

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

'SIT DOWN, LET'S TALK'

Pacquiao calls out to Sarangani bombers

by AQUILES ZONIO
Philstar.com

MANILA—After disposing of the likes of Oscar De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton in the ring, Manny Pacquiao is now taking on a different foe: terrorist bombers.

Alarmed by last weekend's twin grenade attacks in Sarangani province that killed one person and wounded 32, the Filipino boxing king on Monday called on the attackers to sit down with him for talks on restoring peace in the area.

Not a surprising move from a man President Macapagal-Arroyo recently named as ambassador for peace. Pacquiao has also declared his intention to run in 2010 for the lone congressional seat of Sarangani.

"I am asking them (the attackers) to sit down and talk so we can discuss whatever problem there is," Pacquiao, speaking in Filipino, told reporters.

Pacquiao stressed the impor-

ance of dialogue in resolving conflicts.

"We should resolve whatever problem there is by talking," he said.

Helping the victims

Pacquiao isn't just all talk. Upon learning about the Sarangani attack, Pacquiao rushed to see the 32 injured victims in various hospitals and gave them financial aid ranging from P2,000 to P3,000 each.

This was aside from the P39,000 cash he gave social welfare officials as initial assistance for the victims.

"With or without politics, I really try to help people," Pacquiao said.

Pacquiao was meeting with tourism officials in Malungton town, where he is the tourism council chair, when he received the news about the grenade blasts which occurred during a fiesta celebration in Maasim town.

Pacquiao said he was stunned

by the news.

One wonders how much time his labors as a peace envoy will take away from his training for his next fight, possibly against World Boxing Organization welterweight champion Miguel Cotto of Puerto Rico. The fight is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 14.

MK2 type

A military bomb expert said the grenades used were an MK2 model, which is said to explode three to five seconds after the safety lever is removed.

Before the blasts, Lt. Col. Edgardo De Leon, the Army battalion commander based in Maasim, had asked help from a bomb disposal team on receiving intelligence reports about a planned bomb attack on the town.

A few minutes before the team arrived from General Santos, the explosions occurred.

De Leon blamed the attack on rogue elements within the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. ■



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ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

The NVM Writers' Workshop is both a coming and a going home for all writers-participants. The aim is to foster stronger collaborative projects and critical perspectives by gaining deeper appreciation of the works of present and past Philippine and Filipino-American literature. Rather than paint both regions as unique literary environments, imagine that both exist in a global interconnected sense. As a tool for capturing the expressions of life in the now diasporic world of the Filipino, good writing becomes essential to articulate, to explore, and to share these new worlds and vocabularies that many Filipinos now inhabit, from Hong Kong, the Middle East, Western Europe and the United States. "There is not a place in the world, including Antarctica where a Filipino cannot be found." It will be through literature that these global ties can be bound.



ABOUT PETER BACHO

Distinguished Writer in Residence at Seattle University, Peter Bacho is an accomplished author receiving two American Book Awards. Mr. Bacho will lead this year's three-day NVM Gonzalez Writers' Workshop. Participants will gain skills and techniques on creative writing and have the opportunity to work on their own stories as part of the workshop.



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