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Editorial

Rottenness pervades the AFP

A former officer of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), a former government auditor and other witnesses have exposed large-scale corruption within the reactionary military. They have confirmed and disclosed in detail what the people have known all along—that corruption permeates the entire AFP.

The most striking among their exposés are the hundreds of millions of pesos worth of “sendoff gifts,” “welcome gifts” and many other perks and privileges enjoyed by AFP chiefs. The whistleblowers exposed the depth and breadth of corruption in the military and its systematic nature, where various military officers collude with each other and with officials of the Commission on Audit, the courts, the Ombudsman and other high-ranking government officials.

Corruption within the AFP has long been out in the open. There have been longstanding complaints of how officers have been stealing funds earmarked for military operations and soldiers' rations, salaries, insurance and pensions. Funds are skimmed from money meant for weapons, ammunition and other military equipment, as well as that meant for the operations of paramilitary forces and “rebel returnee” programs. Even funds provided by the United Nations for peace-keeping forces have not been exempt from the grimy hands of greedy officers of the AFP.

In doubling the AFP budget, the Aquino regime has merely doubled opportunities

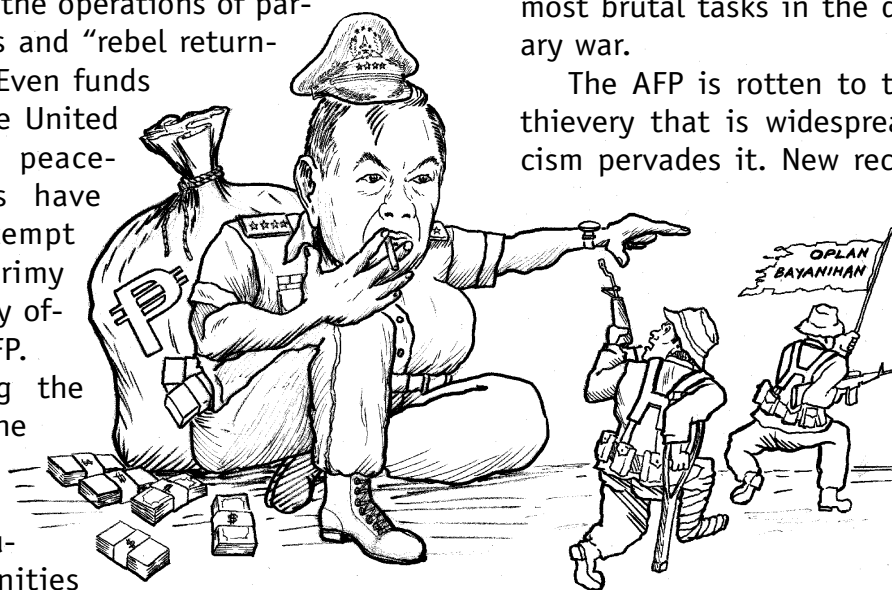
for corruption.

Corruption in the AFP is an added burden to the Filipino people, particularly to junior officers and the rank and file. Avaricious generals pocket billions of pesos and their wives and children wallow in luxury while ordinary soldiers, lower-ranking officers and their families make do with meager salaries that are often late in coming. They are also deprived of many benefits.

The corruption engaged in by their high-ranking officers is enraging to the foot soldiers. These thieving generals and their profligate wives and children rake in billions of pesos and obsess themselves with building grandiose mansions and going on pleasure trips abroad. Back home, foot soldiers and junior officers are at their wits' end trying to live on a mere pittance. Many of them have houses in cramped urban poor communities and could only dream of providing comfortable lives for their families.

It is the foot soldiers who are used as cannon fodder in a war they are incapable of winning. They are used as henchmen by their callous superior officers who drive them into undertaking the most brutal tasks in the dirty counterrevolutionary war.

The AFP is rotten to the core. It is not only thievery that is widespread. The culture of fascism pervades it. New recruits and the rank and file are treated like drudges and are themselves subjected to abuse. Stripped of their humanity, they are taught the most savage methods of conducting their filthy war of suppression against the people.



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Rottenness and corruption are likewise rife in the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other security forces of the reactionary state. Top-ranking police and military officers are involved in criminal syndicates such as those engaged in carjacking, drugs, kidnapping, *jueteng* protection rackets and the like.

The Aquino regime is scrambling to project an image of reforming the AFP. This is being done in accordance with the US Counterinsurgency Guide which emphasizes the importance of reforming the military in order to make it a more effective instrument in suppressing "threats" to the ruling state. Aquino wants a refurbished AFP in his desperate attempt to win popular support for his antipeople war.

This can never happen. In serving as a pillar of the rotten semicolonial and semifeudal system, rottenness and corruption can never be excised from the AFP.

Disgust over large-scale corruption in the AFP runs deep and wide among junior officers and the rank and file. Conditions are excellent for them to realize their true situation and the need to wage resistance. Most of them come from the toiling masses and were only

forced to enlist as soldiers because of widespread unemployment and massive poverty in the country. Soon, they will come to grasp that this ruling system lorded over by plunderers and big thieves in the AFP and the reactionary government are not worth dying for.

In the face of all this, the revolutionary forces must step up their work within the reactionary army alongside redoubling their efforts to mobilize the people for the revolution. We must reach out to the masses of soldiers and junior officers and encourage them to turn their backs on the rotten reactionary and fascist army, join the movement of patriotic soldiers and join or support the revolutionary movement. We must urge them to follow the example of Lt. Crispin Tagamolila who defected from the Philippine Constabulary in 1971, joined the New People's Army and became a hero of the Philippine revolution.

As the people's war intensifies, more and more foot soldiers and junior officers of the AFP will join and support the revolutionary movement against the rotten reactionary ruling system. **AB**

Rampant corruption in the AFP

A former budget officer of the AFP revealed in January the anomalies and systematic corruption in the military, especially among its highest ranking officers. In a series of hearings at the Senate that began in January, Ret. Lt. Col. George Rabusa and other witnesses testified on the longstanding tradition of giving "welcome" and "sendoff gifts" to AFP chiefs of staff and on many other ways of stealing from AFP funds.

