

By DAN TORIBIO

One of three hostages held and used as human shield by armed men was killed during a firefight with government troops in barangay Reconalla, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, early morning yesterday.

A report from the Police Regional Office 9 identified the fatality as Ronnie Tangupan. Two other hostages were rescued by government troops and were identified as Marjun Alano, 29, and Carlo Cariño, 23.

Initial police investigation showed that at around 8:30 p.m. of Friday, Chief Insp. Joseph Realas Maulad, Chief of Siocon Municipal Police Station received a phone call and text messages from some residents informing him that a group of armed men were seen in barangay Reconalla, in the same municipality.

Information added that the armed men were holding hostages some civilians in the area.

The police official and his men, along with troops from the 13th SF led by Capt. Rodillo Famulag and Capt. Joy Boliguen, 42nd IB led by 2Lt. Emmuel John Perez, proceeded to the place and interviewed some residents. They then proceeded to Sitio Dumayum, barangay Reconalla where they spotted more or less ten families evacuating their village and proceeding to the barangay hall due to fear.

At around 4:20 a.m., yesterday, the government troops clashed with the armed men and lasted for five minutes.

No casualty was reported in the government side.

Hostages used as human shield in Siocon encounter

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During the skirmish, the government forces rescued Alano and Cariño and recovered the body of Tangupan.

The troops continued in pursuing the enemies who withdrew towards NIA Dam in the same place and attempted to again hold hostage two civilians identified as Edison Maquilang and Joseph Pangaralbut. They were able to escape.

Police and military troops were still in the area as of press time. – Dan Toribio