

Mindanao (Philippines): Ka Ruben was never involved in the murder of volunteer doctor Dreyfuss Perlas in Lanao del Norte (RPA)

Monday 6 March 2017, by [AREVALO Roxanne](#), [ESPINA-VARONA Inday](#), [MANLUPIG Karlos](#) (Date first published: 6 March 2017).

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RPA denies cadre's involvement in Perlas slay

ILIGAN CITY - The Revolutionary People's Army (RPA) on Wednesday denied the involvement of its cadre, Agapito Democer, in the killing of volunteer medical doctor Dreyfuss Perlas last Wednesday in Lanao del Norte.

In a statement, the group denied Democer was a hired assassin, adding that he did not engage in "unrevolutionary" activities.

Last Saturday afternoon, Democer was also killed in Kapatagan town, Lanao del Norte after he allegedly attempted to throw a grenade at arresting military and police personnel.

The RPA is an armed wing of the Rebolusyonyang Partido ng Manggagawa- Mindanao (RPM-M), which broke away from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in the 1990s. It has been present in northwestern Mindanao, including Lanao del Norte, since early 1980s. It signed a ceasefire agreement with the Arroyo administration.

Authorities, however, are not discounting the involvement of Democer, also known as "Darwin" and "Rico," in the killing of Perlas.

In a phone interview, Police Supt. Wilbur Salaguste said they have yet to confirm Democer's involvement in Perlas' killing.

"Pero 'di pa talaga natin ma-confirm 'yung involvement niya sa doctor," he said.

Perlas was shot in a dark portion of the highway in the town of Kapatagan in Lanao del Norte on March 1. There were no witnesses to the crime.

Authorities are looking into several motives behind the killing of Perlas.

"Ayoko muna mag-mention ng particular motive. We are looking into two to three motives," Salaguste said.

Salaguste said they will reveal the motives and the suspects as soon as they have enough pieces of evidence.

Roxanne Arevalo, ABS-CBN News

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<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/06/17/rpa-denies-cadres-involvement-in-perlas-slay>

Leftist rebels disown murder of doctor to the barrios

The alleged “gun for hire” slain Saturday in Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte was a cadre of a splinter leftist group with no connection to the March 1 murder of doctor-to-the-barrios Dreyfuss Perlas, according to a spokesman of the Revolutionary People’s Army (RPA) and the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa-Mindanao (RPMM).

Harold Fernandez, speaking for the RPA/RPMM’s National Operational Command, told ABS-CBN News that Agapito Tamparong was unarmed when a composite team of soldiers and cops shot him dead.

“Tamparong has never been a gun for hire; he has never been involved in unrevolutionary activities,” Fernandez said in an interview conducted online following the release of the group’s statement on the Saturday killing.

“He could not have also been the suspect in Dr. Perlas’ killing because on the day he was killed, Ka Ruben (Tamparong’s nom de guerre) had just been released from the hospital for an ailment,” he added.

The RPA/RPMM broke away from the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) in the late 1980s when ideological differences rocked Asia’s longest running insurgency. The group is composed of members of the CPP’s central Mindanao unit, which also covers the island’s northwestern provinces.

It took the name Revolutionary People’s Army after falling out with the Revolutionary Proletarian Army, which is largely based in Negros Island, with some members also operating in Luzon.

Fernandez said Tamparong had just dropped by friends before proceeding to his area of operation.

He acknowledged that the unarmed Tamparong – given two other different aliases by authorities – had tried to “evade” arresting officers out to serve warrants for double murder and frustrated murder.

“They did not have to kill him,” Fernandez stressed. “We are investigating the incident as we have been investigating the murder of Dr. Perlas, who is considered a hero in Lanao del Norte. We want to know whether their lies are meant to cover-up the extra-judicial killing of Ka Ruben or to cover-up the real identity of the killers, or to ease the pressure of public clamor for justice.”

Motive unclear

Previous to the Saturday slay, there had been no word about the identities of suspects in the killing

of Perlas, the municipal health officer of Sapad town.

The doctor, citing the need for more doctors to minister for Lanao del Norte's rural poor, had opted to stay on after finishing the pay-back required of government medical scholars.

Some reports, angry at the spread of the term EJK in relation to Perlas' death, claimed the murder stemmed from an argument with a patient whose request for hospitalization was turned down.

A statement by alumni of the Pi Omicron Fraternity, which Perlas had joined as a student in the University of the Philippines Los Banos campus, slammed the use of EJK in Perlas' death.

"We condemn those who have put his death into political play, unjustly pigeonholing it in the ignoble company of the many illegal drug pushers and addicts slain as of late! To imply that his death was state-sponsored is ridiculous and low," said a statement signed by Bertrand Somera, president of the Pi Omicron International Alumni Association.

While EJK has been used to describe thousands of killings of suspected drug addicts and street-level pushers under President Rodrigo Duterte's government, its traditional use also includes the killings of activists and other persons who have run afoul of state authorities or politicians and other groups that often use government security forces.

Fernandez told ABS-CBN News that Tamparong's duties were in towns some distance away from Perlas' sphere of duty.

"Malayo po ang hospital ni Doc Drey. Sa ibang ospital pumunta si Ka Ruben," he added. (Ka Ruben went to a different hospital, far away from Doc Drey's place.)

