

**Mindanao Hour Briefing**  
**by**  
**PCO Assistant Secretary Kris Ablan**  
**with**  
**Secretary Delfin Lorenzana**  
**Department of National Defense**

[Kalayaan Hall, Malacañan Palace | 15 September 2017]

**OPENING STATEMENTS:**

**ASEC. ABLAN:** Good morning, Rocky. Good morning, Malacañang Press Corps.

To give us updates on Bangon Marawi, we have the Department of National Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Malacañang Press Corps, let us all give a warm welcome to DND Secretary Lorenzana.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Thank you, Kris. Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat. I'm happy to be here again to give a briefing on Marawi operations tsaka 'yung Task Force Bangon Marawi.

Just a quick recap of the data that I have here with me.

On military operations, there are already 666 enemy neutralized --- ibig sabihin, napapatay.

Civilians killed by terrorists, I think, remain the same --- 47.

Firearms seized from the enemy is 685.

Civilians rescued by government security forces since the start remains at 1,728.

Killed-in-action is now 147, including I think, four policemen.

Wounded-in-action, I think, is more than 1,500 already.

The status of donations as of 12 September, 'yung natanggap nating cash for Marawi wounded-in-action plus killed-in-action is P13.3 million.

For the Marawi internally displaced people --- persons, is P992,840.00

Update on Task Force Bangon Marawi:

On housing, the transitional shelters are already being built, ano. Construction is [*garbled*] to flooring. Flooring muna ngayon, for the transitional quarters --- shelters has started last September 8.

The Subcommittee on Housing convened on 13 September 2017 to discuss the provision of water supply in the transitional shelter site in Marawi city.

Filinvest has expressed its willingness to assist the Task Force in the provision of water supply. Filinvest shall meet with Local Water Utility, LWUA, to work on a plan to provide the service.

The OCD's Quick Response Fund may be utilized to support such projects, such as water system to address the immediate needs of Marawi IDPs.

Psychological interventions --- dahil, you know, we know that people there are being bothered mentally and emotionally --- the Task Force Bangon Marawi, in partnership with Mindanao State University (MSU), Marawi Sultanate League, and the Philippine Army, conducted a moral recovery and psychological program last 13 September at Buruun School of Fisheries, which is two days ago, in Iligan City.

Part of the program was a message delivered by the Ulamas to the internally displaced persons focusing on the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad. Local artist Mali Suliman performed his original piece, entitled "Bangon Marawi" during the activity. This is a song.

The Philippine Army facilitated the draw --- a drawing activity to the children in Buruun evacuation center. Further, women soldiers distributed stuffed toys to the children.

This is the status of foreign assistance to the Marawi incident:

Australia has announced to give P1 billion --- one billion pesos ha.

The US has announced also a P730-million assistance.

Japan, P100 million;

Thailand, P100 million --- all in pesos.

China, P85 million, which consists of 70,000 --- 70 --- yeah, P70 million for wounded and P15 million for the rehabilitation.

EU has pledged P49 million.

I think that's it for the quick recap of what's happening in Marawi.

Now, let me draw your attention to this map on the --- to my right, ano. So, this is the battle area --- main battle area before. Doon nag-umpisa 'yan eh --- from there, papunta dito.

Now, upon the bridge somewhere there, where we went with the President last time we went there last week. Now, this --- this was taken about a week --- more than a week ago. Andito pa 'yung tropa natin ano? Now, they are -- - andito na lahat siguro. Konti na lang 'yung natitira rito. This is just one and a half barangay-wide. The area is just one and a half barangay. That's why I've been told by our ground commanders that malapit na raw.

He cannot just say when because they're afraid to set a deadline. Baka mabulilyaso na naman tayo, mag-a-announce tayo, hindi naman matutupad. Nakakahiya na. Nasunog na --- tatlong beses na ako nasunog diyan eh.

So konting tiis na lang. Anyway, our troops are doing their best. In fact, what's so unfortunate is that three days ago, we lost one captain and one enlisted personnel while they were recovering one building here --- 'yung malaking building na ano nila.

'Yung mosque na pinuntahan namin is somewhere --- 'yung Grand Mosque - -- somewhere here, which is just very near where the fighting was being held. Nung andoon kami kasi, pumuputok pa 'yan eh. Pumuputok pa 'yung ano doon.

And the President, gusto pa niyang lumapit, pero pinigilan na namin siya kasi baka ma-stray bullet tayo doon.

So, that's what's happening on the ground. Maybe we should go into Q and A.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

**Maricel Halili (TV 5):** Hi, sir. Good morning. Sir, I just would like to clarify reports na meron daw pong mga government firearms 'yung nakita na

ginagamit din ngayon ng mga terrorists. Have we identified kung paano po napunta na sa kamay ng mga Maute 'yung mga government firearms?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah, many ways that the Mautes acquired these firearms from the government.

