



PHILIPPINE
EMBASSY

Caucus Chronicle

Newsletter published by the Philippine Embassy for the members of the US-Philippines Congressional Friendship Caucus

ARROYO, ROMULO: NO LET UP ON ADVOCACY ON MYANMAR DEMOCRACY

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President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Foreign Minister Alberto G. Romulo, who were in New York late September for the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly, have intensified their calls for democratic reforms in Myanmar.

In her statement before the General Assembly on 28 September 2007, President Arroyo called on Myanmar to immediately implement democratic reforms and to free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

"This is the time for Myanmar to return to the path of democracy and to release Daw Aung



President Arroyo with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon shortly after her statement before the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly where she made an urgent call for democratic reforms in Myanmar.

San Suu Kyi – now – and to involve all the parties including the National League for Democracy in the democratization and the constitutional process," the President told the UN General Assembly, saying that the attention of the international community has been drawn, with great reason and justification, to the current situation in Myanmar.

President Arroyo also pointed out "The Philippines is the most democratic country in our region. We have no tolerance for human rights violations at home or abroad." (to p.6)

ROMULO RAMPS UP SUPPORT FOR VETERANS BILL

24 September 2007 Washington, D.C. Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo further firmed up and broadened support for vital legislations in the United States seen to provide benefits for Filipino World War II veterans.

Secretary Romulo met California Representative Bob Filner, Chair of the US House of Representatives Veterans Affairs Committee, Hawaii Senator

Daniel Akaka, Chair of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye, principal sponsor of the Senate bill and thanked the legislators for their "sustained support" describing them as "proven partners and true friends of the Philippines." Representative Filner welcomed the opportunity to meet Secretary Romulo and provided a "constructive (to p.6)



Secretary Romulo and Rep. Filner reiterate their common determination to see the passage of the bill that would benefit Filipino WWII veterans.

US BACKS MINDANAO DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The United States supports President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's initiative to bring lasting peace and development in Mindanao by improving the lives of the Mindanaonons through the provision of key infrastructure facilities and expanding economic opportunities, US Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney said on 19 September 2007.

Ambassador Kenney made the statement before the signing of the Mindanao Peace and Development (MPAD) Agreement at the Rizal Hall of Malacanang that afternoon. (to p. 5)



Ambassador Kristie Kenney inaugurates a US-funded livelihood project in Mindanao.

RP UPDATES

- RP stocks hit record high anew
- 25,000 coops uplift lives of 5.5M Filipinos
- Agriculture-based exports grow 17.3%
- Three big major mineral reserves found in RP
- Peso continues to gain
- UN Report: RP 4th largest remittance collector
- RP improves Press Freedom Index rating
- Arroyo honors top women achievers
- Amnesty program initiated for communist rebels.
- Peace process with Muslim secessionists on track

ARROYO AT APEC AND CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE



PRESIDENT ARROYO AT THE 2007 APEC LEADERS MEETING IN SYDNEY- At the APEC Summit, President Arroyo welcomed the declaration of the 21 leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries reaffirming their commitment to the United Nations (UN) framework on climate change. The Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development, or simply called the Sydney Declaration, states that the leaders of APEC's 21 economies agreed that economic growth, energy security and climate change are fundamental and inter-linked challenges for the APEC region. President Arroyo stands with some of the Leaders at the Summit, from left, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore, President George W. Bush of the US, and Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, who represented Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono



PRESIDENT ARROYO AT THE 2007 CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE FORUM IN NEW YORK CITY - President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo fields a question by former United States President Bill Clinton (extreme left) during the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Opening Plenary Wednesday morning (Sept. 26, New York time) at the Sheraton New York Hotel in New York City. The CGI was launched in 2005 as a non-partisan catalyst for action, bringing together a community of global leaders to devise and implement innovative solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges. The President, one of the panelists in the CGI Opening Plenary, is joined on stage by other panelists (from right) former US Vice President Al Gore, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, President Hamid Karzai of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, World Bank President Robert Zoellick, and Wal-Mart President and Chief Executive Officer H. Lee Scott.

ARROYO REITERATES COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL TRADING SYSTEM

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has reiterated the Philippine government's commitment to the global trading system, through the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, saying "it remains the best option to address poverty and improve standards of living around the world through an agreed set of international trade rules."

