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Editorial

Aquino indulges himself with the people's money

The revolutionary forces led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) support the struggle against Aquino's pro-imperialist, antipeople, anomalous and corrupt program of expenditures for 2014.

After three years, Aquino's words and empty showcase programs have lost their bite. The barrage of criticisms that has met his proposed budget for 2014 shows that the people are no longer lulled by Aquino's promises of clean governance.

The people have seen no changes in the system of budgeting and expenditures. Most striking is the continuing allocation by Aquino of huge

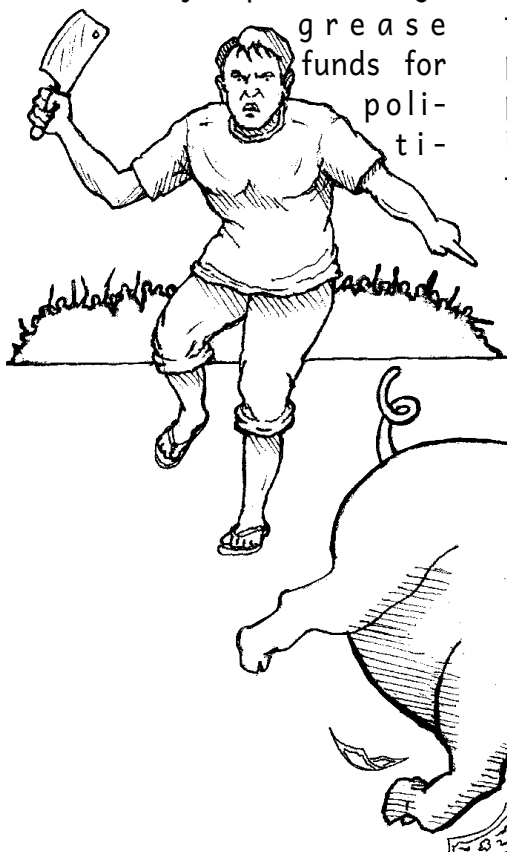
grease funds for politicians—the so-called "pork barrel" under the "Priority Development Assistance Fund" (PDAF). These funds usually end up lining politicians' pockets in the form of kickbacks on public works projects or by being channelled through fake programs of bogus organizations.

The "pork barrel" has long been part of the corrupt practice of the ruling political system in the Philippines. It was taught to Philippine reactionary politicians by their American imperialist masters and has been in use since the establishment of the neocolonial state in 1946.

It is an instrument wielded by the ruling

clique to ensure the support of senators and congressmen by conniving with them in the plunder of the nation's coffers. Once they receive their "pork barrel," the legislators usually turn a blind eye and fall silent in the face of large-scale theft, corruption and various other anomalies involving Malacañang.

Faced with a major scandal, Aquino announced the suspension of the pork barrel's distribution, but not its abolition. On the other hand, Aquino has been justifying the existence of Malacañang's very own pork barrel in the form of the "special presidential fund" which is several times bigger than the monies allotted to congressmen. Although



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there is nothing new with presidents having funds under their control, under Aquino, the amount has doubled since 2011.

In shrewdly using public funds for his own political and economic interest, Aquino has demonstrated that he is no different from other presidents who ruled over the rotten reactionary state.

Like Arroyo or Marcos, Ramos or Estrada, or his mother Corazon Aquino, Aquino and his clique are also experts at using the reactionary state budget to solidify their rule, rein in other politicians, suppress their rivals and enjoy the perks and privileges of power.

The Aquino regime's program of expenditures represents a huge waste of the people's money. It mirrors the interests and priorities of the backward ruling classes of big landlords and big comprador bourgeoisie in the Philippines who rely on foreign debt and investments and use political power to advance their business interests.

Aquino has no intention of

allocating public funds for productive programs and using them to develop industry and agriculture. Like his predecessors, he uses these funds to serve the interests of big foreign banks and companies and their local partners. Almost half of the Aquino government's total expenditures in the coming year (or more than P1 trillion) have been allocated to service the government's debts to foreign and local banks.

While the budget to support and guarantee the profits of private investments has been enhanced (in the name of "public-private partnership"), the budget for

state colleges and universities has been slashed by several billion pesos. The budget for the government's cash doleout program (the so-called Programang Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino) has been raised by 50%, even if it has not contributed significantly to alleviating the poverty of the toiling masses. The regime has allotted a huge amount for the demolition of urban

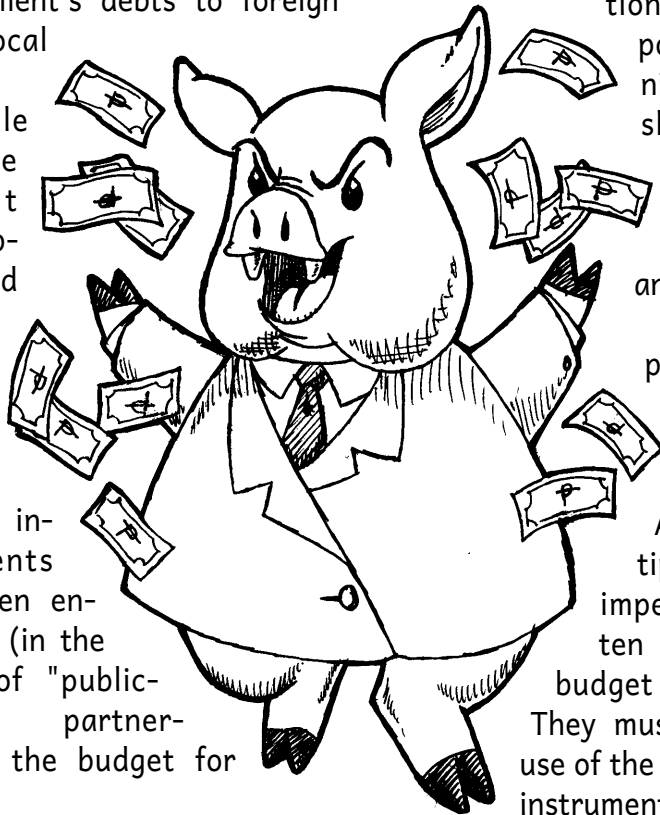
poor communities but has slashed the public health budget anew.

The Filipino people are justified in their opposition to Aquino's anti-people, pro-imperialist, rotten and corrupt budget for 2014.