Unang una, 'yung mga ina-ambush nilang military noon. When they ambushed the military, they also get the firearms, even the uniform. Pati nga combat boots kung minsan, kinukuha nila eh. That's one.

Second is they procure from unscrupulous soldiers. Marami rin na nagbebenta kasi niyan eh na mga sundalo noon. Ewan ko ngayon kung ano pa 'yan, kung prevalent pa 'yan.

And number three, which is actually 'yang mangyari --- this happened many years ago when our government supported some of the --- mga leaders doon, like --- one, I can remember, Ali Dimaporo, he was given some firearms by the --- during the time of Marcos to help us in the security operations.

So marami tayong naibigay sa kanilang baril na hindi na natin na-recover because it's very difficult to recover the firearms once they are given to them. So ito lahat 'yung mga nakukuha natin. And hindi pa natin natiyak --- we have not yet determined which unit lost them.

But I am certain that when the --- in the battle of Abubakar --- Camp Abubakar before, in 2001, we lost a lot of soldiers there plus the firearms. So 'yun ang sources nila.

And also, they have been smuggling in from the outside through the southern backdoor, 'yung mga galing diyan sa labas na firearms supported by the terrorist groups --- foreign terrorist groups.

**Ms. Halili:** Sir, you mentioned about soldiers who sold firearms in the ---

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah. Meron diyan noon.

**Ms Halili:** --- to the terrorists. Have we identified those soldiers and ano po 'yung actions?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Kami noon, nung nasa battalion pa ako, we have identified them and we punished them. We punished those, we discharged them, we court martialled them. That is the penalty of even losing firearms,

kahit na legitimate na losses 'yan na hindi ma-explain na ma --- 'pag malaman naming kasalanan niya na nawala, then they are court martialled.

Selling is --- or magbebenta ka ng baril sa labas --- is a big offense in the military and ma-court martial 'yan, mabibilanggo pa. Babayaran pa niya 'yung firearms.

**Ms. Halili:** Sir, how many soldiers are we talking about?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Sa akin noon, I think in my battalion, was only --- that was a long time ago, sa '87 pa. Hindi ko nga alam sabi ko kung meron pang nangyayari.

But, ang isa pa pala, 'yung mga pilferage. Sometimes, our armory are being ransacked by sometimes ano, siguro lawless elements, sometimes with the connivance of our soldiers.

**Ms. Halili:** Thank you, sir.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** That's one of those sources of firearms.

**Pia Ranada (Rappler):** Good morning, sir.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Hi Pia.

**Ms. Ranada:** Sir, just on the foreign donations. Sir, you mentioned 'yung mga amounts, these are all for Marawi rehabilitation, correct po?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah. 'Yung --- 'yung nahuli ko sinabi. No, except the one from China na 85, specific kasi 'yung 65 million for the soldiers na wounded at tsaka 'yung namatay.

**Ms. Ranada:** So sir, hindi po kasama dito 'yung 370million worth of guns which China donated?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** No. Hindi pa. Kasi 'yung donations nila na mga firearms and ammunition, especially the M-16's, all went to the PNP. kasi naghahanap sila ng... You know, PNP is buying long firearms for their soldiers --- for their policemen, so binigay namin sa kanila lahat 'yun.

**Ms. Ranada:** So none of the rifles donated from --- by China were used in Marawi?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Some. Some of the policemen were there because there is a Special Action Force there just --- hindi naman sila marami, siguro isang... dalawang company or isang battalion.

But I'm sure --- pero nung nandoon sila, hindi pa naman dumarating 'yung ano eh, 'yung firearms from the... from China. So palagay ko, meron na silang ginagamit.

I don't think pinadala ni Bato doon 'yung mga bagong dating eh. I think he gave it to other areas that need those firearms.

**Ms. Ranada:** Is there any other reason why the military decided not to use these firearms aside from the fact that the PNP...

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah. Desisyon kasi ni Presidente 'yun eh. Because he... alam niya, alam ni Presidente na kulang 'yung long firearms ng pulis so sabi niya --- binigay natin sa kanila.

And, isa pa, we have sufficient firearms in the --- in the Armed Forces.

**Ms. Ranada:** So sir, nothing to do with quality? With the fact na...

**SEC. LORENZANA:** No, no, no. They're --- they're good. They're good. Sinubukan na namin 'yan eh. We have also tested some bago namin binigay sa kanila. And the verdict is they are good firearms. Pati 'yung ammunition na binigay sa atin.

**Ms. Ranada:** Sir, lastly, just on the other amounts donated by the other countries. Sir, these are all generally for rehabilitation, there's no specific aspect of rehab that was ---

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yes, yes... Sabi nila, for Marawi. So we assumed na kung hindi naman specific na wounded, we will give it to the rehabilitation na. Kasi kulang eh. Nine --- wala pang isang milyon 'yung natatanggap nating cash for the rehab, while we already have P13 million for the wounded.

