



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

US support for Duterte = murderous rampage

The US government has quite a record in supporting the most odious despots in the world. It ignores the heinous crimes of dictatorial regimes, as long as US interests are preserved and promoted. In the not so distant past, US administrations zealously propped up the Marcos fascist dictatorship until it was overthrown by the Filipino people.

The Trump administration showcased this infamous record just this week with its 'donations' to the Duterte government of military equipment and munitions worth millions of American taxpayers' dollars. According to US officials, these would help Manila fight 'terrorism' and, in exchange, strengthen Manila's support for US interests in the Asia Pacific region.

President Rodrigo Duterte and his security officials, however, have a different type of 'terrorism' in mind. While the terrorist Abu Sayyaf gang are allowed to wreak havoc in southwestern Mindanao islands, the Duterte regime is brandishing its sword against newly-found terrorists: the political opposition, activist organizations, human rights defenders and even celebrities. The newly-acquired 'smart' weapons will target peasant and indigenous communities who are demanding land rights and resisting so-called development projects. Continued military aid and political backing from the Trump administration will further embolden the bloodthirsty tyrant to carry on with his terrorist-tagging and kill, kill, kill policies.

In a truly sovereign and democratic country, Duterte and his security officials would have been long subjected to investigation, indicted, locked up and punished for their genocidal crimes. But the Trump administration opts for its policy of coddling dictators, as long as they remain American dictators.

The Filipino people and their revolutionary forces are fully justified in their determined efforts to overthrow the Duterte tyrannical regime. It will be the most earnest expression of solidarity of the American people to help put an end to US military and political support to this tyrant. **UP**



GRP Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin
(2nd from L) inspects US donation.
Photo: cpp.ph

US donates US\$33M military gear to Duterte government

The US government handed over this week various military equipment and munitions valued at a total of US\$33 million to the Duterte government to boost 'counter-terrorism operations' in the Philippines.

In ceremonies at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila on 23 November, US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien Jr. and Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. announced the donation of 24 MK-82 bombs, 100 TOW 2A missiles, 12 target acquisition systems and support equipment worth US\$18 million to the Philippine Air Force. Locsin said, "We look forward to training for the

use of these weapons with the best and undisputed military power in the world."

On 25 November, US Embassy officials in Manila announced the donation of eight Boeing Insitu ScanEagle unmanned aerial vehicles worth US\$14.7 million to the Philippine Navy. The announcement coincided with the visit to Manila of US Secretary of the Air Force Barbara Barrett to meet with defense officials of the Duterte government, including Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Gilbert Gapay and PAF chief Lt. Gen. Allen Paredes. She discussed with them "the importance of US-Philippine alliance to regional security... and opportunities for greater bilateral security ties."

The Communist Party of the Philippines denounced the deal, saying the US bombs and munitions "will only embolden Duterte's military and police officers in their dirty war of suppression against the people."

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CPP Chief Information Officer Marco Valbuena said, “With US support, the AFP has conducted relentless aerial bombing and artillery shelling campaigns not only against the AFP-linked Abu Sayyaf criminal bandits, but more so against the revolutionary forces of the New People’s Army.”

Valbuena said, “Bombs have exploded near peasant and minority communities, caused damages to farms, destroyed homes and sources of livelihood, killed farm animals and pets, and destroyed forest resources.”

He urged the American people “to support the call for an end to US military support to the Duterte terror regime.” He also called on the international community “to focus and investigate the ill-effects brought about by the AFP’s aerial bombardment and strafing campaigns and its violations of international humanitarian law.”

US officials say the Philippines is the largest recipient of US military aid in the Indo-Pacific region. From 2015, the US has delivered more than US\$650 million worth of planes, ships, armored vehicles, small arms and other military equipment to the Manila government. **UP**



DND Secretary Gen. Delfin Lorenzana (L) and AFP Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade.

Senate launches inquiry on ‘red-tagging’

The Philippine Senate on 3 November started holding public hearings on the subject of ‘red-tagging’. The legislative inquiry was called after Armed Forces of the Philippines Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade accused prominent actresses and a beauty queen as being members or sympathizers of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Red-tagging refers to the labelling by State security agents of individuals or organizations who are critical or not fully supportive of the incumbent government as communist, communist sympathizer or terrorist.

Senator Panfilo Lacson, chairman of the Senate Committee on National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation is presiding over the hearings. Present were AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Gilbert Gapay, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr, Secretary of the Department of National Defense Gen. Delfin Lorenzana, and Secretary of the Department of Interior & Local Government Gen. Eduardo Año.

A self-confessed ex-member of the New People’s Army, Jeffrey Celiz, was brought in by the Duterte officials to testify. His testimony was later contradicted by persons who knew him and who attested that he had never been a member of the NPA and was giving false testimony.

