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**SPEECH BY**

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**AT THE TALK TO TROOPS**

[Delivered at the AFP 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Camp Elias Angeles, San Jose in Pili, Camarines Sur |16 March 2023]

Good afternoon. Before we start, will the troop commander give the order of tikas pahinga?

Good afternoon to the commanders, the officers, the men and women of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Ako'y natutuwa na nakarating ako dito at dahil nga this is a – for me the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division is still a new unit. In my time in the military, there was no 9th Infantry Division yet.

And so I was very interested to see kung ano ang naging operation ng itong command na ito. I just received a briefing from your commander and it is – it looks like the situation here has stabilized, if not even diminished in terms of the danger that is providing to the community. So that is something that we have to – we have to thank you all for.

Ang mission ng ating mga sundalo ngayon ay medyo nahahalo na, nagbabago na nang kaunti. Whereas before, we asked you all of the individuals, men and women, in the military to be warfighters. And you were very strong, very brave, very courageous warfighters and that's how we put pressure on the enemies of the government.

But now, the situation is beginning to evolve. And that evolution means that not only are you meant – they still train to be warfighters and in some occasions you have to go and fulfill your primary mission of defending the people or the communities here in Bicol.

Also now, we are asking you to be peacemakers because we have changed our approach to the communist, terrorist groups that we have been encountering.

We are now not only presenting them with a military force, we are presenting them with other options. We are presenting them with a life after their life as rebels.

And that I think has become the reason why we have slowly succeeded in the so-called whole-of-society, whole-of-nation approach in terms of our dealings with these groups that originally would like to bring down the government by armed struggle.

And now I think even the – although they technically have not abandoned the concept of armed struggle, I think they – efforts of those dissidents had been redirected in another way. And that's why your role as the Philippine military continues to be as warfighters, but now there is the additional mission that we are asking of you to be peacemakers.

That is the only way that we can move forward in... Now, also the – beyond the internal threats that we are facing, what is becoming more complicated and more difficult are the external threats that we are facing.

And with the geographical location of the 9th ID, we can see that it is very close to some of the disputed areas kung saan pumapasok ang mga iba't ibang barko. Kailangan din nating bantayan 'yan. Kaya't ito na naman ay isa pang panibagong mission ninyo.

Kaya't we have to have a sophisticated and well-trained military and I can say that we have been working very hard to that. I think I am accurate when I describe our military today as being capable and as well prepared as we ever had.

For a long while, hindi natin dini-develop ang capabilities ng ating mga military. Nagkukulang tayo sa equipment. Ngayon, nagbago na lahat 'yan. And we in the civilian government are determined to make sure that when we

ask you to do your duty, that then you are fully prepared, you are fully trained and you are complete in the equipment that you need to fulfill that mission.

So as I said during the command conference very quickly earlier, I see that the actions here, the violent instances of encounters et cetera, have slowly come down. And looking at that, all I can say is that once again, I have always been a – I have always said that of all the sectors of society, it is only the military that has never let the Filipino down.

So keep up the good work. Continue your service. Inaasahan namin kayong lahat at hindi naman kayo – wala naman kayong karanasan na hindi niyo tinanggap ang inyong duty at hindi niyo tinupad ang inyong mission.

Maraming salamat. Good afternoon and thank you to you all. *[applause]*

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