



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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PUNO BARES 3-POINT APPROACH TO PEACE PROBLEM

Secretary Ronnie Puno of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) has said the government is now implementing a three-pronged holistic approach—comprising enforcement, negotiation and rehabilitation—in tackling the insurgency and other peace and order problems all over the country.

In his various meetings with members of the Regional Peace and Order Councils (RPOCs) in the Visayas and Mindanao, Puno said the approach basically defines the “civilianization” of the insurgency problem, with the Philippine National Police given a more active role in the internal security operations (ISO), as directed by President Arroyo under Executive Order No. 546.

Puno, who chairs the National Police Commission (Napolcom), said this “civilianization approach” was first applied by the DILG and the Department of National Defense (DND) under the leadership of Secretary Gilbert Teodoro during the spate of attacks perpetrated by renegade leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in nine barangays in North Cotabato, certain parts of Lanao del Norte and other conflict areas in the South in August last year.

“The Secretary of National Defense and I sat down and said let's recommend to the President a different approach,” Puno said. “So, we came up with the approach of a task force that has three components—enforcement, negotiation and the last which is rehabilitation and resettlement.”

Puno said that in the enforcement component, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) have joined forces in implementing the law to bring to justice the MILF leaders responsible for the attacks on the civilian population in Mindanao.

Under this setup, the AFP has deputized the PNP to assist in its anti-insurgency operations, giving the military the powers it needs to arrest suspected rebels and other criminal elements without being exposed to charges of illegal arrest or human rights violations, he said.

Puno noted that under the law, the PNP can legally conduct arrests under certain conditions as long as those apprehended are not detained longer than 36 hours.

As for the negotiation component of this approach, Puno explained that a task group was created during the MILF attacks in North Cotabato and Lanao del Norte to open communication lines with the insurgents and find ways of peacefully ending the fighting between the two sides.

The last component of this approach pertains to the resettlement of displaced civilians and the rehabilitation of conflict areas, which also involves other national agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the local government units, Puno said.

In the case of the MILF attacks, Puno said the government immediately set up resettlement and evacuation centers in Ozamiz City as well as other towns in North Cotabato and Lanao del Norte that were away from the conflict areas to temporarily house tens of thousands of displaced families.