They must resist the use of the budget as an instrument for political bribery and repression.

They must assail the squander and expropriation of the nation's coffers by Aquino and his collaborators. They must stand up against the rotten system and method of budgeting which serve imperialist interests and worsen the subjugation and oppression of the masses of workers and peasants.

They must thoroughly criticize the US-Aquino regime for pretending to be upright and clean when it is no different from all other previous regimes in its crookedness and thievery. They must expose the rotten class rule of the Aquino regime and demand an end to imperialist, anti-people, corrupt, oppressive and repressive rule. **AB**



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Aquino's budget

Since Aquino began framing the national budget in 2011, ever bigger portions of the government expenditure program have been put under his control. Out of the proposed ₱2.268 trillion budget for 2014, experts estimate that more than half or ₱1.106 trillion of it is "Aquino's budget," comprising funds whose disposition depends entirely on his discretion.

Part of this amount is ₱310 billion that could be released and utilized only upon Aquino's orders. This includes the "Priority Development Assistance Fund" (PDAF), more popularly known as the "pork barrel" which serves as a grease fund for politicians; and the ₱7.5 billion calamity fund.

The amount likewise includes questionable funds allotted to public corporations (₱45.7 billion); government agencies (₱19.7 billion); "contingencies" (₱1 billion); pensions and "gratuities" (₱120.5 billion); the "DepEd School Building Program" (₱1 billion); the E-Government program (₱2.479 billion); "international obligations" (₱4.8 billion); various personnel benefits (₱80.7 billion); and for the conduct of feasibility studies (₱400 million).

Also included in "Aquino's budget" is a ₱139-billion "unprogrammed" fund. To avoid scrutiny of

this fund, the Department of Finance has been pushing for its exclusion from the national budget to be ratified by Congress. This is aside from intelligence funds and various other lump sums that have no specific allocations and have been inserted in various ways within the budget.

To cover up such shenanigans, Aquino has crowing that the Department of Education enjoys the biggest budget compared to all other government agencies. In fact, the bigger allocation is due only to the funds that have been allotted for Public-Private Partnership (PPP) infrastructure projects (such as the construction of school buildings) that will be of benefit to big compradors like Lucio Tan and the Ayalas. On the other hand, more than ₱2 billion has been slashed from the budgets of the biggest state universities and colleges.

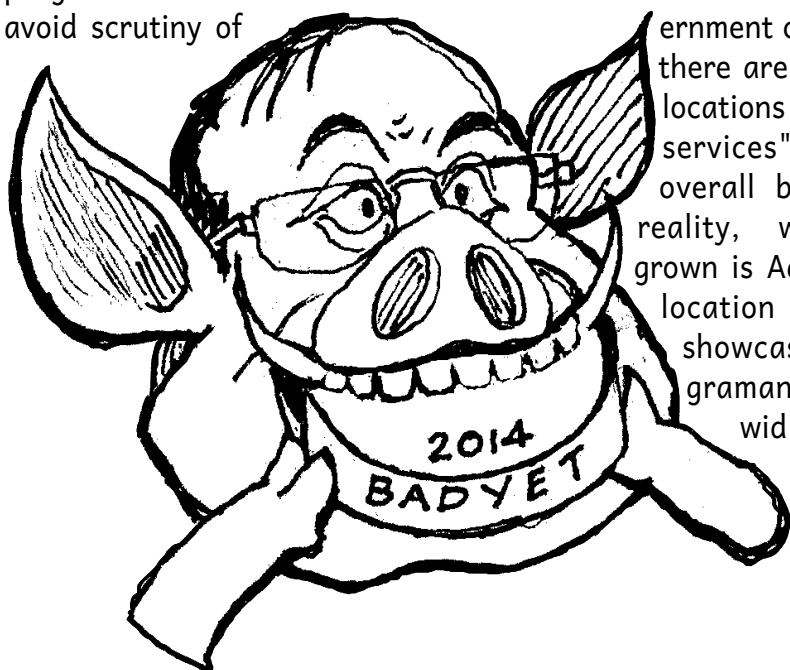
The Aquino government claims that there are bigger allocations for "social services" in the overall budget. In reality, what has grown is Aquino's allocation for his showcase "Programang Pantawid Pamilyang

Pilipino"—which has ballooned from ₱44.3 billion to ₱62.6 billion allegedly to support the program's expansion. This, despite the program's inutility in solving poverty. (See "Pantawid Pamilya" on p. 4) This fund is much bigger than those allotted for irrigation (₱21.1 billion), farm-to-market roads (₱12 billion) or land reform (₱12.7 billion).

Still foremost among the regime's priorities is debt service, with up to ₱1.035 trillion allotted for this in the national budget for 2014. The amount comprises an automatic allocation of ₱352.7 billion for interest payments; and ₱682.3 billion to pay the principal, which is not apparent in the proposed budget. The overall allocation for debt service is equivalent to 13.8% of the projected ₱7.4 trillion gross domestic product (GDP) for 2014. Less than a third of this (or 4.3% of the GDP) has been allotted to education.

The government has been suffering from a major tax revenue shortfall, reflecting the Aquino regime's failure to enable the local economy to stand on its own feet. The Aquino regime's target tax and customs duties collection for 2014 is a mere ₱1.864 billion, which is still not likely to be met. Thus, the Aquino regime plans on borrowing an additional ₱1.14 trillion, including an additional \$2 billion from foreign banks.

Aquino is doing everything to pay off previous debts to enable his government to borrow anew. The Philippines' foreign debt is set to shoot up to ₱6.32 trillion, burdening Filipinos with a per capita debt of ₱63,859.31. AB



The Aquino fund for puppets and allies

Ever since he came to power, Benigno Aquino III has used his control over the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), more commonly known as the "pork barrel," as well as other monies to favor his puppets and political allies.

In 2012, Batanes congresswoman Henedina Abad received ₱92.5 million in pork barrel funds from the Aquino regime—an amount ₱22 million higher than the ₱70 million PDAF allotted for very congressman in 2011. Although Batanes is one of the Philippines' smallest provinces, it received the sixth largest fund allocation.

The Batanes representative is the wife of current Budget and Management secretary Florencio Abad, one of Aquino's closest and most loyal officials and the man in control of the funds.