So siguro dagdagan na --- ibigay na natin sa rehabilitation kasi we need more funds for the rehabilitation.

**Ms. Ranada:** So sir, with these amounts, it's still not enough to cover the cost of rehabilitation in Marawi? Hindi pa po sapat 'yung --- kailangan pa po ng additional?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah, kasi nung nag-briefing 'yung --- when the Committee on the Rehabilitation of Marawi in the Senate --- meron silang committee roon eh na finorm (form), new committee.

Si Senator Gringo Honasan asked me what do I think is the ballpark --- 'yung estimate lang --- ballpark figure from what I see on the pictures, how much do we need to rehabilitate Marawi.

Sabi ko, "Siguro, Mr. Senator, 50 billion." But when we went there last week with the President --- early this week --- I think 50 billion is not enough. Talagang grabe 'yung destruction. When you see the --- when the fighting stops and we will --- I will bring you there, you will see how --- how damaged the area is.

**Ms. Ranada:** So sir, how much more do we need?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Ngayon, we --- we have already the Post-Conflict Assessment Group. They are starting already to go around 'yung mga cleared area, except 'yung meron pang mga barilan. Meron nang --- ano diyan, namamasiyal, composed of the DPWH and the Army engineers to assess already kung ano ang...

So malalaman natin 'yan in --- in two weeks' time, especially kung tapos na 'yun ano --- tapos na 'yung bakbakan doon, we will be able to just accurately determine how much we'll need to rehabilitate Marawi city.

**Ms. Ranada:** Thank you, sir.

**Tina Mendez (Philippine Star):** Sir, good morning. Last week si...

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Asan na? Ay...

**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, good morning. Sir...

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Good morning.

**Ms. Mendez:** There was a statement from General Padilla na medyo depleted na 'yung funds ng AFP because of the Marawi incident. And that the AFP is asking for supplemental budget. Have you formally asked for this budget and how much?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Meron na kaming ni-request. I think the amount that was requested is something like 2.5 billion. Dahil what happened was that,

we did not ask additional budget from the government to prosecute 'yung ating operations sa Marawi.

So ang ginamit ng Armed Forces is their funds up to the --- kumuha muna sila, in-advance nila for the procurement of ammunition, mga fuel --- kailangan nila ng fuel --- medicines for those who are ano doon, plus the incidental expenses in --- sa evacuation, gumagamit din kami niyan.

Ang malaki doon is the ammunition at tsaka 'yung mga explosives natin na ginagamit doon.

So it adds up. From the... ang ginagamit ng Army, the Marines, and the Air Force --- it's the Air Force who are helping us. Plus the Navy, so they keep bringing people there, and supplies to... from Manila there. It costs also money. So aggregate. 'Yun ang ano namin.

Hindi na namin sinali 'yung ano ha, 'yung gastos ng PNP na nag-participate doon. They are another... iba rin 'yung kanilang estimate doon.

**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, you are requesting from Congress or from the DBM?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** From DBM lang. From DBM lang. Now, Congress also has pledged na kung kailangan namin daw ng supplemental for these, kung wala na sa pag --- they can also allocate to us.

Pero ang kuwan diyan, the bottom line is we will still have to go to DBM kasi nasa kanya naman ang pera eh, wala naman sa Congress eh. Congress can allocate, but it would still depend on how much money DBM has in its coffer.

**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, anong response ni Budget Secretary?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Pardon?

**Ms. Mendez:** What's the response of our Budget Secretary?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Ang sabi niya eh maghahanap daw siya ng pera.

**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, how soon do you need this budget?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Hindi pa naman namin kailangan masyado kasi hindi pa naman tapos 'yung... 'yung taon. We still have some reserve na ano.

But towards the end of this year, maybe towards this third, fourth quarter, medyo magigipit na kami and already, we need replenishment.



**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, one last. 'Yung expense ng AFP, different pa 'yan dun sa na-tap niyong funds sa AFP Modernization?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** No, no, we are not using modernization to the operations sa Marawi.

**Ms. Mendez:** Okay, thank you po.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** For procurement lang ng equipment 'yun.

**Ms. Mendez:** Okay, thank you very much po.

**Rose Novenario (Hataw):** Good morning, sir.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Good morning.

**Ms. Novenario:** Sir, may mga pronouncements po si Presidente nitong mga nakaraang araw tungkol po dun sa posibilidad na maaaring mag-deklara siya ng martial law sa buong bansa. Sa palagay po ninyo, as martial law administrator po sa Mindanao, ano po 'yung mga factors na pwedeng i-consider para i-deklara po 'yung martial law sa buong Pilipinas?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Sinabi na rin ni Presidente 'yan eh. Sabi niya, kung the... mga... 'yung left, sabi niya, "Kung left will try to have a massive protest, magsunog sila sa kalsada, they will disrupt the country, then I might."

Sinabi na rin niya ang rason eh. But I don't think --- sa aking pananaw naman, estimate ko --- very remote naman mangyari.

