

any issue that struck deeply into the honor and prestige" of the MNLF.¹²⁹

Furthermore, Ramos was conscious of Misuari's expressed concern over "losing his men to other militant armed groups" during the transition period if the Government cannot assist them; hence Misuari's hopes for a larger Special Regional Security Force (SRSF).¹³⁰ Also, during the last hours of backroom negotiations, Misuari and then Executive Secretary Ruben D. Torres allegedly agreed on the auxiliary services [to augment the number of MNLF members integrated into the AFP and PNP], unaware of their respective varying interpretations. Reportedly, for Misuari, this meant the integration of his men into specialized units of the AFP, including the intelligence service; whereas for Torres, this understand would refered to the technical services of the AFP, such as the medical, dental and engineering units and the AFP's Women's Auxiliary Corps.¹³¹ It is not clear at this point where the auxiliary services will serve. However trivial, this could be another cause of temporary snags given that peace accords in earlier administrations had bogged down due to conflicts in the interpretation of salient provisions.

Further complicating these talks was the fact that the security concerns of the MNLF were intertwined with its economic concerns. Ramos was aware of the problems related to the livelihood and basic needs of the MNLF men, as well as other sensitive issues of registration and licensing of firearms, together with the question of the ranks and qualifications of those who would be taken in into the armed forces.

Moreover, Ramos knew that Misuari had to perform the follow balancing act if the talks were to succeed:

1. He had to maintain his leadership in attaining the aspirations of his people under the Tripoli agreement;
2. He had to project an image of a consensual peacemaker before the people of Mindanao; and
3. He had to bring prestige to the OIC and earning the respect of its members in order to negotiate a meaningful peace for his people.¹³²

Hence, in a Memorandum to the Government Panel Negotiating with the MNLF dated 23 August 1993 he instructed that "the conduct of the Formal talks shall be in line with the aim of the

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹³¹ Discussions with military officers supporting the technical requirements of the peace negotiations, December 1999.

¹³² Fidel V. Ramos, p. 66.