

3 soldiers dead in Surigao del Sur communist clash

Written by Rhea S. Ong
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COTABATO, Philippines - At least 3 state security forces were killed while another was wounded as they clashed Tuesday, June 4, with fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) in the restive southern Philippines, a military official said.

Soldiers under the 29th Infantry Battalion were on patrol mission in the remote village of Buhisan in the town of San Agustin in Surigao del Sur when they encountered around 30 heavily armed leftist rebels, according to 4th Division commander Brigadier General Ricardo Visaya.

A 30-minute fire fight ensued, leaving 3 dead on the government side.

"They were on patrol and they saw a lot of tents, but pet dogs alerted the NPA to the troops' approach," Visaya, told reporters by telephone.

"Our troops maneuvered toward the trees as a gunfight began but the area turned out to be mined, and 3 of them were killed instantly," Visaya claimed.

He said army reinforcements later captured the camp, which the rebels apparently used for combat training, while the guerrillas fled.

Series of clashes

It was the latest of a series of deadly clashes this year that have left dozens of combatants dead.

On May 27, 8 members of the elite Special Action Force (SAF) of the Philippine National Police were killed in an ambush in Cagayan

About 30 rebels set off a landmine and fired at their truck, police authorities said.

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The government has long condemned the rebels for using such explosive devices, saying they violate international agreements. The National Democratic Front of the Philippines, which represents communist rebels in peace talks with the Philippine government, denied the accusation.

"The use of command-detonated land mines by the NPA is not a violation of the Ottawa Treaty. It is a legitimate weapon of the NPA against the armed forces of the Aquino government in the revolutionary movement's just war of national and social liberation," NDFP earlier said.

Talks between the Philippine government and Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NPA-NDFP) broke down shortly before the May 13 elections.

The NDFP is accusing the government of negotiating in bad faith. But the government peace panel said the NDFP has set tough conditions for the peace process to move.

The peace process is aimed at ending 40 years of communist insurgency that has killed at least 30,000 people, according to a government estimate.

Source: rappler