

Headline: Soldiers paid retirement insurance premiums

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The Armed Forces of the Philippines Veterans Association Inc. (AFPVAI), Aksyon Beterano Inc. (ABI) and the Federasyon ng Retiradong Kasundaluhan at Kapamilya sa Pilipinas-International Inc. (FRKKPII), together with the NGOs of pensioners, are at present organizing the Philippine Green Army Planters (PGAP). This is a special nationwide mission to plant trees, including coconuts for the production of buko juice for export. This massive tree-planting project should cushion the disastrous long-term effects of global warming and climate change.

To participate in this big project are the more than 100,000 pensioners and their families who are asking President Aquino to order the Department of Budget and Management to release the funds for the payment of the differential arrears, which could not be paid due to massive corruption, as exposed by retired Col. George Rabusa. Aside from the arrears, also not paid are the pension adjustment effective July 1, 2011.

Part of the payment to our arrears will be used by the PGAP as operating funds in carrying out its mission. However, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources must provide the seedlings and the tools and equipment, and for the logistics.

Pensioners are not a burden, they are worthy, reliable and valuable resources that can support the AFP/PNP, particularly this 21st century and beyond, in defending our territorial sovereignty. Moreover, contrary to what Budget Secretary Florencio Abad said

(Inquirer, 10/10/11), AFP soldiers paid their respective retirement insurance premiums, as shown in our monthly pay slips, from the 1970s through the 1980s and 1990s. However, when the AFP Retirement and Separation Benefits System (RSBS) started losing due to mismanagement, the AFP tolerated the reimbursement of our premium contributions minus interests. When the government investigated the RSBS after the 2003 mutiny of the Magdalos, the contributions of active soldiers were temporarily deferred, and this is probably why Abad said the soldiers had not paid their retirement insurance premiums.

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