

Army transformation bears result for 2009

The year 2009 has not been an easy year for the Philippine Army. Along with all the Filipinos, the entire Army faced every endeavor the past year has given the country. However, as the one whom the countrymen depend on, the Army soldiers handled the challenges with all their might. It was also during this year when the Philippine Army underwent a transformation, as non-traditional approaches were promoted with the goal of enticing the New People's Army (NPA) rebels into returning the government fold.

One of the major concerns of the Philippine Army Command for the past year is the President's set deadline of significantly weakening the NPA rebels by June 2010. In response to this, many changes and innovations has been undertaken by the present leadership. Various officers and soldiers were reassigned from one Army unit to another; a number of battalions were activated; different capability improvements had been conducted, all in fulfillment of the 2010 deadline.

During the year, three Civil-Military Operations (CMO) Battalions were activated by the present leadership. This is in line with the non-traditional operations promoted by the Philippine Army Command to win the hearts and the minds of all the Filipinos, including the NPA rebels. Said CMO Battalions were the 5th, 4th, and 10th CMO Battalions that were activated June 1, October 1, and October 15 respectively. Needless to say, the three CMO Battalions have been players of progress and development ever since its activation.

Three Infantry Battalions were also activated during the past year—the 81st, 82nd, and 83rd Infantry Battalions. The activation of said battalions aimed at augmenting the Army forces against hostile NPA rebels. However, as all Army units, the three Infantry Battalions are capable of conducting nation-building operations that promises progress and development to Nueva Ecija, Capiz, Camarines Sur, and its surrounding areas.

Also activated this year were 11th and 12th Scout Ranger Companies on June 1 and September 15 respectively. The activation of these companies is also aimed at augmenting the forces that battle against rebels and bandits in various areas in the country. Also, the 4th Special Force Battalion was activated last June 1 and later upgraded into a regular unit last August 16. Another upgrade that took place was the development of the K9 Battalion into a Company June 1 of this year. During the same day, four new K9 Companies were activated for four various Infantry Divisions.

Furthermore, the present leadership sees the importance of every Army soldier. That is why various activities were initiated in taking care of the Army personnel. Among these

activities was the activation of Army Stores. To date, there are already seven Army Stores installed in Samar, Isabela, Cebu, Nueva Ecija, Capiz, Cagayan de Oro, and Cotabato. More Army stores are expected to be inaugurated until all Infantry Divisions are supplied with an Army Store.

All changes that took place of the Philippine Army seem to have been effective, as more surrenders from NPA groups around the country were reported. For the year, 566 NPA rebels are reported to have willingly turned themselves over to various Philippine Army field units. Included in this large number is the high-ranking NPA leader who recently surrendered, Felisismo Jacobe who has been instrumental in various successful Army operations in Northern Luzon.

This large number is a clear indication that the anti-insurgency campaign is on the right track and is bearing results for the 2010 deadline. More and more Filipinos—civilians and rebels alike—are forging healthy partnerships with the Philippine Army. With the coming of 2010, the Philippine Army shall continue to improve for the promise of a more peaceful and progressive Philippines.