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Editorial

Further arouse the people's rage against the US-Aquino regime

While all the reactionary parties and candidates are busy prettifying themselves and the 2016 election campaign is well underway, the Aquino regime continues to relentlessly carry out anti-national and anti-people measures.

Last January 12, the Supreme Court dismissed petitions by several patriotic personalities and organizations against the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The EDCA is an agreement the Aquino government entered into with the US government last 2014 which authorized the US military to establish military bases and facilities within the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) military camps and facilities.

Officials of the Aquino regime and the US government have long been cooking up this Supreme Court decision. On the same day, Defense Sec. Voltaire Gazmin and Foreign Affairs Sec. Albert del Rosario, two of the most rabid US puppets of the Aquino regime were in Washington, to discuss the EDCA "implementing rules" or details with US government officials.

Also on January 12, the nuclear submarine USS Topeka docked at Subic Bay, a former US naval base which it wants to reutilize under EDCA. This is the third nuclear submarine docking at Subic in a span of a few days after the USS Tucson and USS Texas.

These dockings show how the Philippines, will be transformed into a large US military base under EDCA. Currently, no less than eight camps are set to be used by the US.

On the very same day, Aquino vetoed the bill set to increase the monthly Social Security System (SSS) pension by P2,000. In doing so, Aquino denied the retirees' demand for additional pension.

Aquino bared his loyalty to the neoliberal policy and principle of cutting pension subsidies and social services. Pensioners and other sectors denounced Aquino for being "heartless."

He showed bias towards the interests of delinquent capitalists who fail to remit their workers' SSS

contributions. He is also biased for the bureaucrat capitalists who plunder the SSS funds for their highliving and investments. The people are enraged at the current head of the SSS who was exposed for his frequent first-class travels abroad. In 2014, SSS officials gave themselves a million-peso bonuses.

These most recent measures of the Aquino regime—the unpatriotic ratification of EDCA and the anti-people veto of the additional SSS pension—are the hallmarks of his much-touted "straight path" that is nothing but upholding US hegemony and compliance with neoliberal policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and foreign big capitalists.

These measures further enrage the people. These add to the people's outrage over the Aquino regime's corruption in the pork



barrel, DAP and PPP, criminal neglect of millions of victims of Yolanda, Pablo and other storms and calamities, violations of human rights under the brutal Oplan Bayanihan war, demolitions, refusal to raise wages, opposition to policies for national industrialization, opposition to land reform and the distribution of Hacienda Luisita, and numerous other crimes and offenses against the people.

The people's rage against Aquino and their desire to put an end to his rule are inexorable.

Amid the elections, the people's intense hatred of these measures are directed against Aquino's chosen candidates. They also denounce other candidates who do not firmly support the demand for additional SSS pension and those who favor the EDCA or do not clearly state their opposition.

The national democratic forces must further arouse the people's wrath against Aquino.

They must untiringly arouse, organize and mobilize the people in their millions. They should advance the struggle to junk EDCA and other lopsided agreements and oppose US military presence and intervention in the Philippines. They should advance the struggle for SSS pension increase, wage and salary increases, job security and other measures that are beneficial to the people's welfare.

The people should be given the opportunity to express their fierce loathing of Aquino. The national democratic forces must continuously expose and reject the Aquino regime and demand his culpability. They must continue to encourage the Filipino people to participate in various kinds of collective action to express their rage and protest.

Efforts should be exerted relentlessly to enlighten the people that with or without elections, they hold the power to make Aquino pay for his big crimes against the people. AB

US speeds up military bases construction

ON JANUARY 12, the Supreme Court upheld the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) when it junked appeals filed by some patriotic personalities and organizations demanding its abrogation.

By voting 10-4-1, the court ruled against the petition which stated that the EDCA is a treaty which the senate should first ratify in accordance to the provisions of the 1987 constitution. The court did not address the substantive issue of the reestablishment of US military bases which goes against the sovereign provisions of the said constitution.

