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— Lt Gen Rolly Bautista

No one wants to fight a war on their own shores. No one wants terrorists to gain a foothold in their own country. The Battle of Marawi was not expected. When we found out that Isnilon Hapilon was in a safehouse at Bgy Basak, Malutlot, Marawi City, on the 23rd of May 2017, soldiers raided the premises. Isnilon Hapilon was largely unknown to the civilian world prior to that day, however, as the hours of the clock struck by, he was named the ‘Emir in Southeast Asia’, and the recognized leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), commonly referred to locally as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Isnilon Hapilon’s local connections in Mindanao were terrorist groups allied with ISIS: the Maute Group, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and the Ansar Khalifa Philippines. In the Battle of Marawi all these terrorist groups were part of the siege that backed Isnilon Hapilon and destroyed Marawi City.





One cannot speak of the siege of Marawi by the ISIS-Maute Terrorist Group without knowing the city's history. In 1639, the Spaniards attempted to colonize *Dansalan*, Marawi City's old name, but were repulsed by its inhabitants, deeply rooted in their Malayan-Arabic culture. Two more attempts after this transpired. In 1891, Gov. General Valeriano Weyler failed to conquer *Dansalan*. In 1895, Gov. General Blanco came prepared with firepower and succeeded in overcoming the resisting natives.

In 1898, the Spanish American war broke out. *Dansalan* was put under American rule. On the 24th of May 1904, the Colonial Government of America proclaimed *Dansalan* a regular Municipality. In 1914, the creation of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu converted Lanao into a province. The passage of Republic Act No. 2228 divided Lanao into two provinces, based on their location around the huge Lake Lanao, which is actually situated in the center of Lanao del Sur. Lanao del Norte has Iligan City as its Capital, while Lanao del Sur has Marawi City as its Capital. This new province was inaugurated on the 4th of July 1959; however, during the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Lanao del Norte chose to remain in Northern Mindanao, while Lanao del Sur and later on Marawi City, voted to become a part of the new ARMM.

In 2015, in the predominantly Catholic country of the Philippines, the City of Marawi, was populated by more or less 200,000 people, and remains its only Islamic City.

This book entitled, *Marawi and Beyond: The Joint Task Force Marawi Story*, was taken from the “21” volume series of handbooks, that the Office of the Operations Research Center, Philippine Army (ORC, PA) has painstakingly documented. It is a no-holds-barred substantiation, annotation, and narration of what actually transpired in Marawi City from the time Army troopers raided the safehouse of Isnlon Hapilon at Bgy Basak Malutlot, Marawi City on the 23rd of May 2017. Thank you to the ORC, PA team for making this possible.

Day by day, as the battle progressed, present doctrines, protocols, procedures, human resource, equipment, and practically the entire resources of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were put to the test. On the spot innovations, interventions, command guidelines, and the like were fashioned to try to overrun the enemy, while prioritizing the safety of trapped civilians, hostages, places of worship, vital installations, homes, and others.

Joint Task Force (JTF) Marawi saw to it that the combined units operating in Marawi City were put under one command, in order to synchronize and coordinate movement, solidify action, hasten mobility, and facilitate a smooth interaction between the AFP, Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) units. JTF Marawi served as the nerve center for the Battle of Marawi, and was responsible for updating and facilitating the transfer of information to and from the combined AFP/PNP/PCG operations on the ground to the AFP under the Chief of Staff, Gen Eduardo Año, to President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, Special Assistant to the President, Secretary Christopher Go, the Secretary of National Defense, Delfin Lorenzana, and other selected Cabinet Officials.

A day after terrorists Isnlon Hapilon and Omarkhayam Maute were killed, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, formally announced the liberation of Marawi City, on the 17th of October 2017, from the main battle area (MBA). After a grueling five-month-long battle in Marawi City, the combined forces of the AFP, PNP, and the PCG were finally pulled out, starting with the AFP on the 22nd of October 2017, followed by the PNP on the 24th of October 2017, and then the PCG on the 27th of October 2017. To date, certain members of the military and the police force are still stationed in the City of Marawi to prevent a re-


entry of terrorists, to assist in the government rehabilitation efforts, and to aid in the clearing operations in the MBA.

The siege of the City of Marawi is a part of our history that we do not want revisited; nevertheless, it must be properly documented for historical purposes. It is our fervent hope that through these publications, Filipinos will come together and go all out to help our Muslim brothers and sisters, recover, rebuild, and return to normalcy.

The attainment of peace in the free world is every leader’s elusive dream. It is one of the most challenging tasks for both the military and police organizations and their personnel. Our institutions must evolve and seek to better themselves in keeping with the demands of the times and new terms of engagement. Our combined efforts from all the branches of service, together with the full support of our Commander in Chief, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, media, Local Government Units (LGUs), stakeholders, volunteers, and that of our allies, gave us the strength to overcome the lengthy and extensive stronghold preparations of Isnlon Hapilon, the Maute brothers (Omarkhayam and Abdullah), foreign terrorists, and their supporters during the siege of Marawi City.

I salute each and everyone involved in the effort to liberate Marawi City, and all those as well who helped to get Marawi City back on the road to recovery. I thank the Filipino people for all the support that they extended to JTF Marawi and its combined units and troops, especially for those killed in action, those wounded in action, and those who were deployed in the City of Marawi. Together we can do great things for our beloved country. Mabuhay ang Hukbong Katihan ng Pilipinas!




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