Rabusa said one of the many officers on the take was former Gen. Angelo Reyes, who received P10 million pesos as a "welcome gift", P5 million monthly (or P100 million in total during his 20-month stint as AFP chief) and P50 million as a "sendoff gift" upon his retirement from the AFP in 2001.

Rabusa also testified that Gens. Diomedio Villanueva and Roy Cimatú received "sendoff gifts" of P160 million and P80 million respectively when they retired.

An AFP officer who requested anonymity also said that most of the money used for such gifts were sourced from "conversions." This illegal practice was first exposed by Capt. Rene Jarque before his death in 2005. Jarque then singled out Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia as one of the most notorious players in the AFP "conversion" racket.

Among the examples of how "conversion" is done is through the non-completion of deliveries of military supplies and equipment, as well as through overpricing and the extraction of kickbacks from transactions. In purchasing P10 million worth of medicines, for instance, a colluding supplier may deliver only P5 million worth but still



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indicate in the receipt that he delivered ₱10 million worth. The ₱5 million balance is then divided between the supplier and officer in charge of the procurement. Other cases involve ghost deliveries.

Rabusa also detailed anomalies in the AFP's purchase of millions of pesos worth of equipment. He cited the procurement from Thailand of ₱200 million worth of ammunition for 105 mm howitzers and \$2 million worth of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) from Israel.

On the other hand, Lt. Col. Antonio Lim, currently the AFP's Deputy Budget Officer testified that General Reyes and then AFP Comptroller Gen. Jacinto Ligot gave directions on how to source funds from transactions. Both Rabusa and Lim said these purchases were riddled with anomalies, especially since neither of them was covered by official contracts or had gone through public bidding and because the so-called "procurement system" was thoroughly rotten.

Rabusa disclosed that even generals' wives and other family members were given "sendoff funds" during their travels or pleasure trips abroad. Each of them was gifted a minimum of ₱20,000 if they travelled within the country and \$10,000 if they travelled abroad. The money was sourced from a "slush fund." Rabusa said this happened so frequently that he could no longer recall how many times he personally handed over "sendoff money" to General Reyes and General Ligot's wives.

Another milch cow was the "provision for command-directed activities" (PCDA), a fund controlled by the office of the Chief of Staff. The PCDA funds are collected from the offices of the AFP Joint Staff. But since this isn't enough, additional funds are taken from the budgetary allocations of the AFP's

Letting General Garcia go with a slap on the wrist

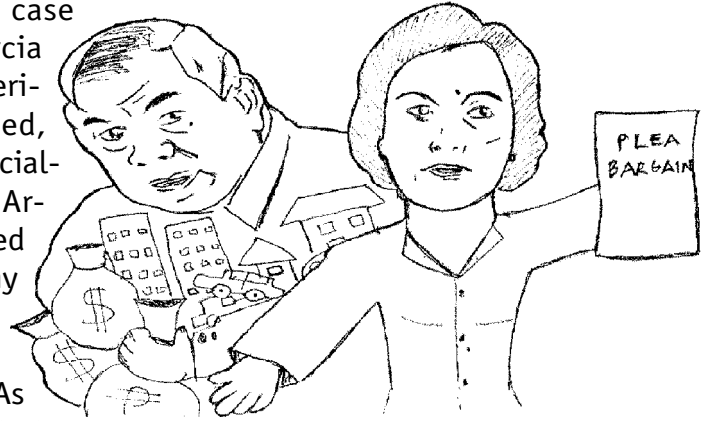
The Ombudsman filed a case of plunder against Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia in 2005 for stealing ₱303.27 million in AFP funds. Garcia, a former AFP Comptroller had a key role in controlling the military budget.

The case against Garcia was never seriously pursued, however, especially after Gloria Arroyo appointed her close crony Merceditas Gutierrez as Ombudsman. As early as 2009,

Garcia and Gutierrez had already reportedly been cooking up a deal on how to let the general go with just a slap on the wrist.

In December 2010, the Office of the Ombudsman officially announced that it had entered into a plea bargain agreement with Garcia. Under the agreement, Garcia would plead guilty to the lesser charge of "direct bribery" and return the amount of ₱135 million to the government. In exchange, the Ombudsman would withdraw the more serious charge of plunder.

Being charged with a lesser crime has enabled Garcia to



post bail and be released from detention.

The Ombudsman claimed the plea bargain agreement was entered into because there was not enough evidence to convict Garcia of plunder.

The agreement has since been under attack from several quarters and has prompted Heidi Mendoza, a former employee of the Commission on Audit (COA) to come forward and courageously disclose the truth about the case.

Mendoza had led a team of auditors to look into AFP transactions when Garcia was still AFP Comptroller. She said there was plenty of evidence to

major services—the Army, Navy and Air Force—as well as the Philippine Military Academy, the Presidential Security Group and the AFP Medical Center.

The others who benefit from the PCDA are the AFP Vice Chief of Staff, the Deputy Chief of Staff, the Secretary of the Joint Staff, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Senior Military Aide, the Military Auditor, the Liaison Officer on Legislative Affairs, retired generals, the defense press corps, the surgeon gener-

al and the chief nurse. Even the gardeners and other military staff had their share of the largesse.

Another source of funds are "savings" from the budget earmarked for the soldiers' salaries. This is possible because of the AFP's practice of requesting a salary budget that is far bigger than what it actually needs. The AFP also skims funds from the budget allotted for combat operations and the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit. **AB**



nail Garcia. Among them was a check for P200 million signed by Garcia. The amount represents the United Nations' (UN) reimbursement for the expenses of soldiers who had gone on peace-keeping missions for the UN. Garcia had the amount broken down and transferred to his personal bank accounts.

When the UN learned about the anomaly, it requested Mendoza to conduct a deeper investigation. In particular, it asked her to probe a \$5 million check that had been issued to an AFP officer at the Philippine Permanent Mission in New York. The amount has not turned up in any of the AFP's accounts and was not deposited in any other bank account for that matter.

