



# UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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Amsterdamsestraatweg 50, 3513AG Utrecht, The Netherlands

T: : +31 30 2310431 | E: [editors@updatesphilippines.info](mailto:editors@updatesphilippines.info) | W: [updatesphilippines.info](http://updatesphilippines.info)

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## EDITORIAL

### Theater of War in Intensifying US-China Conflict

As tension between the US and China continue to escalate, the Philippines is more and more being drawn into the growing maelstrom of inter-imperialist conflict. Both superpowers profess to be friends of the Filipino people, but in fact have utter contempt of Philippine sovereignty.

Instead of asserting the country's independence, the Marcos regime acts as stooge to US imperialist design in Asia. It allows the US to construct more military bases in the country, as part of the war preparation in line with "first island chain" (consisting of Taiwan, Okinawa, and the Philippines) US military strategy. As in the Second World War, the possibility of the country again becoming a battleground of conflict is real and imminent.

The US government's urgency to construct four or five more military facilities within camps of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are clearly part of its war theater preparations and aim to provoke China and raise the level of armed tensions. This is further exacerbated by plans to carry out a series of joint war exercises, including the planned deployment of at least 12,000 American troops for the Balikatan exercises, on the pretext of preparing to "defend the archipelago."

The US has been increasing its military presence in Japan, Korea, and other countries surrounding China. Its aircraft carriers also maintain permanent presence in the west and eastern seas of the Philippines, the Japanese sea and in the waters around the Taiwan strait. It has sold two nuclear-powered submarines to Australia that aim further expand the military presence of US and its subalterns in the South China Sea.

The US claims that all these are part of its "military deterrence" strategy, but are in fact, calculated to provoke China to take military action. It is constantly stoking Taiwan's secession to push China to unleash its military might, and in turn, use the pretext of defending Taiwan to justify US armed intervention.

The US knows very well that repositioning its military troops and equipment in the Philippines, including long-range missiles, can easily be interpreted by China as aggressive and provocative acts. The US continues to raise the possibility of military conflicts with China erupting and escalating into a full-scale war.

China itself maintains large military facilities in the South China Sea that violate the country's sovereign marine territory.

The Filipino people must demand the imperialist US and China to put an end to their saber-rattling, denounce their war preparations involving Philippine territory, oppose plans to build more US military bases and facilities in the archipelago, call for the pull-out of all US troops in the country, call for the pull-out of all Chinese warships that transgress in the country's maritime territory and take away the source of livelihood of Filipino fisherfolk, and oppose plans to hold large scale war exercises. **UP**

### NPA troops launch further tactical offensives against state armed forces



Image: [philippineevolution.nu](http://philippineevolution.nu)

On 15 March 2023, Red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) launched two rifle grenades at the newly installed 62nd Infantry Battalion detachment in Barangay Malangsa, Callehermoso, Negros Oriental.

According to NPA-Negros Oriental, the attack was in response to complaints of residents that the said detachment of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have been harassing the community and forcing residents to surrender as members of the NPA. *[continued next page...]*

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Meanwhile, the same group of NPA fighters harassed the 62nd Infantry Battalion last 6 March in Canlaon City, Central Negros.

In Camarines Sur, twin harassment operations were mounted by the NPA-West Camarines Sur on 28 February 2023 against two military detachments in Ragay town. NPA squadrons first attacked the detachment in Barangay Bayan followed by attacks against another detachment in Barangay Pantalunan.

On 15 March 2023, forces from the NPA-Mindoro actively defended communities in a firefight against AFP troops in Sitio Naksib, Barangay Sta Cruz, Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro. No casualties were reported among the NPA.

On 7 October last year, members of the NPA successfully seized firearms from the the 52nd Infantry Battalion in Barangay Dorillo, Jipapad, Eastern Samar. According to the NPA, state troopers were drunk and sleeping when the NPA attacked and confiscated 14 firearms, nine of which were high powered rifles.