Through its decision, the Supreme Court bared itself as an instrument of the puppet reactionary state subservient to US imperialism. As expected, the AFP is set to speed up the construction of facilities for US use. Under EDCA, the US military will be allowed to use various facilities in so-called "agreed locations" inside AFP camps. The US is set to use these facilities to land its jetfighters, dock its submarines and warships, store its military supplies and materiel and for rest and recreation purposes for its troops and contracted security forces.

The Philippines will be embroiled in any war the US is set to instigate or participate in, even without its assent. It has transformed the Philippines into a target for retaliatory strikes from its enemies. As a result, it has affirmed the previously held status of the country as US stooge in the international community.

Aquino signed the EDCA with US officials as a welcoming gift to US President Barack Obama's visit in 2014.

Even before the Supreme Court issued its decision, Foreign Affairs



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Secretary Albert del Rosario and Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin were on their way to the US to report to US State Secretary John Kerry and Defense Secretary Ashton Carter. On January 12, the so-called Philippines-US 2+2 Ministerial Meeting was held in Washington where the US and the Philippines agreed on EDCA's implementing rules and regulations so that the US can immediately make use of the agreement.

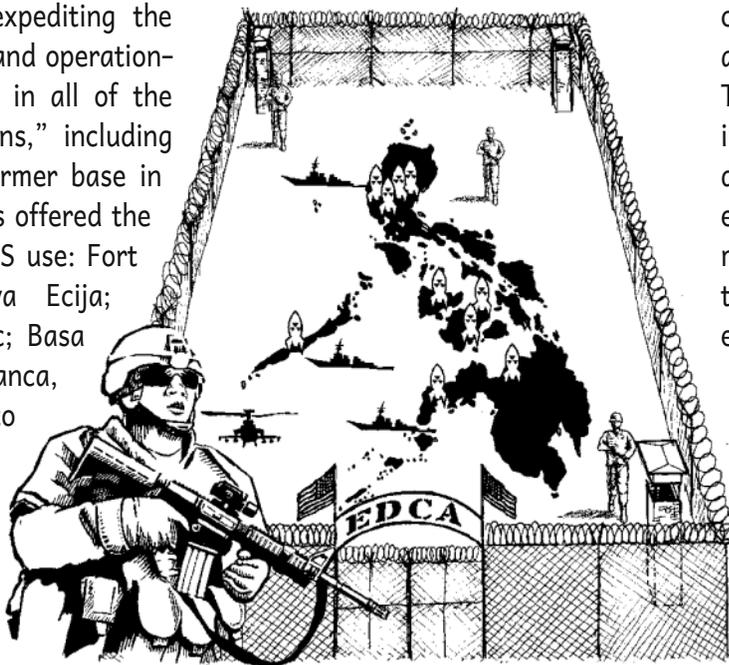
The first of such meetings was held on 2012 where the US laid out its plans to build facilities in Subic Bay, Zambales, a former US naval base, and other locations in the country. The US is currently speeding up the construction and use of these facilities under EDCA.

The US is also expediting the delayed construction and operationalization of its bases in all of the eight "agreed locations," including Clark Air Base, its former base in Pampanga. Aquino has offered the following camps for US use: Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija; Crow Valley in Tarlac; Basa Air Base in Floridablanca, Pampanga; Benito Ebuena Air Base in Mactan, Cebu; Camp Lapu-Lapu, Cebu; Camp Macario Peralta in Jambuan, Capiz;

Naval Station San Miguel in San Antonio, Zambales; Antonio Bautista Air Base, Puerto Princesa, Palawan; Lumbia Airfield in Cagayan De Oro and Edwin Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City.

Even without EDCA, the US military has continuously used Philippine facilities. On 2015, US warships made a hundred port calls to Subic alone. During the first two weeks of 2016, three US nuclear submarines have successively docked in Subic — the USS Texas on January 5, the USS Tucson on January 6 and the USS Topeka on January 12. From August 12, a total of five nuclear submarines have entered Philippine territory.

This is aside from their troops' permanent presence inside the



country in the guise of "exercises." Using facilities anywhere in the country, the US has trained and directed armed forces of other puppet Asian states in the name of "interoperability."