The RPA/RPMM accused members of the Bravo Company of the 15th Infantry Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division as those behind Tamparong's killing.

The team was reportedly headed by 1Lt. Marlouie S. Dicen, 2ndLt Fernando Oliveros Jr. under the command of Lt. Col. Audie A. Mongao of the 15th IB 3rd ID battalion unit. The group said "scores" of cops from Kapatagan were also involved in the Barangay Tiacongan incident.

"Ka Ruben was an active member of the RPA and a cadre who was serious about defending the poor against oppressive forces, including those involved in drugs," Fernandez said. However, he said the group did not support the methods used in the government's "Operation Tokhang." *Sun.Star* daily in Cagayan de Oro quoted Dicen as saying the slain man was also a suspect in a series of shooting incidents in the town and in nearby municipalities of the province. He said an informant had tipped them off to Tamparong's presence.

"When the troops were approaching the area, the suspect noticed and suddenly ran which resulted to a pursuit operation, until he was cornered beside the rice field at Purok 8, Barangay Bagong Silang, Kapatagan," according to the after-action report quoted by *Sun.Star*.

One of Tamparong's companions managed to escape, the report said, while four others were released because they were not armed.

While the AFP and the PNP tagged Tamparong as a suspect in Perlas' slay, they did not explain how he was identified or who "hired" him to kill the doctor.

Fernandez said Tamparong "made a quick decision to evade the state forces being unarmed himself... He was alone and only armed with a cellular phone because he was in the place to visit a family friend and the masses."

The RPA-RPMM spokesman added: "Given the number of the armed operatives at the scene, the intention was really to eliminate Comrade Ruben. It was murder as can be seen by the number of bullets... It was crystal clear and very revealing that the said operation was mainly a military operation rather than a police one. That is if warrant of his arrest was supposed to be served at him."

He said there are many unsolved cases and rampant illegal activities in Lanao del Norte, including Kapatagan.

"Either they are covering up something or made our comrade the convenient 'face' from the criminality they have ignored or failed to curb," Fernandez added.

Tamparong had a wife but no children, according to Fernandez.

Inday Espina-Varona, ABS-CBN News

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<http://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/03/06/17/leftist-rebels-disown-murder-of-doctor-to-the-barrios>

Rebel group denies member's link to rural doctor's slay

DAVAO CITY - A revolutionary armed group has denied allegations that one of its members, who was killed in a military and police operation, was a suspect in the murder of volunteer doctor Dreyfuss Perlas in Lanao del Norte.

Harold Fernandez, head of the National Operational Command of the Revolutionary Proletariat Army of the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa- Mindanao (RPM-M), said in a statement that Ka Ruben or Agapito Tamparong, as identified by the military, was not a gun for hire.

Tamparong was killed by government forces after he reportedly resisted arrest on March 4 in the town of Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte.

Authorities said Tamparong was one of the suspects in the killing of Perlas, a volunteer doctor who enlisted with the Department of Health's Doctors to the Barrio Program.

Fernandez said Tamparong, who was allegedly unarmed during that time, decided to evade the approaching composite team of soldiers and police.

"His attempt to escape had been impossible considering the number of the enemies with high caliber arms. He was alone and only armed with a cellular phone because he was in the place to visit a family friend and the masses," Fernandez said.

Fernandez said that judging from the number of gunshot wounds Tamparong sustained in the shooting, the authorities' intent was not to arrest but to neutralize him.

The military earlier said that Tamparong lobbed a grenade towards the advancing government forces.

“Comrade Ruben had never been in any gun-for-hire and other un-revolutionary activities. He was an active political and military cadre of the RPA since it split way from the CPP-NPA-NDFP in the early 90’s,” Fernandez said.

The RPMM broke away from the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed group, New People’s Army and its political arm, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, following serious debates on ideological, political and military issues in waging the revolution.

Fernandez added that Tamparong had a reputation for enforcing strict rules against crime in their area of operations.

“In fact, he was one of those vocal in supporting the current Duterte government’s campaign on illegal drugs but not the “Tokhang” method. He strongly believed that the widespread drug problem in the country is a symptom of the intensive poverty and social inequity affecting the vast majority of our people,” Fernandez said. Oplan Tokhang was the massive door-to-door campaign of the Philippine National Police to persuade known drug users and pushers in the communities to surrender and undergo rehabilitation.

Fernandez shared that Tamparong was active in performing political activities in peasant and rural communities before he died.

The RPMM-RPA said the arrest and the subsequent attack on Tamparang violated the ceasefire agreement inked by the rebel group with the Philippine government on Oct. 28, 2005 during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

“Since the RPMM signed the ceasefire agreement with the Philippine government under the Arroyo administration, RPA comrades hold on to this agreement and tried to stay the course of peaceful settlement of the armed conflicts as a result of the extreme poverty of the people. The murder of Comrade Ruben is a violation to this agreement,” Fernandez said. SFM/rga

Karlos Manlupig - Correspondent / @kmanlupig

* INQInquirer Mindanao / 12:08 PM March 06, 2017:

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/877808/rebel-group-denies-members-link-to-rural-doctors-slay#ixzz4aZgYHlzU>