"The Doha Development Agenda was launched with an emphasis on integrating a developmental dimension into all elements of the negotiations," the President said in her statement during the 62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 28 September 2007.

The President pointed out that in order to make the Doha Round truly a Development Round, there must be greater coherence of policies among international development institutions such as the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) "so that trade is mainstreamed

in the development agenda and therefore capacity building can be focused on trade competitiveness."

As part of the capacity building measures, the President called on the UN and partners among developed nations to strengthen South-South cooperation wherein developing nations with specific strengths can share with other developing nations in need of their strength, funded by developed nations or multilaterals like the UNDP.

"The developed nations were the prime movers behind global trade when it suited them; now some countries are slowing down. That is not right nor good for our respective economies," the President said.

The President noted that there has been a ray of hope with the developed countries declaring that they are willing to maximize flexibilities, in exchange for greater market access.

She expressed the hope that the contending countries can continue consulting to find the right formula of subsidy cuts and market access that will break the Doha impasse.

"But let me be clear: even as the Philippines works tirelessly to move the talks forward, we are not going to stand by and do nothing. For us, it is full speed, preferably with Doha, but full speed nevertheless," she said.

The President explained that if the multilateral trading system is fragmented into trading blocs, it will result in a more complex set of trade rules. "That could be incompatible and detrimental to the interests of developing countries," she added.

In the meantime, the President said that while "we are hoping for a successful conclusion to the Doha Round, we have to maximize the economic opportunities provided under bilateral and regional free trade agreements."

"This will complement efforts under the multilateral trading system," she said.

The President also said that "at a time of uncertainty when the Doha Round is faltering," the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) took a bold step forward by drafting its charter.

Ambassador's Corner



Working to match perception with reality is one of the many challenges that diplomats face.

The Philippines gives great importance to its relations with the United States. These relations have been healthy and robust because of the deep level of understanding between the governments and peoples of both countries, fostered over many decades.

For us, ensuring that US perception matches Philippine reality is crucial.

The Philippine economy has been going strong. Growth, exports and investments are up. The Philippine peso and Philippine stocks continue to increase in value. Yet not enough credit is being given to these facts.

At a lunch hosted by the ASEAN-US Business Council for President Arroyo (see p. 5), the Council's President expressed befuddlement over this and promised to help correct any misimpressions on the Philippine economy.

On the human rights front, the Philippines is one of the most democratic countries in Asia.

It has been addressing the issue of politically-motivated killings, a problem with deep roots that go back many decades, in a forthright manner. The Philippines continues to aggressively pursue solutions and seek justice (see p.7). Yet questions have been raised on the commitment and resolve of the Philippines to tackle this critical issue.

In the information age, there is much information but there are also many gaps.

Perception and reality tend to drift apart in the maelstrom of pixels and bytes along the information highway.

The Philippine Embassy is determined to work closely with its partners, including the Philippine-US Congressional Friendship Caucus, to help bridge gaps between perception and reality.

Caucus Members in Focus

Rep. Todd Tiahr Republican, 4th District, Kansas

Rep. Tiahr began serving the 4th District of Kansas in Congress in 1995. He was appointed to the powerful House Appropriations Committee in 1997 and currently serves as the senior Republican on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies.

He is a champion of taxpayers and those who believe in the traditional American values of integrity, faith and family. Rep. Tiahr grew up on his family's farm where, at a young age, he learned the values of hard work and frugality.

In addition to serving as Ranking Member on the Interior Subcommittee, he is a member of the Defense Subcommittee.

Rep. Tiahr is the only Member currently serving in the U.S. House of Representatives to sit on both the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.



He founded and serves as chairman of the House Economic Competitiveness Caucus and is leading the effort to help keep and create jobs in Kansas and the U.S. Under his leadership in advancing the competitiveness agenda, the House of Representatives passed more than 50 pieces of legislation directly related to increasing the ability of U.S. workers to compete in a global economy.

As a Member of Congress, he has received numerous honors for his voting record on behalf of taxpayers, seniors and American families, including the Spirit of Enterprise Award from the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce, being named a Super Friend of Seniors, a Champion of Private Property Rights and a Taxpayer's Hero.

Rep. Tiahr attended the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and later transferred to Evangel College where he graduated and met his wife Vicki. He went on to earn his MBA from Southwest Missouri State. He and Vicki are blessed with three children.

