Lt. Col. Raul Farnacio, 43rd IB Commanding Officer, presented to General Ramos six surrendered and captured NPA cadres. He also presented several items recovered during a firefight which lasted almost an hour between his troops and the NPAs on November 1 at barangay Maslog, Baybay, Leyte. Among the recovered items were 1 claymore mine, 1 US Cal. .22 rifle, 1 Cal. .45 pistol, 1 rifle grenade.

(21.11.2005)

If only the right attitude and leadership of Southern Leytenos with regards to renouncing the entry of communist insurgents in their barangays can be replicated in other provinces of Eastern Visayas region, then the problem "probably may not be gone in six months but it would not be very long from there."

Thus spoke Major General Bonifacio Ramos, the new Commanding General of the 8th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, when sought for a time-line on the Army's heightened efforts to end the insurgency in Region 8.

Ramos' predecessor, Major General Jovito Palparan, who assumed the post in February, this year, vowed to put a stop to the said problem within six months to one year, but in August he was transferred to Nueva Ecija.

In a press conference held at the 43rd Infantry Battalion Army Camp at barangay Hibod-hibod, this town, on Friday November 18, Gen. Ramos qualified Palparan's projection as a "statement of optimism" inherent in any Commander to boost the moral of the troops on the ground, but "complexities" of the problem certainly prevent realization of the vision in such a short time span.

At first, the Region 8 Army Commander, a native of barangay Lonoy, a hinterland village in Maasin City, hesitated in giving his own time-frame in dealing with the 35-year old insurgency, saying it can even end in less than six months if a "miracle" occurs, that is, through the people's outright rejection of distorted communist ideas, ideology, false hopes and promises.

But citing Southern Leyte's positive development as a barometer, he said that after the first semester of next year an assessment can be undertaken to see how far the Army has gone in its campaign.

"Looking at it in terms of areas, like here in Southern Leyte, if we can replicate the attitude of the leadership in Southern Leyte in other areas, then probably it may not be done in six months but it would not be very long from there. That's why we are asking the media, we are asking the civic organizations, the Church -- anybody who has credibility to the people to really help us," Gen. Ramos stressed.

Earlier, Lt. Col. Raul Farnacio, 43rd IB Commanding Officer, presented to General Ramos six surrendered and captured NPA cadres: Raul Meija, Rodolfo Cagadas, brothers Marcelo and Roberto Mantilla, and the couple Alejandro Sepada and Erlinda Daniel Sepada who were captured in July.

Farnacio also presented several items recovered during a firefight which lasted almost an hour between his troops and the NPAs on November 1 at barangay Maslog, Baybay, Leyte. Among the recovered items were 1 claymore mine, 1 US Cal. .22 rifle, 1 Cal. .45 pistol, 1 rifle grenade, 2 ICOM radios, M16 magazines and ammunitions, 2 cellular phones, medical equipment and subversive documents.

Maj. Gen. Ramos praised Farnacio and his men for a job well done, personally pinned medals to the ten soldiers who engaged the NPAs, and handed an undetermined cash reward to the troops through Col. Farnacio. (PIA-Southern Leyte) [top]


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