

March 12, 2009

### **Troops overrun NPA camp, recover high-powered firearms**

**CAMP Melchor F dela Cruz, Upi, Gamu, Isabelala** - A New People's Army camp was overrun by the operating troops of the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion led by 2Lts. Edelfred A. Mendoza and Reymundo O. Zamora Jr., following a heavy exchange of fires with more or less 20 NPA terrorists at about 12:15 p.m. on March 11, 2009 at Sitio Tagkar, Barangay Mission, Sta Teresita, Cagayan.

Reports reaching Major General Nestor Z. Ochoa, Commander of the Army's 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division from Lt. Col. James B. Joven, Commanding Officer of the 17<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion disclosed that the heavy exchange of fires against NPA terrorists led by a certain Jonathan Sandaga alias Ayan resulted to the seizure of their camp which consisted of 15 huts and recovery of an M14 rifle, a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), a bandoleer with three magazines for M14, three 40mm Grenades, hand grenade, generator, medical supplies, training paraphernalia's and subversive documents. No casualty was reported on the government side while undetermined on the other side.

Major General Ochoa said that the successful combat operations conducted by the Army troops is a result of text messages and other information from the civilians in the area.

"People are really against the NPA's presence in their barangays because of their relentless forced contributions and extortions. NPA rebels operating in Cagayan Valley are now losing grounds because people have ceased their support and a number of its fighters have lost faith in the movement and are now returning to the folds of the law," said MGen Ochoa.

Meanwhile in Samar, a mass grave was found and 15 bodies believed to be victims of CPP/NPA purging buried at the site were excavated by the Army troops at 11 a.m. on March 9, 2009 in Brgy. Mac Arthur, Las Navas, Northern Samar.

Intelligence reports reaching the Army troops led by 1Lt. Noriel D. Tayaban of Charlie Company, 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion disclosed the location of the mass grave, which led the troops to verify the information. Troops are now coordinating with the families of the victims for further identification and proper disposal of the body.