Rep. Silvestre Reyes Democrat, 14th District, Texas

Rep. Reyes, now in his sixth term, became the first Hispanic to represent the 16th District of Texas in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996.

After serving his country in Vietnam, Reyes decided to devote his life to public service.

In 1969, he began his career with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the U.S. Border Patrol. After serving as an agent, immigration inspector, and instructor at the Border Patrol Academy, he was named Assistant Regional

Commissioner in Dallas, Texas for five years, where he had direct responsibility for administering a budget program exceeding \$100 million for a 13-state area.

Rep. Reyes was then promoted to Sector Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol first in McAllen and subsequently in El Paso from 1984 to 1995. He quickly became known as one of our government's strongest and most effective innovators in border management. In McAllen and

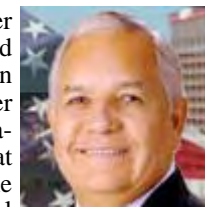
El Paso, Rep. Reyes initiated forward-thinking programs such as "Operation Hold the Line," the Border Patrol's Canine Program, and the Border Patrol's National Anti-Drug School Education Program.

Known as "Silver" to his friends, Reyes retired in December 1995 after 26 1/2 years with the Border Patrol to run for Congress.

In December 2006, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi selected Reyes to be Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a committee on which Reyes has served since 2001. The committee drafts the laws that

govern, authorize the funding for, and provide Congressional oversight of the 16 agencies that comprise the U.S. intelligence community, which includes components of the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, State and Energy.

Rep. Reyes recently led a Congressional delegation on a visit to the Philippines (Caucus Chronicle Vol, 2, Issue 4).



Asian Wall Street Journal highlights economic turnaround

The Wall Street Journal Asia said that the Philippines, the “perpetual sick man of Asia,” has been making an unexpected turnaround.

In its August 31 banner story, titled “Comeback Trail for Philippine Economy, Harsh Remedies Paying Off,” the Hong Kong-based newspaper reported that this year, the Philippine economy is “expected to post its fastest growth rate since the early 1990s.”

Dated Manila and written by James Hookway, the WSJA report said that “almost lost amid the international excitement about the growth of China, India and Vietnam – the Philippines has been rebounding.”

“This year, the nation's economy is expected to post its fastest growth rate since the early 1990s, despite the economic shadow cast by the global credit squeeze sparked by problems in the U.S. mortgage market.”

“The Philippine economy grew at a 7.5%

annual rate in the second quarter. The stock market has soared over the past two years.” “Foreign investors are coming back, attracted by the Philippines' young population -- the average age of its 89 million people is 22 -- and the widespread use of English, a legacy of its past as an American colony. The call-center business is thriving,” Hookway reported.

Ambassador Gaa welcomed this development and said that the economic and structural reforms implemented by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo showed investors her determination to move the economy forward. “The focus now is on investment,” Ambassador Gaa said. “The Philippines intends to invest in education, health, social services and in roads, ports, airports and agricultural infrastructure,” the Ambassador added.

Aside from the banner story, the August 31 issue of WSJA also featured two articles on the country's economic recovery.

This year, the nation's economy is expected to post its fastest growth rate since the early 1990s, despite the economic shadow cast by the global credit squeeze sparked by problems in the U.S. mortgage market.

Asian Wall
Street Journal
31 August 2007

Headway continues in MDG on environment

The Philippines is gaining headway in its bid to meet by 2015 the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of ensuring environmental sustainability nationwide.

Data available as of September 2007 shows the country's progress in making sustainable development principles part of its policies and programs on reversing loss of environmental resources.

The data showed proportion of the country's urban popu-

lation with access to improved sanitation already exceeded the MDG goal of 83.8 percent as this soared from 67.6 percent (1990) to 86.2 percent (2004).

Proportion of Philippine population with sustainable access also improved water source jumped from 73 percent (1990) to 80.2 percent (2004) which is about 6.3 percent below the 86.5 percent MDG target by 2015.

While that of forest-covered land nationwide rose to 23.9

percent (2003) from 20.5 percent (1990) while area protected to maintain biodiversity increased to 12.7 percent (2006) from 8.5 percent (1990) of the Philippines' total surface area.

Data also indicated that consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons dipped to 681 tons (2006) from 2,981 tons (1990) and proportion of households using solid fuels for cooking decreased to 42.1 percent (203) from 66.2 percent (1990).

