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## Five rebels slain, soldier hurt in Maguindanao clash

SECURITY forces killed at least five separatist rebels in a clash in Maguindanao, a military official said yesterday.

Troops were patrolling in the remote village of Talitay township in Ma-guindanao

province on Sunday when they encountered around 20 rebels belonging to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), local Army spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Ponce told reporters.

A clash ensued, leaving

five militants dead and one soldier wounded, Ponce said.

He said after the firefight, soldiers recovered four weapons left behind by the rebels.

Ponce said the rebels

were followers of Ameril Ombra Kato, a rebel commander facing arrest for leading a series of attacks in the region on August last year.

A peace talk between the government and the

MILF collapsed in August 2008 after the two sides failed to sign an agreement on ancestral domain, prompting some rebel commanders to launch deadly attacks on some communities.

## Dads to quiz jail warden over treatment of 2 Swedes

COUNCILORS are set to question the warden of the city jail today over reports the suspected operators of a cybersex den in Kaus-wagan have been receiving special treatment.

"All the inmates should be treated the same way," Councilor Ian Mark Nacaya said.

When a Gabriela team led by lawyer Beverly Musni visited Lumbia jail last Friday, the militants found the Swede suspects staying in an infirmary instead of a cell with other inmates.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, who was in the city recently, said some detainees would need to be "isolated" inside prisons.

"If you mix these people with members of the Siguesig Gang, then it is highly likely that they will be sodomized," Gonzalez told reporters here.

Meanwhile, the Social Action Center of the local Roman Catholic archdiocese said the government would need to fight the flesh trade down to its root cause.

The root cause can be traced to the government's lack of delivery of services, according to Fr. Jose Cabantan, the center's director.

"If poverty is the main reason why women resort to prostitution," Cabantan said, "it's because development has not really reached the grassroots."

He said most women involved in the commercial sex trade in the country come from poor families.

Cabantan said the government needs to review its poverty alleviation programs and assess if its goals were being achieved.

MARK FRANCISCO AND JIGGER JERUSALEM

# Hunt laid to rest; no widow in sight

By JIGGER JERUSALEM and AMOR BARLISAN Correspondents

THE Songcuya family yesterday gave American Thomas J. Hunt a decent burial at the Cagayan de Oro Gardens cemetery.

The Songcuyas were there but not Hunt's 33-year old widow Janelaze who has opted to stay in the US.

Hunt's body, in a white coffin, was brought to the cemetery in Lumbia. A mass immediately followed at 2 pm.

Some 70 people attended the funeral but no one cried a tear, according to Fr. William Salva who officiated a mass during the interment for the Baptist.

There was no foreigner during the funeral.

Two public jeepneys and a 6x6 police truck were used to bring some people from the Songcuyas' neighborhood in Consolacion to the cemetery.

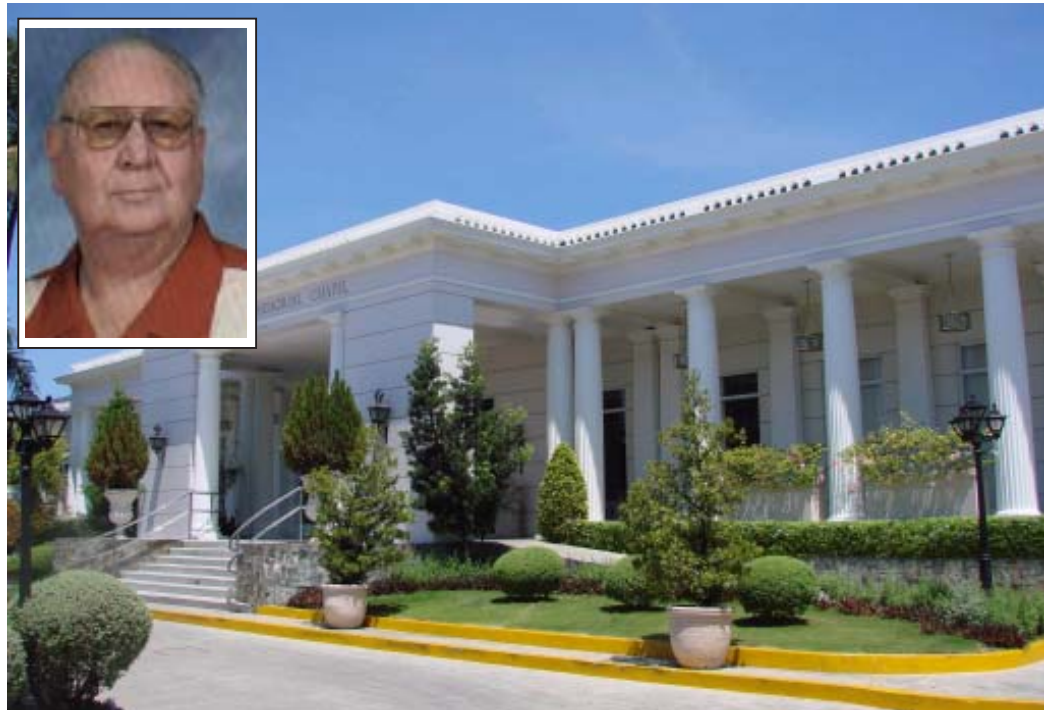
Fr. Salva started the mass around 2 pm. The ceremony ended 50 minutes later.

