

## **PEACE STRATEGIES IN THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING IN THE POLICE REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION**

P/Lt.Col. ERICKSON A. BANIAGA, MAPD

### **Abstract**

Recruitment and training are indispensable in every police organization such as the Police Regional Office of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (PRO BAR). Unfortunately, with all their good intent and purposes, people with ill motives grabbed them as opportunity to execute their crookedness to include personnel of the PRO BAR and their cohort. And for so many years, these allegations had been shadowing the recruitment and training in PRO BAR. So this study, through the qualitative research method, aim to investigate the issues relative to the recruitment in PRO BAR and the training at the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region Training Center (BARTC). It follows to cover how the qualification and requirement of recruitment and training serve as springboard for unlawful schemes and the peaceful strategies that were put in place at preventive measures. An observed, it appeared that personnel of PRO BAR and BARTC and their civilian cohort enterprised from the recruitment process but not necessarily the "3 applicants-in-one million pesos" scheme. Applicants in their desperateness to join the PRO BAR had submitted fake Transcript of Records (TRs) and other documents such as height waiver and eligibility and even noting that NAPOLCOM examination are taken by another person in behalf of the would-be PNP applicant. Long before, Psychological examination can be acquired from a NAPOLCOM accredited testing center, the only requirement is to pay. The same is true that in the past, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region Training Center (BARTC) personnel dipped their hands on the "issuematic" of training supplies and materials. But let it be emphasized that the cases of corruption in the PRO BAR recruitment and BARTC training processes are not institutional but personal. And these police officers who were doing these anomalies have long empowered themselves that they were indestructible. However, nowadays, these anomalies in the recruitment and training decreased especially with the resolve of the national government to eliminate corruption. Be that as it may, it is recommended that the intelligence machinery of the PRO BAR i.e. the Regional Intelligence Division and Regional Intelligence Unit 14 must sustain, if not enhanced, their monitoring to eliminate this abhorred corrupt practices and to adopt the peaceful strategies this study contributed.

Keywords: Peace Strategies, Recruitment and Training, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region

### **INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of policing is maintaining peace and order in communities. It is inherently risky yet a righteous duty, a noble profession that is served by well-trained professionals. Citing Kraska (2007), Wilson, Dalton, Scheer, and Grammich (2010) describe the policing responsibilities as enormous especially that with technological advancement, crimes and criminals are becoming difficult to detect or predict.

All throughout the world, crimes have become sophisticated. The New Jersey State Police Department (2019) declares that there is a greater need now of efficient and effective performance of all the law enforcers of the investigative and analytical units because modern technology has made criminals smarter.

In China, crime rates are relatively low. The numbers of homicides, robberies, rapes, bombings and gun-related crimes have gone down drastically in the last fifteen years. The comparatively low crime rate is due to stricter enforcement of the law. Amnesty International reported that Chinas execution of

criminals has lowered from 10,000 in 2003 to 2400 in 2013 (Amnesty International, 2019). The sophisticated Law

Enforcement system in China may have something to do with the lowered crime rate. The Ministry of Public Security is the main agency for law enforcement. This government manages policing through the local Public Security Bureaus. There is another government ministry, Ministry of State Security which is tasked to provide political security for the country. In addition to the two ministries, there is another police force, the People's Armed Police Force and in the cities, there are Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureaus (Human Rights watch, 2019).

In the United Kingdom, investigating high-end serious organized crimes often requires specialist capabilities which are cost effective for every police force and law enforcement partner to maintain. The government provides a range of specialists and niche capabilities that are best delivered nationally on behalf of all UK Law enforcement. As serious and organized crimes evolve, so do the skills and capabilities that law enforcement need to investigate and disrupt the most dangerous and technologically sophisticated offenders (<http://www.crimeagency.gov.uk>).

Enabling the police to perform their tasks efficiently requires good recruitment and training background. Thus, this makes the human resource the most indispensable element that defines and gives justice to the quality of services a police organization delivers to its clients, the citizenry. Patrick Oliver (2014) seconded that, "The recruitment and training of law enforcement officers is the single most important function of any law enforcement agency. The key factor to ensure an organization's success lies on its personnel who need not only be qualified but should be the best and skilled to be effective and efficient in performing not only their sworn duties but especially, as Tulauan's (2014) pointed out, to "render true public service."