To reward Aquino for ratifying EDCA, it has been reported that Obama approved last September 2015 the \$300 million military aid for the AFP's so-called modernization of its arms and facilities. Part of this so-called modernization is the purchase of obsolete war materiel from the US and its allies, as well as the repair of AFP camps for US troops' use. This fund is also a main source of corruption for top military officials.

In his statement after the 2+2 Ministerial Meeting, Sec. Kerry cited measures that the US has enacted in exchange of the EDCA. These include the discontinuation of inspections on Philippine labor conditions in exchange of the tax-free entry of Philippine goods to the US market. Such inspections are part of the Generalized System of Preference, a system the US uses as a pressure tactic in exchange of military and political favors. The Philippines has also been removed from the Special 301 Watch List on intellectual property rights. Philippine planes have also been allowed to ply US routes.

AB

Protests against EDCA

PROGRESSIVE organizations strongly criticized the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement's (EDCA) legality, contrary to petitions filed to abrogate the agreement on the grounds of its unconstitutionality.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) staged a protest rally in front of the Supreme Court last January 12 to express its continued opposition to US military intervention in the Philippines. Bayan Secretary General Renato Reyes maintains that the EDCA is not the solution to counter China's threats in the South China Sea. And since this is similar to the return of US bases in the Philippines, EDCA is bound to bring back related social ills to the country.

Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares likewise criticized the Supreme Court and said that the EDCA will aggravate the tension between China and the Philippines. "In truth, the US is just using the territorial dispute to justify the transfer of half of its military forces in Asia," added Colmenares.

Meanwhile, the Kabataan Partylist urged the Senate to stand by its position that the agreement should have its concurrence. In this regard, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago revived her call to nullify the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). According to the senator, national sovereignty, as well as the people's rights and dignity, have gravely suffered under 17 years of the VFA.

AB

Aquino vetoes pension increase

CONDEMNATION from various sectors flew left and right after Aquino vetoed a proposed law that would have increased monthly pension payments of Social Security System (SSS) senior members by P2,000. Aquino vetoed the bill on January 12, two days before it would have lapsed into a law of the reactionary government.

Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares is the main proponent of the bill in Congress. He proposed raising pensions from P1,200 to P3,200 for those who have worked for 10 years and from P3,000 to P5,000 for those who have worked for 20 years. There are about 1.9 million SSS pensioners.

According to Colmenares, SSS pensions should have been raised long ago. The P1,200 that was given in 1997 only amounts to P519 in 2015 due to rising prices of commodities and services. Likewise, the P3,000 is now only worth more than P1,000. This is a far cry from the P5,330 that an individual needs to live decently. Not included in this amount are medical needs for sickly pensioners.

Aquino justifies his veto by saying that passing the said bill will bankrupt the SSS. In truth, the SSS' low collection is due to its inefficient collection system and its inutility to go after employers who fail to remit their workers' contributions.

In addition, a big chunk of SSS funds go to scandalously large salaries and bonuses its high officials award themselves. The SSS is an institution that is funded by private sectors' workers' contributions and managed by officials appointed by the regime in power.

National-democratic organizations launched rallies in Mendiola, Manila on January 13, 18 and 19 to condemn Aquino. Several opposition senators supported their calls. On January 19, these called for a series of "Black Fridays" or wearing black on Fridays.

AB

2016 elections

Road now open for electronic fraud

Consecutive decisions of the Supreme Court and the Commission on Elections (Comelec) paved the way for the repeated use of electoral tricks through the automated counting of ballots. Through this, the Aquino ruling clique and its US imperialist masters can ensure the induction of candidates supportive of their interests.

The Comelec disregarded the appeal of the Automated Election System (AES) Watch to junk the Smartmatic-TIM contract despite allegations of the firm's foreign ownership, which is in direct violation of the reactionary constitution. AESWatch also pointed out that the Smartmatic-TIM papers in 2010 stated that its existence would end after the election that year. On December 8, 2015, the Supreme Court sided with the Comelec against the AESWatch appeal.

