

# President calls for unity

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the police for their success in the campaign against terrorism and crime, for arresting Abu Sayyaf leader Ghalib Andang alias Commander Robot and ending the Makati mutiny peacefully.

The President said the "operational fusion" between the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) has resulted in the lowering of the crime rate in Metro Manila.

"With your vigilant support to the policemen and other law enforcement agencies, we have been able to cut down by half the crime rate in Metro Manila over the past two weeks," the President said.

The celebration was themed, "Sandatahang Lakas ng Pilipinas: Nagkakaisa Tungo sa Matatag na Republika."

The President particularly commended the AFP and the PNP for neutralizing and arresting top criminals, including members of kidnap-for-ransom syndicates, the Abu Sayyaf, and Jemaah Islamiyah.

"Your work together with the PNP has been truly a great example of inter-operational fusion that bodes well. *Pagkakaisa ng AFP at PNP para suguin ang krimen at terorismo* (A united AFP and PNP to stop crimes and terrorism)," she said.

At present, the President said the integrated track of vigilance and peace building would continue "until we have a just, lasting and comprehensive peace especially in Mindanao."

The President said the peace efforts in Mindanao and the suspension of military operations (SOMO) with the New People's Army (NPA) is a gesture of peace to give respite to the civilian communities affected

by conflict.

"All of these are reminders that we wage war to gain peace," the President said

She said the achievements of Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita in the peace process and the "mainstreaming" of the peace process into the defense policy combined with the "spectacular" successes of Secretary Angelo Reyes, head of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTAF), in fighting kidnapping and bank robberies "is truly a banner year for our defense and armed forces officials."

Being the Chief Executive and also a mother, the President said her administration has fully supported the AFP and the PNP to cope with the demands of their work.

The President said she has prioritized the acquisition of supplies and equipment for the use of the AFP and PNP and the provision of additional benefits, including the increase of their salaries and the P1-billion housing package since the start of her administration.

The President directed Ermita and AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya to look for more housing areas for soldiers and policemen and assign a military doctor from the Department of Health (DOH) regional hospitals near conflict areas to attend to the immediate needs of their wounded personnel.

She also reiterated her instruction to the DND and the AFP to improve the management system in addressing redress and grievances.

All these, she said, are intended to ensure that the security and investment of the people and the soldiers are well taken care of.



**THE PRESIDENT:** "We cannot have change before genuine reconciliation with justice."

## President calls for unity, end to political bickering

THE country has had enough of political bickering and political strife. Bitter memories of the past are hampering our goal to move forward."

With these words, articulated at the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) at Camp Aguinaldo on December 19, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo set the tone for the coming year and the political campaign period ahead.

Focusing on the theme of unity and understanding, the President stressed that "we cannot have change before genuine reconciliation with justice."

"I would like to spare this pagkakaisa (unity) from politics because this is a sincere and earnest effort to transform our divisions into unity and thereby see a clear path to a brighter future," she said.

At the same time, the President commanded the military and

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