

There is an axiom that says: **"The greatest victory is winning the battle without even firing a single shot."**

For so many years we've been fighting our enemy by using what we are trained for and what we believed can end the insurgency that wreck havoc and hampers the development of our nation – **the use of military force**. But as time drags on, we have realized that this is not the best solution to our problem in defeating the enemy in order to attain the ever elusive peace that we are all dreaming for. Hence, the focus was shifted more on CMO activities with the participation of the whole nation as stakeholders in attaining peace and development.

It is here in 2nd Cavalry Squadron (then 4th Light Armor Battalion) that on CY 2012; "Project Shoebox" was conceptualized, born and nurtured, wherein its main purpose is to help our indigenous and needy countrymen in far-flung areas especially the children in their pursuit for education. This became highly successful, not because of the media mileage but its gains since its inception. More and more stakeholders come to our door, pledge their supports and actively participated in the unit's endeavours. But so much for this as many had been written about "Project Shoebox" history, concept and gains.

What I want to tackle this time is its potential as a weapon in winning the enemy on our side using their own "Concept of Victory?". According to what had been taught to me by former rebels whom I had talked to, since theirs is a protracted war, their view on this concept is quite different from the military view wherein victory is measured by success in the quantity skirmishes won and neutralized enemy. As an example is their ideological teach-in coupled with agitation / propaganda activities. Here, they did not yet count it as a victory after accomplishing their task but rather victory is when people started to believe and support them no matter how long the time takes to effect to achieve what they desire for. Likewise, for those whom they had not yet won on their side, they had already cast the doubt in their minds as to be wary or not to believe on what the AFP or the government is saying and doing. Hence by this way, they are also eliminating these people to support us that is why people are aloof on believing the sincerity of the AFP in attaining peace and that we are their friends and protector. And that is also victory on their part.

And where did "Project Shoebox" come as a weapon in defeating the enemy on their own concept? Please indulge with me a little longer as I explain my belief. First, we all believe that being uneducated or under-educated is one reason not to succeed in life and for them to be easily deceived by our enemy. Likewise, lack of education is one major reason for poverty which our enemy exploit to the fullest. But through "Project Shoebox", we are giving these children the means and morale support to continue their education by supporting them by providing basic school supplies needs. Thus, we become instruments in ensuring the children's pursuit for a better future through proper education. **And the beauty of this is that these beneficiary children and their families are the best medium for disseminating information about our sincerity in helping them achieve their dreams. The teachers also have their own means of communicating to other teachers nationwide who will then relay the events to other people in their places. Even our enemy will find it hard to discredit the children for we all know that children always want to talk about their beautiful experiences to whoever will listen to their stories. What more so is that they only tell the truth on what they have experienced. Likewise, this beautiful experience will forever be implanted in the minds of these children and when the time comes, they will doubt whatever teach-ins and agitation / propaganda the enemy will do and tell them in the future.**

Through this simple and humble project, we are now alienating the enemy from their mass base and denying them of their future recruits, supporters and sympathizers. **YES...** I know that it's still a long way to see the results and its lasting effect to claim victory; but at least . . . the seed had already been planted and all we need is to nurture and sustain whatever gains we have to be able to achieve our nation and our people's dream . . . **PEACE.**

This is a different battlefield where we will defeat the enemy and win our people on our side to work hand- in- hand with government, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations toward lasting peace without the use of military force . . . just pure love and genuine desire to help.



Photo taken during the distribution of school supplies headed by LTC FACUNDO O PALAFOX IV, Sqdrn Comdr, 2Cav Sqdrn together with members of Rescue 117 to 410 pupils of Kinatihan II Elementary School, Candelaria Quezon 22 August 2013.