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Army bestows highest honor to 1Lt Evangelista

"Press on the fight..." These are the last words of 1Lt Dell Jhun Evangelista before he succumbed to the hard reality of death during that fateful day on August 12.

Even in pain due to a gunshot wound, 1Lt Evangelista remained in control and continued to lead his men in a decisive and most significant engagement by the Philippine Army with Abu Sayyaf Group members resulting to 20 killed on the enemy side and 17 high-powered firearms recovered, including five machine guns and two rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

1Lt Evangelista graduated cum laude and no. 11 out of the 329 members of the Philippine Military Academy "Mandala" Class of 2006.

"His heroic feat and display of gallantry could qualify 1Lt Evangelista as Medal of Valor Awardee for selflessly offering his life in the line of duty," said Lt Col Ronnie Evangelista, commander of the Light Reaction Battalion of the Special Operations Command, Philippine Army. According to Maj. Gen Arturo Ortiz, commander of the Special Operations Command, who himself is a Medal of Valor Awardee, he will facilitate the recommendation, however he said the selection goes through a very tedious process subject to the approval of the President.

Army chief Lt Gen Delfin N Bangit, on the other hand, lauded 1Lt Evangelita's gallantry, saying that his death is a big loss to the Army organization. *"It is not only bravery that he displayed, it is heroism,"* he further added.

The Army chief visited yesterday the wake of 1Lt Evangelista in San Quintin, Pangasinan, and that of 1Lt Chester Barela and Cpl Renato Dindin in Floridablanca, Pampanga and San Miguel Bulacan respectively.

Twenty-three soldiers, together with the estimated 30 to 40 ASG bandits were killed in several skirmishes in Basilan last August 12. The Philippine Army mourns the death of three of its men. In honor of the soldiers who risked and offered their lives in the line of duty, a look into the heroism exhibited by these valiant soldiers is the most appropriate thing to do.