When Mendoza proceeded to investigate, she was stripped of authorization by former COA chairman Guillermo Carague. Carague had also reportedly told Mendoza that there were five other higher-ranking officers who were on Garcia's payroll. Mendoza was told not to write her report and to return the documents in her possession.

She had also earlier been told of a Malacañang order to the COA to "go slow" on the investigation because of possible effects on "national security."

Mendoza could no longer stomach all this and eventually resigned from the COA. **AB**

Garcia's stolen millions

With General Garcia's declared income and other assets amounting to just a little more than P2 million, he has been hard put explaining his acquisition of the following:

- the \$100,000 (or P5 million) his sons tried to smuggle into the US in 2003. Garcia and his wife had earlier been able to each bring \$100,000 legally into the US.

- big houses, apartments and two expensive condominiums in the US, each worth \$750,000 (P37.5 million).

- almost \$800,000 (P40 million) worth of bank deposits in the US owned by his family.

- more than \$100,000 in deposits in a Philippine bank and P12 million deposited at the AFP and PNP bank.

- two big agrcorporations, the IJT Mango Orchard Inc. and the IJT Katamnan Corp. that earn more than P300,000 yearly, land and other expensive real estate properties in various subdivisions across the country.

- eight luxury vehicles.

NPA seizes 9 firearms in two ambushes

The New People's Army (NPA) seized nine firearms in tactical offensives launched in Agusan del Sur and Cagayan. Nine enemy elements were killed and 11 were wounded in these firefights. A policeman has also been taken into custody by the guerrillas.

In Agusan del Sur, a unit under the NPA Conrado Heredia Command attacked an outpost of the 1403rd Police Provincial Mobile Goup in Pulang Lupa, Trento on February 1. Aside from the policemen, the outpost was also being manned by members of Agusan del Sur Gov. Adolph Edward "Eddie Bong" Plaza's private army. The NPA seized two M16 rifles, a shotgun and a cal .45 pistol.

Killed in the ambush were two members of Plaza's private army. Meanwhile, PO3 Jorge Sabatin was taken into custody after he surrendered to the NPA. He was slightly wounded in the right leg and was treated by guerrilla medics. An investigation is underway on whether he has committed any serious crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement.

Contrary to police and military claims that the target was a DENR Bantay Kalikasan checkpoint, the police and Plaza's armed men manning the outpost actually extorted a minimum of P1,000 from every truckload of logs that passed by. The police and private army thugs victimized both legal and illegal loggers. The NPA also belied claims by military propagandists that the policemen and Plaza's armed goons were involved in relief operations for flood victims in the area.

In Cagayan, guerrillas under the NPA Danilo Ben Command seized four M16 rifles and a cal .38 revolver in an ambush on a group of police officers in Barangay Illuro Sur, Rizal town on January 23.

Five PNP elements were killed and two others were wounded in the ambush.

Killed were P/Insp. Antonino Rueco, SPO2 Mary Ann Rueco, PO2 Hermilio Rueco, PO2 Jose Baquiran and PO1 Joven Jimenez.

Wounded were SPO4 Elison Lacua and PO1 Valiant Bustamante. **AB**



Celebrating the CPP's 42nd anniversary in Mindoro

Red commanders and fighters, their families, members of local Party branches and the revolutionary mass base gathered to celebrate the 42nd anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines-Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (CPP-MLM) in an interior village in southern Occidental Mindoro.

NPA Lucio de Guzman Command spokesperson Ka Higom Maragang said up to 250 peasants and allies joined back to back celebrations of the anniversary on December 25 and 28, warmly sharing lunch and afternoon snacks with Red fighters.

The cultural presentations centered on depictions of the struggle of the Mangyan tribespeople and settlers against the owners of big pasturelands in the 1980s and how this intertwined

with the establishment of the first guerrilla fronts in the island. The participants also recalled the heroic struggle against the terrorist counterrevolutionary campaign launched by past regimes, especially during the time of Gen. Jovito Palparan's rampage and that of Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2.

Also a main feature of the celebration were the challenges currently being faced and the ongoing campaign against de-



structive large-scale foreign mining operations as well as militarization under the new Oplan Bayanihan counter-revolutionary campaign.

The comrades and the peasant masses enthusiastically participated in the cultural presentations. Through speeches and the creative depiction of the experiences and aspirations of the indigenous toiling masses, the participants were able to share experiences on military abuse against the national minorities in the island. They also tackled the dangers posed by impending large-scale mining operations in Mindoro.

Parents recalled before the Mangyan youth their victorious struggle against the vast pasturelands. The mountains reverberated with the slogans "We won the struggle against the pasturelands back then, and we will win the struggle against the mines now!"

The participants also condemned the 80th IB's violation of the holiday ceasefire. Fascist troops of the reactionary government had treacherously attacked an NPA mass work unit in Sitio Upper Balading, Barangay Bayotbot, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro midnight of December 23. Elements from the 80th IB and the CAFGU killed a young cultural worker who would have been present at the celebration.

Various NPA units, people's militia and the peasant masses all contributed in ensuring a joyous and secure celebration of the Party's anniversary.

3 CAFGU elements killed in sapper operation in Quezon

A unit under the Apolonio Mendoza Command (NPA-Quezon) launched a sapper operation on a detachment of the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Barangay Sumalang, Lopez, Quezon on January 16.

It was a little past midnight when Red fighters launched the daring attack, using command-detonated explosives. At least three CAFGU elements were killed and an undetermined number wounded. The explosion also destroyed three huts.

The CAFGU detachment was under the command of the Philippine Army 59th IB.

Meanwhile, an abusive policeman was killed in an NPA ambush on January 30 in Barangay Balubad, Atimonan, Quezon. PO3 Diosdado Corilla, who was assigned to the Atimonan Police Office victimized innocent town residents. The people of Atimonan had long been demanding justice for Corilla's crimes.

