On October 1, they conducted relief operations in Tunasan, Muntinlupa City. During typhoon Pepeng, they distributed relief goods in Marikina City on October 2 and used the Rotary Club of Marikina office as relief center.

That same day, progressive organizations in the NCR launched a cleanup drive. They gathered at the Marikina Bayan Sports Complex and lit candles for the typhoon victims. They also staged a picket to condemn the government's neglect of the people. This was fol-

lowed by a similar activity on October 10 where people cleaned up streets and houses in Malanday, Marikina. These organizations also initiated a petition-signing campaign to demand from the reactionary government efficient service, price controls and assistance to typhoon victims.

Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-NCR chair Roy Velez said that the house cleanup drive is only an initial step and that there is dire need for a bigger cleanup by the people of the government and society as a whole. **AB**

Stealing from the victims of disaster

A huge warehouse of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Pasay City was found to contain stocks of relief goods that are not being distributed to victims of typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng, according to a recent exposé over the internet. The piles of cots, blankets, food and various other relief goods for typhoon victims are part of millions of dollars worth of donations from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other donor countries.

Ella Rose, the volunteer at the warehouse who revealed the suspicious accumulation of relief goods said that the volunteers were only instructed to pack 10 cans of sardines, a detergent bar, several bars of bath soap and a few personal items. Imported items still inside their boxes remain untouched. Volunteers were also not allowed to pack Coleman-branded cots as well boxes from Japan with yet undetermined items, toys and many others.

The DSWD failed to convince anyone with its flimsy explanations on why they have such a huge stock of relief goods that have not yet been distributed. After several calls made by the US-based newspaper *Philippine News* for Sec. Esperanza Cabral demanding an immediate explanation, the only excuse she could come up with was that they lacked vol-

unteers to distribute these goods.

Who can believe that there is a lack of volunteers? Efforts of various groups and institutions to come to the victims' aid have been met with an outpouring of support from people who voluntarily gave time to help out.

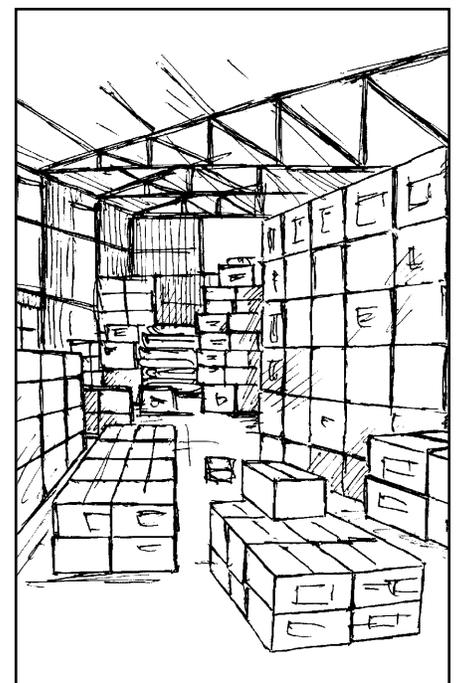
The truth is that it was difficult to be accepted as a volunteer in the warehouse, as discovered by Ella Rose and seven other fellow volunteers when they went to the DSWD to help in packing relief goods. They even needed backers just to get accepted.

They were even more surprised to see only one DSWD employee and a guard inside the more than 1,000-square meter warehouse. It was also ridiculous for the agency to say that it needed to rotate all the volunteers every four hours because the stockroom could only accommodate up to 50 volun-

teers.

It is clear that DSWD was lying to conceal a sinister plan. Will these relief goods only surface during the upcoming elections? Will the powers-that-be make money out of them?