According to reports, residents of the community fully supported the tactical offensive of the NPA. Prior to the incident, community members complained about the presence of combined forces of soldiers and police under the Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP) – a new ‘counter-insurgency’ program launched by the State. According to residents, state troops occupied the barangay hall and often fired indiscriminately at the civilian population, prompting the NPA to take action. **UP**

## Jobless Filipinos rise to 2.37M in January, belying Marcos admin’s claims of ‘economic recovery’



*Image: philippinerevolution.nu*

The number of jobless Filipinos increased last January to reach 2.37 million according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). This is in contrast to recent pronouncements by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Artemio Balisacan that the country has a ‘healthy’ jobs market and that the quality of jobs is increasing.

The PSA reports that the unemployment rate increased from 4.35% in December 2022 to 4.8% in January 2023. In the same period, the labor force shrank from 51.2 million to 49.7 million. At the same time, the number of unemployed

increased by 153,000 and the underemployed increased by 458,000.

The bulk of the drop in employment occurred in agriculture, wholesale and retail trade and construction.

In February, Ibon Foundation Executive Director Sonny Africa countered claims made by Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno on the success of the Marcos regime in creating new jobs and that the economy is on its way to full recovery. Africa said the Marcos Jr. administration must stop manipulating statistics and face the unemployment crisis squarely.

“[They] are using the persuasive power of statistics to tell something that is less truthful than what a more honest reading of the statistics truly shows,” said Africa.

Meanwhile, commodity prices and services continue to rise as job opportunities and wages decrease. Worse, the price per liter of petroleum products went up by 1.50 pesos in the first week of March, while electricity is poised to rise by 0.5453 pesos per kWh this month.

Africa argues that the Marcos Jr. government is spreading a story of economic recovery that is “disconnected from reality” which obscures sustainable and real solutions to the country’s economic woes.

“Without bolder measures like comprehensive national industrial and technology policy to build Filipino manufacturing, for instance, the economy will never be able to create enough formal, productive and high-paying jobs for its growing work force and population,” Africa added.

“A better story for the economy can be told – but this is best done with a real reimagining of policy and really building the domestic economy, and not with misleading propaganda,” Africa ended. **UP**

## Groups denounce series of aerial bombings by AFP



Image: philippineevolution.nu

The recent spate of aerial bombing incidents by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Northern Mindanao and Northern Luzon were met with calls for impartial investigations on the intensifying human rights violations that have resulted in the displacement of indigenous communities.

Windel Bolinget of the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) said the aerial bombing in the Cordillera region, which happened last 9 March, constitute violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, directly affecting more than 60 families.

"The gunfire and bombings are too close to the civilians and residents. The International Humanitarian Law that guarantees the safety and security of civilians must be ensured," said Bolinget.

Bolinget is part of a delegation of advocates who trooped to Manila to shed light on the human rights situation in affected communities and called on the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the House of Representatives to conduct investigations.

Last year, the Department of Energy approved five dam projects that will affect the municipalities of Balbalan and Pinukpuk, which the residents strongly oppose. According to Bolinget, the attacks aim to sow fear in the communities who reject the impending dam construction projects and the entry of mining firms.

Meanwhile, solidarity group Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle (FFPS) denounced the series of aerial bombings in Malababay City, Bukidnon between 13-16 March. According to reports, the bombings were followed by repeated strafing operations.

"The supposed aim of the systematic bombings is to destroy the NPA, but all these false 'counter-insurgency' attacks amount to nothing more than a war on the people," the FFPS said in a statement as it launched its global campaign against aerial bombings.

"History has proven that as long as the root causes of the problems of the Filipino people are not addressed, all forms of resistance will continue until a just and lasting peace is achieved through national and social liberation," FFPS ended. **UP**

## NDFP 50th Founding Anniversary



On 23 April 2023, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) will celebrate its 50th Founding Anniversary.

The NDFP is the revolutionary united front organization of the Filipino people fighting for national freedom and for the democratic rights of the people. Established on 24 April 1973, the NDFP seeks to develop and coordinate all progressive classes, sectors and forces in the Filipino people's struggle to end the rule of US imperialism and its local allies of big landlords and compradors, and attain national and social liberation.

Today, the NDFP is found in 70 provinces in the Philippines, out of a total 81 provinces. **UP**

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*Thank you!*