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PALAWAN

Hope in the middle of Sulu Sea: Tubbataha rangers win IUCN WCPA award

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Segundo Conales Jr., Noel Bundal, Jeffrey David, and Cresencio Caranay Jr. form the core team of Tubbataha Management Office rangers that leads rangers from the Philippine Navy, Philippine Coast Guard, and Cagayancillo, Palawan.

The award aims to “highlight and felicitate the extraordinary work that rangers do in protected and conserved areas worldwide.”

“Akala namin hindi kami mapapansin ng mundo sa gitna ng Sulu Sea,” Cresencio Caranay said in a recorded video played during the awarding ceremony. (We thought no one would recognize us, isolated in the middle of the Sulu Sea.)

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Their ranger station is located around 150 kilometers southeast of Puerto Princesa, Palawan. Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park covers 96,828 hectares. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site, a sanctuary to thousands of diverse marine species, including vulnerable to critically endangered species.

This isolation has created a set routine for the rangers, assigned to go to the station for two months at a time. In total, the rangers spend half the year marooned at the station, and half the year with their families.

“*Di maiiwasan ‘yung lungkot,*” Segundo Conales told Rappler in a phone interview when asked about being away from his family for a long time. “*Syempre trabaho. Nasanay na rin.*” (Sadness because of separation from family is part of the job. But work is better than

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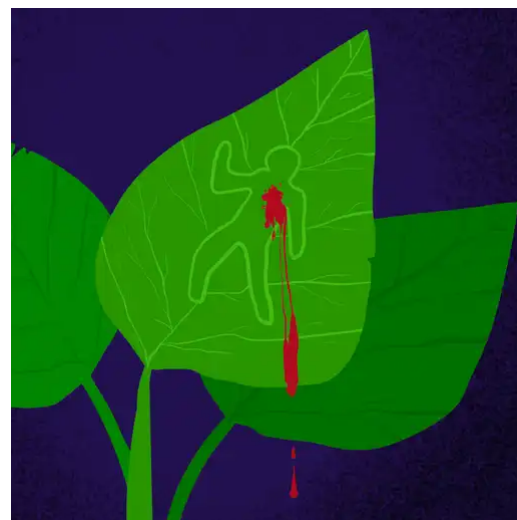
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