

SPOKESMAN ON 'ROUTINE' DEPLOYMENT OF PLANES

HK021401 Hong Kong AFP in English 1332 GMT 2 Oct 85

[Excerpt] Manila, Oct 2 (AFP) -- The deployment yesterday of Philippine warplanes in the southern Philippines, where an island was allegedly attacked by Malaysian troops Thursday, was routine, the official PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY (PNA) reported here today. The PNA said that Philippine Air Force spokesman Colonel Pablo Gonzales had clarified "misconceptions" that the Philippines was massing troops in the area. Col Gonzales was reacting to a report in the METRO MANILA TIMES newspaper, quoting a reliable source, that the deployment was to "prevent similar attacks in the future by foreign troops at the southern backdoor of the country."

A Philippine general has accused Malaysian forces armed with helicopters and gunboats of killing or kidnapping 53 people in an attack on the Philippine island of Maldanas, near the Malaysian state of Sabah. The attack was apparently in retaliation for a raid by Filipino pirates on Lahad Datu town in Sabah on September 23, in which 10 people were killed. Malaysia has denied the attack.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry has still made no comment on the general's accusation. A spokesman said that the ministry was still awaiting a military report. "We haven't gotten any full report from any source," spokesman Antonio Modena said. "We haven't even gotten the official denial."

Manila newspapers reacted cynically to Malaysia's denial of involvement in the attack, but also called for calm and a careful diplomatic approach to prevent a dispute between the two countries.