Pero si Presidente lang kasi is very concerned that it might get out of hand. So sabi niya, "I might declare martial law." But I don't think the possibility that the left will be able to conduct a massive ano, massive demonstration across the country, disrupting the civil government or the lives of the people, eh hindi naman siguro mangyayari 'yun.

**Ms. Novenario:** Sir, follow up po. In case po na medyo... may ganong sitwasyon na halimbawang sa palagay po ninyo ay mapupunta doon, ano po 'yung magiging papel dito ng militar? Halimbawa po 'yung National Capital Regional Command ng AFP?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** We will cooperate with the police kasi sila ang ano diyan sa mga urban areas eh. Our NCR Command under Colonel Mananquil --- we will ano, we'll support the... we will coordinate with the police on what to... what to do to mitigate the disruption of the lives of the people in Metro Manila.

**Ms. Novenario:** Okay po.

**Ina Andolong (CNN Philippines):** For Asec. Ablan or maybe even Secretary Delfin, if you know the answer to this. But the President mentioned a possible holiday that he may declare in his interview with Mr. Tulfo yesterday. But he didn't mention specifically the date. Was he referring to September 21, when demonstrations are expected? Because he said he would declare a holiday para makaiwas na rin sa --- wala daw pong masali doon sa posibleng gulo?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** I'll answer that ano. I heard the President --- hindi ko na napakinggan 'yung interview niya kay Tulfo. But during my interaction with him early this... this week, sinabi niya na pagka... pagka magkaroon ng massive rally sa Metro Manila at it might inconvenience the public, para hindi ma-inconvenience, sabi niya, "Hindi ko na lang sila papasukin. I will declare walang papasok sa mga opisina."

So just... para --- sabi niya, magkaroon sila ng 'yung demonstration, they have free hand kung anong gawin nila diyan sa mga demonstration nila. That's what he... he said during our ano.

Pero hindi naman niya sinabi kung anong araw but since the left is threatening to have this massive demonstration on the 21<sup>st</sup> and siguro baka 21<sup>st</sup> [garbled] basta papakiramdaman naman daw niya kung kailan 'yan gagawin ng left, 'yung kanilang threatened demonstration.

**Ms. Andolong:** Just to clarify, sir. Is it going to... to be a holiday, or will he only be suspending maybe work in government offices?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah, suspension lang ng work ng government offices, oo.

**Ms. Andolong:** Sir, earlier --- Secretary Lorenzana, earlier, you mentioned that you don't think the left can conduct massive demonstrations across the country reason --- which is why you believe remote 'yung possibility of the President declaring martial law across the country. But if massive demonstrations --- NCR-wide --- do you think that... does that warrant a nationwide declaration of martial law?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** That would depend on the President. I cannot and eh second-guess what the President will do kung may mangyari dito sa Metro Manila.

**Ms. Andolong:** Thank you.

**JP Bencito (Manila Standard):** Hi, sir. Good morning.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Hi JP.

**Mr. Bencito:** Sir, can you just describe or give us an idea how does the government see the possibility of threats coming from the left right now? How do you perceive all of these actions?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** How do I perceive 'yung threat nila? Wala naman kaming nakikita. The... our intelligence people or hidden... our field people cannot... do not have any indication that magkakaroon ng talagang malakihan na katulad nung mga nakaraan taon, mga [inaudible] ni Marcos na magkakaroon ng ganong klase. We do not have that indications in our reports. Even the civilian LGUs, wala din naman silang nararamdaman sa baba eh.

**Leila Salaverria (Philippine Daily Inquirer):** Good morning, sir.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Good morning.

**Ms. Salaverria:** Sir, can you discuss with us our plans for Benham Rise? Philippine Rise. Earlier, you said we may need permanent structures there to assert our claim over the area. Matutuloy pa po ba 'to?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** That is one of the plans, kasi ang pinakamababaw kasi, the shallowest part of Benham Rise is about 50... 50 meters. So maiksi lang ano. It's just like a plateau, ganon. It's about so many thousands of hectares din.

And the plan of the... our plan sa Armed Forces is to put up a platform. 'Yung [itukod?] mo doon 'yung malaking poste pero masyadong --- and the problem there is the weather there gets too harsh some parts of the year with the waves as high as maybe 10 meters. So baka hindi tenable 'yung ano na 'yun, platform.

Some people are saying that we put up... i-ano, anchor na lang, para mag-[inaudible] silang ganon. Anyway, we will ask the experts on these kinds of things to advise us.

But our plan now is to establish a naval presence diyan sa Casiguran. In Casiguran, there is an airport there. It's seldom used. There is a beautiful bay, protected bay which Senator Angara is trying hard for us to develop and I [garbled] him we will. Isa doon.

The other one is in Polilio Island. We already have some... before... during World War II, that island was used by the U.S. as a... an air strip.