A special committee was formed by the revolutionary government to investigate the cases against Corilla. The committee confirmed that Corilla was responsible for killing Helario Pantoja, a farmer and part-time tricycle driver. Corilla shot him to death on November 13, 2010 in Barangay Tagbakin, Atimonan, accusing him of being an NPA member.

Corilla was also responsible for killing activist Ryan Perifina on December 8, 2010. The 17-year old Perifina was a high school student at the Leon Guinto Memorial College in Atimonan.

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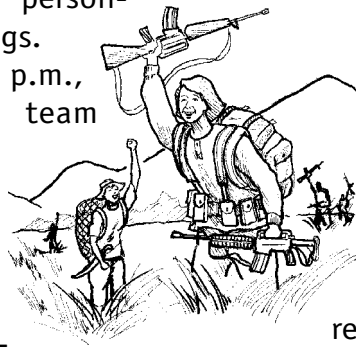
NPA meets onslaught of Oplan Bayanihan in SMR with tactical offensives

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) now tags groups of soldiers conducting military operations in the countryside as "peace and development teams" (PDT). As expected, the soldiers' conduct has been the exact opposite of what their new monicker conveys. The AFP continues on its rampaging missions in various parts of the country. In Southern Mindanao Region (SMR), the Red army did not pass up the opportunity to deal blows on abusive military troops.

At 1 a.m on January 10, a composite force of 400 soldiers, policemen and CAFGU elements from the 69th and 72nd IB and the PNP Special Action Force as well as paramilitaries from the Bahani Long Range Platoon (BLRP) swooped down on Barangays Lumiad and Mapula in Paquibato. They were reportedly in pursuit of an NPA unit in the area. When they failed to find any guerrillas, they arrested several residents and accused them of being NPA members. The BLRP forces threatened to

kill the captives. The civilians were subjected to interrogation and three houses were ransacked by the mercenary troops who either destroyed or stole the owners' personal belongings.

At 5:30 p.m., a sapper team from the N P A Amoran Saripada C o m - mand (ASC-NPA) detonated a bomb, target-



ing operating troops in Sitio Riverside, Barangay Lumiad, and later opened fire on the enemy.

The NPA continued to take action against the military's brutality. Aside from the January 10 offensive, a team from the ASC-NPA also harassed the 69th IB-AFP-CAFGU Patrol Base in Barangay Paradise Embac.

At 3 a.m. of January 18, a commando squad from the 1st Pulang Bagani Company ambushed military, police and BLRP elements in the thick of operations in Purok New Guinobatan, Barangay Paquibato Proper, killing four (three soldiers and a paramilitary) and wounding nine others (five policemen and four soldiers).

The targeted troops were guilty of the following:

- 1) Forcibly arming residents of Sitio Damilag, Barangay Mapula to fight the NPA;
- 2) Ordering an official of Barangay Paradise to threaten residents of Purok New Guinobatan and Barangay Manipis that their communities would be bombed by the military;
- 3) Threatening and terrorizing residents of Paquibato since January 13. The villagers have had to stop their farming activities out of fear. A farmer was shot at by 69th IB troops just because he was seen picking star apples from a tree in his own backyard;
- 4) Beating up farmer Oming Tiokas on January 21.

NPA-SMR political director Ka Simon Santiago said that the series of punitive military actions by the NPA serves as a warning to abusive troops and some tribal leaders who have been collaborating with the 10th ID against the people. Like the failed Oplan Bantay Laya, Oplan Bayanihan will likewise fail to stop the advance of people's war.

NPA-Bicol holds people's clinic

MORE than 700 impoverished people in Bicol benefited from free medical and dental services provided by members of the New People's Army (NPA) and other revolutionary forces during a recent People's Clinic. The guerrillas also addressed the masses' other welfare needs.

In a bulletin, National Democratic Front-Bicol spokesperson Ka Greg Bañares said the locals had long been complaining of various illnesses. But the reactionary government has consistently failed to provide basic health care to the people. The strong rains that have led to floods and landslides have worsened the situation, as the series of calamities has destroyed crops and caused widespread hunger.

The revolutionary government's assistance in the affected areas has come in the form of relief goods, seedlings and ti-lapia fingerlings, among others. This is accompanied by efforts to organize, educate and mobilize the people in the collective endeavor to fight poverty. This is part of the program of the People's Democratic Government to develop the economy and effectively provide basic services not only during calamities.

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Fascism in new garb

Oplan Bayanihan in Southern Mindanao and Cagayan Valley

Contrary to the Aquino regime and the AFP's claims that human rights will be respected under Oplan Bayanihan, reports of military abuses continue to reach *Ang Bayan*. Following are the latest cases collated by AB:

In Tagum City, six soldiers from the 69th IB who were all in full combat gear stormed the office of Sildap, an organization engaged in welfare projects in Lumad communities in Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte and other areas beyond the reach of government services. The soldiers interrogated the office staff on their organization and its members. They accused the staff of being NPA supporters. The 69th IB later admitted that the incident formed part of its "peace and development outreach program" under Oplan Bayanihan.

Soldiers had earlier gone to the Sildap office on December 11 and 14, 2010. They took pictures of the posters on the walls and also went to the house of one of Sildap's staff.

In Jones, Isabela, four soldiers posing as Red guerrillas approached a group of 12 peasants working on their farms on January 10 and asked them where the local NPA unit was. They claimed that they had been separated from their comrades. When the farmers said that had not seen any Red fighters, the soldiers refused to budge. One of them later took

video footages of four of the farmers. The peasants later saw the four impostors in the company of uniformed soldiers.

Earlier, on January 7, twenty soldiers posing as NPA guerrillas ordered 29-year old Marjun Dacuso to tell them where the Party anniversary celebration was held. When Dacuso answered that he didn't know, one of the soldiers threatened to harm him. The military ransacked Dacuso's house and that of his brother Marvin. They cooked rice stolen from the family's supply. Not satisfied, they later destroyed the Dacuso family's crops.