The yellow Akbayan party, one of Aquino's most

rabid followers and apologists received an even bigger amount. The biggest chunk was a ₱4.05 billion fund which Aquino placed under Akbayan's control ostensibly for CARPer beneficiaries in 2010. Aquino pulled out the funds from the budget for the Department of Public Works and Highways on the pretext that it will be used for the construction of agricultural infrastructure and credit for agrarian reform beneficiaries, among others.

In addition, Dinagat Island's ₱140 million pork barrel was given to Akbayan in January 2013, through then representative Kaka Bag-ao, as part of the party's election kitty. Another Akbayan representative, Risa Hontiveros, ran for senator in May under Aquino's coalition party and lost. From ₱30 million in 2009, Akbayan's PDAF grew severalfold to ₱132 million under the Aquino regime. **AB**

Aquino's "Pantawid Pamilya" is inutile

The Programang Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino or 4Ps is the reactionary state's most expensive showcase program. After five years of implementation and billions of pesos worth of infusions, however, it has not brought significant changes to the economic and social status of the Philippines' poorest families.

Aquino has been beefing up the 4Ps budget yearly, fattening it up from the initial ₱299 million in 2008, to the current ₱44 billion and the projected ₱62 billion in 2014. On the other hand, only up to 3.8 million families or 20% of the poorest families have been covered by the program. Families enrolled under 4Ps are given a ₱300 monthly subsidy per child until the latter graduate from elementary school. They receive this amount as long as they continue undergoing checkups in health centers and the children attend school.

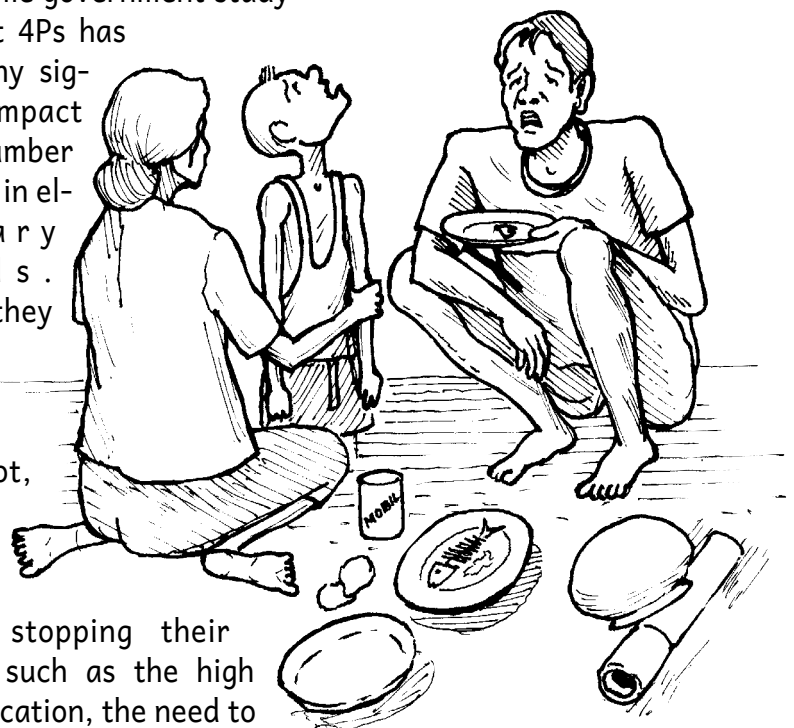
After five years, however, 4Ps has clearly failed to solve the problems it had targeted. The government's own study states that despite tens of billions of pesos in fund alloca-

tions, it has failed to bring significant changes in the areas of education or health, not to mention the wretched conditions suffered by millions of Filipinos.

This same government study states that 4Ps has not had any significant impact on the number of children in elementary schools. Whether they are enrolled under 4Ps or not, dropouts give the same reasons for stopping their schooling, such as the high cost of education, the need to

work and the lack of incentives to study. The problem clearly lies in the huge shortage of teachers, schools and facilities accessible to the children and their parents.

To justify the extension of 4Ps and the augmentation of its budget, Aquino now plans to encompass families with children in high school. The government



claims that a high school diploma is the key to finding a job and raising the living standards of a family. This is an illusion. In fact, almost 80% of the unemployed in the Philippines are either high school or college graduates.

The US-Aquino regime claims that the program has had favorable outcomes by showcasing a few "success stories" in the yellow media. In an assessment in July, the government identified a few "weaknesses" but only to justify the program's extension and greater coverage and the allocation of tens of billions of pesos more to it.

The government's own studies however state that the poverty incidence has risen from 24.9% in 2006 to 27.9% in 2012, proof that 4Ps has not contributed significantly to improving the lives of beneficiaries. Poverty worsened most in the countryside, where 82% of 4Ps beneficiaries are found.

4Ps has been inutile in resolving its specific targets, including grave malnutrition, low educational attainment and high maternal mortality rates. It has not undertaken any moves to resolve the severe poverty deeply rooted in the feudal exploitation of the peasantry.

The people have long repudiated the useless 4Ps dictated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. They are aware that it is nothing but a big gimmick to make it appear that the government is doing something to solve the people's problems. In fact, the implementation of 4Ps serves as a smokescreen for strengthening the privatization of education and health services and the reduction of state budgets for social welfare. AB

Progressives condemn US-PH negotiations

Progressive organizations launched protest actions to coincide with talks on greater US military presence in the Philippines held at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City on August 14 and 15.

Women activists led by GABRIELA launched a picket-rally simultaneous with a protest by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pasay City. They demanded that the regime bare to the public the details of the talks, in accordance with a promise made by Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario that the negotiations would be transparent. In a turnaround, the regime's officials later announced that no details would be disclosed about the number of "visiting" US troops and their length of stay.

