

GMA OKs dismissal of 11 Magdalo officers

President Arroyo has approved the dismissal from military service of 11 junior officers earlier convicted for their participation in the failed 2003 Oakwood mutiny, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said yesterday.

The dismissal of the officers came two days before the fifth anniversary of the short-lived July 27 uprising.

The 11 officers who belonged to the Magdalo group are Capts. Gary Alejano and Segundino Orfiano; Ltsg. Andy Torrato, Eugene Louie Gonzales, James Layug, and Manuel Cabochan; Ltjg. Arturo Pascua; 1Lt. Francisco Acedillo; Lts. Jonnel Sangalang and Billy Pascua and Ensign Armand Pontejos.

"By order of the President, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita signed on July 18 the approval of the verdict handed down by the general court martial against the 11 junior officers who had been found guilty beyond reasonable doubt of violating Article of War 96 (conduct unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman)," the statement read.

Out of close to a hundred junior officers tried by mili-

tary court for the failed uprising, only Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, fugitive Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon, 1Lt. Warren Lee Dagupon, and Marine Lts. Alquin Canson, Junnibert Tubo and Edwin Duetao are still waiting for the resolution of the charges against them.

Trillanes and Faeldon are also facing charges before the Makati regional trial court (RTC) for allegedly leading the Nov. 29 standoff at the Manila Peninsula.

Teodoro said under the military justice system, a court martial's judgment and sentence becomes final and executory when approved by the President, who is the military's commander-in-chief.

Mrs. Arroyo earlier pardoned nine junior officers, led by former Army Capts. Milo Maestrecampo and Gerardo Gambala, after they were convicted by the Makati RTC for leading the Oakwood mutiny.

Most of the officers involved in the Oakwood mutiny have been released from military custody after being dismissed from the service.

- James Mananghaya