Remittances up 15% first eight months

Remittances from Filipinos working abroad rose 15 percent to \$9.3 billion in the first eight months of the year despite a drop in deployment, according to the Central Bank of the Philippines.

The central bank attributed the growth in remittances to increased demand for labor in advanced economies and improved services of banks that encouraged more money transfers through formal channels.

The central bank said some remittance centers were now planning to convert themselves into banks to expand their services by next year. The central bank expects remittance coursed through banks to hit \$14 billion this year, with about \$700 million passing through informal channels.

Citing data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, the central bank said deployment dropped by 3.7 percent in the eight-month period to 726,620 from a year ago.

Deployment of land-based workers fell 1.6 percent to 560,356 while that of sea-based workers dropped 10.2 percent to 166,264.

Demand for Filipino labor will continue because of the aging population of developed economies. Remittance flows to the Philippines are likely to prove relatively robust because Filipinos tended to be employed in the healthcare and education sectors, rendering them less vulnerable to a possible US slowdown.

She took a lot of tough economic positions, and the economy has completely turned around – and she's on the way up now, and she is in very good shape, and I am happy to see her here.

Former President Clinton
2007 Clinton
Global Initiative
New York

US-ASEAN Business Council cites RP's economic growth

The president of the US-ASEAN Business Council on 27 September 2007 expressed befuddlement that public perception in the Philippines does not match reality of the country's economic growth. Matthew Daley pointed out: "The statistics tell the story: The Philippines is experiencing the highest average economic growth, the greatest job creation, the lowest inflation, and that is a remarkable accomplishment! And this, of



President Arroyo is the principal guest at the luncheon meeting organized by the US-ASEAN Business Council headed by its president Matthew Daley (third from right) at the Norse Suite of the Waldorf Astoria Towers in New York City Thursday (Sept.27). The luncheon meeting was hosted by AIG president and chief executive officer Martin Sullivan (partly hidden, second from left).

course, happened under your leadership," he added, addressing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Daley made the observation during the roundtable discussion of the US-ASEAN Busi-

ness Council with the President at the Waldorf Astoria Towers. The forum was hosted by Martin Sullivan, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of AIG.

Daley told the President that the US-ASEAN Business Council will send a business mission to the Philippine next month to further expand public "access between the Philippines and the American audience" on business and investment realities in the

Philippines.

"We will be bringing this mission to Manila in October and we look forward to seeing you and many of your colleagues," Daley told the President.

Daley said the business mission to the Philippine will strive to narrow the gap between public perception and the reality of the Philippines' economic turn-around.

"That is something that we... will work with you and (the Philippine) government in bringing the access between the Philippines... to the American audience, and that we will be bringing this mission to Manila," Daley said.

For his part, Sullivan told the President that the Council remains bullish on the Philippines.

"The President has done an excellent job in running the economy in the Philippines," Sullivan said.

The Philippine economy "has shown tremendous progress under her leadership, and she also recognizes quite clearly the long-standing bilateral relationships between the Philippines and the United States; and I know that she has continued to work very closely with the (US) administration to continue to expand this relationship and a longer dialogue with President Bush," he added.

In a statement, the Council commended the President's

leadership, "especially her guidance of the strong Philippines' economy built upon sound and fiscal and mone-

The statistics tell the story: The Philippines is experiencing the highest average economic growth, the greatest job creation, the lowest inflation, and that is a remarkable accomplishment!

Matthew Daley
President
ASEAN-US Business
Council

tary policies."

"The Philippines has the fastest yearly progress in economy; smallest increase in the prices; and the most number of new jobs created in the last 20 years," the statement said.

The Council members include Fortune 1000 companies noted for their support for the promotion of trade, investment, and technology cooperation, advancing US ASEAN relations through strong participation in public-private partnerships, and committed to development and corporate social responsibility.

US backs Mindanao development . . . from p.1

The President and the US envoy witnessed the signing of the MPAD accord with an initial funding of \$190-million in US grant to promote economic development and strengthen the foundation of peace in Mindanao.

"We support the President's plan to bring a lasting and just peace in Mindanao," Kenney said.

Signing the accord were United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Director John Lindborg and Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO) Chairman Virgilio Leyretana.

The agreement, which covers a five-year period from 2008-2012, seeks to bolster government-private sector efforts to improve the lives of the people in Mindanao.

