

Anti-illegal drug campaign, renewal of commitment to protect PH

MANILA -- The Philippines' campaign against illegal drugs is a renewal of the government's commitment to protect law-abiding citizens against the lawless, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said before the United Nations on Thursday.

For several years, the National Anti-Drug Plan of Action has been in place in the Philippines and the Duterte administration "just gave it a sharper edge, a longer blade, and a wider swing", Locsin said.

"Ours is a whole of nation approach -- we throw everything at the drug trade but firmly anchored on UN drug conventions, the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the 2016 UNGASS (UN General Assembly Special Session) Outcome, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Work Plan against Illicit Drugs, and our national development plan, which has no place above ground for the drug trade," he said in

a speech delivered at the Ministerial Segment of the 62nd Session of the Commission on Narcotics and Drugs in Vienna, Austria.

Locsin said the government continues to implement a multi-pronged strategy to counter illegal drugs through "enforcement, rehabilitation, and reintegration."

"It must be so. Our enemies command vast resources and many allies; including a section of international opinion. The Chinese, African and Mexican-Sinaloa Drug Cartels, and now the Colombian cartel operate in our country," he said.

The foreign affairs chief noted that flooding a country with drugs is "a highly successful form of asymmetric warfare," the same way drug money has also enabled the taking of Marawi City by the Islamic State.

He said the Philippines has more than a hundred million population and faces the South China Sea and

has a spitting distance to major shabu manufacturers in Asia.

Since 2016, the government has conducted a total of 128,000 policy operations, arrested 200,600 drug dealers, and filed 139,400 cases in court. In the process, at least 331 police personnel were killed and wounded.

The government was also able to freeze USD106-million worth of illegal drug

assets and seized USD499-million worth of drugs and lab equipment, including 3,400 kg. of shabu.

"There have been shocking abuses; not many but one is too much. They were not collateral damage inflicted on innocents to get at the enemy; but morally repulsive cases of reckless disregard for basic rights and fundamental deficiencies by rogue cops," he said. (PNA)

PH Navy ships can provide fresh water to coastal communities

MANILA -- Philippine Navy (PN) ships can help provide drinking water to coastal communities that might be severely affected by the ongoing El Niño, Navy spokesperson, Capt. Jonathan Zata, said Friday.

"Our logistics ships are capable of storing and producing fresh water primarily for its operations but it can be used to assist communities while they are in port by providing fresh-

water. We have on board desalination systems to convert saltwater into freshwater," Zata said in a message to the Philippine News Agency (PNA) when asked what the PN can do to help mitigate the effects of the weather phenomenon.

Logistic ships refer to the two brand-new strategic sealift vessels, the BRP Tarlac (LD-601) and BRP Davao del Sur (LD-602), and the Bacolod-class vessels, which

Production losses from El Niño now P464.3-M

MANILA -- Production losses from the El Niño has reached PHP464.3 million, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) Technical Working Group revealed.

In a meeting held Wednesday, the Department of Agriculture placed the volume loss at 22,918 metric tons, as of March 8.

The number of affected areas totaled 13,679 hectares, affecting 16,034 farmers in Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan), and the Bang-

samoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

NDRRMC Executive Director Ricardo Jalad presided over the meeting, which was held to mitigate the impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon in the country.

"NDRRMC member-agencies shall submit their respective Action Plans in regard to the impact of the El Niño, to the OCD (Office of Civil Defense) by 15 March 2019. These will be consolidated and presented at the NDRRMC Full Council Meeting on 20 March 2019. (In the meantime, everyone is encouraged to remain calm, avoid water wastage, and always practice sustainable water management in their respective homes," Jalad said.

Aside from Jalad, also present were Department of Science and Technology Undersecretary Ricar-

21 meters, draft of five meters, and can carry a payload of 2,800 tons.

The ships have a cruising speed of 13 knots, maximum speed of 16 knots, and minimum operating range of 7,500 nautical miles. The two were acquired in 2016 and

do Solidum, and representatives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources - National Water Resource Board, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, the departments of social welfare, agriculture, education, energy, and interior, National Economic and Development Authority, National Power Corp., National Electrification Authority, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Bureau of Fire Protection, Philippine National Police, Philippine Coast Guard, Local Water Utilities Administration, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Commission on Elections, and OCD.

Private groups, such as Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation, as well as water concessionaires, Maynilad and Manila Water, were also in attendance.

2017. Meanwhile, the Bacolod City-class logistic support vessels has a displacement of 4,265 tons at full load, is 273 feet long, has a draft of 12 feet, and has a top speed of 12 knots. It was commissioned in the PN in the 1990s. (PNA)

Napolcom launches search for 'model PNP families'

MANILA -- The National Police Commission (Napolcom) launched its "2019 Search for Model PNP Families" in a bid to uplift the image of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Napolcom vice-chairman and executive officer, lawyer Rogelio T. Casurao, said Wednesday the nationwide search is intended to help uniformed personnel induce positive change in the community by serving as role models.

"Moreover, the search aims to highlight the image of the police as a family man or woman and emphasize the importance of having strong family ties that is consequential to the overall success of preventing crime in the communities," Casurao said in a statement.

Interior Secretary and Napolcom Chairman Eduardo M. Año said the search aims to strengthen and encourage partnership between the community and the police by highlighting the PNP's capability as a leader and partner of the community in the maintenance of peace, order and security for an improved socio-economic system.

The search is open to all uniformed members of the PNP with legitimate or legally adopted child/children, legally married and living together with his/her spouse for at least five years, and have been in the police service for at least five years at the time of the search.

For a Muslim nominee with more than one family, all families will be evaluat-

ed. The family with the highest rating will be considered.

Candidates may be nominated by members of the local government units (LGUs), non-government organizations (NGOs) or fellow police officers who are not related within the third degree of consanguinity and affinity. Nominees from previous years who were not declared winners at the national level may still be nominated.

Nomination forms may be downloaded from the Napolcom website at www.napolcom.gov.ph or from the PNP website at www.pnp.gov.ph. Deadline for submission of nomination is on April 26.

Casurao stressed that nomination must be based on community services or

Freed Pinoy seafarers from Libya arrive in Manila

MANILA -- Kin and government officials welcomed the seven acquitted crew members of the M/T Levante who arrived home in Manila on Tuesday night.

The seven crew were volunteer work in their place of residence, as well as area of assignment.

"Prior to final evaluation and validation, and for purposes of contestability, the names of qualified regional nominees shall be published in the newspapers of general circulation in their respective regions and posted on the Napolcom and PNP websites where the public may give comments/objections on the nominated PNP families," Casurao said. (PNA)

arrested in August 2017 on allegations of fuel smuggling and have been held since then but were acquitted and ordered released last week by the Libyan High Court after reviewing their case.

According to Department of Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Elmer Cato, the department, through the Philippine Embassy in Tripoli, worked closely with Libyan authorities to secure their release and kept the families of the seafarers in the Philippines constantly updated.

The department also shouldered the cost of the repatriation of the seven from Tripoli and provided

them with PHP100,000 each in financial assistance that was sourced from the PHP1-billion Assistance to Nationals Fund approved by President Rodrigo Duterte.

The seven Filipinos were welcomed by their wives and children, together with Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III and Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Sarah Lou Arriola.

Presidential Adviser on Overseas Filipino Workers Affairs Abdullah Mama-o and Philippine Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Mardome Melico accompanied them on board a Turkish Airlines flight from Istanbul. (PNA)