In December 2015, after the AESWatch filed its petition to disqualify Smartmatic-TIM, the latter submitted to the Comelec new documents that no longer indicated it would exist only up to 2010. Thus, it is apparent that the Comelec's use of its service and machines during the 2013 election is illegal.

The Supreme Court used AESWatch's inability to challenge the nationality of the

individuals and companies owning Smartmatic-TIM shares to throw away its appeal. Smartmatic is a firm originally based in Venezuela. It is currently chaired by Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, vice-chairperson of the Investment Fund (one of the largest financial speculators), formerly vice-president of the World Bank and a former member of the United Kingdom cabinet.

Throughout the world, 31 countries including Germany have turned their backs on computerized elections and returned to manual counting. Under the AES, there is no way to ascertain the accuracy of the vote count, especially as details of the computer program used to read the ballots have not been made public. Various groups have asserted the implementation of a combination of manual counting of votes and electronic transmission and listing of the res-



ults.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court sided with the Comelec in implementing the Voter Verification System through biometrics. In junking the appeal of the Kabataan Partylist (KPL), the Supreme Court supported the “no bio, no vote” scheme. This is despite the six million old and new voters who were not able to register under the system.

At the Court's pressing, the Comelec admitted it would not be able to issue out the new IDs until October 2016. Thus, the biometrics for the election day is rendered useless since there is no way to verify the identity of the voters. It appears that the Comelec only revised the voters list so that it can be easily manipulated.

Through the “no bio, no vote,” voters from far-flung areas were effectively removed from the list of

voters as they could not travel to the provincial centers to register and have their biometrics taken.

Election spending reaches billions

Meanwhile, expenses by presidential candidates for television advertisements have reached P2.3 billion before the end of 2015. This is in addition to expenses for newspapers and radio. Mar Roxas, the US-Aquino regime's candidate, registered the biggest expenses with a total of P744 million.

The Comelec has done nothing despite the existence of laws imposing limits on election spending. It admitted that the law is ineffective since it does not consider as candidates those who filed their certificates of candidacy last October until the campaign period starts in February. AB

NPA-EV launches offensives in response to AFP attacks

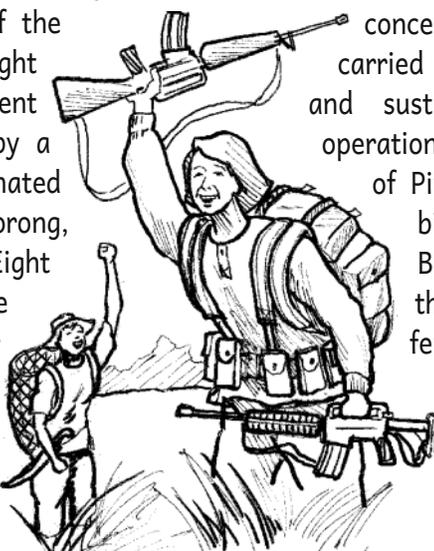
Coordinated tactical offensives were launched by the NPA-Eastern Visayas (NPA-EV) in response to military operations in Samar. Five tactical offensives were launched by NPA units in the region within five days on December 18-22, 2015. In these offensives, 19 soldiers were killed and eight were wounded.

On December 18, 2015, at 7:30 a.m., an NPA unit harassed troops of the 87th IB who were aboard a truck in Madalunot, Pinabacdao, Western Samar. Four soldiers were killed and two were wounded. Around 3:00 p.m., troops of the 87th IB were subjected to sniper fire in Literon, Calbiga in the same province. One was killed on the spot while two died on the way to the hospital. At 5:00 p.m., one military truck and a vehicle of the Phil. Army Light Armored Regiment was destroyed by a command detonated landmine in Borong, Calbiga. Eight soldiers were killed and four wounded.

On December 21, 2015, the Charlie Coy

of the 20th IB was ambushed between Barangay Bugay and Barangay Bukid, Las Navas, North Samar. Three were killed, two were wounded. The next day, at 9 p.m., a soldier of the Bravo Company HQ of the 43rd IB was killed in harassment operations launched at Barangay Erenas, San Jorge, West Samar.