"Today, we sign a pledge that would bring economic development to Mindanao," Kenney said.

Under the agreement, the activities to be overseen by MEDCO and USAID include development infrastructures, improving governance, expanding economic opportunities, and strengthening the foundations of peace through the holding of trainings and other livelihood assistance programs in the area.

Among those present during the MPAD Agreement were Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Director General Augusto Santos, and US Charge d'Affaires Paul Jones.

In the Philippines, President Arroyo has reached out to Muslim leaders and has called on Filipinos to reproach terrorists who kill, bomb and maim to enforce an ideology of evil.

President G.W. Bush
2007 APEC
Leaders' Meeting
Sydney

No let up on Myanmar . . . from p. 1

Earlier that day, President Arroyo joined the participants to the Third Meeting of the Women Leaders' Working Group in issuing a statement also calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

In the statement, the Women Leaders' Working Group reiterated "the call for the immediate release of fellow woman leader Aung San Suu Kyi and urges the Government of Burma/Myanmar, as a matter of urgency, to end violence against peaceful demonstrators and resume a path of dialogue and democracy with its people."

The group, which included US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other ministerial-level officials, held its meeting with the theme "Progress on Women's Empowerment" at New York's Waldorf Hotel's Empire Suite.

At the same meeting, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo proposed that the Women leaders also write a letter to the government of Myanmar to free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The previous day, on his part, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo gave his full backing to a strongly-worded ASEAN statement calling on Myanmar to desist from using violence against demonstrators and expressing revulsion over reports that that violence has led to a number of fatalities. "We minced no words in expressing our grave disappointment and serious concern

over the senseless violence in Myanmar," the Secretary told reporters after the Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting which resulted in the Statement by the ASEAN Chair on the current developments in Myanmar.

"Our nation's profound and deep commitment to democracy and human rights have placed us at the forefront of advocating for lasting and meaningful democratic reform in Myanmar at that is where we will stay as we further intensify our efforts towards this end," the Secretary said.

The Secretary said that the recent developments in Myanmar, particularly the resort to violence in dealing with democracy protestors, "only means that there will be no let up in all our efforts, as a country and as a member of ASEAN, to convince Myanmar to return and stay on the Roadmap to Democracy."

"Myanmar must resume sincere efforts at national reconciliation with all the concern parties and work towards a peaceful transition to democracy," the Secretary said, echoing the sentiments contained in the Statement of the ASEAN Chair.

"One key action that Myanmar must take now is to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and allow the political opposition, including the NLD, to participate in Myanmar's political life," Secretary Romulo said.

Romulo ramps up support . . . from p. 1

overview" of the status of the legislation in the U.S. Congress.

"Representative Filner has been a steadfast partner of the Philippines particularly on this issue and we thank him for his expressed commitment to do everything to see the bill through its passage," Secretary Romulo said. Rep. Filner sponsors US House Resolution 70, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, a stand-alone measure intended to cover benefits for Filipino veterans who fought with US forces during World War II.

Secretary Romulo said that during the meeting, Rep. Filner also suggested ways by which the Philippine Government could help broaden bipartisan support for the Veterans benefits bill, including further harnessing the Philippines Friendship Caucus.

"Representative Filner was optimistic that with extensive legislative and executive backing, we will finally see the passage of the bill," Secretary Romulo added.

"We are committed to work closely with our partners to ensure that this important legislation is passed," said Secretary Romulo.

Senators Daniel Akaka and Daniel Inouye, likewise reiterated their unconditional sup-

port for Senate Bill 1315, the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007, said Secretary Romulo.

"Both Senators Akaka and Inouye recognized the contributions of Filipinos in defense of democracy and freedom during WWII and said that it is important for the bill to be passed," said Secretary Romulo after separate meetings with the Senators.

"Filipinos really served well during the War," Senator Akaka pointed out during his meeting with Secretary Romulo.

Senator Inouye likewise underscored how long-delayed the passing of the legislation is and pledged to "do my utmost to see that it becomes law," said Secretary Romulo.

"To do less than that is dishonorable," underscored Senator Inouye during his meeting with Secretary Romulo.

Secretary Romulo also stressed during the meeting, "I think that much America owes your country."

Secretary Romulo also met with Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte who said that the Department "understands the difficulties" in passing legislation and will be as helpful as they can.

