

Trust issues prevalent among past admin's top execs: Palace

MANILA -- Malacañang said "incompetence and trust issues" were prevalent among the top officials of the previous administration of former President Benigno Aquino III.

This after Senator Francis Pangilinan slammed President Rodrigo R. Duterte for accusing opposition senatorial candidate Manuel "Mar" Roxas II of "wasting" the lives of 44 Special Action Force (SAF) troopers who died in the 2015 Mamasapano clash and tagged this as a "diversionary tactic."

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo dismissed Pangilinan's remark as "noxious nonsense", stressing that the Aquino administration paled in comparison to the administration under Duterte.

"The achievements of the administration far exceed that of the administration of his idol, PNoy, where incompetence and trust issues among its top officials were prevalent, such as what were exhibited during the Mamasapano incident and the destructive storm Yolanda, an incontrovertible truth that is beyond forgetting," Panelo said in a statement on Saturday night.

Previous administrations likewise pale in comparison with PRRD's war on drugs, on criminality, on corruption, and on terrorism as well as his 'Build, Build, Build' infrastructure program," he added.

The Spokesperson said the Duterte administration achieved "many firsts" in its almost three years of governance owing to the political will of the first leader from Mindanao.

He cited a few of the President's achievements including free tuition in state colleges and universities, free irrigation for farmers, universal health care for all Filipinos, free medicine for indigent Filipinos and institutionalized free school feeding program for public school children.

Also among his accomplishments are the collection of billions of taxes from errant billionaire businessmen, salary increases of police and military personnel and teachers, firing of an array of top government officials either allied to him or closely identified with him, the passage of ease in doing business law, the issuance of an executive order on freedom of information, the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Mindanao, the veto of the unconscionable PHP95.3 billion pork barrel, the crushing of the Marawi rebellion, among many other hitherto accomplishments.

"Res ipsa loquitur. The records speak for themselves," Panelo said.

"The achievements of this administration are inescapable to the Filipino masses resulting in stratospheric public satisfaction, approval and trust in favor of President Duterte and his administration," he added.

Panelo claimed that Pangilinan, just like other critics and detractors, is "deaf and blind to the unprecedented survey numbers of the President".

He, meanwhile, urged Pangilinan, who is also president of the Liberal Party and other members of the opposition to "wake up" and take notice of the President's achievements.

"It is about time he

and others in the opposition wake up from their self-destructive illusion lest they are swept away to oblivion by the horses of change galloping in the country," Panelo said.

In his speech during the PDP-Laban campaign rally in Cagayan on Tuesday (April 16), Duterte blamed Roxas, who was Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary at that time, for the death of the 44 SAF troopers in a deadly encounter on January 25, 2015.

"He (Roxas) wasted 44 lives for nothing. They could not even explain while -- why it was the police who went there who were totally ignorant of the topography and the physical arrangement sa bukid doon (in the farm there)?" Duterte said.

Pangilinan insisted to let the judicial processes proceed since the matter has been investigated by the Senate and that charges have been filed. (PNA)

BARMM police urged to help in transformation of Moro combatants

PARANG, MAGUINDANAO — Presidential Peace Adviser Carlito G. Galvez Jr. urged top police officials of the newly-established Bangsamoro autonomous region to help create a more conducive environment for the smooth implementation of the normalization track of the Bangsamoro peace agreement.

This track, Galvez said, will primarily focus on the decommissioning of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) combatants, and assist them and their families as they make the transition to becoming peaceful and productive members of society.

"With the successful ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and the smooth transition of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), there is a need to understand the critical role of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the effective implementation of the normalization pro-

gram in the Bangsamoro," Galvez said.

He also explained the content of the proposed Executive Order (EO) on the Normalization Process to police officers in Maguindanao at the BARMM Police Regional Office on April 16, 2019.

The Normalization Process is one of the annexes of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014.

The CAB has two tracks: the Political Track, which pushed for the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), and the Normalization Track, which covers the decommissioning of MILF fighters and their weapons, as well as the transformation of several camps into progressive and resilient communities.

The EO on normalization is a comprehensive plan of the national government that is designed to aid former combatants as they undergo the delicate

transition process.

In particular, the EO includes socio-economic interventions to be carried out specifically in conflict-affected areas, as well as guidelines for the implementation of a transitional justice system that aims to promote healing and reconciliation among the people.

The national government and the MILF are now drafting the implementing rules and regulations of the said EO.

Galvez said it is very important for the police, in particular, and the security sector, in general, to fully understand the intricacies of the Bangsamoro peace process.

He warned that a single miscalculation on their part could have a major impact on the region's peace and security situation.

For this initiative to succeed, the chief peace adviser emphasized the importance of fostering stronger relationships with the MILF, especially with the ex-fighters.

"We should start to communicate and es-

tablish confidence-building measures, and good relationships with them," Galvez said, adding that this process is very important in the successful mainstreaming of former combatants.

Galvez stressed that the Bangsamoro police will play a critical role in maintaining the peace and order in the region, especially in communities that will undergo the decommissioning process.

Under the EO, the PNP will be part of several transitional bodies. These include the Joint Peace and Security Teams, which will need at least 1,600 police personnel.

The teams will be tasked, among others, to clear unexploded ordnance and landmines.

Galvez said the police will also be part of the soon-to-be reactivated National Task Force for the Disbandment of the Private Armed Groups.

The BARMM regional police office, which is currently undergoing a transition, will soon cover the city of Cotabato, and the 63 barangays in North Cotabato that voted for their inclusion in the BARMM.

The conference attended by Galvez is among a series of strategic information campaigns intended for members of the security sector based in the Bangsamoro area.

Galvez was welcomed by BARMM police regional director, Brig. Gen. Graciano J. Mijares.

Also present in the activity were Assistant Secretary David Diciano, chief-of-staff of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU); OPAPRU Assistant Secretary Dickson Hermoso; and, OPAPRU Director Wendell Orbeso, head of the Joint Normalization Committee Secretariat. (PR)

PH unlikely to develop nuclear weapons

MANILA -- Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the Philippines is not keen on developing nuclear weapons.

And there are a number of reasons on why the country cannot do so, he added.

"Develop our own nuclear weapons to enforce the tribunal ruling? Very unlikely for several reasons. First, we are not technically and technologically capable. Second, we are a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (also known as the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons)," Lorenzana said in a message to reporters Saturday.

The DND chief made this comment in the wake of former Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile's pronouncements that if the country wants to enforce its victory over China in an international tribunal, then it should develop nuclear weapons.

"We appreciate Sen. Enrile's patriotic duty to

suggest how to protect what is legally ours but developing a nuclear weapon is not the way to proceed," he added.

The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons also known as NPT was signed on July 1, 1968 and became effective on March 5, 1970.

The treaty seeks to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology.

Aside from this, the NPT seeks to promote cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament.

"Third, our Constitution states that we denounce war as an instrument of national policy. Nuclear weapon is not a defensive weapon but an offensive one," the DND chief added.

In 2016, the United Nations-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) nullified China's 9-dash line map which covers nearly the whole of West Philippine Sea or South China Sea. (PNA)