

In order to respond to the educational needs of MNLF integrees with regards to their professional advancement, and in some instances the requirements for their integration, the AFP, in coordination with Commission on Higher Education and National Peace Unification and Development Council, launched a scholarship program for MNLF integrees. Some 54 integrees have availed themselves of this program, and have pursued courses in agriculture, education, arts, and sciences. 556 enlisted personnel have also involved themselves in the Philippine Education Placement Test, and the Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency Program, as well as secondary education.

Gains from the MNLF Integration

From a military perspective, the reward of the integration of the MNLF has been in terms of its assistance to AFP Civil Military Operations. The MNLF integrees were particularly helpful in the establishment of cooperatives for livelihood programs, as well as in the delivery of basic literacy programs, health and medical care. They have also been of great assistance in improving mosques, as well as in other infrastructure projects (such as building toilets and digging canals).

Crime levels has also been in the decrease. In Jolo for example, the crime index declined from 63 % before deployment of PNP-MNLF integrees to about 49 % after deployment in October 1999.¹⁴⁹ In general, PNP crime statistics in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has also been decreasing since 1995 at an average of 2 % per year.

The "BARIL" [Bring a Rifle Improve your Livelihood] Program

While the MNLF integrees who joined the PNP were not required to turn in their firearms, the AFP applied the "BARIL" [Bring a Rifle Improve your Livelihood] Program to the MNLF integrees. This is a modified version of the government's "Balik-Baril" Project for the communist rebel returnees. Under this program, the MNLF members who joined the AFP would be provided compensation for each firearm that was turned in. These firearms would be accounted for as government property, and would be issued to the trainers during their training and deployment. Those who opted to retain their firearms were required to register such firearms with the local PNP subject to existing regulations concerning firearms registration, licensing and possession. High-caliber weapons and crew-served weapons (mortar, 50 caliber machine gun, 90 recoilless rifles) that did not qualify under the existing firearm laws and regulations were required to be turned in under the terms established by the "Balik-Baril" Project.

As of 10 September 1999, a total of 4,874 assorted firearms have been turned-in by the integrees. Below is classification of these weapons by type and the total amount turned in:

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Supt. Abdelgardan Indanan Alih.