So isa doon sa Polilio tsaka sa Casiguran, another one in Cagayan... sa tip ng Cagayan. So we'll have three jump... jump-off point for our patrols in Benham Rise.

Benham Rise is 13 million hectares. It's a huge area, as huge as Luzon eh, ang sabi nila eh, ang estimate ng... And it is the spawning ground of the blue fin tuna, the most expensive tuna in the world.

So let us protect that for our --- at least parang resource natin 'yan. And the corals there are so beautiful that we have to...

And the problem there is other countries --- the fishermen of other countries have been poaching there for a long time. Coming from Taiwan, South Korea, China. Even Japan comes to Benham Rise. And we would like to protect what is... what belongs to us. 'Yun ang ating plano.

**Ms. Salaverria:** Pero sir, as for the permanent structures, wala pa pong solid plans as of now?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Wala pa kaming... wala pa kaming ina-allocate na pera but meron na kaming planong mag-start ng structure diyan.

But we have already... meron na tayong flag doon sa baba ha. May nag plant nan g flag --- we have already planted our flag there last June 12. Some divers went there and planted it, this flag there sa mababaw na area.

**Ms. Salaverria:** Sir, last na. When will you see the establishment of permanent structures in the area?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Maybe, akin --- sa estimate ko ha --- if we have the funds and we get the correct technology, maybe in two years' time. In two years' time, we'll be able to start siguro and maybe another one year to establish it there.

We want to have a platform na pwedeng mag-land ang helicopter, our ship can also go near there and dock para naman we will have some presence

there. Plus we can... we can put there marine biologist, 'yung mga scientist natin to study the area.

**Ms. Salaverria:** Thank you po.

**Ms. Novenario:** Sir, good morning uli.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Good morning.

**Ms. Novenario:** Sir, may... meron pong in-upload --- may status po noong nakaraang mga araw si retired General Joey Kakilala tungkol po doon sa alleged recruitment sa PMA Class 2006 para po sa... maglunsad ng coup d'etat 'yung isang popular politician. Meron po ba tayong info rito at nakipag-coordinate na po ba kayo kay Mr. Kakilala tungkol dito?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Wala naman kaming ano eh... hindi ko kilala 'yung popular politician. Pero si General Kakilala, kakilala ko siya. Magkakilala kami. But I don't know where he based his ano... 'yung report niya na 'yun.

We will try... we are checking that with him, kasi kung saan niya nakuha 'yun, nasagap 'yun. But on the whole, wala naman kaming nakikita eh, nakikita na mga grouping ng mga disgruntled officers kasi before you can do that, there must be some grievances eh. Kailangan meron kang gripes na hindi matugunan. And we do not see any of those indications now.

**Ms. Novenario:** Thank you po.

**Ms. Andolong:** Sir, related po doon sa mga nauna kong questions. The President also said yesterday that --- when he was warning demonstrators not to or against destroying property. Sabi po niya, "If you do it, the next thing, ang kaharap ninyo would be the military and the police." Does this mean that the military will be deployed on September 21 and if so, can you give us an idea on their deployment and directives for them?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Wala naman kaming ano niyan eh... if... kung 'yung deployment, I cannot tell you because those are confidential ano.

But ang unang... ang mauunang sa harap niyan are the policemen. It's only when the policemen need some more warm bodies when we will deploy our military.

**Ms. Andolong:** And for Asec. Ablan. Sir, I just like to get the Palace's thoughts on reports that the PNP is now barring access sa media sa spot reports. Is this policy sanctioned by the President or Malacañang?

**ASEC. ABLAN:** We were informed by the PNP, Ina, that the policy is the same as before. So reporters, journalists may still be able to retrieve blotters and other reports. Nothing has changed. It's still the same status quo.

**Llanesca Panti (The Manila Times):** Good morning po. Kay Asec. Ablan. Sir, about the House reducing CHR budget to P1,000. Critics of the administration is saying --- are saying that it is indicative that... that reduction is indicative that extrajudicial killings is a policy of this administration. So how do you respond to that? Since I asked Usec. Abella the last time if the Executive will intervene in the... ahead of the vote for the 1,000, and he said he won't --- the Palace won't intervene. So ---

**ASEC. ABLAN:** Yes.

**Ms. Panti:** --- is reducing CHR budget to P1,000 indicative that extrajudicial killings is a policy?

**ASEC. ABLAN:** No, 'no. That's a stretch. If you recall, it has already been mentioned by other officers of the Executive branch that the DBM and the OP actually submitted a budget of at least 600 million for the Commission on Human Rights.

The reduction of the budget to 1,000 is a exercise of the check-and-balance power of the Legislative branch. And just to put things in a perspective, the reduction of the 1,000 is only at the earlier stages of our budget process.

If we recall, every year, we start our budget... our budget process, at the earliest, January of the past... the previous year. And then the passage is hopefully by November and December.

We're only in September right now and we're at the level of the House of Representatives.