The day before, two other residents of Jones had been subjected to military abuse. Soldiers masquerading as Red fighters slapped Rene Dumalawon, 24 and Ronald Agustin, 22, when they failed to give any information on an NPA camp that the troops had been looking for. AB

Military charged with murder for death of Leonard Co

The families of Leonard Co, Sofronio Cortez and Julio Borromeo (dubbed the "Kananga 3") filed murder charges against 38 soldiers of the 19th IB. The Kananga 3 were killed when they were shot at by elements of the 19th IB while conducting research in a forested area of Kananga, Leyte on November 15. The military insists that the victims were killed in the crossfire during an encounter between the 19th IB and the New People's Army (NPA).

The families of the Kananga 3 decided to file charges against the soldiers after a task force formed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate the killing exonerated the 19th IB.

The DOJ Task Force's report which was released on January 7 said that none of the firearms submitted for analysis by the 19th IB matched the bullets extracted from the victims' bodies

or the shells found at the site of the shooting.

The task force also sided with the 19th IB's version, saying there was an exchange of gunfire and that the bullets that killed Co and his two companions came from the NPA's alleged position at that time.

The DOJ Task Force also recommended charging the Energy Development Corporation for



negligence, saying the company was responsible for Co's activities.

AGHAM (Science and Technology for the People) blasted the DOJ Task Force's investigation results as a whitewash. AGHAM is one of the convenors of the Justice for Leonard Co Movement.

A fact-finding mission organized by AGHAM revealed that



Co and his companions were not killed in a crossfire. They were in fact, the actual targets of the military's fire. AGHAM also decried the DOJ Task Force's disregard for the testimonies of Co's surviving companions Policarpio Balute and Roniño Gibe who actually witnessed the soldiers shooting. The two eyewitnesses said that there was no one else at the scene and that the shots all came from one direction.

AGHAM added that it was puzzling why the 19th IB surrendered only nine firearms for analysis when there were almost 40 soldiers involved in the military operation. The task force also disregarded the fact that there were so many bullet holes found on the trunks of trees facing the military's position.

AGHAM belied the DOJ Task Force's claims that there were

three bullets fired from a lower position and it was these bullets that hit the victims. AGHAM said Co and his companions were already occupying practically the lowest level in the area's terrain. It added that it was the survivors who were actually exposed to the area where the bullets that killed the victims allegedly came from. This renders the DOJ Task Force's conclusions contrary to the actual events.

The task force also did not hold the soldiers accountable for failing to provide medical attention to Borromeo who was hit in the chest and died before reaching the hospital. The 19th IB's forces instead spent hours interrogating the survivor they found at the scene.

Even other experts like Dr. Raquel Fortun, a forensic pa-

thologist, said that it was impossible for the 19th IB not to have hit Co or anyone in his team after firing close to 250 rounds. She concurred with AGHAM's position that all of the soldiers' firearms should have been submitted for analysis.

Co's family has gone to the DOJ to appeal for a reinvestigation of the case. The Co family's lawyer, Atty. Evalyn Ursua said that they would ask for a nullification of the DOJ Task Force's investigation. She added that they had strong evidence that no firefight transpired, based on the sworn statements of Co's surviving companions.

DOJ Sec. Leila de Lima has positively responded and said that a new group will be formed to undertake a thorough study of the deaths of the Kananga 3. AB

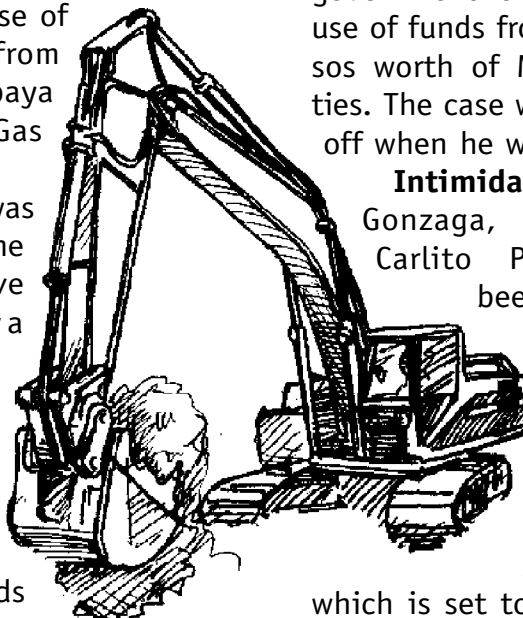
Violence and harassment by big mining companies

Dr. Gerardo "Gerry" Ortega, 47, a veterinarian, anchorman of a radio program on DWAR Palawan and an environmental advocate against destructive large-scale mining was shot dead in Puerto Princesa City on January 24. The radioman, who was killed while shopping for shoes at a discount store was a strong critic of the province's corrupt politicians who were behind illegal mining activities in Palawan.

Four assailants are in police custody: One who was captured while fleeing the scene of the crime, two others who were fingered by him and a fourth who surrendered, has confessed and identified the mastermind. Two of the assailants have disclosed that they were hired to kill Ortega for P150,000. Initial investigations have traced the ownership of the murder weapon to a lawyer and provincial administrator of a former governor who was frequently the target of Ortega's hardhitting commentaries for his involvement in illegal

mining and anomalies in the use of royalties from the Malampaya Natural Gas Project.

Ortega was active in the Kilusan Love Malampaya (KLM), an organization that aimed to determine the whereabouts of funds



from the Malampaya Natural Gas Project and provide the people of Palawan their rightful share of the royalties. The Local Government Code stipulates that 40% of the royalties from the project should benefit the people of the province. Up to P20 million in royalties is said to have been stolen. Ortega had assembled an airtight case against the Palawan provincial government on the anomalous use of funds from billions of pesos worth of Malampaya royalties. The case was about to take off when he was murdered.

Intimidation in Cagayan. Gonzaga, Cagayan mayor Carlito Pentecostes has been bullying officials of Barangay Calayan into signing a document endorsing the operations of Huan Xia Corporation which is set to mine magnetite

in the area. Pentecostes called the barangay officials for a meeting on January 8, bringing along with him a platoon of the 17th IB. Instead of consulting them, he demanded their signatures on the document he prepared, branding those who immediately refused as NPA supporters. The incident was repeated on January 12 in another meeting called by Pentecostes, and where soldiers of the 17th IB were again present.

