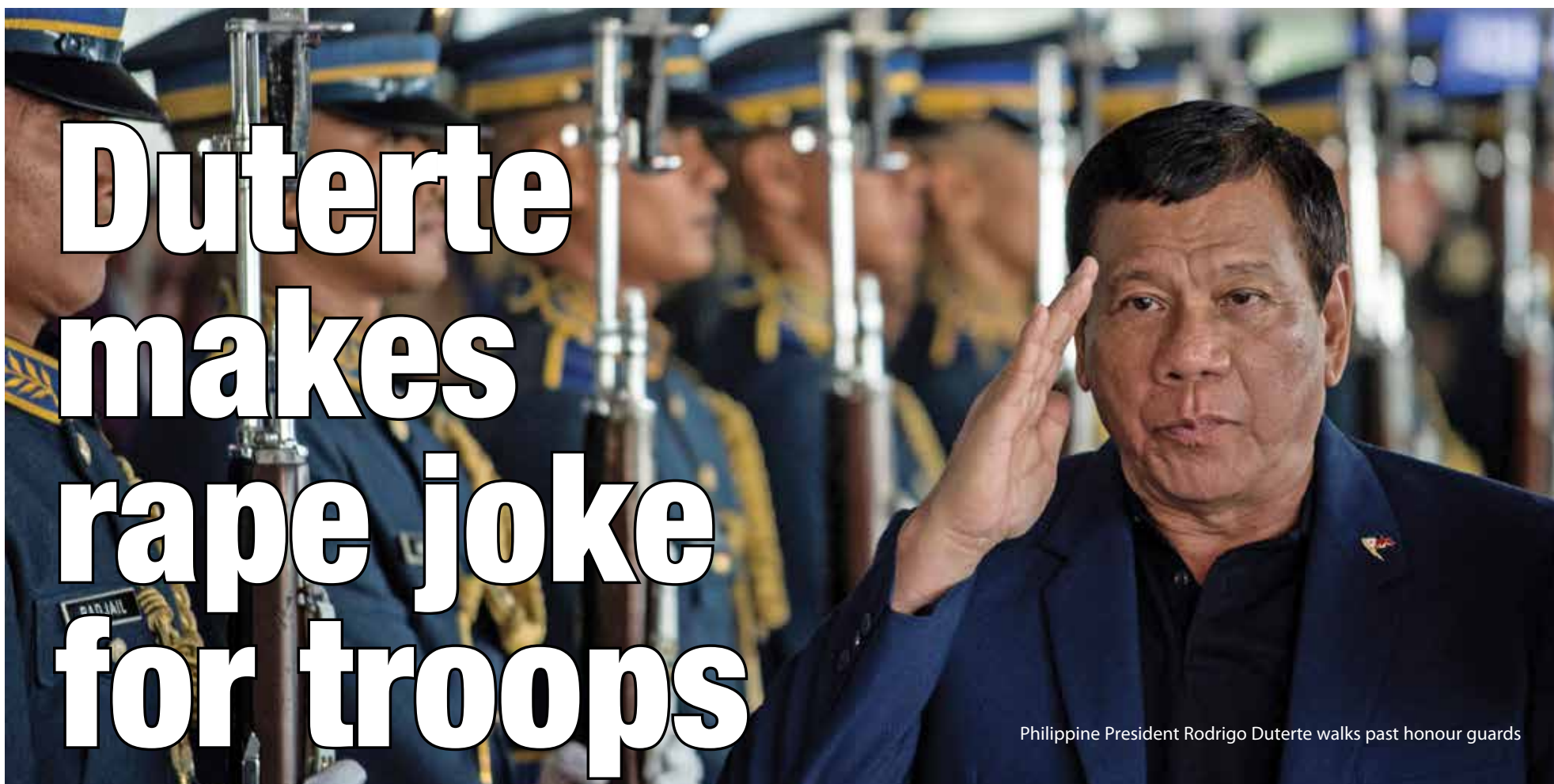


Duterte makes rape joke for troops



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte walks past honour guards

Manila

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte joked yesterday that soldiers could rape up to three women, as he reassured them of his full support under his newly imposed regional martial law.

Duterte, who often peppers his language with man-on-the-street curses, made the comments in jest during a speech at a military base to lift the spirits of troops tasked with quelling what he says is a fast-growing threat of Islamist terrorism.

"For this martial law and the consequences of martial law and the ramifications of martial law, I and I alone would be responsible. Just do your work. I will handle the rest," he said.