This budget, although cut, will still have to be sent to the Senate for further discussion and deliberation.

So we're still... we still have a long way to go. In fact, after the Senate --- since the version of the Senate and the House may not always be the same -- there will still be Bicameral Conference Committee. So we're still a long, long way from the budget approval.

And the reduction of the budget of the CHR to 1,000 --- we don't speak for Congress --- but as a lawyer and a student of public policy, as I mentioned earlier, is an exercise of the Legislative branch of its checks and balances.

And maybe I can take this opportunity to explain to those who are uninformed that there are only a few times that the Legislative can actually check on other branches, specifically on the Executive branch.

One time is when they can conduct investigations in aid of legislation. That's how they can pursue their check-and-balance power.

The other is to actually review the budget. The House of Representatives is the... has the power of the purse --- it originates from them.

And the PCOO actually, like any other government agency, have to appear before congressmen. This is the only opportunity for Congress, really, to hold us accountable.

They ask us, "What did you do for the past year?" "This is what happened." "Before we approve anything, you have to submit us this document."

So I feel the reduction of the 1,000 is a, you know, a... the Congress exercising its check-and-balance power to direct CHR and other agencies it has reduced budget --- including the NCIP and the ERC --- to submit the documents and to justify their budget. And... there. So that's the whole check and balances.

This whole budget approval is the only time Congress can actually hold the Executive branch accountable for the budget it used for the previous year and to give its budget for the following year.

And I mentioned early just to reiterate, this is still just at the start of the whole budgetary process. It would still go the Senate and you've already heard comments from our senators that they will restore the budget of the CHR.

It's a totally legislative matter that the Palace will respect as far as we know, we submitted a budget for CHR.

**Ms. Panti:** Sir, yes, you mentioned about the Executive submitting over 600 million budget for CHR.

**ASEC. ABLAN:** Yes.

**Ms. Panti:** So are you hopeful? Do you support the senators' stand that it should be restored to over 600 million?

**ASEC. ABLAN:** The thing speaks for itself. When the DBM and the OP submitted the budget to Congress of more than 600 million for CHR, it's there.

The MOOE, the personnel salaries, the projects. It's all there. So that by itself, it's in the proposed GAA, is already symbolic that the Executive respects all of its branches, including its constitutional commissions' budgets.

**Ms. Ranada:** For Secretary Lorenzana, sir, could we just get an update on the plan to repair facilities in Pag-asa Island? What is the status? And what is the timeline for this?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Hopefully, they have already started because the contracts have been finalized, I think two months ago. And the funds are already available. But it will be done in stages.

The first stage is to construct a beaching ramp for our ship to dock ano, so that we can bring in construction materials and heavy equipment.

After that is finished, after that, they will bring in the construction materials. Then they will repair the runway.

They will repair first the runway before --- make it useable on all weather. It would be cemented.

And then later on, they will extend for another 500 meters to make it viable for bigger aircrafts.

So ang timetable is maybe 18 months. We should have started early this year, when the water still, medyo calm. Kalma pa `yung tubig.

Now, rough weather starts July. So it is now doubtful if the contractor can still go there with their ships ano. So medyo tuma-timing sila ngayon kung anong magandang panahon para magdala ng mga equipment.

But it will *[inaudible]* we have allocated P1.6 billion there for the repair of Pag-asa.

**Ms. Ranada:** And sir, what will we do if China lodges a protest or speaks against the actions, these repairs?



**SEC. LORENZANA:** No, I don't think they will do any violent actions. They will protest. I was told by the ambassador that anything we do there, they are going to protest. It's okay. Anyway, whatever you do there, they also protest.

So we have very good working relationship with the Chinese Ambassador here.

Meron naman tayong Code of Conduct in South China Sea that will be implemented by all claimants there, saying that status quo muna tayo ngayon, we will not occupy any new features. So that's it.

What we are doing is improving our own, the islands that we are occupying. We have occupied since 1969, nung first time we occupied those islands there in the Kalayaan Island Group.

So that's the status quo now. So I'm sure that the repair of Pag-asa will go on smoothly.

**Ms. Ranada:** Thank you, sir.

**Ms. Mendez:** Hi again, sir. May we ask for your reaction on North Korea's ballistic missile launch this morning over northern Japan that landed in the Pacific Ocean? How will this affect sir the peace and stability in the region?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** That is a very dangerous act by the North Korean, ano. First, they keep flying those... sending those missiles up without any reason siguro except to scare us here, the neighboring countries.

Pangalawa, their technology's not accurate. Or they might be aiming for some other, but it will drop into another country like the Philippines. Even the President is very much concerned about these missiles from North Korea.

So natatakot tayo diyan. Very concerning. Sabi nila, eh bumagsak diyan sa Luneta, eh anong mangyayari sa Manila? And it has --- how many? Ten times as powerful as the one drop in Hiroshima. Eh 'di ten times din 'yung destruction. So very concerning 'yan. We are concerned about that.