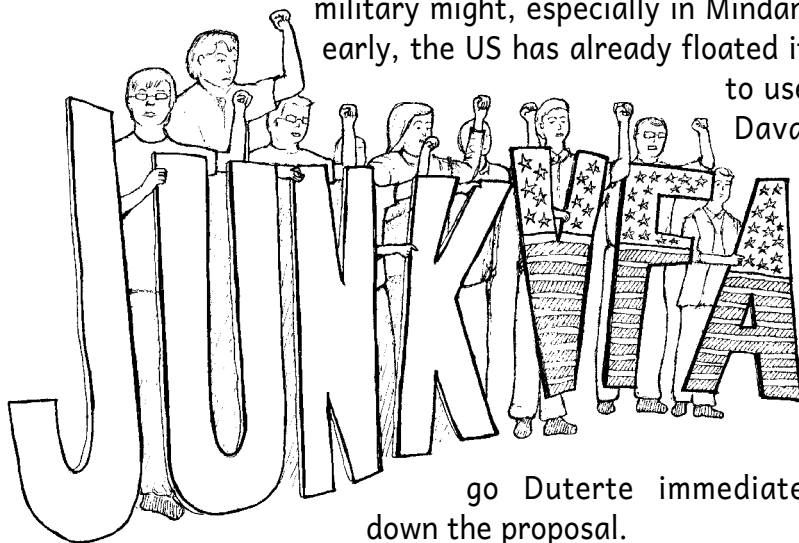
The talks held at Camp Aguinaldo are but the first of a series on the "increased rotational presence" (IRP) of American troops in the Philippines. The second round of talks on building a framework agreement for the IRP will be held in Washington, DC.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) strongly condemned the sham talks, saying they were a mere formality between the regime and US officials.

The Aquino regime and the US had long agreed on the "increased rotational presence" of US military troops in local ports and infrastructure and the expansion of their right to construct their own facilities in the country. The agreement was clinched at the Strategic Defense Dialogue held in Washington, DC in January 2012 after the Obama regime announced its strategy of shifting its forces to the Asia-Pacific region.

The US has long been maintaining a permanent presence in the Philippines. Since 2002, the 700-strong Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) of the US Pacific Command has had an exclusive base within the AFP Western Command's headquarters in Camp Navarro, Zamboanga City. US ships which have been docking regularly at Subic and other Philippine ports are likewise a permanent fixture. The US has also been maintaining powerful communications equipment right inside Camp Aguinaldo.

The talks are paving the way for the more visible presence of US military might, especially in Mindanao. This early, the US has already floated its desire



to use the old Davao City airport as a drone base. The city's mayor Rodri-

go Duterte immediately shot down the proposal. AB

Rice prices continue to shoot up

Rice prices are on an unstoppable rise due to production shortfalls caused by the reduced hectarage of rice lands nationwide. Instead of resolving this, however, the ruling regime prefers to rely on importations to fill up the shortage as a favor to powerful cartels that control both the legal and illegal importation of rice and manipulate its prices. The cartels are composed of Chinese-Filipino businessmen and their cohorts among Aquino relatives and officials of the ruling clique.

Last month, the price per kilo of rice rose by P2 to P4. From P30/kilo, the cheapest rice varieties in the country now sell at P32-34/kilo. In Mindanao, rice prices rose by an average of P9/kilo, from P27 to P36.

The rice shortage is due to production shortfalls in recent years. According to the Department of Agriculture, rice production fell by 2% in April-June 2013 compared to the same period last year—

from 3.9 million metric tons (mt) to only 3.83 million mt. Local production is too low to fulfill the targeted 20 million

mt that would be enough to supply the needs of the Philippines' population of 100 million.

The government has pinned the blame for the shortage on typhoons and other calamities. But the real reason lies in the continuing land-use conversion of rice lands for eco-tourism, real estate and other projects and the lack of government support to rice producers. The most serious problem is landlessness among the peasantry and the

absence of genuine land reform that would provide farmers with their own land to till.

Another reason for low production is the lack of adequate irrigation systems. Where they exist, farmers are made to pay exorbitant rates. Expenses for production inputs such as seeds, fertilizer and pesticides

continue to grow, leaving farmers neck-deep in debt.

The continuing hikes in rice prices belie the Aquino regime's claims of rice self-sufficiency. In his State of the Nation Address in July, Benigno

Aquino III said that the volume of rice importation has been reduced from two million mt in 2010 to a targeted 350,000 mt in 2013. He failed to mention the frequent confiscations of huge volumes of smuggled rice in various Philippine ports. Legal rice importations have been dwindling, only to be replaced by ever bigger volumes of rice brought in via technical smuggling, which is also controlled by the rice cartels. **AB**



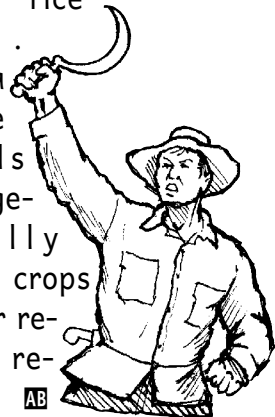
Golden rice spurned in Bicol

Some 400 members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bicol (KMB) and Sararong Inisyatiba nin Kahimanwaan na Wasakon ang Agrokemikals na Lasong-GMO (Sikwal-GMO) stormed the "golden rice" experimental farm in Pili, Camarines Sur on August 10. They uprooted "golden rice" stalks to protest plans to propagate the variety. The protesters were joined by farmers from Camarines Norte and Sorsogon.

"Golden rice" is a type of genetically modified rice that is touted as a superior variety for containing various chemical pesticides and herbicides. To make it attractive, it has been allegedly fortified with Vitamin A to provide health benefits to those who consume it. Like other genetically modified seeds, the propagation of "golden rice" will cause serious damage to people's health and destroy the ecological balance. The farmers added that it is not Vitamin A deficiency that is their foremost problem but widespread landlessness.

The farmers are aware that the only entity that will benefit from "golden rice" is Syngenta, the world's biggest agrochemical corporation which owns the patent to sell "golden rice" seeds.

Syngenta likewise controls other genetically modified crops and other related research. **AB**



4 military actions in Misamis Oriental

Seven soldiers were killed and three others were wounded in harassment actions by the New People's Army (NPA) under the Eastern Misamis Oriental-North Eastern Bukidnon Subregional Command. According to the command's spokesperson Lorena Mangahas, the military actions were launched successively over a period of four days against the 58th IB which is conducting operations in Claveria town in Misamis Oriental this August.

A squad of Red fighters figured in an encounter with 58th IB troops in Barangay Aposkahoy on August 9. The NPA took position on higher ground where the mercenary military troops were passing. Two soldiers were killed when the NPA used a command-detonated explosive against the soldiers. Villagers who witnessed the incident said that the military casualties were loaded on a six-by-six truck.