Choosing the best applicant must be supported by a capability build-up which should not only be made basic but should be continuous practice for the human resource to keep abreast with the changing times. "As our community continue to face new challenges, our police forces must be prepared to meet those challenges. As crime continues to evolve, we must be vigilant in recruiting police officers that are well trained and educated. Training and education allows officers to solve problems creatively and engage the community without reservation. Police training must not be limited recruit academies; but instead considered as an important and necessary part of evolving and innovating along the community" (Daniels, 2015).

In the Philippine National Police (PNP), the biggest challenge in the recruitment and training of law enforcers is maintaining integrity. The PNP training centers have been accused of some forms of corruption. Malacañang has ordered an audit of the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC), after the director of the police training academy alleged corrupt practices within the police's training school, specifically mishandling of government funds (<http://www.newsinfo.inquirer.net>).

## **METHODS**

The qualitative research design was used in this study. Interviews were undertaken to ensure complete stories of narration of events which are necessary for meaningful discussions. The study was conducted at Camp Brigadier Gen Salipada K Pendatun, the Regional Headquarters of PRO Bar, located in Barangay Making, Parang, Maguindanao. Inside the said Camp is the headquarters of the Regional Mobile Force Battalion 14 (RMFB14), Regional Special Training Unit of the Bangasamoro Autonomous Region (RSTU-BAR), and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region Training Center (BARTC), and the RHQ Admin Building where the Recruitment and Selection Section of the Regional Personnel and Records Management holds office.

The BARTC, as in other Regional Training Centers, offers Public Safety Basic Recruit Course (PSBRC), the mandatory course for new PNP

recruits and among the qualification standards to upgrade their temporary appointment status to permanent and be promoted up to the rank of Police Staff Sergeant (PSSg); Public Safety Junior Leadership Course (PSJLC), the mandatory course needed by Police Non-Commissioned Officers with the rank of PSg to be qualified for promotion up to the rank of Police Senior Master Sergeant (PSMS); Public Safety Senior Leadership Course (PSSLC), the compulsory course for PMS prior they could be promoted up to the rank of Police Executive Master Sergeant (PEMS); and Public Safety Officers Candidate Course (PSOCC), the required course for personnel having the rank of PEMS to be promoted to Police Lieutenant (PLT) (PNP Qualification Standards). Just recently, it has been a venue of one class of Public Safety Officers Advance Course (PSOAC), the requisite course for promotion to Police Major (BARTC Documents).

The more or less four (4) hectares land area of the BARTC holds the admin building, a library, six (6) dormitories where each can accommodate 100 occupants, 11 classrooms each good for 50-60 students, and a mess hall which can served 250 students all together at the same time. Renovations are underway in some of the facilities. For sports activities and other recreation, it has a basketball court, a mini-gym and enough ground for volleyball game. For the teaching and training staff, professors, lawyers, and heads of government line agencies from Cotabato City and as far as Davao City are being invited as guest instructors aside from police officers of PRO BAR who are mostly assigned at the Regional Headquarters and the Assistant Instructors (AIs) who are organic personnel of the BARTC or from RMFB 14 detailed to the training center. Up until January of 2020, the BARMTC housed a total of 622 students; 47 from the PSOAC Class 2019-01, 98 from PSBRC Class "KAMARAGTAS" 2019-01, and 277 belong to PSBRC Class "SANDIRIGMA" 2019-002. The number is expected to increase with the anticipated entry of 200 new PNP recruits relative to the CY 2019 Attrition Recruitment Program tentatively scheduled to take their oath on January 31, 2020.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### Issues Related to the Recruitment and Training

The different hitches in the recruitment and training had become serious issues especially that the people involved are supposedly the law enforcers and how come they could do these under the noses of police officers who are supposed to serve as models for honesty, transparency and dignity. There were also civilians involved but these were also collaborators of the police.

Most common is asking money from the applicants in exchange of their passing the requirements. The different forms of corruption in the recruitment had been already known years and even decades back. It is good the current administration is bent on tidying the police force whose image had been badly tarnished by various forms of corruption. Corruption is the stark anti-thesis of social justice.