And so what we're doing now is meron tayong ginagawang plan to --- if something happens in the Korean Peninsula, magkaroon ng bakbakan diyan, on how to evacuate our... the Filipinos there.

We have about 26,000 Filipinos working in Korea. So malaking problema 'yan kung saka-sakali. Ngayon kung magkaroon naman ng --- tatargetin nila 'yung Guam, we still have a lot of Filipino-Americans there in Guam that might --- we'd like also to evacuate.

So medyo nakaka-ano... nakakabahala 'yan, 'yang ginagawa ng North Korea.

**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, any information on how we are... the Philippine government is coordinating with our military allies regarding this?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Well, we have an alliance with the US. We are friendly with Japan and South Korea. And I think the Defense... the Foreign Affairs is talking to them about how these things... kung paano gagawin 'yan. We leave it to the Foreign Affairs department on how to deal with the foreign government.

**Ms. Mendez:** Okay. One more thing, sir. On another issue. Sir, I understand the Philippines is still under the state of national emergency, right?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah. The state of lawlessness and [*ano ba 'yun?*] emergency that was declared last September 2016 has not been lifted. So it still covers the whole Philippines.

**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, can you please refresh our minds on what the President can do under this declaration in view of the upcoming protest by leftist groups?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** The normal that we can do under emergency, we can also put up checkpoints, we can establish curfews. Just like martial law. Mas maano lang 'yung martial law, mas matindi ng konti. But almost the same 'yan eh.

We can hold people for --- arrest people and hold them for 36 hours. 'Yun kasing martial law, 72 hours eh. So 36 hours. And then we have to let them go kung wala naman silang --- we cannot find any culpable violation of law and we cannot charge them with any cases, we can let them go.

'Yun lang naman ano eh. At 'yun na. Checkpoints, some ano --- And then intensify operations, we can do that.

**Ms. Mendez:** Sir, sa tingin niyo ba ito 'yung iniisip ng Pangulo na while he is ordering the military to allow protest, be inside the camps, pwede rin daw siyang i-tap niya 'yung mga military 'pag nagkagulo na? Is he ---

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah. Of course, of course, of course. The President has his disposal of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to quell any disturbances.

But first, sabi ko nga kanina, 'yung police mo naandiyan kasi sila 'yung sa internal eh. Police muna, especially urban areas and we have presence here, wala naman kaming presence sa Manila. Sila 'yung may mga sa barangay, may mga patrol sila diyan. Sila muna diyan.

Then I said a while ago that if they need more manpower, support, then that's the time we go in.

**Ms. Mendez:** Thank you, sir.

**Celerina Monte (The Daily Manila Shimbun):** Good morning. Celerina Monte po sa The Daily Manila Shimbun.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Good morning.

**Ms. Monte:** Secretary Lorenzana, you have mentioned na 'yung preparations natin, if ever sa Japan and sa Guam. How about here in the Philippines, are we not --- Kasi you're saying na hindi naman accurate 'yung North Korea, what if pero huwag naman sana, na dito mag-land. So ano 'yung preparation? Meron ba tayo like the other countries na merong like --- I don't know kung panel ba or how do you call it, I don't know. So meron ba tayong mga ganun?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Yeah. Unfortunately, wala tayong mga air raid shelters. At the height of the Cold War, the US marami silang ganyan, underground bunkers. Huge bunkers cement, deep within the earth.

Kumpleto ng tubig, pagkain that will last them for maybe months, ano. Because they were afraid that there will be exchange of missile, nuclear weapons with the Russians, so meron sila.

Now, those bunkers are now there, nandun pa, pwede pa nilang gamitin. Tayo, wala. Wala naman tayong ano noon eh, preparation.

Now, I'm going to tell you what the President said. "Anong magagawa natin?" sabi niya. "Wala naman tayong --- we cannot shoot the missiles so that it will not come here. Just go, do your daily --- what you're doing regularly," sabi niya. "Kung oras mo na, oras mo na," sabi naman niya.

It's very fatalistic eh. So that's not good siguro. Hindi niyo matanggap na ganun. But that is how the President looks at these things.

"Eh kung bumagsak 'yan sa Luneta, anong magagawa natin?" sabi niya. "At meron 'yang warhead na mga 100 kilo ton of TNT."

So what can we do? We cannot start digging now, digging for air raid shelters. We just pray and hope siguro that the missile will drop somewhere there in Pacific Ocean.

**Ms. Monte:** But sir, are we asking like US and Japan, since allies naman natin sila, na like they have their own interceptor ba 'yung tawag doon, if ever?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** No, we have not asked the United States or Japan. But the US has already stationed their Patriot missiles in Japan and also in South Korea. Tsaka 'yung THAAD nila, 'yung High Altitude to intercept any missiles coming from North Korea.

So we hope that 'yung kuwan nila doon, 'yung harang nila, maharangan nila 'yung papunta dito sa atin.