Huan Xia Corporation plans to replace Unimaster Conglomeration Incorporated (UCI) in mining magnetite in the area. UCI has been compelled to stop its mining operations after a punitive operation by the NPA on December 2 where Red fighters torched P10 million worth of the company's quarrying equipment. The NPA also disarmed the company's guards.

Local officials of Cagayan allied with the Enrile dynasty are staunch supporters of destructive foreign mining companies in the province. The 17th IB and the PNP, which serve as the main security force of corrupt officials conduct military operations and harass peasant leaders.

The people of Cagayan have been launching protest actions against UCI since 2006. Magnetite mining in the area has resulted in the destruction of farmlands and irrigation systems. It has also polluted the Wangag River, once touted as the country's cleanest. The campaign against imperialist mining in Gonzaga has spread to the nearby towns of Aparri, Buguey, Camalaniugan, Lallo and Sta. Ana which have also suffered from the destruction wrought by mining operations. AB

Military abuses against children

Ang Bayan has collated three striking cases of military abuse against minors.

In Iloilo, a 14-year old girl has been traumatized due to the terrorism of elements of the 61st IB. The girl is the eldest of five daughters of Manuelito and Annabelle Lorena, residents of Barangay Binolosan Grande, Calinog, Iloilo.

The incident occurred in the afternoon of January 5 when five soldiers of the 61st IB and four CAFGU elements entered the Lorenas' house, allegedly looking for members of the New People's Army (NPA).

Annabelle, 31, recounted that she was then with her daughters aged 2, 5, 7, 9 and 14 years. Her husband was not around because he was peddling bananas in the adjacent town of Lambunao. It was 12:20 p.m. when the soldiers led by a certain Opeña approached their house and asked them about the rebels. They were then mashing boiled bananas when two of the soldiers entered their house and trained their guns at her family.

One of the soldiers told them not to move or he would shoot. Annabelle's 14-year old daughter was terrified when she saw a rifle aimed at her head. She ran and hit a wall of their house. Her younger sisters then started crying.

Since the incident, the 14-year old has had nightmares and has been acting strangely. She once bound the hands of one of her sisters. A medical certificate issued by the Dr. Ricardo S. Pro-

vido Sr. Memorial District Hospital on January 14 states that the patient was suffering from anxiety reaction.

In Davao City, a 17-year old girl continues to be exploited by the 10th ID in its campaign to malign the NPA.

The 10th ID has falsely claimed that "Amanda" (not her real name) escaped from the NPA on September 14.

In fact, "Amanda" who is a resident of Escandor, Baracatan, Toril District was maliciously used as an asset by the military against the NPA. She is a victim of rape and sexual abuse by a soldier from the 84th IB who courted her. She was forced into admitting that she was an NPA member when she went to a military detachment upon the soldier's request.

The 84th IB had conducted aggressive military operations in "Amanda's" barangay in mid-2010, harassing villagers by conducting a terrifyingly prying census and accusing them of being NPA leaders or members.

In Compostela Valley, soldiers of the 25th IB detained 13 peasant women last September, including two girls aged 13 and 14 years old girl and a 65-year old grandmother. They were accused of being NPA members. The two minors were jailed for four days in Monkayo with the other detainees before being rescued by the DSWD. AB



Contractualization: A bane on workers

When ten workers at the Eton Residences construction site in Makati City plunged to their deaths on January 27, it was not only the sight of their mangled bodies that seared the public consciousness. The intense exploitation that they and other contractual workers suffer was also starkly brought to the fore.

Slave wages, the absence of benefits, job security and any form of assistance from both their employers and the Department of Labor and Employment—these and more were thrust before the public eye by the grim tragedy. Also bared was the fact that Eton Residences' subcontractor failed to comply with regulations ensuring the health and safety of its workers.

The workers were then installing glass windows at the 32nd floor when the gondola they were riding came crashing down towards the 7th floor. Ten of the workers died on the spot and the lone survivor suffered multiple fractures. They were contracted by Arlo Aluminum and Glass Inc. (ALGI), a subcontractor of Eton Properties. Eton Properties is owned by Lucio Tan, one of the wealthiest businessmen in the Philippines.

ALGI's workers earn a daily wage of only ₱260 despite the fact that the minimum daily wage for Metro Manila is now ₱402. They do not receive any night differential and 13th month pay, nor do they have bonuses. The company has not remitted their contributions to the SSS. They do not have benefits from PAG-IBIG or Philhealth or any insurance for their health and safety, even if construction work is considered one of the most dangerous jobs worldwide.

Subcontracting and labor-only contracting are rampant in the construction business. Most workers employed by the sector are hired either on a daily or "pakyaw" basis, depending on how much work should be done and how much time they have to do it. The "pakyaw" system involves the employment of an

entire group to accomplish a specific set of tasks in a given timeframe. Under this system, the employer deals only with the "kabo" or group leader and has no obligations to the individual workers. This practice has become legal by virtue of Department Order 18-02 of the Department of Labor and Employment, which gives companies free rein to rely on subcontractors. Eton Properties is only one of the companies that has been taking advantage of the contractualization system to cut down on costs.

As part of their cost-cutting measures, companies routinely disregard the safety of their workers. There are many laws that mandate work safety measures such as the use of protective gear for the eyes, face, hands and feet. There are also more than enough policies on the use of lifelines, safety belts and harnesses, face protection glass shields and other equipment for hazardous jobs.

Construction workers, particularly those who work six meters or more above the ground must use safety harnesses or lifelines.

Despite all this, violations are rife and company negligence is the norm. **AB**

NDF condemns massacre in Bicol

The National Democratic Front-Bicol strongly condemned the heinous massacre of five civilians in Barangay Villadima, Libmanan, Camarines Sur on the night of February 4. The victims were mercilessly shot to death by armed men wearing ski masks. Initial reports state that the victims' names were Federico Bico, Christian Bico, Christine Ramier, Armando Que-to and Tiola Borral. Three other civilians were wounded.

