

DND chief sees nothing wrong with AFP-Dito telco deal

MANILA -- Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Thursday said he sees nothing wrong with the co-location memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) with Dito Telecommunity (formerly Mindanao Islamic Telephone Company) last September 11.

"(There is) nothing wrong, it's the same as Globe and Smart," Lorenzana said on the sidelines of the launch of the "Mateship and Bayanihan: The Story of Philippine-Australian Defense Ties" exhibit held at the QCX Museum, Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City. Lorenzana made

the statement when asked whether he already came up with a decision on the co-location MOA.

While stressing that he is likely to approve the deal, the DND chief said he is still waiting for comments coming from the Senate as senators have requested copies of the contract for review with the MOAs with the two telecommunication firms.

"They requested us to submit the contract for the third telco and the documents for the other two. According to them they are going to look at it, (the documents) have been them for two and a half weeks," Lorenzana said.

The DND chief was abroad on an official

trip when the co-location MOA was signed by the AFP and Dito Telecommunity.

But Lorenzana earlier stressed that all Dito Telecommunity equipment and facilities will be placed in locations where local carriers, Smart and Globe, are also located, based on a similar MOA signed by these telecommunication firms.

"Smart and Globe also has many towers (inside our) camps. The third telco will have to place their facilities near these sites," he added. Dito Telecommunity is composed of Chelsea Logistics and Infrastructure Holdings Corp., Udenna Corp, and China Telecom.

It was conferred with the status of New

Major Player in the telecommunications industry by the National Telecommunications Commission on November 19, 2018. The AFP and Dito signed the co-location MOA last September.

Former AFP chief Benjamin Madrigal, Jr., earlier bared that partnering with Dito Telecommunity is nothing new as similar MOAs have been entered with Smart and Globe.

Based on the agreement, the AFP will determine specific locations with its rental value for use of Dito Telecommunity in the installation and management of its communications sites without undermining the operations of affected AFP units.

The telecommunication firm is also required to "furnish all equipment, labor, and materials necessary to effect the co-location of its facilities and shoulders all expenses in connection with or incidental to the co-location" and payment of all taxes, permits, licenses, and other charges. (PNA)

Exhibit highlights Australia's role in WWII Leyte Gulf landings

MANILA -- An exhibit showcasing Australia's contribution to the Leyte Gulf landings during World War II opened on Thursday in commemoration of the event's 75th anniversary.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Australian Ambassador Steven Robinson led the opening of the exhibit "Mateship and Bayanihan: The Story of the Philippines-Australian Defense Ties" at the QCX Museum at the Quezon City Memorial Circle.

"This exhibition highlights this legacy and the tradition of co-operation, both in battle and in peacetime. The strong ties forged during World War II (WWII) continue in modern times," Robinson said in his message.

"Bayanihan is all about talking friendship, solidarity, and co-operation. We bring ourselves together in times of adversity to

work together for the common good. There are many common traits in our region in common time, and we need to have trusted friends and that is what we find here in the Philippines," he said.

The exhibition traces the improvement of the defense ties between the Philippines and Australia.

"This exhibition is a tremendous opportunity to highlight the cooperation that has existed for so many years between the Australian military and the Philippine military. It guides back right to the second World War to show the history up to the current day, so we bring together difficult situations and right after the most recent, confronting the situation together in Marawi," he added.

Robinson also highlighted the cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Australian Defense

Force on counter-terrorism as he also mentioned the partnership of the two forces during the Marawi siege.

"In a few days, we will mark the second anniversary of the battle of Marawi. This shows once again that the spirit of cooperation ties with two countries that was forged in WWII, is still present today", he said.

Meanwhile, Lorenzana urged people to learn more about Australia's contribution to the liberation of the Philippines during World War II.

"I bet that not many Filipinos know the participation of Australia during World War II. In fact, it took me a while to learn it also. It was only in the US when I found out the involvement -- I don't know why it's not in the history books but we will correct that and we will inform the people with this beautiful relationship," he said.

Reds reciprocated gov't's goodwill with seeds of distrust: OPAPP

MANILA -- The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) on Thursday took exception to allegations made by former Bayan Muna representative Satur Ocampo for claiming that Executive Order 70, which gave life to the National Task Force to End Local Communist Insurgency (NTF ELCAC) and institutionalizes a "whole-nation-approach" in combating communist insurgency, is a barrier to peace negotiations.

"The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) would like to respond to the issues raised by Mr. Ocampo, and provide the Filipino people a clearer, more balanced perspective on these issues," said OPAPP spokesperson and chief-of-staff, Atty. Wilben Mayor, in a rejoinder to Satur's column titled "Duterte order sets peace process barriers" published by the Philippine Star on October 12.

"Mr. Ocampo's piece only proves his skewed understanding of the entire peace process. He pointed out the government and its other supporters merely want to put an end to the communist revolution by employing all means necessary," Mayor said in his letter.

He reminded Ocampo that President Rodrigo R. Duterte was forced to terminate peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) in November 2017 due to continuous communists' attacks on military and civilian targets while a ceasefire was in place.

"To put things in their proper context, we would like to remind Mr. Ocampo that President Rodrigo Duterte termi-

nated the peace talks specifically because of the lack of sincerity on the part of the insurgent group. We believe there are no gray areas here," Mayor added.

The CPP-NPA is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States, European Union, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

From the start of President Duterte's administration, Mayor said the Chief Executive created a platform for peace negotiations and even went the extra mile to appoint leaders of the left-leaning groups into his Cabinet.

Seeds of distrust

He said acts of goodwill, which were reciprocated by planting seeds of distrust and sleeper cells that created more problems than solutions in their agencies while a series of violent acts were carried out by the CPP-NPA in the countryside.

"So brazen were these actions that even while the Philippine government was engaging with them in peace talks, the New People's Army continued to attack government forces with continued extortion and burning of development equipment and commercial establishments. It also proceeded in recruiting young cadres from prominent schools to its fold, and thus robbing them of their future," he said.

To highlight the communist rebels' efforts to recruit minors into their ranks, the OPAPP spokesperson cited the case of "Jane from Bulacan" who was convinced to join the communist movement at the age of 15 and was prevented from leaving the organization until she became preg-

nant and gave birth.

"Now, we are asking Mr. Ocampo, who is setting the peace process barriers?" Mayor asked.

Alternative solution

Due to the lack of the CPP-NPA's sincerity in the peace talks, he said the Duterte administration was forced to look for an alternative solution that would directly address the social conditions and the threat posed by the communist rebels against vulnerable communities across the country.

This gave birth to Executive Order 70 and the NTF ELCAC which aims to empower communities in most conflict-affected areas and enable them to face the rebel organizations head-on, and at the same time, enhance the delivery of much-needed government services to residents in the countryside.

With its whole-nation approach that includes localized peace engagements, Mayor said communities are now empowered to recommend solutions that can solve the communist insurgency problem and convince members of the CPP-NPA to return folds of the laws and normalize their lives.

We believe it is crucial for local stakeholders to be directly involved in the peace process. As what we have witnessed, it is pointless to talk to leaders of an organization who employs deception and duplicitous tactics," he added.

Executive Order 70, he said, is also designed to empower local government units and peace partners in the community to be at the forefront of efforts to stamp out the communist rebellion as they know the sentiments of their constituents on the matter.