

# AFP offers ‘full support’ in ending Diwalwal row

For so long the hotbed of many problems, from illegal miners to insurgents, the security problem in Mt. Diwata gold rush, i.e., peace and order, may eventually be addressed and the exploration and exploitation of the gold-rich resource given full attention.

Lt. Gen. Felimon Santos, Jr., commanding general of Eastern Mindanao Command (EastMinCom), and Brig. Gen. Jose C. Faustino, commanding general of the Army’s 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, offered security for areas in the Diwalwal Mining Reservation Area (DMRA), which is under the supervision of the state firm Philippine Mining Development Corporation (PMDC).

The military officers, who held sensitive posts in southern Mindanao years earlier, made this pledge in a consultation-meeting held with Alberto B. Sipaco, Jr., chairman, president and chief executive officer of PMDC, which recently transferred its main office in the city.

Consistent with their offer is to secure DMRA as government property while continuing the efforts of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to lure insurgents and rebels to return to the fold of law under the comprehensive local integration program (CLIP).

The campaign to bring back rebels to mainstream society has been further strengthened under the Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2018-01 signed on July 5, 2018 by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of National Defense (DND).

The circular aims to facilitate the integration of former rebels as productive citizens, compensate and remunerate turned-in firearms, and enhance the capability of the local governments and national government agencies in the execution and sustainability of the CLIP plan.

Maj. Gen. Faustino acknowledged the concerns raised by the PMDC in bringing normalcy to DMRA and gave it a guarantee, saying: “You can expect the full support of the 10<sup>th</sup> ID and that if we could support you with even more.”

In the meeting, Sipaco underscored the inroads PMDC have achieved in recent years due to the committed support of law enforcement agencies, local and national agencies, private entities, and other stakeholders.

He expressed optimism the PMDC-military alliance in securing the DMRA as a peaceful and orderly environment will eventually transform Diwalwal into an ecology-friendly activity, a revenue-generating engagement, and an occupation with intent to develop host communities.

Sipaco's briefing included PMDC's strides and gains, its environmental advocacy vis-à-vis the host community, solid support for indigenous peoples, livelihood for resettled families, transfer of plants to the mineral processing zone, and consultation with all stakeholders.

“At a time when Mindanao is in the throes of industrial revolution and the whole country is moving towards unprecedented economic growth, in part hastened by the ongoing infrastructure transformation,” he said in an interview, “forging alliance and creating links with worthy individuals and institutions certainly creates inspiration.”

“More than the official intention that comes with their visit,” he added, “linking with them appropriately echoes the call of President Rodrigo Duterte for decision makers in government to weld together and work hand in hand towards promoting efficiency, especially in strengthening the task to institute doable reforms in the bureaucracy.”

The EastMinCom and 10<sup>th</sup> ID have also committed to build a partnership with the PMDC's community relations department (ComRel) in the implementation of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects.

The ComRel will also work hand in hand with the civic-military operations of EastMinCom in the conduct of medical and dental missions, deliver livelihood programs and other services, and provide employment and livelihood to host communities, on top of the vigorous campaign on responsible mining in the DMRA, with the support of the tribal community.

Source:

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