Representatives of the opposition party lists, the Makabayan bloc, as well as human rights defenders lamented that the Senate continued with the hearings even while the country is still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic and typhoon Rolly (international name: Goni).

The Makabayan bloc opted not to attend the Senate hearing saying they engaged with relief missions in areas hardest hit by the recent typhoons. In their letter, the legislators said they are “hoping that the hearing will not allow the committee and the Senate to be used as a launching pad for red-tagging or terrorist tagging, a policy that has been repeatedly proven by UN Special Rapporteurs that lead to the extrajudicial killings, trumped-up charges and other human rights violations.”

They also called on fellow legislators to “focus on meeting the urgent needs of our countrymen who suffer during the pandemic and calamity, and not on political intimidation and spreading lies.”

Cristina Palabay, Secretary General of human rights alliance Karapatan, expressed her condemnation and disappointment over the hearing which she said has turned out to be a “roadshow for [the Duterte government’s] deranged red-tagging spree and a dry-run of a meeting of the Anti-Terrorism Council’s arbitrary terror-tagging of individuals and people’s organizations — setting them all up for graver violations such as further threats and harassment, arrests, detention, and even killings.”

Amnesty International meanwhile called on the Duterte government to end what they described as the “deadly practice of red-tagging.”

“The government should address legitimate criticism of its policies and practices rather than maligning and endangering people’s lives by exercising their freedom of expression,” AI said. **UP**



Ateneo University students condemn Duterte's criminal negligence

More than 500 students of the Ateneo de Manila University started a nationwide academic strike against the Duterte government on 18 November. They condemned the regime for "criminal negligence" in failing to protect the people during the recent typhoons and the COVID-19 pandemic. They declared in their manifesto, "the disastrous effects of the typhoons resulted from the government's lack of urgency in handling the situation, and limited capacity and research funds. Had the government responded quickly, such a

big number of casualties could have been prevented!"

Close to 800 alumni of the university have already expressed their strong support for the students' strike.

Duterte's spokesperson, Harry Roque, warned the Ateneo students, "You will fail!" President Duterte himself mistakenly thought it was the students of the University of the Philippines that declared the strike. So, he threatened that he would withdraw funding for the UP.

As the striking students called for accountability, they laid out "Minimum Demands" for the education sector that must be fulfilled by the national government, which included: financial assistance to students in need, ensuring the salaries of university personnel while on strike, ending the 'no work, no pay' policy on a nationwide scale, greater access to electricity and internet nationwide and subsidies to teachers, students, and families for distance learning.

They also listed their "Maximum Demands", including free Covid-19 testing for all Filipinos, implementation of a clear pandemic response, clear Covid-19 vaccine strategy, "medically-informed" response to the pandemic and extension of livelihood assistance for those who lost their jobs.

They called on the Duterte government to declare a "climate emergency" in response to the onslaught of natural disasters, resource shortages and destabilization of the environment due to calamities, "worsened by the government's refusal to learn from mistakes of the previous natural disasters."

Until the demands are met, the students vowed to take part in collective actions such as academic strikes and rallies on 30 November, a national holiday to honor Filipino hero Andres Bonifacio.

Pinoy Weekly, an online news publication, declared: "Support the student strike. Let all academic institutions pause from regular programming in order to collectively teach each other the most important and urgent lessons right now!" **UP**

Revolutionary peasants surmount disasters thru collective farms

The Covid-19 pandemic and successive typhoons are relentlessly ravaging the poor people of the Philippines. In rural villages however, local chapters of the revolutionary peasant organization Pambansang Katipunan ng Magbubukid (PKM) rely on their collective strength to survive hunger and face the country's chronic crises.

In Northern Samar, a PKM chapter recently established a collective farm where they harvested about 40 sacks of rice in September. They also harvested sweet potatoes, squash, bitter melon, okra and other vegetables to supplement their food sources. With the support of the New People's Army, the farmers cleared the lands which were confiscated from a local landlord.

In an adjacent area, another PKM chapter reestablished its cooperative store.

PKM chapters in the Eastern Visayas region have been able to manifest their unity after their areas were hit by Typhoon Ambo in May 2020. In one area, they spearheaded the reconstruction and repair of 36 houses destroyed by the typhoon.

Meanwhile, in the Bicol region, mutual aid groups of PKM chapters also launched a campaign to collectively produce crops for their families and those in nearby villages.

In September, in the Zambales mountain range of Central Luzon, the PKM and the indigenous group Rebolusyonaryong Organisasasyong Ayta held a conference to unify minorities and peasants in cultivating their lands to resist the encroachment by the so-called 'National Greening Program' of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The PKM is one of the 18 allied organizations of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. **UP**