During the whole month of November until the December 23, 2015 ceasefire, AFP troops concentrated and carried out intensive and sustained military operations in the towns of Pinabacdao, Calbiga, and Borongan. But the tactical offensives proved that Oplan Bayanihan is only bound for failure. AB



Journalists condemn killings and harassment

THE NATIONAL Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) condemned the continuing killings and harassment of journalists under the US-Aquino regime. In the past, the organization has not always considered that the reactionary government is behind the said killings.

The latest cases of military harassment of journalists actively covering the people's anti-fascist campaigns have made them reconsider their view. In particular, the NUJP is outraged at the military's campaign to suppress, vilify and intimidate its former president Inday Espina-Varona for her exposés on the military's brutality and crimes in Lumad communities.

On December 2015, the Magahat-Bagani, a paramilitary group directly under the AFP, threatened journalists set to cover the Party's anniversary celebration in Northeast Mindanao. Prior to this, there have been numerous cases of media killings which the regime has ignored. Violations of their other rights and disregard for their welfare, such as contractualization, low wages and union busting, are widespread.

During Aquino's term, 30 journalists have been killed due to their profession. AB

Eduardo Serrano: revolutionary leader

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army, National Democratic Front (NDFP), Southern Tagalog Regional Party Committee (STRPC) and the whole revolutionary movement honor Eduardo Serrano "Ka Eddik", 62, who died in prison last January 8.

According to the CPP, the Filipino people holds responsible Benigno Aquino III, Gloria Arroyo and their defense and security officials for Ka Eddik's death.

The STRPC salutes Ka Eddik whose "life and struggle is a shining inspiration." Guerilla zones in the region held tributes in his honor. Aside from reflecting on his revolutionary life, his contemporaries in various works reminisced their memories of the jolly and playful comrade.

The NDFP lambasted the Aquino regime for its heartlessness, which is a far contrast to Ka Eddik's caring spirit. To condemn the injustice, political detainment in the Special Intensive Care Area 1 and the Taguig City Jail, both in Camp Bagong Diwa, as well as in the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa, conducted a five-day hunger strike.

A true son and people's hero

Ka Eddik was a member of the Southern Tagalog Regional Party Executive Committee (RPEC), formerly secretary of the Party Committee in Mindoro Island and NDFP consultant to the peace talks. He gave 44 years of his life in advancing the revolutionary struggle.

Ka Eddik is the eldest of seven siblings. He was born in Oas, Albay in June 20, 1953. After finishing his elementary and high schooling at the Naga Parochial School, he went to the National University in Manila in 1970. He then transferred to the University of the Philippines in Los Baños (UPLB). Upon the declaration of martial law, he took up studies at

the Bicol University College of Agriculture. After one semester, he transferred back to UPLB where he finished Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, with a major in Animal Science.

Ka Eddik joined the Kabataang Makabayan (Patriotic Youth or KM) in April 1971 and was elected as KM's vice-chairperson in UPLB from January 1972 up to the declaration of Martial Law. He also studied in Copenhagen, Denmark from 1978 to 1979. Upon returning to the country, he responded to the Party's call for cadres and members and mass activists to work fulltime in 1980.

He first worked among the peasant masses and the NPA at the Quezon-Bicol border. In 1983, he was deployed to the Mindoro island. There he would be known to the masses and comrades as Ka Juan, Makling, Eska and Vocag. He worked tirelessly as a cultural worker, artist, writer and poet of *Kalatas*, the Southern Tagalog's revolutionary mass paper.

He was arrested on May 2, 2004 despite having in his possession the Identification Documents stating that he is a consultant to the peace negotiations. Trumped-up criminal cases were filed against him.

None of the charges against him were proven by the reactionary state. While the courts ordered his release, he remained in prison as additional cases were filed against him.

Ka Eddik was detained for 11



years, one of the longest in Philippine history. In jail, he joined in the political prisoners' struggles. He suffered a heart attack last December 16, 2015 and succumbed last January 8 at the Philippine Heart Center.

