Security sector 'always ready' to protect PH maritime industry

MANILA -- The country's security sector would "always be ready" to protect the maritime industry from any threats, the Department of National Defense (DND) vowed on Tuesday.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana made the vow in a keynote speech during the first day of the National Marine Summit 2019 held at the Manila Hotel, as he stressed that the administration's resolve is to promote economic development and protect the natural resources in the Philippine waters.

"The Department of National Defense earnestly supports our maritime industry by ensuring maritime security and by contributing to an environment that is conducive [to] trade and commerce [growth]," Lorenzana, based on the statement read by DND Undersecretary Arnel Duco, said.

"We will always be ready to provide assistance to our domestic [maritime] industry," he added.

Lorenzana guaranteed that his department is working closely with other law enforcement agencies to address maritime issues plaguing the country.

He added the DND is "fully supportive" of the Maritime Industry Development Plan (MIDP) 2019 to 2028, which he deemed as the "first-ever comprehensive plan that aims to chart the future of our maritime industry."

"With MIDP, various government agencies such as the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the Philippine National Police, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), with the Philippine Navy, address maritime terrorism, piracy, armed robbery at sea, transnational crimes, illegal fishing, and marine environmental degradation," the Defense chief said.

"It behooves upon us to ensure that the ownership of maritime business entities will remain in the hands of Filipinos. Rest assured that the DND, together with the entire security and law enforcement sector, would remain supportive of our country's maritime industry," he added.

MIDP 2019 to 2028 is the product of extensive consultation with key maritime sector stakeholders from the government, private sector, academic and training institutions, civil society organizations, and representatives from the International Maritime Organization from 2017 to 2018.

The comprehensive maritime plan intends to understand and address the core problem of the maritime sector, as well as the underlying causes of the problem, to plan and implement more responsive programs that meet the demand of the maritime industry.

While he admitted that it remains a "challenge" to protect the security and control of the country's maritime domain, Lorenzana said the MIDP "embodies the government's dreams and aspirations for our maritime sector."

Multilateral maritime security cooperation a big help

Lorenzana acknowledged that presently, piracy, armed robbery, maritime terrorism, and trafficking are among the "major tests of our maritime industry."

He added that overfishing and poaching also undermine the maritime economy.

But the multilateral maritime security cooperation entered into by the Philippine government with other countries help Manila protects its national interests in its "vast" maritime domain, Lorenzana noted.

"So far, the most effective component of our multilateral approach is our bilateral cooperation agreement with Malaysia and Indonesia. This was forged in 2016," Lorenzana added.

Private sector's help 'very much welcome'

Apart from the multilateral approach to address maritime concerns in the country, Lorenzana said the AFP and the PCG regularly conduct maritime patrols to protect the integrity of the Philippines' sovereignty and sovereign rights in its maritime domain.

He added the "Bantay Dagat" program is being implemented to monitor illegal incursions and overexploitation of resources in coastal municipalities and cities.

To further boost the government's efforts to secure the maritime industry, Lorenzana said assistance from the private sector is "very much welcome."

"The maritime industry must go beyond its commercial and business pursuit, this time, to be of service to country's interests in protecting our national interests in our vast border," he said. (PNA)

Duterte orders LGUs to inspect buildings amid series of quakes

MANILA -- President Rodrigo R. Duterte on Thursday directed local government units (LGUs) to conduct an immediate inspection of buildings within their respective jurisdictions.

"Well, it is time for the LGUs to inspect all buildings. Umpisahan na nila ngayon (They should start now)," the President said in a chance interview in Davao City after his visit to his late parents' tomb at the Roman Catholic Public Cemetery.

"The earthquake season has come. I don't know if it will occur again between now and tomorrow. Ang problema nito, wala ako dito, sa Bangkok ako (The problem is I will not be around, I will fly to Bangkok) so I do not want disasters to happen when I am not around," he added.

Duterte's order came after another deadly quake jolted some areas in Mindanao on Thursday morning, the second in a week and the third in a month.

The directive was also issued a day before he leaves the country for his participation in the 35th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit and Related Summits on Nov. 2 to 4.

The President said he wanted to make sure that all facilities are "strong enough to withstand earthquakes".

A total of 6,009 families or around 30,045 individuals from the Davao Region and Soccsksargen have been affected by both the magnitudes 6.6 and 6.5 earthquakes that struck several parts of Mindanao on Tuesday and Thursday, respectively, according to a report as of 8 p.m. Thursday by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

Fourteen people, including two children, were confirmed dead, the NDRRMC said.

Around 403 people were wounded, while two are still missing, in the aftermath of the earthquake.

The NDRRMC also reported that the powerful tremor damaged a total of 2,817 infrastructures in Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, Soccsksargen, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

On Thursday, Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Martin Andanar called on Congress to amend Republic Act (RA) 6541 or the National Building Code of the Philippines, saying that the current framework of the "outdated" law is "very lax".

The scope of RA 6541 includes "location, siting, design, quality of materials, construction, use, occupancy, and maintenance" of both private and public buildings.

"Let us not wait for a disaster to happen before we become strict in granting building permits," Andanar said. (PNA)

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Prayer for Healing

JESUS, may Your pure and healthy blood circulate in my ailing organism, and may Your pure and healthy body transform my weak body, and may a healthy and vigorous life throb within me, if it is truly Your holy will. Amen.

O BLOOD AND WATER WHICH FLOWED OUT FROM THE HEART OF JESUS AS A FOUNTAIN OF MERCY FOR US, I TRUST IN YOU!

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, Have Mercy on us and on the whole world. Amen.

3 O'CLOCK PRAYER

"You died Jesus, but the source of life flowed out for souls and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fountain of Life immeasurable Divine Mercy, cover the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us."

"O Blood and Water which flowed out from the heart of Jesus as a Fountain of Mercy for us, I trust in you!"

"Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One have mercy on us and on the whole world." (3x) Amen.

Jesus, King of Mercy, I trust in you!

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