On the other hand, an NPA

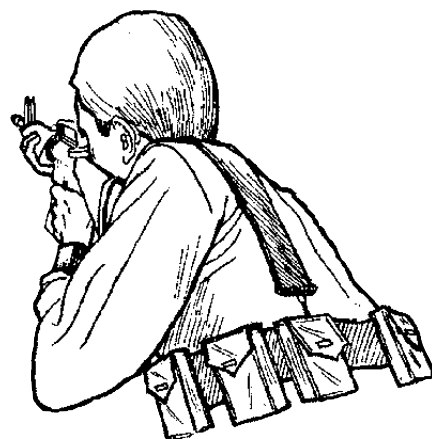
reconnaissance team skirmished with another column of the 58th IB that had returned to Barangay Aposkahoy at 9:30 a.m of August 10.

On August 11, an NPA team launched a successful military action anew in Barangay Bulahan, at around 6 a.m. The guerrillas positioned themselves by the roadside and attacked the military troopers who were passing by. They were a mere three meters from the Red fight-

ers. Four soldiers were killed and three were wounded on the military side.

At around 2 p.m. in Barangay Parmbugas, an NPA team harassed 58th IB troops, killing a soldier, according to partial reports.

The military operation began as far back as April and is ongoing as of August. **AB**



2 peasants arrested in Gingoog City

Two farmers were arrested and detained because of alleged involvement in a skirmish between the New People's Army (NPA) and armed escorts of former Gingoog City Mayor Ruthie Guingona on April 20. Guingona was wounded and two of her bodyguards were killed when her convoy ignored and rammed a checkpoint set up by the NPA to check violators of a policy by the revolutionary movement against bringing firearms within the territory of the People's Democratic Government during elections.

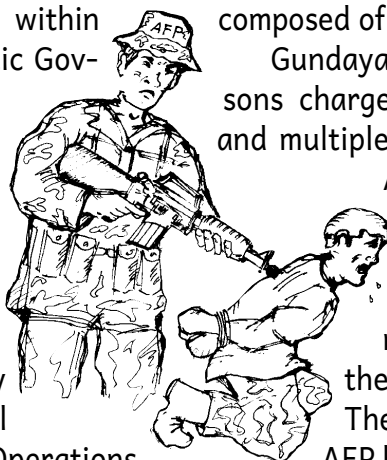
Regional PNP spokesperson P/Supt. Ronnie Francia Carriaga boasted before the media about the arrest of civilian Reynaldo Gundaya on August 10 in San Roque, Aposkahoy, Claveria, Misamis Oriental. Presented as "Kumander Tarik," he was arrested by combined forces of the PNP Regional Intelligence Unit, Regional Special Operations Group, CIDG, Provincial PNP and the 4th ID Military Intelligence Battalion.

Earlier, another civilian, Dodo Bernas, who was

presented to the media as "Kumander Dindo" was arrested on July 13 in his home in Sitio Lincomonan, Binakalan, Gingoog City. At 11 p.m., some 15 to 20 armed men kicked and tore down the door to his house, trained their guns at his entire family, including the children, and ordered them to put their hands up. Bernas was then dragged out and forced to board a waiting van. The arresting team was composed of combined police and military forces.

Gundaya and Bernas are only two of 27 persons charged by the police with double murder and multiple frustrated murder in relation to the April 20 incident.

The National Democratic Front-Northcentral Mindanao Region vehemently denied that Gundaya and Bernas are NPA members and condemned the violations of the two victims' rights. The NDF-NCMR added that the PNP and AFP have been venting their ire on civilians because of the failure of their relentless pursuit operations against the NPA in eastern Misamis Oriental. **AB**



Intensifying suffering and oppression in ICR

For the people of Ilocos-Cordillera, the illusion of Benigno Aquino III's "righteous road" is shattered. It now clearly mirrors intensifying imperialist rampage and militarization.

Plunderous mining companies. The entire region, from the mountains of the Cordillera to the seas of Ilocos is rich in gold and other minerals. The US-Aquino regime continues to view Ilocos and Cordillera as a place from which to extract resources for plunderous imperialist projects and businesses such as gigantic mines and energy plants, which have been penetrating the region one after the other.

The province of Apayao faces the looming operations of the Cordillera Exploration Inc. (CEXI), a subsidiary of Nickel-Asia-Sumitomo Metal, after the former was able to obtain a permit from the local government. In Abra, the Grand Total & Exploration Mining Corp. which spans 11,612 hectares in four municipalities has been able to obtain an endorsement for a final evaluation by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau despite its failure to get the consent of local residents.

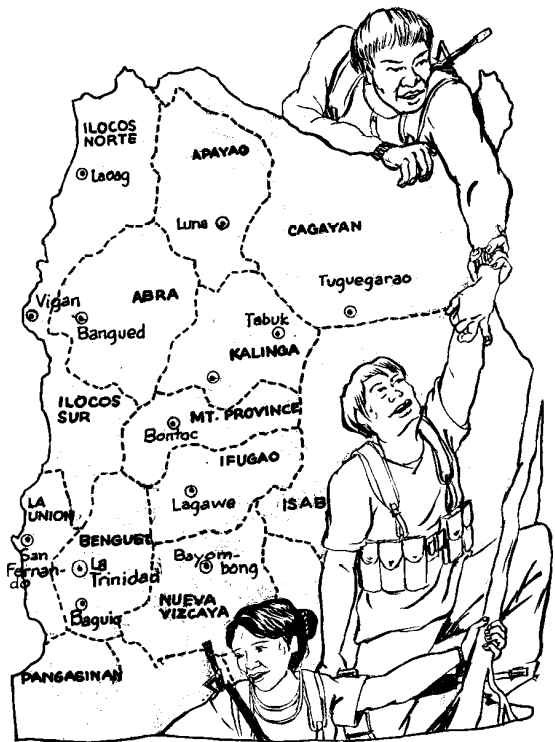
In Benguet, the Goldfields-Lepanto Consolidated Mining Corp. (G-LCMC) joint venture has been able to push through with drilling operations in Mankayan, also despite opposition from the locals. Philex Mining resumed operating after a suspension due to the destruction of its mine tailings dam in Itogon which unleashed 20 million tons of waste. The big capitalist company relentlessly pushed for the reopening of its mines.

In Kalinga, Carrascal Nickel Corp. and Indophil are also gaining a foothold, aside from the Makilala Mining Corp. of Freeport McMoran (formerly Phelps Dodge) which persists in its drilling operations and construction of buildings and other mine structures despite the absence of a government permit. These companies are likewise engaged in mining operations in other regions of the country.