Tributes and mass actions

Tributes were held for Ka Eddik in urban areas. In UPLB, some 500 students held a tribute at Baker's Hall last January 12. A tribute ceremony was also held by 200 students in the UP-Diliman last January 10.

Members of Anakbayan, League of Filipino Students and Karapatan protested in front of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in Ortigas, Pasig last January 15. They condemned the Aquino government for the harassment of NDFP consultants, especially in Ka Eddik's case that led to his death.

Condemnations were also aired by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Anakpawis, Karapatan and other national-democratic and progressive organizations.

Meanwhile, the group Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network expressed its praise for Ka Eddik as a peasant leader and martyred political prisoner. AB

Paramilitary murders Lumad student

A LUMAD student was killed by a member of the Alamara, a paramilitary group, in Sitio Laslasakan, Barangay Palma Gil, Talaingod, Davao del Norte on January 17. The Alamara is under the control of the 68th IB.

Alamara's Joven Salangani shot Alibando Tingkas, a Grade 3 student of a Salugpongan school. Together with two others, Tingkas was walking towards Laslasakan

when the culprit opened fire. Tingkas was hit twice on the chest and was immediately killed.

The Save Our Schools Network strongly condemned this latest military brutality. According to the SOS, Tingkas is the 29th child that the Aquino regime killed under Oplan Bayanihan. In related news, teachers from Talaingod's Salugpongan reported receiving threats from the Alamara.

AB

Crumbling illusion:

Stock market plunges

The illusion of Philippine economic growth is fast crumbling as the Philippine Stock Exchange Index (PSEi) plunged last week, simultaneously with the similar drop in other stock markets in other countries since the start of the year.

By January 11, the PSEi dropped by 9.57% in a span of one week. This is the steepest drop since the 6.7% plunge in the PSEi in August 24, 2015.

Among the biggest losers are Bloomberg Resorts Corp. (which dropped by 23% or P11.34 billion) and International Container Terminal Services Inc. (17.5% or P25 billion), both controlled by Enrique Razon; and Henry Sy's SM Investments Corp (11% or P75.8 billion).

There was a similar drop in the value of shares of the Ayala Corporation (12% or P412 billion); Lopez Holding (12%), Andrew Tan's Alliance Global Group (9.3% or P8.6 billion) and Megaworld (P23.5 billion), and Manny Villar's Vista Land and Lifescapes (10.8% or P7.2 billion).

The PSEi dropped by 22.71% or an equivalent of P2.93 trillion from 8,136 points in April 7, 2015 to 6,288 points last January 11. This is a big blow to Aquino's prediction last year that the PSEi is set to reach the 10,000 mark.

The PSEi nosedived primarily as a result of the large outflow of portfolio investments (also called hot money).

In 2015, hot money outflow reached \$600 million, 93% higher than the \$310 million which flowed out in 2014. This is three times larger than the Aquino officials' target of only \$200 million.

In 2014, more than 70% or \$15.6 of the overall \$22 billion foreign investment, was hot money which created the illusion of GDP growth. More than 80% of inflowing hot money goes to the PSE. This bloats the value of stocks but is easily drawn out any time in order to cash in on the dividends.

The "growth" brought about by hot money is empty and temporary. This does not bring about stability to the economy nor contribute to

building industry or strengthening manufacture, nor does it create value.

The large outflow of hot money and the resulting nosedive of the PSEi during this year's first week of transactions coincides with the sudden drop in the stock markets around the world. This follows information revealing the slowing down of the Chinese economy.

Among the data released show an 8% drop in Chinese trade in 2015, far from the first target of a 6% expansion. The Chinese economy is expected to grow by only 6.5% this year, the lowest over the past 25 years. China's economic slowdown, the biggest engine for global production and trade, threatens to worsen the depression of the global capitalist system. *(More in the next issue.)*

AB



Groups criticize Aquino's inauguration of Davao's coal-fired plant

THE people criticized Benigno S. Aquino III's personal inauguration last January 8 of the Therma South Incorporated (TSI), one of the biggest coal-fired power plants in Mindanao, just a few weeks after his posturing as an environmentalist and anti-carbon emission advocate in Paris, France.