This is the time for Myanmar to return to the path of democracy and to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – now – and to involve all the parties including the National League for Democracy in the democratization and the constitutional process.

President Arroyo
62nd UN General Assembly
New York



Secretary Romulo with Senator Akaka, Chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs (above) and Senator Inouye, principal sponsor in the Senate of the bill that would grant benefits to Filipino WWII veterans., last 24 Sept.

Efforts continue to end political killings

⇒ Supreme Court adopt new rule to strengthen human rights protection

On 25 September 2007, The Philippine Supreme Court approved on 25 September 2007 the Rule on the Writ of Amparo, a remedy available to any person whose right to life, liberty, and security has been violated or is threatened with violation by an unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or of a private individual or entity. The Rule was drafted by the Committee on the Revision of the Rules of Court pursuant to the Court's constitutional power to promulgate Rules for the protection and enforcement of constitutional rights. The Writ of Amparo imposes a higher standard of diligence (extraordinary diligence) on public officers or employees than on private individuals or entities (ordinary diligence). There shall be no presumption of regularity on the part of the public official or employee.

⇒ PGMA orders military to take speedy action

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has directed the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to take speedy action on cases of extra-judicial killings and disappearances, and adopt effective measures to avoid military abuses. Signed by the President on Sept. 25, Administrative Order (AO) 197 directs the military to work closely with the Presidential Human Rights Committee (PHRC) subcommittee on killings and disappearances to expedite the resolution of cases of extra-judicial murders and kidnappings.

⇒ DOJ Intensifies Efforts

On 10 October 2007, the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued Department Order No. 841 directing all prosecutors to expedite and prioritize cases of human rights and extra-judicial killings, particularly in cases where the suspects or perpetrators are members of the military, police and other law enforcement agencies.

Prosecutors are to give utmost priority to these cases by conducting marathon preliminary investigation. All cases must be resolved within the prescribed period of sixty (60) days from date of filing with any prosecution office.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) was also instructed to create a crack team of lawyers and investigators that will conduct a comprehensive investigation of human rights and extra-judicial cases. This task force shall now include DNA analysts and forensic chemists, scene of the crime operatives, enforcers and expert interviewers.

In order not to frustrate the ends of justice, the Chief Public Attorney was also instructed to designate Public Attorney's Office (PAO) lawyers who will be specially trained to handle these cases to assist those who have been charged as well as provide legal assistance to the victims of these crimes.

⇒ Arroyo orders new police head to act with vigor

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered newly-installed Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Director General Avelino Razon to put a stop to the killings of political activists and journalists. The President issued the directive during the turnover on 2 October 2007 of command of the PNP from Director General Oscar Calderon to Razon.

The President said while Razon must continue Calderon's task to lead the fight against insurgency and criminality, he has an additional task of addressing extrajudicial killings.

"The first report I want to receive from him is an update on arrests, convictions and imprisonment of those responsible for the killings of political activists and journalists," the President said.

⇒ Razon submits report

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Avelino Razon Jr. submitted to President Arroyo on 16 October 2007 his report on the killings of militants and journalists, with Central Luzon (Region 3) having the most numbers of killings with 26 incidents.

In a two-page report, Razon said out of the 116 killings of militants, 56 cases or 48 percent were filed in court, two cases were considered closed due to the death of the suspects and 21 are considered cold due to the absence of progress.

Razon said that the PNP's Human Rights Affairs Office (HRAO) has formulated a comprehensive human rights development program for the police that will serve as the roadmap of the program on human rights.

Meanwhile, out of 27 work-related cases on media practitioners, 21 cases or 78 percent were filed in court, three cases or 11 percent were considered cold and three cases remain under investigation.

We are on the web
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The Philippine Embassy in Washington DC assists the Department of Foreign Affairs in its work of formulating, planning, organizing, and evaluating policies and actions on RP-US relations and relations with accredited organizations. The goals and objectives of the Embassy and its Consulates are:

- Promoting friendly relations between the United States and the Philippines;
- Protecting Philippine interests;
- Assisting Filipino nationals abroad, including protecting and promoting the rights and welfare of Filipino WWII veterans
- Promoting expanding Philippine exports;
- Promoting tourism and investments to the Philippines;
- Pursuing cooperation in science and technology;
- Promoting human rights, and
- Pursuing international peace, security and development.

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