In the Ilocos region, there are 24 approved and 61 pending applications for Mineral Production Sharing Agreements, Exploration Permits and Financial-Technical Assistance Agreements, mostly on offshore mining. They cover a total area of 1,795,597 hectares.

On the other hand, up to 48 municipalities are affected by magnetite mining in Ilocos, on top of the affected coastal areas of Cagayan spanning 13,483 hectares. A number of villages have already reportedly sunk (including parts of Santa, Ilocos Sur) especially during typhoons. Meanwhile, fisherfolk are being compelled to go farther and fish in deeper waters. This exposes them to greater danger, forces them to spend longer hours fishing and compels them to spend more on gasoline.

Aside from the big mining companies, the capitalist system has likewise penetrated small-scale mining (SSM) in the



Cordillera. Up to 30,000 miners are now engaged in SSM in Benguet, mainly in Itogon. On the other hand, the Mangaoang family closely controls SSM in Gaang, Balbalan, Kalinga where up to 500 miners are being exploited. Financiers control the gold market and rentals of equipment such as ball-mills and jack hammers and are even engaged in selling food, chemicals and explosives to the miners. Aside from comprador Henry Sy's Banco de Oro, Chinese, Koreans and other foreigners have come in as financiers and dominated the gold market.

Meanwhile, big mining companies like Benguet Corp., LCMC and Philex Mines are the main buyers of mine tailings, as the latter contain 40% of the gold.

Superprofits from power generation. Energy projects continue to be pursued, making the Cordillera region the main source of power for Luzon's needs. A listing of geothermal and hydropower projects shows that the region is expected to generate up to 1.7 billion watts. From the planned 38 hydropower dams in the region in 2010 that would have generated 899

megawatts, there are now 67 such projects that are expected to generate 1,357 megawatts. The eight approved hydropower dam projects in Mountain Province and five in Kalinga are set to be doubled. In Mallig, Flora, Apayao, several houses, a bridge and a school will be submerged under 15.447 million cubic meters of water for a hydroelectric dam project. In Abulog, Kabugao, also in Apayao, a megadam to be constructed by Pan Pacific plans to generate 600 megawatts. The dam will be 234 meters high and hold 3.98 billion cubic meters of water.

Of the hydropower dams, 18 will be constructed by SN Aboitiz/Hedcor, which also operates Binga Dam and Ambuklao Dam in Benguet, while 13 will be built by Sta. Clara Power Corp. Because of the Renewable Energy Act of 2008, builders of hydropower dams enjoy huge incentives, including subsidies in the construction of plants aside from guaranteed income due to the sale of electricity in the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market.

There are eight geothermal projects in the Cordillera, and seven of them have already been approved. Chevron, which runs the geothermal plant in Tiwi, Albay

and the MakBan geothermal plant in Southern Tagalog is the main investor in the geothermal project in Lubuagan-Tinglayan; in Buguias, Benguet; and in Tinoc, Ifugao but uses dummies in processing applications for these projects.

Further oppression of farmers, vegetable planters and fisherfolk. Contrary to the US-Aquino regime's slogan of "inclusive growth" which is nothing more than a barefaced lie, farmers both in the plains and uplands are further being buried in debt. The cost of seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, irrigation fees and other agricultural inputs continues to rise even as programs and support infrastructure for agriculture suffer grave neglect.

Meanwhile, agricultural products continue to be underbought at the farmgate. According to the government's own data, in 2010, a farmer had to spend ₱9.39 to produce a kilo of corn. But from a high of ₱15 per kilo, dried yellow corn now sells at ₱9 per kilo, leaving the farmers in the red.

Seizures of farmers' lands is being done openly and on a massive scale. In Apayao, the Cayosa family grabbed 200 hectares of farmers' lands in Pudtol, Flora and Sta. Marcela by having ancestral lands titled. Land-grabbing is especially widespread in areas where there are "renewable energy" projects like hydropower plants.

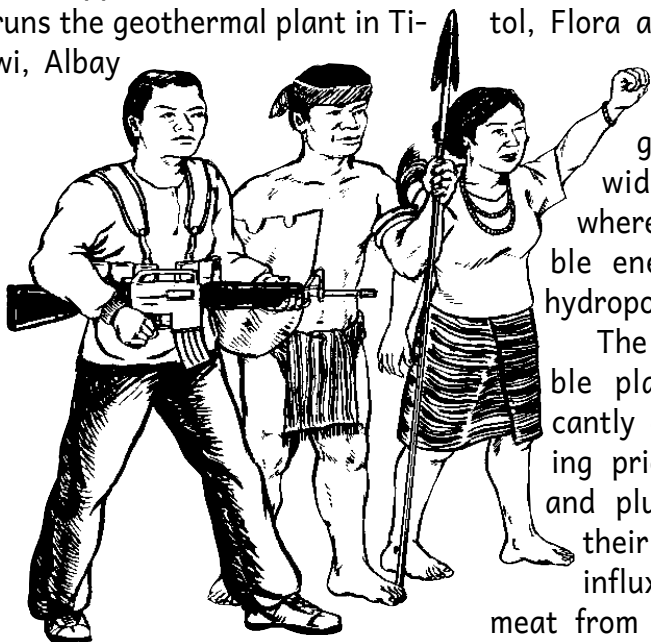
The number of vegetable planters has significantly decreased. The rising prices of farm inputs and plummeting prices of their produce due to the influx of vegetables and meat from China, the US and

other countries have driven more and more vegetable planters deeper in debt. Many farmers have been forced to put their lives at risk by working in small-scale mining.

The people of Ilocos and Cordillera are in desperate straits. Two of the country's most impoverished provinces are found in the Cordillera—Ifugao, where 47% and Apayao, where 59.8 % of the population are poor. Neighboring provinces suffer from practically the same economic conditions and impoverishment.

The regime's stop-gap programs are of no use. Families enrolled under the Conditional Cash Transfer or Programang Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino (4Ps) shell out more money compared to the funds they receive, as they have to spend a lot to comply with the program's requisites such as attending seminars, submitting reports and undergoing medical checkups. This practically wipes out the ₱300 monthly subsidy per child that they receive.