**Ms. Monte:** Okay. Sir, kay Asec. Ablan naman. Sir, you have mentioned that 'yung process sa Congress is just the start and there's still the Senate and the Bicam. So are you hopeful na later on, the budget of CHR and other two agencies would be restored?

**ASEC. ABLAN:** We're very hopeful that the budget we submitted to Congress would be approved by Congress.

**Ms. Monte:** Including the three other agencies?

**ASEC. ABLAN:** Everything inside it, yes.

**Ms. Monte:** And sir, what if like hindi naman siya i-approve? Like the NCIP, which is directly under the OP. What will happen to that agency?

**ASEC. ABLAN:** This is not the first time that there were proposals to reduce the budget by very big amount.

If you recall, several years ago, I think it was 2010. There was a proposal to reduce the budget of OPAPP from whatever they proposed to one peso.

But eventually, Secretary Deles back then got the budget for OPAPP. So we feel again the reduction of the budgets of the three agencies to 1,000 is Congress demanding from these agencies some form of accountability and to justify their budgets.

Congress is asking something from these three agencies. What they are, we have to ask these agencies.

You know, quite recently, this is I think the first time that the House of Representatives have live streamed their approval of the budget process.

They live streamed the Committee on Appropriations hearing, they live streamed the plenary discussion. And I think we should just recall what were the discussions back then.

We have to find out what Congressmen were asking from these agencies and maybe we will find the answers there.

But we're still hopeful that the budget we submitted, including all government agencies plus those offices, will be approved by the Congress.

That's how we're --- our checks and balances works under the Constitution. Until that is changed, we have to respect it.

**Tuesday Niu (DZBB):** Hi, sir. Tuesday, sir. Sir, natakot ako doon sa sinabi mo. Gusto ko pang mabuhay. Pero in the future ---

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Pareho tayo.

**Ms. Niu:** Kaya nga, sir. 'Yung ano na lang, sir, 'yung future na tinitignan natin. Wala ba tayong plano na gumawa nung ganun?

**SEC. LORENZANA:** Meron tayo.

**Ms. Niu:** For Philippines na maging safe naman in the future dahil nga hindi natin alam kung anong iniisip nung gumagawa ng mga missile-missile na 'yan.

**SEC. LORENZANA:** I think what we are doing now is we are part of a global coalition that will try to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Hindi lang nuclear 'yan eh. Pwede ring biological at tsaka chemical. So we are part of that. Member tayo diyan.

In fact, when I was Philippines attaché in the US, I participated in a symposium in the United Nations and we are part of that. So 'yan ang una natin gagawin ano.

Pangalawa, if something happens here, it will be treated as a disaster, a human-made disaster and NDRRMC, hopefully our first responders, will survive the first... 'yung attack. And we can, we can respond ano.

But we have some contingencies also to deal with that. So siguro, ang una nating gawin, eh itigil 'yung paggawa ng mga nuclear weapons. Because if it is... it falls into the hands of the bad guys, they can do it in a place anywhere they want eh, anytime. Nakakatakot 'yan eh.

Kaya nga meron tayong non-proliferation treaties with the other countries all over the world, para 'yung mga hindi responsible na countries like North Korea will not be able to obtain them.

**Ms. Niu:** Alright. Thank you, sir.

**ASEC. ABLAN:** Before we adjourn for this morning, just to reiterate the... what Secretary Lorenzana already briefed the Malacañang Press Corps earlier, our updates on Mindanao.

This is Day 116 in Marawi and the data is good as 7 p.m. of September 14. You can see on the screen.

The total enemies killed is 670;

The total civilians killed is 47, no change;

The total of firearms recovered is 692, an additional of seven firearms recovered yesterday;

Unexploded ordnance recovered, total is 11, no change;

Civilians... Total civilians rescued is also 1,728, no change;

The total killed-in-action is 147 as mentioned earlier by Secretary Lorenzana.

Insofar as the status of cash donations are concerned, the information is good as of 3 p.m. yesterday September 14, we have an additional of 65 million from the Chinese Embassy. And as mentioned by the Secretary of National Defense, this 65 million for the soldiers wounded-in-action. So we have a total of 80 million.

For our internally displaced persons in Marawi, we have 993,340.21.

And before we end the Mindanao Hour today, let me just share some good news from the NEDA and DOTr.

The Department of Transportation's Metro Manila Subway Project or MMSP, one of the Duterte administration's key infrastructure projects, has been approved by the NEDA last Tuesday, September 12.

The construction of the MMSP, amounting to P355.6 billion, will start early 2018 and is expected to be completed by 2025.

The Philippines' first subway project, funded through the Official Development Assistance or ODA coming from the Japanese government, will run from Quirino Highway in Quezon City to the NAIA complex in Parañaque [City].

Details will be further disclosed by the Department of Transportation.

That ends the announcements for this morning. Thank you, Rocky.

**--- END ---**