Lacson (2019) hit the current president for telling cops to accept gift and ignore anti-graft law (<http://www.rapler.com>). However, it has been a common knowledge that the administration is waging a very aggressive drive tidying the public image of the police that had been marred by different faces of corruption and other illegal activities. You (2019) defines corruption as an abuse of power that is a breach of formal justice and a violation of formal obligations of fairness by individuals for their private gain which involves betrayal of public trust. It attacks democratic institutions, slows economic development and contributes to governmental instability.

Sumpf (2015) asserts that corruption is not only state-centric or elite phenomenon. The cases of corruption in the PRO BAR recruitment and BART training processes are not institutional but personal. It is carried out by enterprising law enforcers with the involvement of some civilians who dared to challenge the efforts of the Regional Intelligence Division to help out in curbing the anomalous practices of some law enforcers.

Moral ascendancy is the bigger issue now especially that the recruitment office selects applicants and the training center trains recruits intending to become future law enforcers. Strict discipline and lawfulness should begin, in the said offices. Although, Filipinos have always been noted to be deeply religious people and so are expected to be truthful, decent, disciplined and lawful, among other expectations. Although probably the time allotted for the training is not really enough.

The Online Recruitment Application System (ORAS) has been employed by the Philippine National Police to streamline application and to avert the continuation of the corrupt practices. However, it partly failed its purpose in the Bangsamoro areas because of the issues on poor internet signal and system malfunctions. This does not only burden the applicants but it holds true to the recruitment office because of the delays it caused.

On the other hand, there could be some suspicions why there is delay resulting to chain reactions such as delay in the processing of the application and fund request making the head of the RSS sometimes source it from his own pockets. One explanation could be on the limitation of the bandwidth due to the use of the line by thousands of applicants in the different police regional offices throughout the country.

The PRO BAR is cognizant of the different forms of corruption happening and it is better now because many victims are beginning to talk. Probably this is due to the current culture of cleaning-up the entire agency and also to the government's pursuit of corrupt-free government institutions and agencies.

#### How the Qualifications Serve as Springboard for Corruption

The following are the general qualifications and requirements for candidacy into the recruitment of the Philippine National Police: (1) A citizen of the Philippines; (2) A person of good moral character; (3) Must have passed the psychiatric/ psychological, drug and physical tests to be administered by the PNP or by any NAPOLCOM accredited government hospital for the purpose of determining physical and mental health; (4) Must possess a formal Baccalaureate degree from a recognized institution of learning; (5) Must be eligible according to the standard set by the Commission; (6) Must not have been dishonourably discharged from military employment or dismissed for caused by any civilian position in the government; (7) Must not have been convicted by final judgement of an offense or crime involving moral turpitude; (8) Must be at least 1.62 meters in height for male and 1.57 meters for female; (9) Must weigh not more or less than five (5) kilograms from the standard weight corresponding to his or her height, age, and sex; and (10) Must not be less than twenty-one (21) nor more than thirty (30) years old at the time of appointment.

There are different ways by which corruption is done in the level of complying with the qualifications. The height requirement is very often a springboard for corruption by some enterprising individuals, usually in cohort with some government employees. The Indigenous People (IPs) are given chance to join the PNP but because many of them are short, requirement for height is a little shorter than the rest of the Filipinos. If they do not qualify, they need to present a document certifying that they are IPs. Here are stories shared about corruption related to height waiver:

*"Itong mga waiver may pera din. May classmate ako sa college. Sya ang nagpakilala sa akin sa isang fixer na ang asawa ay anak ng isang tumad na tribal chieftain. Ang fixer ay isang empleyado ng munisipyo"* (There is also money in waiver. I have a classmate in college. He was the one who introduced me to a fixer whose husband is a son of a tribal chieftain. The fixer is a local government employee).

*Gagasto ka talaga sa height waiver kasi kung hindi ka lumad magpabinyag ka pa. Marami ang nagheight waiver pero hindi ko rin alam kung pure blooded ba talaga sila na may dugong lumad. Sa face-to-face interview ko kulang point something sa aking height kaya umuwi na ako para magprocess g height waiver pero hindi natuloy kasi pagkalipas ng ilang araw bumalik ako sa Parang at nagpare-height ako, pumas naman ang aking height na* (One should really spend

money for the height waiver because if you are not an Indigenous Person (IP), you have to be baptized. Many of us secured height waiver but I am not really sure if they are IPs. In my case, in the face-to-face interview, I was told that I was short of height. So I went home to process a height waiver but it was not materialized because after a few days, I went back to Parang and I had my height re-evaluated. I passed this time).

