

# Sabaya informer gets P5M

One of two informants of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), who was reportedly with Abu Sabaya and his minions on a getaway pumpboat, received from President Arroyo yesterday a check for P5 million as a reward for providing information that led to the

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gun battle where the Abu Sayyaf spokesman was slain last Friday.

Yesterday's ceremonies were held at Malacañang, where the asset identified only as Gardo Ibrahim, an alias, revealed details that the government hoped

would further bolster military claims that Sabaya had been killed.

Ibrahim saluted the President twice as she offered a handshake to congratulate him.

His P5-million reward was on top of the \$1-million

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bounty being offered by the US for any information that would lead to the arrest of top Abu Sayyaf leaders.

Instead of an earlier statement that there were only Sabaya and six of his followers on board the pumpboat, military officials said Ibrahim and another government informant were also with Sabaya. Nine men instead of seven were on board.

Ibrahim told Palace reporters that he saw a fatally wounded Sabaya, whose real name is Aldam Tilao, falling into the shark-infested waters.

"*Patay! Oo, totoo patay na siya. Totoong patay na siya!* (He is dead. Yes, he is truly dead!)," Ibrahim said.

He said Sabaya was hit by bullets "many times."

The military refused to identify the second informant because he is still working for them.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Gen. Roy Cimatu said Ibrahim "was instrumental in giving timely information" that helped the elite Marine and Navy Special Warfare Amphibious Group commandos intercept Sabaya's group in Mantibu Point off Sibuco town in Zamboanga del Norte.

The President lauded civilians supporting the government's campaign to crush the Abu Sayyaf bandits who have been terrorizing southern Mindanao in a string of high-profile kidnappings since early 2000.

For over a year, Ibrahim had worked as a courier for Sabaya, 39, and eventually gained his trust. Ibrahim was later promoted as a member of his close-in security detail.

Unknown to the wily Sabaya, Ibrahim had been providing military agents key information on his movements.

In his remarks at Malacañang, Cimatu said, "Madam President, there were actually nine people in the boat. Two were our informers and one of them is with us now." He did not identify the other informant, or intimate what had happened to him.

Cimatu said that on June 20, around 8 p.m., Ibrahim informed unidentified military handlers that Sabaya was arranging for a boat that will be used for their escape from Zamboanga del Norte.

When the group of Sabaya was monitored to have docked at the shore of barangay Parong-parong, Sibuco town, the military initiated Operation Black Archer to capture Sabaya and his men.

The operation involved intercepting Sabaya's group who was on board the *Kingfisher* boat that Ibrahim helped secure, AFP spokesman Eduardo Purificacion said.

Cimatu said the military reported initially that there were only seven men on board the pumpboat, all of whom were Abu Sayyaf members.

Purificacion could not say whether Ibrahim joined the Abu Sayyaf under guidance of the military or was tapped to be an informant later.