

BIFF not involved in attack on farming village in North Cotabato town – mayor

Written by WILLIAMOR A. MAGBANUA (www.inquirer.net)

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KIDAPAWAN CITY, North Cotabato, Philippines — Mayor Joselito Piñol of Mlang town in North Cotabato has denied that members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) were behind the Dec. 27 attack on a farming village that left three people wounded.

Piñol said the hostilities in Barangay Tibao in Mlang resulted from a conflict over a 10-hectare land that has been claimed by Moro and non-Moro farmers.

“This is a feud between the two groups of farmers who both claimed ownership over a parcel of land in Barangay Tibao,” Piñol said as he denied reports that BIFF members harassed the farmers.

Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan, chief of the military’s 6th Infantry Division, said troops have been deployed to the area.

Piñol said the national government should immediately intervene to end the tension in the area.

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At least 50 families have left their homes for fear of getting caught in the crossfire.

Piñol also denied reports that villagers were arming themselves.

“There is no truth to that report. I will not allow civilians to buy firearms and fight the attackers,” Piñol said. Barangay Tibao chair Armando Tongcua said he was just “carried away” by his emotions when he said that residents were arming themselves.

“My emotion was high at that time. That’s why I claimed that my constituents were taking arms,” Tongcua said.