The NAPOLCOM examination had also been an opportunity for corruption. An interviewee told a story of a teacher who was caught because she took the examination for an applicant.

Part of the physical test is the Agility test. There are also anomalies in this requirement. This story tells of a relevant form of corruption. It is simple, not so serious but still a form of corruption.

*"Napansin ko na may mga kasama kaming aptikante na hindi naman nagpeperform ng maayos sa push up at sit up sa Physical Agility Test pero nakapagtataka na pumasa naman. Ang balita kasi namin, ang iba sa amin ay pinakisuyo ng kamag-anak o kakilala o kaibigan ng kamag anak na may kakilala sa supervisor sa PAT. Pagdating sa PAT ay tinatapat sila sa kanilang mga kakilala o kakilala ng kanilang kamag- anak na PAT evaluator. Iyong katabi ko kasi alam ko hindi nakaabot ng 30 ang push up niya pero naging 35 dun sa PAT form niya. Ang problema ay hindi sa video dahil covered naman niya ang mga activities pero siguro sa mga personnel na nagsusupervise or evaluator sa PAT kasi mga tao din naman yan sila"* (I noticed that we had co-applicants who did not really performed properly in the push-ups and sit-ups in the Physical Agility Test (PAT). In the PAT, arrangements were made such that they would be under PAT evaluators whom they know or whom their relatives know. I know that the one next to me was not able to complete 30 but in his record, it was 35. The problem was not in the video because the activities were covered. Probably it was the PAT evaluator who supervised because he is also human.

Possession of a Baccalaureate degree is another requirement. There had been several cases of fake Transcript of Records (TR) discovered. Verification may have been difficult before but nowadays, it has become easier because of modern technology. The applicants spend money because these transcripts are for sale. There were also TRs submitted that were photocopies. Evaluators not used examining original TR may be fooled because sometimes, sophisticated copying machines are used.

The psychological exam can also be a source of corruption. Before, there were accredited psychological clinics or centers that could do the evaluation. The Regional Health Service of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (RHS-BAR) now has the facilities and the expertise to do the psychological and medical evaluation.

### Peace Strategies Used in the PRO-BAR

For several decades, the anomalies had been going on in the PRO- BAR in terms of the selection of police applicants, provision of supplies and others. As a product of deep analysis and reflection by the administrators, with suggestions coming from the involved offices in the PRO-BAR especially the Regional Personnel and Records Management Division and the Regional Intelligence Division, some measures have been institutionalized. In this paper, they are labelled "Peace Strategies".

### Peace Strategies Employed by the Police Regional Office Bangsamoro Autonomous Region and Bangsamoro Autonomous Regional Training Center

There had been several measures put in place to check the errors in the recruitment and training. The interviews yielded the following core ideas: (a) The recruitment process has been streamlined; (b) The RSS personnel have become soft but firm; (c) There is now a process of checking and monitoring and process of investigating and penalizing errant; (d) Peaceful mechanisms are now provided to avoid conflicts among recruits in the training center; (e) The cases of corruption are now checked; (f) The officers of RSS and the Training Center Director conduct regular conference or "pep talk" regarding the values that they should

uphold beginning the training time until they retire from police service. They would emphasize the responsibility to help improve the public image of the Philippine National Police.

The online application is actually a provision to prevent corruption in the recruitment. This is based on the reports regarding those who were promised assistance so that they would not be made to undergo difficult recruitment and training activities provided that they pay P1,000,000.00 for every three applicants. The perpetrators were also police officers. The problem would crop up when the recruit would become regular law enforcers especially when assigned in combat zones.

The previous attitude of the RSS officers and Assistant Instructors who were very stiff in their dealings with the applicants and recruits has changed. They have become a little soft but still firm in the requirements, Also, as one interviewee said, "the constant dialogue among the training staff and trainees which created strong bond minimized, if not eradicated, the issues during training. This has better result than imposing punishment thru physical activities or exercises."

