

# Army, MILF vow to work together in war on drugs

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CAMP SIONGCO, Maguindanao – Government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) vowed to work together to ensure the effective implementation of a ceasefire mechanism and successful campaign against illegal drugs in the Central Mindanao region.



Brigadier General Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division (6ID), hosted a joint conference with police officials in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and in Region 12, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA-ARMM) and PDEA-12, Army brigade and battalion commanders as well as Moro Islamic Liberation Front Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (MILF-CCCH).

Sobejana, also chief of JTFC, said the joint conference was aimed at reviewing and revisiting the mandates of relevant government agencies in the campaign against illegal drugs, issues on coordinating and actual conduct of anti-drug operation.

It also aims to formulate measures to minimize, through proper inter-agency coordination, problems encountered in previous operations in affected communities within Central Mindanao.

Among the consensus was the need to observe coordination with the MILF-CCCH whenever law enforcement operations are to be conducted in recognized MILF camps.

Butch Malang, MILF-CCCH chair, assured that his group will fully cooperate with government law enforcers in the campaign against illegal drug personalities in MILF identified communities.

"The MILF leadership does not tolerate the use of illegal drugs as this is generally forbidden in Islam," Malang pointed out. Sobejana presented his desire for peaceful communities as gatekeepers of peace in the region.

"We are the guards of the gates of change and we have to start the change within us," Sobejana said. Internal cleansing among the Army ranks is ongoing through drug tests and other means, he said.

Sobejana stressed the need for proper and effective interagency coordination, collaboration, and cooperation with the PNP and PDEA as the lead agencies in all drug operations and to address capability gaps to accomplish the mission without casualties as much as possible. (PNA)

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