Residents of the area, as well as scientists, oppose the operation of TSI, as it has adverse effects both on the people's health and the environment.

They condemned the US-Aquino regime for hypocritically inaugurating TSI just after declaring that the Philippines will reduce its carbon emissions. They also slammed the privatization of the power generation industry.

TSI is located in Barangay Binugao, Toril, Davao City. It is owned by Aboitiz Power Corporation (AboitizPower) of the Aboitiz clan, one of the biggest compradors favored by the US-Aquino regime. It has two power generators with a combined capacity of 300 megawatts (MW). The construction of the P35 billion plant was started in 2012 and its Unit 1 started commercial operations last September 2015. Unit 2 is set to start operations by February.

Presently, TSI supplies 20 electric cooperatives in the cities of Cagayan de Oro, General Santos, Zamboanga, Butuan, Kidapawan, Tagum, Koronadal, Digos, Pagadian and Cotabato. More than 100 MW of its capacity is contracted to Davao Light and Power Company, another AboitizPower subsidiary.

The regime touts the plant as a long-term solution to the power shortage in Mindanao. In reality, two state-

owned hydroelectric dam complexes were not developed and were left to rot, while giant foreign and big comprador bourgeoisie corporations guzzle up the greater part of the power supply. The so-called power crisis is a scheme of the US-Aquino regime to justify the complete privatization of the power generation industry in the island.

Aboitiz Power's coal-fired power plants have a 2,000 MW capacity between them. Among these are the plants under construction in Subic, Zambales, in Pagbilao, Quezon, and in Toledo City, Cebu. These can annually emit more than 13 million tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Coal-fired power plant technology is considered the dirtiest source of power generation and is banned in many countries.

According to the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM), the regime's plan to construct 28 coal-fired power plants within the next three years and another 32 by 2020 is proof that Aquino's promises in the climate conference in Paris last December are nothing but empty rhetoric.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines also expressed its opposition to the construction of new plants and the issuance of permits to coal miners.

Aside from Aboitiz, other big bourgeois compradors such as Eduardo Cojuangco and the Sy family are also set to inaugurate coal-fired power plants. Among those to be inaugurated later this year are the 100 MW plant of the Sarangani Energy Corporation in Maasim, Sarangani and two plants of the San Miguel Power Corporation with a capacity of 150 MW each. AB

Against neoliberal austerity:

Doctor's strike in England

HOSPITALS in England were almost entirely paralyzed during the 24-hour strike by junior doctors that started 8 a.m. on January 11. This is one of the latest actions against the austerity policy of European governments in the face of the drawn-out economic crisis.

The National Health Service (NHS) - England reported that only 10,000 of the assigned 26,000 junior doctors showed up at hospitals. Around 3,300 medical operations were cancelled, as were 4,000 routine treatments, check-ups and tests. Only emergency cases and vital treatments were continued.

Doctors launched the strike after the British Medical Association (BMA) and the government

failed to agree on a new contract. In line with its austerity program, the government insists that it lacks funds for the doctors' salary increase.

Talks broke down in 2014, but the dispute escalated after ministers said they would impose the deal despite the disagreements, and thus provoking the strike.

If the deadlock continues, the BMA plans to launch a 48-hour

strike on January 26 where emergency services will still be provided, and a general strike on February 10 when even emergency services will not be made available.

Of more than 55,000 junior doctors in England, 37,000 are members of BMA. Doctors who have only a decade of work in their profession are considered junior doctors. They work under the government because the health care system is largely owned by the state. England constitutes the biggest district of the United Kingdom. AB

US-Saudi coalition bombs hospital in Yemen

Missile attacks by the Saudi-led coalition on a hospital in Yemen killed at least five people on January 10. Several buildings of the Shiara Hospital, a facility run by the humanitarian agency Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders or MSF), were destroyed. At least ten were wounded and more are feared dead under the rubble.

