

With the integration of the MNLF into the AFP and PNP now in its final phase, Misuari has issued "verbal orders to his field commanders in the 14 provinces and cities under the terms of the Peace Agreement ... to prepare for the formation of the so-called Regional Internal Security Forces."¹³⁹ Members of this Force are drawn from those who cannot be integrated into the MNLF and the PNP.

There is also a special socio-economic, cultural and education programs to those that cannot be accommodated in the AFP, PNP or the SRSF, designed to equip with the necessary educational, technical skills and livelihood training for other productive endeavours.

As of September 1996, shortly after the signing of the peace agreement, military records showed some 17,700 MNLF members. The military intelligence statistics place the MNLF strength at 6,900 in 1976, gaining its peak strength of 21,200 individuals by 1977.

Most of the MNLF members should be in their late forties or early fifties, given that the MNLF has fought for their cause since the 1970s. Thus, some integratees to the AFP and PNP are representatives of MNLF members; typically, as sons and nephews of the MNLF "mujahideens". There are also unverified reports that some people are buying the slots in order to be integrated.¹⁴⁰

Consequently, those MNLF members who did not opt for integration turned to farming. Others lost hope in the armed struggle and gave up fighting to lead a civilian life, given that the fight had provided little benefit for them.¹⁴¹ They felt that only those with connections have benefited from the peace agreement.¹⁴² Some others former MNLF members have gone on to form their own groups or join existing associations branded as "lost command groups", kidnap-for-ransom gangs, and terrorist groups.¹⁴³

Many former MNLF members joined the MILF due to what they considered as MNLF's compromise concerning its accedence to terms for autonomy. This exodus was confirmed by Al-Haj Murad, MILF's Vice-Chair for Military Affairs,¹⁴⁴ as well as by military figures which showed a drastic increase in MILF strength from 8,000 in 1996 to 15,420 as of June 1999. Its firearms holding also increased from 10,227 in December 1998 to 11,351 by June 1999.

¹³⁹ Speech of Misuari, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with BGEN Garcia.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Prof. Kalidtod.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ In an earlier separate interview on Dec. 2, 1998, Camp Abubakar As-Sidique, Maguindanao.