AFP mulls int'l complaint vs NPAs

Manila, PHILIPPINES, 23 April 2010 (The Philippine Star) - The military is planning to file before international bodies a complaint against the communist insurgents who launched a landmine attack that killed four policemen in Antipolo City, Rizal last Tuesday.

Brig. Gen. Francisco Cruz Jr., Armed Forces of the Philippines' Civil Relations Service (AFP-CRS) commander, said such a complaint can jeopardize the rebels' bid to be recognized as a legitimate group fighting for an ideology. "We intend to bring that (landmine attack in Rizal) to the international convention on preventing the use of landmines. Landmines kill even innocent people," he said in an interview at Camp Aguinaldo yesterday. "Their (communist rebels') goal is for the international community to recognize the NPA (New People's Army) as a belligerent force. If they terrorize the people, it is unlikely," he added. Cruz said a belligerent force refers to an organization that is equal to the state and is fighting for freedom, and democracy. "Because they (communist rebels) terrorized the people, nobody could support them. If they keep on killing, they will lose their support base," he said. Cruz said the complaint will have to be discussed with the Commission on Human Rights and then turned over to the United Nations. Four members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) were killed while seven others, including two civilians, were wounded in the landmine attack. The policemen belonged to the 34th Special Action Command of the 3rd SAF Battalion based in Baras, Rizal. Authorities said the SAF men were passing by Sitio Kaysakat, Barangay San Jose when their vehicle hit a landmine planted by the rebels. A firefight then ensued between the surviving policemen and the insurgents, who retreated after several minutes. Chief Superintendent Rolando Anonuevo, Calabarzon police director, said they are preparing charges of robbery with multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder against at least 25 rebels belonging to the NPA's Narciso Antazo Aramil Command. The survivors, he said, have identified three of the rebels through a police rogues' gallery. Cruz said the NPA staged the attack to make it appear that they are still a significant force in the country. "Their strength is declining in terms of manpower, firearms and influence. They will do some acts to make their presence felt. They want to tell us that they are still around. They pretend to be strong," he said. Cruz said they are continuously working with the PNP to track down the perpetrators of the landmine attack. The NPA, according to the AFP, has launched more than 50 landmine attacks since 2002 despite an international agreement that bars the use of the explosive. The incidents victimized close to 200 people, including civilians, the AFP said. The Philippines is a signatory to the Mine Ban Treaty, which was convened in Ottawa in 1997. The agreement prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines or those designed to incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons. The government has set a June 30 deadline to end communist insurgency in the country.