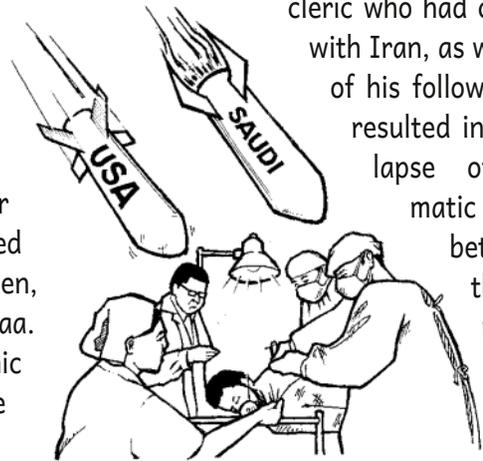
MSF condemned the attack on their hospital, saying that Saudi Arabian officials have been informed of the GPS coordinates of their facility. Saudi airplanes targeted the hospital six times. Last month, nine were wounded in the bombing of an MSF clinic in Taz in Yemen. Another MSF hospital was bombed in October 2015 in Saada province.

Since March 2015, Yemen has been incessantly bombed by jet-fighters of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition that includes Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan and Qatar. The US government funds, arms and trains this coalition.

It is estimated that at least

5,800 have been killed and 5,200 wounded in Yemen from bombings by the US-Saudi led coalition. Half of the victims are civilians. Almost all the structures destroyed were for civilian use such as churches, hospitals and schools.

The bombings aim to reinstate the US puppet, former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. The Hadi government was ousted in September 2014 after armed Houthi militias seized a large portion of west Yemen, including capital city Sanaa. The Houthis are an ethnic group identified with the Shia Muslim branch.



Hadi declared his own provisional government in south Aden where he fled. He was again ousted after the Houthi attacked the southern city of Aden in March 2015.

On January 7, Saudi Arabia bombed the Iranian embassy in Sanaa. This is against international laws that guarantee the safety of diplomatic structures in all situations.

Before this, Saudi Arabia escalated tensions with Iran by beheading a Shi'ite Muslim cleric who had close ties with Iran, as well as 46 of his followers. This resulted in the collapse of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

AB

Control for oil:

NATO forces set to attack Libya anew

Based on United Kingdom (UK) declarations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces are set to attack Libya this January purportedly to defeat the ISIS (also known as IS, ISIL or Daesh) that is based at the eastern section of the nation. The UK announced on January 5 that it will deploy 1,000 Special Forces troops to Libya to spearhead some 6,000 NATO troops under the guise of fighting the ISIS.

Italy, Libya's former colonizer, will make up the majority of the troops, together with American and French soldiers who are armed with US weapons. This offensive is not authorized by any Libyan government nor the UN Security Council, and as such, is clearly a case of aggression.

This attack on Libya is part of the geopolitical maneuvers of imperialist countries within NATO to control the biggest share of Libyan oil.

Libya is one of the largest countries in all of Africa. Because of its abundant oil reserves, it was one of the most developed African nations

before combined forces of the US and France ravaged it in 2011 and ousted the anti-imperialist government of Muammar Gaddafi.

Imperialist countries covet control of its oil because aside from the huge reserves, it is very accessible to Europe and other countries. Libya faces Italy just across the Mediterranean Sea. It lies along the coast of the sea together with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, oil-rich nations that are now controlled by the US imperialists.

To control Libyan oil, the US uses the pretext of pursuing the ISIS which is based in Sirte, which is considered the gateway to some

major oil mines and refineries. However, it is an open secret that the ISIS was created and utilized by the US, despite its much publicized anti-ISIS war in Syria.

NATO forces claim that the attack aims to defend the oil refinery in Marsa al Brega, the biggest in North Africa. This is apparently an ISIS target and if captured, will give them firm control over the whole Libyan oil industry.

Aside from ISIS, there are two rival governments in Libya, one in Tobruk and the other in Tripoli. These governments have agreed to unite, but the UN-sponsored "government of national unity" last December 17, 2015, has yet to assume power.

This attack is part of the US and NATO plan to completely subjugate Libya while dividing the oil resources of the nation among themselves. NATO is only using the ISIS presence in Libya as a pretext to send more troops into the country. AB