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## ECONOMIC GROWTH
(Energy and Environment)

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2008



# Marines, US troops 'attack' Sulu beach

By ROEL PAREÑO

SULU – US and Philippine marines led an attack at the beach front of Litayon yesterday.

This time, the combined US and Filipino troops were leading not battalions of soldiers to win the war but villagers and stakeholders of this island province battled in saving the environment as the country joined the commemoration of World Earth Day.

With automatic rifles slung on their soldiers, the main weapons the troops went for the kill was spoke sticks and waste bags in collecting all the wastes and other materials polluting the waters. The troops and hundreds of people descended on Litayon beach and removed trash and debris. Famous for its white-powdery sand, the 1.2 miles long Litayon coast, is a hugely productive fishery for Tausugs in Sulu.

Children were given the main task that is segregating the waste from biodegradable to non-biodegradable materials and mopped up destructive rubbish that has fouled beaches and coral reefs in the insurgency-prone Sulu province.

"The children is our future and they have to take now the lead in saving Planet Earth as we are guiding them," anti-terror Task Force Comet chief Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban said.

The program was initiated by the Alliance for Mindanao Off-grid Renewable Energy Program (Amore).

Col. William J. Coultrop, commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines said their presence in this southern island province is not just to ensure military capability but also to build a more secure environment.

"The clean and secure environment for our children is important. We recognize the clean air and water resources for the children," Coultrop said.

He said the US troops have to make concrete and significant contributions for the Filipino people, not only for military purposes and to restore the goodness of environment that we have in the Philippines.

"We have a common goal in sustaining environment security. The Filipino people and the United States not only pursue good military strategies (but) for protecting the environment and good governance," he added.

Elzadia Washington, deputy chief for mission, US Agency for International Development (USAID) Philippines, said the agency recognized the protection of the environment which is crucial to economic growth.

She said the USAID programs, such as the project of the Amore do not only focus on projects but is making sure the programs have positive impact on the environment.

**(Source: Philippine Star, 4/22/08, page A28)**