

LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS NO. 879, June 20, 1979

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TO:

Chief of Staff

Armed Forces of the Philippines

- With the way paved for the establishment of the autonomous government in Region 9 and 12 and in line with my instructions to gradually leave the primary responsibility for peace and order in these regions to their respective autonomous governments and correspondingly to withdraw the national government forces from such responsibility. I would like you therefore to plan for this eventuality under the following guidelines and concept:
- To the maximum extent feasible, the two regional governments shall be responsible for the internal security and the peace and order in their respective regions. This responsibility shall be discharged through the local police (INP) and Regional Security Forces (BSF) that shall subsequently be organized.
- As the need arises, as when the peace and order situation shall escalate beyond the capacity of the two regional governments to cope with, the national government through the AFP shall assist in restoring peace and order or, as necessary, take over temporarily such responsibility from the regional governments until the situation is stabilized. It is necessary, therefore, that effective relationships and close coordination between the regional governments and the national government forces in the two regions be established to facilitate such assistance to the regional governments.
- There shall be a transition period from now to the future set-up when the regional governments are capable of assuming their responsibility for peace and order in their respective regions. During the transition period, the responsibility of the AFP for security and peace and order in the regions shall be gradually contracted. Accordingly, AFP forces will conduct a phased withdrawal to predetermined cantonment areas in both regions. The transition shall be effected as quickly as the developments in the situation will allow and as will insure the successful discharge of this responsibility by the regional governments.
- During the transition period, the AFP shall monitor closely the situation and shall take steps to insure that the secessionist forces and other enemies of the state located in the region will not take advantage of the situation to build up their strength and stock supplies with the object of renewing or escalating the conflict.
- Commensurate with their responsibility, the two regional governments should be provided an adequate security force directly responsible to them for the maintenance of peace and order aside from the local INP. Such security force shall contain an equitable representation of the people in the region, to include those of the MNLF and other secessionist rebels who will return to the fold of the law. It is envisioned that such security force will partly be composed of the existing para-military forces in the two regions, such as the CHDFs, SPMFs and provincial strike forces. It is necessary, therefore, in determining the strength and composition of the regional security force, to have an inventory of the existing paramilitary forces in the two regions to include their strength, armaments and their locations, and an accurate assessment of their capabilities.

- The contraction of AFP responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order in the two regions and their withdrawal to cantonment areas do not preclude their continued participation in the total security effort, both in military and non-military activities. AFP forces should be prepared to accelerate their Home Defense activities in support of and in coordination with the two regional governments. Other AFP units will conduct retraining in place or at the rear areas and intensify troop information and education (TI&E)/TANGLAW activities. R&R will likewise be accelerated in order to give the maximum number of troops much needed rest. Troops in the region should be kept busy.

- It is likely that as a consequence of this transfer of responsibility for peace and order to the two regional governments, there may be a need to reduce AFP strength and to terminate the services of a number of AFP and draftees. In the interest of morale and to preclude a security problem arising from these terminated EP and draftees if they are left without means of livelihood, plans should therefore be made to absorb as many as possible of these EP and draftees into the local police and regional security forces. Those who may not be absorbed for lack of quota or who wish to retire from government service and opt to settle permanently in the region may be resettled in the resettlement areas to be established for the purpose.

- The AFP shall continue to assist in the rehabilitation of rebel returnees and displaced persons in the region. Accordingly, the AFP will recommend twenty (20) resettlement areas for the purpose. Terminated EP and draftees as mentioned above may be accommodated in these resettlement areas.

- Submit the plans and report on para-military forces called for as soon as possible.

DONE in the City of Manila, this 20th day of June, in the year of Our Lord, Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Nine.

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