The NDF also condemned the Philippine Army 9th ID for its baseless accusations that the NPA perpetrated the crime. NDF-Bicol spokesperson Ka Greg Bañares said only the state's armed minions such as the AFP-PNP-CAFGU would have the stomach to commit such a crime.

Wyeth-Pfizer union assails harassment

The Wyeth-Pfizer Philippines Progressive Workers' Union (WPPWU-DFA-KMU) condemned pharmaceutical giant Wyeth-Pfizer Philippines for its continued harassment and threats against its workers even as it turns a deaf ear to their demands for higher wages, retirement and separation pay.

Negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the union and management began as early as July 2010. On the last day of negotiations, management representatives suddenly rejected all of the provisions that had already been agreed upon in previous sessions. They even threatened to sue the union leaders if they refused to withdraw the provisions.

The lack of consensus led to the declaration of a deadlock. Workers picketed Wyeth Philippines'

main office in Makati City twice a week to air their grievances. It was at this point that the threats and harassment began, said union president Dennis Galido. Management has resorted to talking with small groups of workers to prod them into accepting the compensation package being offered by the company and malign the union leadership. The management has filed various cases against some 100 workers like vagrancy and slander without any concrete evidence.

Overpricing and the NFA

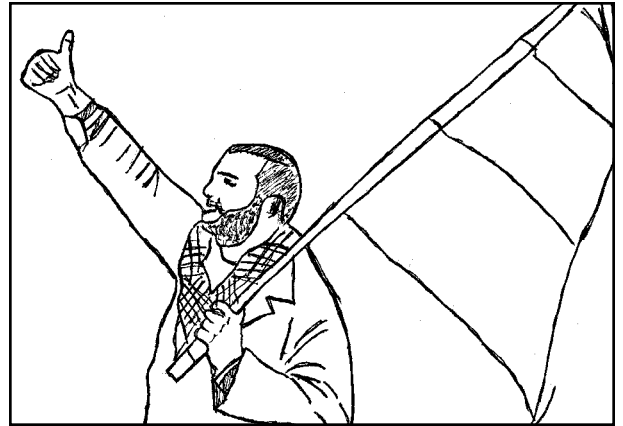
The National Food Authority (NFA) recently bared in a report to the Aquino regime the extent of the corruption involved in the agency's excessive rice importations under the Arroyo regime. Rice imports have reportedly been overpriced by \$60 to \$125 per metric ton (MT) for the past three to ten years. As a result, the NFA's debt ballooned to as much as P117 billion. Worse, claimed the NFA, much of the rice was wasted as it rotted in NFA warehouses. The extent of waste and level of corruption were so scandalous that Aquino was prompted in his SONA to pledge that he would punish agency officials involved in the anomalies.

But the Aquino regime must do much more than this. Long before the price of NFA rice rose last year from P18.25 to P25 because of the overpricing, the people had already been bearing the brunt of corruption within the NFA. When the Arroyo regime gave the go-signal to big businessmen in the rice cartel to import as much as 200,000 MT of the grain using bogus farmers' cooperatives as fronts, the government absorbed the costs and taxes, thus causing NFA's debts to swell. Much of the excess rice, however, did not end up in NFA warehouses but with the rice cartel. Government officials pocketed commissions and other kickbacks in the process.

Nonetheless, the people, organizations advocating their interests and even NFA employees are wary that the Aquino regime will use the report not to hold the rice cartel and corrupt officials accountable but to push for the agency's privatization under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program. COURAGE vice president and NFA employee Santiago Dasmariñas said that the regime has long wanted to put the agency up for sale. First on the auction block would be its commercial operations, which would automatically deregulate rice importation and marketing. The result will be far worse than Arroyo's program which allowed the rice cartel to import rice to the detriment of farmers and consumers.

The Aquino regime claims that the NFA must be privatized because of its mounting debts. In fact, it was the actual privatization of parts of its operations in years past that caused its debts and its bankruptcy to grow by leaps and bounds. **AB**

People's uprisings spreading like wildfire in the Middle East and Africa



Mass uprisings continue to spread in various countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The most prominent so far are the mass actions of the Egyptian people to oust President Hosni Mubarak. Daily protest actions have been going on unrelentingly for close to two weeks in Cairo to put an end to Mubarak's 30-year dictatorship.

The upheavals in Egypt began on January 25, ten days after a massive people's uprising toppled the similarly fascist dictatorial regime of Zine al-Abidine ben Ali in Tunisia. The successful ouster of Tunisia's strongman has served to spread the fires of people's uprisings in other Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa ruled by despotic regimes, such as Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Sudan and Yemen.

Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians are massed up in Cairo's Tahrir Square, with their numbers growing by the day. Despite this, Mubarak has insisted on holding on to power until his current term ends in September. On February 1, he declared that he would not step down. Instead, he formed a new government and appointed as his new vice president his close ally Omar Suleiman who heads Egypt's national intelligence agency.

Mubarak's political maneuverings to cling to power have angered the people all the more. On February 3, thousands of civilian-clad policemen and Mubarak sup-

porters attacked the protesters and dispersed the anti-Mubarak demonstration. Mubarak's thugs, many of whom rode camels or were on horseback whipped and fired shots at the protesters, killing up to 300 and wounding up to 3,000 others.

Mubarak's government is one of US imperialism's fiercest allies in the Middle East, aside from Israel.

The US is pushing Egypt to immediately effect a "democratic transition" to usher in a new puppet regime that would see to the interests of the US and the local ruling classes. Meanwhile, a number of high-ranking generals from the US and Israel have arrived in the country to enable them to keep the Egyptian military on a tighter leash and maneuver to protect US and Israeli interests, whatever the outcome in Egypt.

The Egyptian government is one of the biggest beneficiaries of US military aid, and is second only to Israel in this regard. Since 1975, the US has poured in more than \$50 billion to keep Egypt's leaders compliant so they could be used to ensure US dominance and support Israel as the US' junior partner in the region. The Egyptian military is dependent on huge amounts of direct US military assistance that comes to \$1.38 billion annually. This is aside from more than \$800 million in economic assistance.