Whatever the plan is and whoever is behind this, this is shameless thievery. What is even more outrageous is the fact that the victims of calamity are being victimized again, this time by being robbed. **AB**





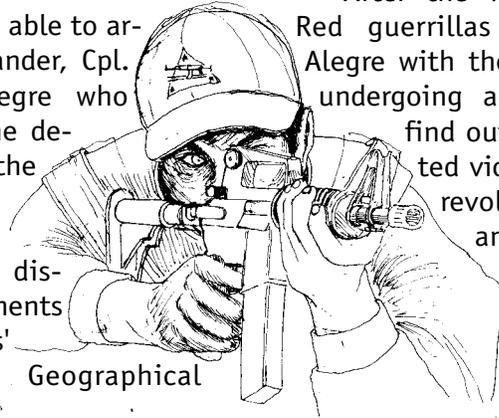
NPA seizes 18 firearms in Compostela Valley

The 4th Pulang Bagani Company of the Merardo Arce Command (4th PBC-MAC) seized 18 high-powered firearms at the 72nd IB patrol base in Sitio New Kapatagan, Barangay Casoon, Monkayo, Compostela Valley on November 2 without firing a single shot.

The raid was a big slap to the 10th Infantry Division and its notorious Oplan Bantay Laya 2 (OBL2) campaign, said the 4th PBC-MAC. The 72nd IB is under the command of the Philippine Army 10th ID.

The Red guerrillas employed a ruse and the element of surprise. Wearing Special Forces (SF) uniforms, it became easy for the Red fighters to enter the detachment

after they were able to arrest its commander, Cpl. Dominador Alegre who was outside the detachment at the time. The valiant NPA forces quickly disarmed the elements of the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit.



Seized were ten Garands, five carbines, two M16s and an M14 rifle. The comrades also seized an ICOM radio, several rounds of ammunition and other military paraphernalia such as combat boots, backpacks, ammunition pouches and military uniforms.

After the victorious raid, the Red guerrillas brought Corporal Alegre with them. He is currently undergoing an investigation to find out if he has committed violations against the revolutionary movement and the people. The Merardo Arce Command will be issuing a statement about him in due time. **AB**

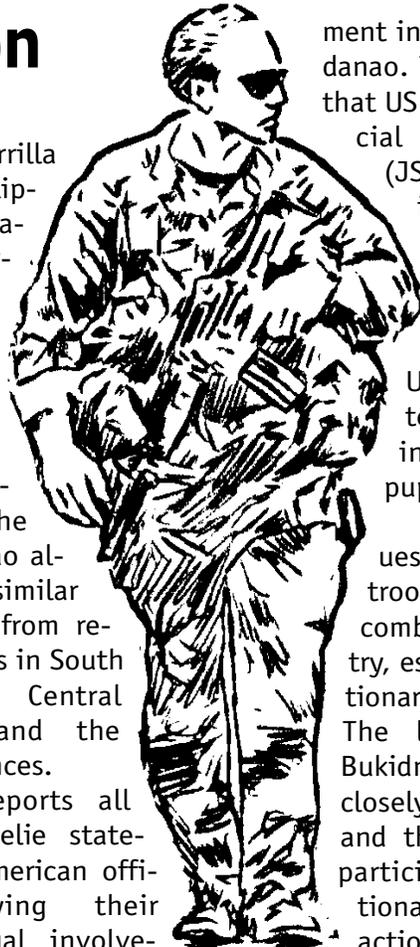
US troops in Bukidnon

American troops actively join counter-guerrilla operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Bukidnon. Thus revealed National Democratic Front (NDF)-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos. Ka Oris pointed to the active role of US military personnel in combat operations against the NPA in the hinterlands of Bukidnon.

He cited four separate incidents. In mid-February and early July, there were sightings of American soldiers participating in combat operations in Quezon, Bukidnon. The troops, including a unit of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) encountered an NPA unit and terrorized residents in the area. In April and again in September, US troops were seen with AFP soldiers in Valencia and Malaybalay asking local residents about the possible whereabouts of the NPA and even threatened civilians in the area.

On top of these reports, the NDF-Mindanao also received similar information from reliable sources in South Cotabato, Central Mindanao and the Davao provinces.