For erring recruits, they are not automatically dismissed from the training center. There is always a process, since the law says that "an accused person is always presumed innocent". A misbehaving Training Instructor or Assistant Instructor may also be put in the same process.

Previously, there were conflicts between and among the recruits. Conflict is very inviting because they come from different cultural backgrounds and all people are always proud of their own. Thus, there will be biases and prejudices, and probably discrimination. Dialogues are constantly done, and activities that would involve all such as sports festival and cultural parties are expected to build camaraderie and respect.

Regular conversations with the head of RSS and the training director changed the perception of some regular law enforcers. One regular law enforcer who was a recruit a few years back said, "Before, when I would see any of the top camp officials, I would look for another route so I would not meet them face to face. To me their ranks were terrifying. But because of these regular activities, an informal venue of exchanges, I have come to realize that they also have a human side. Their advices to be good in the service have been engraved in my heart that I am really wary of law enforcers violating laws themselves".

Indeed, there is a need for top camp officers to talk to the recruits during their application and training periods. As high ranking officers, they could be very influential especially if they have the moral ascendancy to give the advice to the recruits. This is very important especially the pursuit of the government now is a corruption-free police force and which usually starts in the training of recruits.

## OBSERVATIONS

Corruption and other forms of anomalies were occurring relative to the recruitment in PRO BAR such as: the collecting of a handsome amount of money from applicants but not necessarily the P1Million for every three recruits in exchange of being accepted without questions; and the submission of fake Transcript of Records and other documents such as eligibility. The submission of psychological exam result from testing centers accredited by NAPOLCOM, regardless if the examine had really took the exam or just pay for it, was allowed before. But such was no longer observed with the current set up of the RHS-BAR. Batches of police recruits many years back had experienced "issuematic" or the provision of substandard but overpriced training supplies because the

suppliers were in cohort with some police officers in the camp. There was also this NAPOLCOM examination anomaly where one person takes the NAPOLCOM examination for those who are intending to apply as police officer but probably could not trust that they could pass the examination. PRO BAR personnel may not be directly involved in this scheme since NAPOLCOM is a separate higher office, but having this kind of personnel in its rank would hamper the

transformation programs of PRO BAR. On the other hand, they might become the proponents of corrupt practices in the recruitment in PRO BAR being themselves products of fraud. The recruitment corruption extends to the NCIP involving applicants who are not yet members of IP but are willing to pay any amount to fixers to avail of the Certificate of Conformation as required by the issuance of height waiver. But in all cases, the corruption is not institutional, but personal. Money can never corrupt the institution, but it does the persons running these institutions. On their part, PRO BAR and BART leadership have not tolerated these anomalies especially that the government never leave its eyes on corruption.

### INSIGHTS

The police officers who were doing anomalies in the recruitment and training have long empowered themselves (negatively) that it seemed that they were indestructible. However, with the willpower of the national government and the president of the country who is just bent on stopping corruption in all government and non-government institutions, corruption in the recruitment and training decreased. This willpower is expressed in the systems and processes installed.

### IMPLICATIONS

This study has an implication to research. This is a qualitative one. Another similar research may either be quantitative or mixed where there could be measures set for every change that is happening.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the following:

1. There are many problems relevant to the online application. To remedy this, the researcher recommends that the application be made year-round. The applicants shall be given time to accomplish what they lack and as soon as they are accepted, their names appear in a list posted in a public information board. The list will also be posted in a PNP page for the purpose. Those who pass will wait for the notice to report for the recruitment process. The first come first served basis will be applied in determining who will constitute the next batch.
2. Civilian entering the camp should be strictly screened especially during the period of recruitment activities. Preferably, CCTV must be installed inside the camp.
3. The researcher upholds this recommendation of one interviewee: There must be additional medical personnel, medical specialist and medical equipment so applicants no longer travel to Cotabato or Midsayap to comply with the requirements.
4. If height is not really a significant requirement, it should be lowered to three inches lean. It is still a form of corruption when the office accepts waivers, when they know what was done to produce the waiver.
5. Certificate of Conformity and other height waiver application document must be included among the documents subject of the Character background Investigation.

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