"I will be imprisoned for you. If you rape three (women), I will say that I did it."

Duterte imposed martial law on Tuesday across the southern region of Mindanao in response

to militants going on a deadly rampage through a city in the south and flying the black flags of the Islamic State group.

Duterte said the militants were planning to establish a caliphate for IS across all of Mindanao, home to 20 million people, and that martial law was the only way to crush the rebellion.

Duterte, 72, easily won presidential elections last year by presenting himself as in touch with ordinary Filipinos, often using street language full of profanities.

On the election campaign Duterte said he had two mistresses but jokingly reassured taxpayers that he would not cost them much if he was president because he took them to cheap, short-time hotels for sex.

Duterte also attracted controversy when he said he wanted to rape an Australian missionary who had been caught

up in a 1989 prison riot in the Philippines and murdered by the inmates.

"There was this Australian lay minister. When they took them out, I saw her face and I thought, 'Son of a whore. What a pity. They raped her, they all lined up. I was mad she was raped but she was so beautiful. I thought, the mayor should have been first,'" Duterte said in April last year.

The Australian and American ambassadors to Manila voiced their disapproval at the comments, but Duterte reacted furiously and insisted he had been taken out of context.

On the campaign trail Duterte also jokingly told voters to open funeral parlour businesses because as president he would fill them with corpses from a war on drugs.

Duterte did launch his drug war, and it has claimed thousands of lives. (AFP)

Military flags martial law censorship

Manila

The Philippine military said it would censor the press and social media to protect "national security" across the southern third of the country that is under martial law, and warned violators would be arrested.

President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law across the southern region of Mindanao on Tuesday to combat what he says is the rising threat of Islamic militancy.

"We'll exercise the right to censure," military spokesman Brigadier General Restituto Padilla told reporters. In a text message, Padilla clarified he meant "censor".

"One, to ensure the safety of lives, second to ensure operational security and ensure the safety of our men in uniform who are fighting, and for other national security considerations," he said.

Padilla specified that social media would be subject to censorship, warning



Philippine policemen check evacuees from Marawi aboard a van

people against posting material that breached the conditions.

"That's why we are appealing to you now while there's still time, to exercise your common sense, he said.

"If you know that this will harm the public and will not be helpful, better not post it because police might come to your door later on and arrest you."

Prisoner executed in 8th date with death

Washington

Tommy Arthur was executed late Thursday after his eighth, and final, rendezvous with the US state of Alabama's capital punishment system.

The 75-year-old was given a lethal injection after the US Supreme Court allowed the execution to proceed by denying the inmate's stay requests.

Arthur's death ends a legal saga spanning more than three decades in which he became known by some as the Houdini of death row, managing to evade his final sentence seven times. He

was first sentenced to death back in 1983 for a murder he denies committing. Since then, the southern US state has executed 58 people -- an end Arthur had until now dodged.

"Thomas Arthur's protracted attempt to escape justice is finally at an end," Alabama's Attorney General Steve Marshall said in a statement released following the execution.

In last-minute appeals Arthur's lawyers had challenged the injection method to be used on Thursday and asked that a cellphone be put in the death



Death-row inmate Tommy Arthur

chamber in the event that something went awry -- requests the nation's highest court denied.

In her dissenting opinion Justice Sonia Sotomayor noted the risks of the lethal injection protocols, writing: "When Thomas Arthur enters the execution chamber tonight, he will leave his constitutional rights at the door."

'Houdini no more'

His case had angered both opponents and supporters of the death sentence: the former saw his endless run-ins with execution as a form of psychological torture, while those who supported the

sentence see Arthur and his legal team as constantly playing the system to cheat justice.

"He has used every trick in the books to manipulate the courts for over 34 years. He has used every trick possible to manipulate the public into believing he is innocent," she said. "Hopefully Houdini's bag of tricks is empty and he is finally going down. No Houdini no more."

Arthur was found guilty of conspiring with his then-lover Judy Wicker to murder her husband Troy so that she could

cash in on his life insurance. She was accused of paying Arthur \$10,000 for the hit.

Arthur had already served five years for the 1977 murder of his sister-in-law and was out of jail on work release at the time. He admitted to the previous killing, which he says was an accident and blames on being drunk. But he has always denied murdering Wicker.

Prior to the execution Troy Wicker's niece had told Alabama media that the execution would give surviving family members closure after decades of pain.