These reports all the more belie statements by American officials denying their troops' actual involve-



ment in military operations in Mindanao. The reports are added proof that US troops under the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF)-Philippines are joining AFP units in launching counterrevolutionary operations in the island.

These incidents provide clear evidence of the US's intensifying military intervention and fascist crimes in connivance with local puppet troops.

The NDF-Mindanao continues to expose the American troops' involvement in actual combat operations in the country, especially against the revolutionary forces and the people. The local NPA commands in Bukidnon have been directed to closely monitor these movements and the American troops' active participation in counterrevolutionary and antipeople military actions. **AB**



Military agents case CTUHR office in Cebu

Military agents have been conducting surveillance operations on the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) branch office in Mactan City, Cebu. This began in September when a number of burly men in crewcuts and armed with side guns regularly monitored the people entering the CTUHR office.

CTUHR volunteers reported that these military agents take turns in taking pictures of whoever was headed towards the private compound where the CTUHR-Cebu office is located. On October 2, these military assets even set up

a table in front of the compound while the office workers were holding a meeting. They scampered away when the workers went out of the office and also took their pictures.

This is mere intimidation, said

Daisy Arago, Executive Director of CTUHR-Cebu. "They want to weaken the resolve of the volunteers from working for their aspirations." The office has been active in conducting training and education campaigns on human rights after the establishment of its local chapter in April. It is also active in supporting the Unity for Workers Rights (U4WR), a broad organization of workers and workers rights advocates. The U4WR was established as a result of the mass layoffs of workers at the Mactan Economic Zone (MEZ) which was struck by the crisis of the world capitalist system. **AB**

Military agents illegally arrest 3 students

The Free Zamboanguita 3 Movement has demanded the immediate release of three students arbitrarily arrested by military agents on October 18 in Zamboanguita, Negros Oriental. They are Maria Carla Alvarico, a member of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines; Karlo Cabahug, member of the League of Filipino Students-Cebu; and Glen Absin, a student at the University of Cebu.

Elements of the 79th IB arrested them while they were conducting research together with the Kahugpungan Alang sa Ugma sa Gamay'ng Mag-uuma or KAUGMAON about the possible effects of jathropa cultivation in the province. They are now jailed at the Zamboanguita, Negros Oriental Police Station under false charges that they are New People's Army members. They were also charged with rebellion.

The CEGP and LFS are demanding not only the release of the three detainees but also the dropping of trumped-up charges against them at the Dumaguete City Regional Trial Court. **AB**

5,000 people in Mindoro hold protest

More than 5,000 Mindoro residents launched a march-rally on October 30 in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro against the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for granting an Environmental Compliance Certificate on October 14 to Intex Resources Corporation, a nickel mining company.



The protesters paraded mock coffins marked with the Intex company logo and pictures of DENR Sec. Lito Atienza to symbolize their fury.

The DENR granted Intex permission to operate and mine nickel over 11,216 hectares of what is primarily a watershed area that is the source of the Mag-asawang Tubig and Bukayao river system.

The mining company will be diverting water from the major source of irrigation for about 40,000 hectares of rice fields in the towns of Calapan, Naujan, Baco and Victoria.

The march-rally was led by Alyansa Laban sa Mina or Alamin and was attended by students, professionals, employees and local government officials, religious organizations, non-government and multisectoral organizations and delegates from the towns of Victoria, Socorro, Pinalayanan and Naujan. **AB**

Hacienda Luisita residents ordered to leave

The management of Hacienda Luisita Inc. (HLI) has imposed a deadline on the hacienda's farmers and residents to leave their homes and farmlots.

Almost 5,000 HLI farmers occupying a 2,000-hectare lot are being threatened with eviction. Led by estate manager Herman Gregorio Jr., the HLI management issued a memorandum on December 18, 2008 demanding that residents leave the hacienda and stop farming. The deadline was originally set for October 30 but protest actions by residents forced the HLI management to move it to November 15, 2009.