Decrepit health services. Not only are public hospitals poorly subsidized, they are being privatized to boot (under the term "corporatization"). Three of the government hospitals slated for privatization in accordance with the US-Aquino regime's Public-Private Partnership Program are in the region—the Baguio General Hospital; Ilocos Training and Regional Medical Center in San Fernando, La Union; and the Region I Medical Center in Dagupan, Pangasinan. Charity wards in public hospitals have been phased out and replaced with the compulsory implementation of Philhealth. Services and medicines provided under the Philhealth system are sorely inade-



quate, however. Neither could the poor sustain the ₱300 monthly contributions (which will be hiked to ₱600 per month this year) because they live from hand to mouth and could hardly afford to have three meals a day.

Intensifying militarization. Upon taking his seat in Malacañang in 2010, Benigno Aquino III unleashed massive, simultaneous military operations in the Cordillera, with up to battalion-size forces ravaging every province. Not a single guerrilla front has been dismantled, however. In fact, their number has even expanded.

Because of the lack of Philippine Army troopers, the number of AFP auxiliaries is currently being expanded with police elements under the Regional Public Safety Battalion (RPSB) undergoing Special Counter-insurgency Unit Training (SCOUT). Up to four batches have finished the 45-day course in Babalaan, Tadian, Mountain Province. Along with the PNP Special Action Force, they serve as force multipliers like the paramilitary CAFGU.

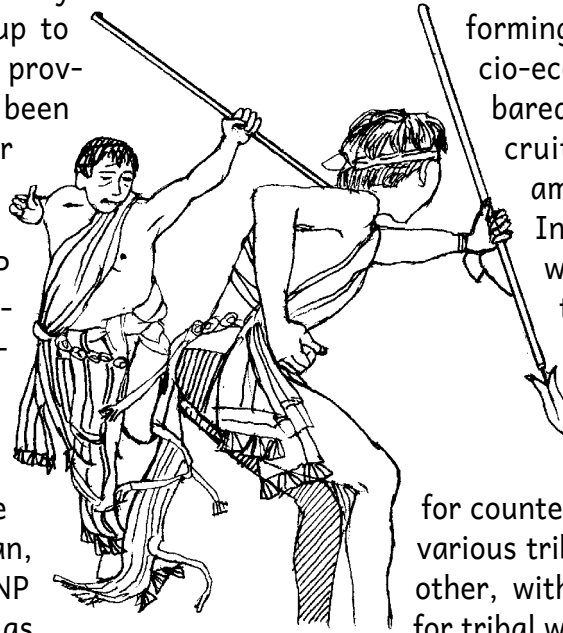
There are six battalions from three brigades under two AFP divisions stationed in Ilocos and the Cordillera. The 81st IB under the 703rd IBde of the 7th ID is based in Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, while two battalions of the 503rd IBde—the 41st and 50th IB—are focused on Abra. On the other hand, under the 501st IBde, the 54th IB is

currently scouring the entirety of Mountain Province, while the 17th IB has replaced the 21st IB in Kalinga. The 86th IB's area of operations are the provinces of Ifugao, Isabela and Quirino. Meanwhile, a major part of the 77th Cadre IB has been maintaining CAFGU detachments in the Cordillera.

The real objective of the Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army (CPLA) in transforming itself into a deceptive socio-economic force has now been bared—it is to serve as a recruitment base for the AFP among the minority peoples. In June, 168 CPLA elements were recruited into the AFP to sow terror among their fellow minorities who like themselves, are victims of national oppression.

Recruiting minorities for counterinsurgency is divisive. The various tribes are pitted against each other, with this serving as a trigger for tribal wars. The AFP and PNP have also been exploiting indigenous traditions, including vendettas in order to sow discord among the national minorities.

The AFP has stepped up its role as an Investment Defense Force providing security for plunderous projects, with the police regional and provincial "safety battalions" serving as its force multipliers. **AB**



Billionaires become richer under Aquino

Amid the grave economic crisis and widespread poverty, the country's wealth is further being concentrated in the hands of a few.

A recent report in *Forbes Magazine* disclosed that the number of billionaires in

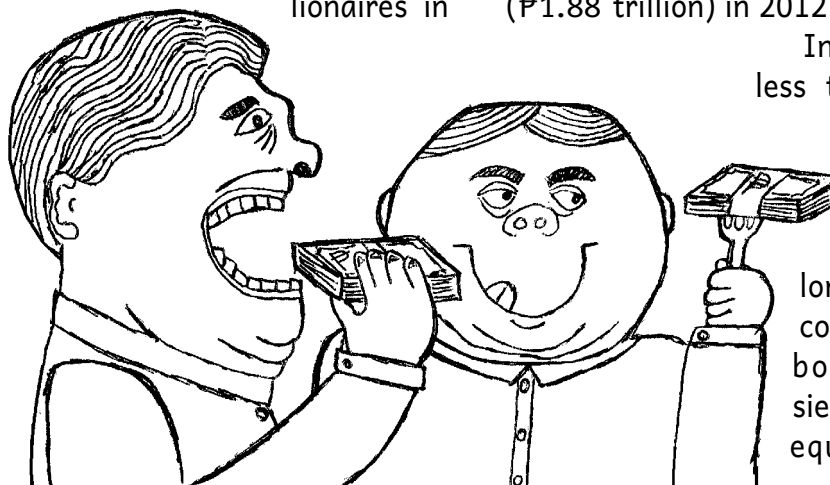
the Philippines has grown from 11 in 2011 to 17 this year. According to *Forbes*, the 50 richest people in the Philippines have combined incomes of up to \$64 billion (₱2.56 trillion), 36% higher compared to their combined incomes of \$47 billion (₱1.88 trillion) in 2012.

In short, less than 1% of the biggest landlords and comprador bourgeoisie hold the equivalent

of 25% of the entire Philippine economy in their hands.

The list of Philippine billionaires is led by Henry Sy, owner of the SM chain of malls and department stores, SM Development Corporation, Banco de Oro and Chinabank. Sy is one of the most brutal big capitalists in the Philippines, leading the way in "flexible labor" practices, the suppression of workers' rights and the depression of their wages.

Among the wealthiest ruling class elements in the Philippines are the Aranetas (relations of DILG Sec. Mar Roxas) and Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. (Benigno Aquino III's uncle). **AB**



Ayta tribespeople evicted from their land

Ayta communities have long been suffering from intense militarization and repression. Under the US-Aquino regime, their exploitation and oppression have worsened. The Ayta are now being driven away from their land more often and on a wider scale to give way to mining companies, real estate development and eco-tourism projects. They are also being evicted using the pretext of reforestation and their land converted to plantations.

