

# AFP denies order to stop West Philippine Sea patrols

Manila Bulletin · 10 Jun 2018 · 4 · By MARTIN A. SADONGDONG

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) yesterday belied an opposition lawmaker's reported allegations that President Duterte has issued a directive to stop patrol operations at the disputed West Philippine Sea.

Colonel Edgar Arevalo, AFP spokesperson, said that Magdalo party-list Representative Gary Alejano's claims about the supposed Duterte orders were "malicious."

"I do not know where Cong. Alejano got that supposed instruction from the Commander-in-Chief. Malamang kuryente 'yan (Probably it's a false news) if not yet another malicious imputation on the President dragging the AFP in," Arevalo said.

Malacañang also reacted to Arevalo's statement saying it was impossible for President Duterte to order the AFP to stop patrolling the disputed WPS.

"That's impossible," Roque said in a text message Saturday in reply to questions confirming Alejano's claims.

In a news forum yesterday, Alejano reportedly claimed that Duterte had instructed the AFP to halt its patrol operations on the disputed waters because it will only be rendered "useless" against more powerful claimants.

Alejano said he had no physical evidence to support his claims because it came from a military source but he added that he "trust" his informant.

Alejano's statements came after a recent video report revealed that alleged members of the Chinese Coast Guard appeared to harass Filipino fishermen by stealing their catch of the day.

"The Chinese Coast Guard is acting much like pirates bypassing small Filipino fishermen and stealing their catch. Kung kaibigan pala natin ang China, tulad ng sinasabi ng administrasyong Duterte, ganito ba dapat ang trato sa isang kaibigan? (If China is really an ally, just like what the Duterte administration is saying, is this how you treat a friend?) China does not seem to treat us as a sovereign equal anymore," Alejano said.

However, Arevalo assured that the AFP is continuously conducting patrol operations on the West Philippine Sea to secure our territory.

"For the record, there is no such order coming from the Commander-in-Chief. As a matter of fact, our maritime and aerial patrols continue -- contrary to such information allegedly received by the party-list congressman," Arevalo clarified.

"Let me assure our people that your AFP continues and will continue to perform its mandate," Arevalo said. (With a report from Argyll Geducos)