

December 10, 2009

AFP RESPECTS HUMAN RIGHTS, WITH OR WITHOUT MARTIAL LAW

CAMP AGUINALDO –In the light of various statements and allegations of human rights violations reportedly committed by soldiers in the implementation of martial law in Maguindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines assures the public and concerned organizations that we are fully committed to defending and respecting human rights charters.

As a strong defender of human rights, AFP had been in the vanguard in prosecuting members who have been proven to have abusing human rights. It scrutinizes and takes legal actions to personnel involve in human rights violation with duly established and competent evidence.

Records shows that as of November 2009, the status of 16 complaints/cases filed against 30 suspects composing of 24 regular AFP personnel, two Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) members and four suspected military assets for alleged Extra Judicial Killings of 19 victims are as follows: seven cases with a total of 16 personnel accused are pending trial in court; one case pending at the Office of the Ombudsman with one Officer as respondent; one case with one Enlisted Personnel (EP) accused has been archived due to non-appearance of the suspect; one case with one EP accused has been acquitted for insufficiency of evidence; and seven dismissed cases/complaints (five by the Department of Justice and two by the court).

Moreover, the continuous efforts to ameliorate the Armed Forces in promoting human rights brought institutional changes and reiteration of policies to enhance and strengthen its stance on human rights concerns. This includes creation of Human Rights Office which manages and implements AFP affairs concerning human rights program, policies and activities; incorporating human rights modules in the curricula of military courses; and continuous conduct of crash courses on “para-legal” up to battalion level to enhance personnel’s awareness and sensitivity to human rights.

As a professional and dedicated organization, AFP strictly abides to the constitution and to the principles of the International Humanitarian Law. It does not commend abuses of human rights even in the fiercest of battles. Utmost respect is given to human rights even to those who are against the government and to those who violates the law.

The declaration of martial law in Maguindanao does not hamper AFP’s overriding deference to human rights and on improving human rights situation in the Philippines.