On the other hand, Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano expressed apprehension that the Cojuangco family which owns HLI may once again employ police and military forces to forcibly evict the residents. The lawmaker also denounced plans by San Miguel Corporation owner Danding Cojuangco to convert a part of the hacienda into a training center for the 2014 Asian Games.

It seems that Danding Co-

juangco is evading his responsibility to distribute the hacienda lands to the farmers, said Mariano. He added that Cojuangco is fully aware of the 2006 Supreme Court decision cancelling the Stock Distribution Option (SDO) through a Temporary Restraining Order issued to the HLI management. The SDO is a scheme wherein HLI distributed worthless corporate stocks to the farmers instead of distributing the hacienda lands to them.

The farmers have requested Sen. Benigno "Noy" Aquino III to mediate so that the hacienda lands could be distributed right away, since it should have been done a long time ago. United Luisita Workers Union (ULWU) chair Lito Bais has challenged the senator by telling him that if he is truly interested in distributing the lands and giving closure to the HLI issue, he himself should

start talking with the farmers and not to his uncle Danding Cojuangco.

Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas deputy secretary-general Randall Echanis, on the other hand, said Aquino's presidential ambitions have a price, and he cannot afford to be noncommittal or passive over the nearing HLI deadline. He cannot use as an excuse his family's small share of stocks in the hacienda. If he aspires to become president, he must be able to revolve issues like this, added Echanis.

The KMP reiterated its call to scrap the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program with Extension and Reforms which is an instrument to deceive the farmers. They demanded genuine agrarian reform under the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill and the distribution of HLI lands to the farmers.

A day before the eviction deadline, the farmers will be commemorating the fifth anniversary of the massacre that took place on November 16, 2004 where 12 farmers and two youth were mercilessly killed by military elements, police forces and goons of the Conjuangcos. **AB**

Rice shortage in Asia

The Arroyo government has announced that it will be forced to increase rice importation as a result of the destruction of several rice fields due to typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng. At least 925,000 tons of rice crops were destroyed in the Philippines due to these typhoons.

But a rice shortage is also looming in other Asian countries due to the destruction of millions of tons of staple crops caused by successive floods and droughts. This situation is bound to raise rice prices and result in a rice shortage in the poorest nations of

the world.

India, for instance, which is one of the world's leading rice exporters is poised to import from 1.1 to 3.8 million tons of rice next year to address its own rice shortage after being hit by a series of droughts. It also remains

unclear if China, which controls half of the world's rice supply, will export rice. Thailand is also unsure of opening up its buffer stock.

A rice crisis and a shortage of other staples in 2008 led to riots in at least 30 countries. Back then, Thailand, Vietnam and India, the biggest rice producers, controlled their grain stocks to protect their own domestic consumption. In the Philippines, people stood in long queues to buy low-quality rice at subsidized prices while traders hoarded rice

supplies.

The devastation wrought by typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng has merely brought to the fore the impending rice crisis. But it is a crisis deeply rooted in the Arroyo regime's failure to ensure sufficient agricultural land and support to farmers. Instead, the regime has relentlessly been allowing the massive conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural use.

More than 1.5 million hectares have been transferred to agribusinesses since 2005, according to the Philippine Agricultural Development and Commercial Corporation. Most of these lands are now planted to high-value commercial crops instead of rice and corn. Worse, the Arroyo government has recently approved the granting of three million hectares of land to foreign agri-corporations, including 60,000 hectares to the Japanese-owned Pacific Bio-Fields Corporation. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has also already allowed the exclusive use of 375,091 hectares of land for jatropha cultivation, and even opened 30 hectares more to public bidding.

Land conversion has already had dire consequences. Since the 1990s, rice lands have been reduced by 87,000 hectares and corn lands by almost 300,000 hectares. Because of the consequent rice shortage, at least 10% of the Filipino people's rice consumption is sourced from abroad. The Philippines is currently the world's biggest rice importer. AB



Number of poor increases—Ibon

MORE and more people consider themselves poor, based on a survey by IBON Foundation in October. The survey was conducted after typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng left a wide swath of destruction across the country.