Destructive mining operations conducted by gigantic mining firms are rampant in Central Luzon. Among these companies are Pisumpan Copper Mines Inc. and Shuley Mines Inc. in Barangay Camias, Porac, Pampanga. The Dizon family also controls quarrying and other mining operations on 825 hectares in Barangay Mabulliat in Porac; 8,756 hectares in Barangays Aglao and Buhaben in San Marcelino, Zambales; and 1,107 hectares in Barangay Panlag, Floridablanca, Pampanga. Black sand mining is likewise widespread in Ayta areas in the towns of San Marcelino, San Felipe and Botalan in Zambales.

Meanwhile, a university is responsible for grabbing national minority lands

in Abucay, Bataan.



Seven hectares in Hacienda Buena, Hermosa, Bataan had also already been taken from the Ayta. Another group of Ayta tribespeople has been displaced from their swidden farms in the upland areas of Mayantoc, Tarlac to give way to a rubber plantation controlled by foreign and local corporations. The project will be implemented under the National Greening Program of the reactionary government, using "reforestation" as a pretext.

Ayta lands are also being plundered in the name of eco-tourism. One instance involves the eviction of 80 Ayta families because of the construction of a golf course and other tourism projects under the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) in Angeles City. The Ayta are then recruited as workers receiving substandard wages and laboring under more oppressive conditions.

In Barangays Nabuklod, Mawacat and Camachile in Floridablanca, Pampanga, the government has incessantly been deceiving the Ayta in the name of eco-tourism. It has constructed vast "viewing deck covered farms" and "Ayta sacred places" and recruited the tribespeople as

tour guides, souvenir makers and guards but has prohibited them from farming, hunting and engaging in other traditional activities.

There are Korean-owned eco-tourism projects in Barangay Sapang Bato, Angeles City and Barangay Inararo, Porac, Pampanga where restaurants, hot spring spas and other facilities designed to lure in tourists have been built. As usual, the Ayta have become contractual and lowly paid workers without any benefits in these facilities.

In Barangay Maamot, San Jose and Barangay Sta. Juliana, Capas, both in Tarlac province, some 500 Ayta families have been affected by the construction of the Balog-balog Dam.

Meanwhile, the reactionary Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) has reduced the land reserved for the Ayta. In Barangay Nabuklod, Pampanga alone, their land has been reduced from 10,000 to a mere 5,000 hectares.

Victims of militarization

Side by side with government and private projects that have been driving the Ayta from their land, militarization plagues their communities. In Porac, Pampanga, the Philippine Army 70th IB which has been stationed in the area since 2004 has been responsible for many acts of brutality against the Ayta. Local residents are frequently intimidated and their domiciles violated. CAFGU elements routinely train their guns at them. Many have been tortured. Those suspected of supporting the New People's Army are included in the military's "order of battle" and targeted

for surveillance, harassment and extrajudicial killing.

Ayta eco-tourism workers in Floridablanca, Pampanga are likewise being subjected to harassment and forcibly recruited as Bantay Gubat elements under the Philippine Air Force. Meanwhile, Ayta lands in Zambales covered by mining operations have been

militarized, with soldiers serving as security guards. The military has also built a shooting range and set up a checkpoint at the Balog-balog Dam area in Tarlac.

The US-RP Balikatan Exercises are also held in Central Luzon almost every year, militarizing Ayta communities in Tarlac and Zambales.

National minorities hold conference

Up to 80 representatives of indigenous peoples nationwide attended the National Forum on Indigenous Peoples and World Conference on Indigenous Peoples held at the SEAMEO-Infotech in Diliman, Quezon City on August 7-8. The seminar tackled the conditions of national minorities under the Aquino regime.

According to the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA), Benigno Aquino III has failed to address the grievances of national minorities since he took power and has shelved the issues they raised as far back as three years ago. National minorities have never enjoyed the right to self-determination and to land as well as basic services, said the CPA.

The conditions of national minorities have worsened because they are affected by large-scale mining and other government projects that displace them from their ancestral lands.

Meanwhile, the Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan sa Pilipinas (KAMP) assailed Aquino not only for opening the country's natural resources to big foreign and local capitalist exploitation, but for implementing the destructive Oplan Bayanihan. Many national minorities have become victims of human rights violations. Under Aquino, up to 35 of them have been killed. Trumped-up charges have been filed against 260 minorities and more than 4,000 have been forcibly evacuated, mostly in Mindanao. Some of the more striking human rights violations involving minorities are the massacre of the Capion family who are members of the Blaan tribe in South Cotabato; the murder of Matigsalog tribal chieftain Jimmy Liguyon in Bukidnon; the arrest in Kalinga of Kennedy Bangibang of the Cordillera People's Democratic Front; and the arrest in Surigao del Sur of Manobo tribal leader Jalandoni Campos.

US whips up Japan militarism

IN accordance with US imperialism's objective of "rebalancing" its forces in the Asia-Pacific, imperialist Japan has been beefing up its military capability in the continent by expanding its war materiel for the first time since the Second World War. On August 6, it inaugurated the DDH 183 Izumo, an aircraft carrier which it misrepresents as a helicopter destroyer. Japan, which had earlier built a small warship is one of the US' key military allies in the Asia-Pacific.

The DDH-Izumo, which cost \$1.23 billion, is among the world's biggest aircraft carriers and can be used as a base and landing pad for anti-submarine helicopters and modern US-made warplanes. It is capable of providing combat support at a range of 400 kilometers. In the short run, it enhances Japan's military capability against Chinese submarines in the East China Sea, where the two countries are locked in dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu island group.

The DDH 183 Izumo was named after a Japanese cruiser involved in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. The cruiser also served as Japan's flagship carrier, leading the attack on, and eventual occupation of, the Chinese city of Shanghai in the 1930s.

The launching of the Izumo is but the latest of Japan's moves to circumvent the pacifist provisions of its constitution which prohibit the country from maintaining offensive weapons such as aircraft carriers. Although it is the US that designed the Japanese constitution, it is now openly allowing and driving Japan to strengthen its offensive military capability. These moves are strongly opposed by the Japanese and other Asian peoples.