The Communist Party of the Philippines salutes and supports the Egyptian people in their efforts to topple the Mubarak regime. The International League of People's Struggle (ILPS) is in solidarity with them in their successful isolation and weakening of the long-hated puppet regime. It calls on the Egyptian people to raise their fighting spirit and their capability to launch various forms of revolutionary struggle until they gather enough strength to destroy the bureaucratic and military machinery of the ruling classes.

The ILPS said that conditions are becoming more favorable for advancing revolutionary struggle in most of Egypt, North Africa, the Middle East and the entire world due to the worsening crisis of the international capitalist system and the destructive US-dictated policies of neoliberal globalization, state terrorism and wars of aggression.

The ILPS fully supports the heroic aspirations of the Egyptian people to muster their revolutionary strength and launch various forms of mass struggles against imperialism and reaction. They must defeat the armed counterrevolution and fulfill the democratic revolution. AB

Protest actions against rising prices and transport fares

THE people achieved a tactical victory after planned fare hikes in the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT) were suspended.

The suspension came after commuters, students and other sectors launched a series of mass actions. Among them was a student protest held during a public consultation by the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) in Santolan, Pasig City on February 4. The students walked out on the consultation after the DOTC insisted on pushing through with the LRT fare hike on March 1. Simultaneously, members of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan in the National Capital Region (BAYAN-NCR) picketed the LRT station on Recto, Manila.

The day after, it was the workers and urban poor's turn to protest at the DOTC consultation. According to Riles Laan sa Sambayanan or Riles Network, the MRT and LRT must think of other ways to raise funds instead of burdening the people with higher fares. One is to seek rent from the huge department stores along the train's route and another is to seek payment from various private companies for their advertisements.

The protests against the fare hikes coincided with a series of mass actions by various sectors against rising prices of goods and services resulting from the Aquino regime's Public-Private Partnership program. Progressive organizations have been leading the protest actions in Manila and Quezon City since the first week of January and the first week of February.

On January 28, GABRIELA set up a "Tatak Center" in front of a big department store along Recto Avenue in Manila. GABRIELA aims to encourage consumers to rail against rising prices by signing their receipts and dropping them in boxes located at the "Tatak Centers."

GABRIELA members also marched to Mendiola Bridge in Manila where they concluded their activity. Strongly opposing price hikes in basic commodities, they cited the price of NFA rice which has risen from ₱27 to ₱30 per kilo, and of cooking oil which has spiked from ₱14 to ₱30 per 375 ml. bottle. Meanwhile, the price of white sugar continues to rise—from ₱39 per kilo in 2009 to its current price of ₱65.

Students from Manila also protested, marching from the University of Sto. Tomas to Mendiola on March 1 to assail the PPP. They said that

rising prices and fare hikes as well as higher tuition fees would cause them and their parents much hardship. The PPP guarantees the privatization of public services in the country.

The Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY) picketed the office of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to protest looming water rate hikes. Maynilad Water is set to raise its rates by ₱3.87 per cubic meter while Manila Water Corporation plans a water rate hike of ₱3.45 per cubic meter.

Farmers oppose bioethanol project in Isabela

SOME 400 farmers launched a protest march in San Mariano, Isabela on February 1 to oppose a planned bioethanol project in the area. They charged that farmers who owned land would end up as mere tenants as a result of a 15-year contract to grow sugarcane that would be processed into bioethanol.

The bioethanol project in Barangay Minanga which is supported by the Isabela provincial government will be run by Green Future Innovations Inc., a joint venture involving Japanese, Taiwanese and Filipino capital. Aside from San Mariano, the project will also cover the towns of Benito So-liven and Ilagan. Up to 9,000 hectares will be planted to sugarcane under the contract growing scheme while another 2,000 hectares of sugarland will be directly supervised by the company. The projected bioethanol plant in San Mariano will be the country's biggest.

The contract stipulates that the company will rent the farmers' lands for only ₱5,000 per hectare annually. Diony Yadao, an officer of Danggayan Dagiti Mannalon iti Isabela-San Mariano said that the amount is too small. They are also against a provision in the contract that states that owners of land covered by contract growing will be automatically deemed as lessors and obliged to pay real property taxes.

Most of the farmers fear that they will never get their land back. BAYAN-Isabela spokesperson Gretchen Valdez said farmers in at least 846 hectares covered by the project are in danger of being displaced from their land.

The struggle in Corazon de Jesus, San Juan continues

RESIDENTS of Barangay Corazon de Jesus in San Juan City are deadset on continuing their struggle for their homes, jobs and social justice despite the violent demolition of their community. Three days after the demolition, they marched with their supporters to the Don Chino Bridge (formerly Mendiola).

They strongly assailed San Juan Mayor Guia Gomez' administration for the violent demolition of their homes on January 25 that injured 25 people, including children and the elderly. Gomez is one of former Pres. Joseph Estrada's mistresses and is the mother of San Juan's former mayor and current congressman Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito.

The residents stood by their claim that they now own the land in question by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 164 issued by Cory Aquino and Presidential Proclamation No. 54 issued by Gloria Arroyo.

A day before the demolition that wiped out 103 houses, Gomez had promised that houses would be dismantled on a voluntary basis. But the opposite happened. At 8:30 a.m., anti-riot police fired tear gas and used water cannons against the residents who had set up barricades. Two bullets from a police sniper's rifle landed near the huse of Arnold Repique, president of the Samahan ng mga Maralitang Nagkakaisa sa Corazon de Jesus (SAMANA). Undaunted, the residents led by SAMANA and supporters from organizations like Anakpawis fought it out with the police using stones, bottles, slingshots and "T-bombs" (human feces wrapped in plastic).

The Ejercito family has long wanted to evict residents of Corazon de Jesus because the barangay is the site of the planned ₱500 million new city hall building for San Juan. Companies like Phinma also plan to build a housing project in the area where units will be rented out to residents for ₱2,000 to ₱3,000 per month.