The nationwide survey was conducted from October 2 to 8 with 1,496 respondents. The survey showed that seven out of ten people or 71.4% consider themselves poor, a 4% increase from Ibon's survey results in July. Majority of the respondents were from Metro Manila, registering 62.4% of the total survey results. This is higher by 13% compared with the July results of 49%.

The survey also shows that 57% of the respondents believe that their family income is not sufficient to meet their basic needs, a 4% increase compared to results last July.

Philippines won't receive \$2M military aid from US

THE Philippine government will not be receiving \$2 million in military aid from the US government this year due to the Arroyo regime's notorious record of human rights violations. This was revealed by Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares who had just arrived from his US trip where he was able to talk with US State Department officials.

Colmenares likewise said that the Philippines will also probably not be receiving such military aid from the US in 2010 because the US House of Representatives has filed a resolution stating that it will only release the \$2 million military assistance if the Arroyo regime implements three conditions pertaining to the observance of human rights.

These are the implementation of recommendations by United Nations Special Rapporteur Prof. Philip Alston on how to stop extrajudicial killings and abductions; the investigation and trial of military personnel accused of human rights violations; and a stop to threats and atrocities committed by the AFP against members of legal organizations and human rights advocates.

Alston also recommended, among others, that Gen. Jovito Palparan, now a congressman, be put on trial for grave human rights abuses.

Obama's war in Afghanistan

US Pres. Barack Obama has ordered an additional 13,000 American troops in Afghanistan on top of the 21,000 troops he sent there in April. The orders were given amid growing international criticism of the war in Afghanistan and announcements by Germany and other US allies of their intention to withdraw their troops.

The soldiers are not part of the over 40,000 troops being requested by Gen. Stanley McChrystal, commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. In August, he submitted a report to Obama and the NATO stating that if the US does not send additional troops at the soonest time possible, the Taliban will quickly take over Afghanistan.

The additional 13,000 forces are purportedly support forces—engineers, medical personnel, intelligence experts and military police—who are allegedly non-combatants being sent there to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

Obama approved the quiet deployment of additional troops in October, only a few days after he was granted the Nobel Peace Prize for his alleged "unique efforts in strengthening diplomacy and international cooperation." This award earned widespread

denunciation since it was granted amid the US's escalating war in Afghanistan.

The troop buildup approved by Obama brings the number of US forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan to a level higher than that which prevailed at the height of the war in Iraq in late 2007 and early 2008. As of October, there were 65,000 American forces in Afghanistan and 124,000 in Iraq. At the height of the war in Iraq, US troops numbered 26,000 in Afghanistan and 160,000 in Iraq.

Meanwhile, as a result of strong criticisms against the US' continuing and intensifying war in Afghanistan, Washington is still locked in debate on the bigger troop deployment requested by General McChrystal. There is also furious debate in Washington on proposals for the US to draw up a troop withdrawal strategy in Afghanistan.



US warned against deadly drone attacks

The United Nations (UN) has warned the United States government against growing incidents of drone attacks primarily in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Drones are remote-controlled aircraft. Aside from drones used in surveillance, there are drones used to attack and bomb particular targets.

Since US President Barack Obama assumed office, there has been an increasing number of drone attacks on areas considered as "terrorist lairs" along the Pakistani-Afghan border.

Drones have already killed about 600 people in northwest Pakistan since August 2008.

According to Prof. Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, the US should explain the legal basis for attacking individuals with drones.

The US, he added, has the responsibility to ensure that these drones are not being utilized for arbitrary and extrajudicial assassinations.

He also said that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has to show accountability to international laws which ban arbitrary executions.

It is the CIA that identifies persons and communities to be targeted by drones.

AB