Hunt's remains were buried on a 1x2.48-meter lot that was originally bought for a member of the Songcuya family.

The American was buried beside the grave of the late Niche Songcuya, an aunt of Janelaze's.

The lot was surrounded by flowers and candles. A gravestone was still being made.

It was the American's wish to be buried here where his adopted family are, according to Linda Songcuya, the mother of



The Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes on Capistrano Street where the remains of American Thomas J. Hunt have been since April 27. Inset, a mugshot of Hunt when he was still alive. Hunt was laid to rest at Oro Gardens yesterday afternoon.

DANTE SUDARIA

Hunt's widow Janelaze.

Songcuya said she recalled how Hunt repeatedly made it clear that he wanted to be buried here. She said he considered the Songcuyas as the only family he had.

The elder Songcuya said she has not been able to properly rest since Hunt was hospitalized. She said she and some of her children took turns in caring for the elderly American when he was confined at the Polymedic General Hospital.

Songcuya said she was also worried for her daughter Aurea who helped a lot in the hospital. She said she feared

Aurea, who is seven-months pregnant, would have a miscarriage.

It took two persons to clean Hunt every time he soiled himself, according to Songcuya.

"We did not abandon him," Songcuya said, adding that even when Hunt moved in with her family until his death, she was at his side.

Hunt, according to Songcuya, had long been suffering from diabetes and arthritis.

"Despite his poor health, he remained cheerful," said Songcuya in the vernacular.

Songcuya said Hunt

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Press Secretary Serge Remonde goes over a copy of The Gold Star Daily. Remonde was in the city recently to grace the induction of officers and directors of the Cagayan de Oro Press Club.

PHOTO BY GERRY GORT

## Call him 'Ambassador Pacquiao'

BOXING champ Manny Pacquiao is now an "ambassador," and a special assistant on intelligence matters of the justice department.

President Arroyo yesterday named Pacquiao as her government's "ambassador for peace and understanding."

Pacquiao was also appointed by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez as his "special assistant."

Gonzalez said it was an honorary position in the Department of justice and the boxer would receive receive salary.

Pacquiao also heads the Task Force Kalikasan of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

## Laid

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was so fond of her granddaughters—they called him “Daddy Tom”—and he had often joined them in watching cartoons on TV. She even recalled that there was a time when Hunt played Santa in the neighborhood and gave children candies and coins.

Serious questions on the way Janelaze and her family treated the septuagenarian are hounding the Songcuyas.

Expats said it was widely speculated that Hunt’s US\$1-thousand monthly pension (around P46 thousand), which was entrusted to Janelaze and her family, were not properly spent.

Tom Landry, who was involved in efforts to help Hunt when he was under treatment at the Polymedic General Hospital, sought an accounting of Hunt’s social security pensions so expats could understand why one of Janelaze’s aunts said the septuagenarian could not

afford his medicines and food.

Janelaze’s mother Linda said Hunt’s pension was not enough to buy the medicines he needed daily.

She said a vial alone cost some P3 thousand and Hunt needed one every six hours. There were many other medicines that needed to be bought everyday.

The elder Songcuya acknowledged the help of the Expats’ Ladies Charities which she said helped in buying medicines for Hunt.

Hunt had been confined at the hospital from Jan. 29 until his death on April 26. Songcuya said the hospital bills ballooned to over P500 thousand. She said it was Janelaze and her aunt Grace who fixed the problem with the hospital.

Janelaze, according to the mother, worked to raise funds from friends in the US to pay the bills.

It was Grace Songcuya, she said, who arranged for

Hunt’s burial at the Cagayan de Oro Gardens. She said Grace had to raise P80 thousand for the funeral.

When Hunt was still in the hospital, Janelaze would send money every week, the elder Songcuya said.

Janelaze’s reason for not being there for Hunt when he was dying in the hospital was because she needed to wait for her green card.

There are photos showing her in compromising positions with a man identified as Albert Dermott. The two are allegedly together in Virginia.

Right after the funeral, a man who was apparently a relative of the Songcuyas’, was overheard as telling people that the man in the photos published by this paper yesterday was merely “the husband of Janelaze’s friend.”

Grace Songcuya earlier told *The Gold Star Daily* that photos like that were “normal.”