

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE**  
**News and Information Bureau**

**INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE**  
**BY PINKY WEBB – THE SOURCE/CNN PHILS**  
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**WEBB:** Secretary Roque good to have you again, as usual, maraming salamat po sa inyong oras.

**SEC. ROQUE:** It's always a privilege, Pinky. Good morning to you and good morning, Philippines.

**WEBB:** During Senate President Tito Sotto's sponsorship speech yesterday, he recommended the filing of charges against eight officials of PhilHealth and that includes, Secretary Duque and former President Ricardo Morales. Secretary, does Malacañang agree with this recommendation of the Senate President?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Let's just say that we respect the recommendation of the Senate as a co-equal body. But the President himself has created a task force to determine capability of individuals and the President will have to await the formal findings of his own task force. But as I said, the investigation in aid of legislation is always welcome, it is a recognized power of the Senate and we respect their findings.

**WEBB:** Of course, I understand this DOJ task force, Secretary Roque, was given a month to wrap up its investigation. But ano po ba iyong, would you say this, probative value of this Senate recommendation to the President?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I think the task force itself will evaluate the findings of the Senate and I'm almost sure that the Senate has transmitted all the evidence it has gathered in the course of its investigation. Whether or not the task force will agree with the conclusion, I leave it to the task force.

**WEBB:** You have Secretary Duque again being part of this, the recommendation is to file criminal charges against him, the President has continued to trust Secretary Duque. Will this latest recommendation in anyway, form or manner, affect how the President actually perceives Secretary Duque?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, as I said, let's await the recommendations of the task force, if the task force has a similar recommendation as the senate, so be it. But for now, the President would defer to the finding of the task force. And you know, it's not just because he created a task force, it's because the individuals and the institutions behind the task force are those tasked with the Constitution and the law to put public officers accountable for their acts: You have the ombudsman, you have the civil service commission, and of course you have the

Department of Justice. So, you will expect that the evaluation of evidence and appreciation of evidence would be, or should I say, far more in-depth than the senate investigation. That is why we are awaiting for the findings of this task force.

**WEBB:** When do you expect to get the findings of the task force from the DOJ, Secretary?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I'm sorry, I didn't get the question?

**WEBB:** When is this going to be submitted?

**SEC. ROQUE:** They have until September 14. Yes, they have only until September 14 to finish their investigation and I think within the month of September the President would like to see their findings.

**WEBB:** All right. So next sir, of course the President, sinabi nga niya kay PhilHealth President Dante Gierran, sabi niya, you must send these guys to prison, lahat ng mga tiwaling opisyal ng PhilHealth. But, I need to clarify this, I know you talked about this yesterday during the oppress conference, what really happens to the regional VPs? Because from what I heard on what the President said, ang sabi niya, lahat ng regional VPS tanggalin ninyo whether performing at par or even parity with the good ones. Can you clarify this again, please? Dapat po ba o sisibakin po ba iyong mga regional vice presidents of PhilHealth?

**SEC. ROQUE:** What I understand from the President and his literal words were i-reshuffle, because familiarity breeds contempt 'no. So, the standing order is not to remove the regional vice presidents, it's to reshuffle them. And yesterday in my press briefing, I likened it to the similar practice adopted by the media, that media practitioners are not allowed to stay in their beats for a very long time, because as I said, you can't be too familiar with your subjects 'no. And in the same din, the President does not want the regional vice presidents, especially those who have been staying in their post for a very long time to stay there, continue staying there. So that is what the President said in his address to the nation, reshuffle the vice presidents.

Meanwhile, almost all of the members of the ExeCom of the PhilHealth have already been put on preventive suspension, except for two (2) - Limsiaco and Aragones.

**WEBB:** Okay and I think, a number of them also are ex-officio members. So, let's see what happens, ano ang gagawin ni President Gierran in the next two to three days, because the President have ordered a reshuffle also within the next two to three days.

I wanted to talk about shift topics to the revolutionary government. So, let's put this into context, Secretary. The President said, prior to yesterday or Monday night, wala akong pakialam, hindi ko sila kilala at hindi ko iyan trabaho. But he brought it up again during his address yesterday at ang sabi niya, dapat ito pag-usapan publicly. Why the openness of the President and would you say this is a change of heart, sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I think it's because of his dedication to the free market place of ideas 'no. If there are those who fear that there is a need for a revolutionary government, they should be heard in a public debate, in a public discussion of the issue, not sub rosa – sub rosa was the word he use which meant, not in confidence or not in private.

**WEBB:** That is true.

**SEC. ROQUE:** So, let this be added to the free market place of ideas, but as far his personal conviction is concerned, he was clear, he does not need the revolutionary government, because it's a constitutional government, he will finish his term and go home to Davao.

**WEBB:** But with what everything that is happening, sir the pandemic, is now really the right time to talk about this revolutionary government and number two, would you say even that this is constitutional?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, as I said 'no, all he said with his address to the nation is talk about it if you want, if the military wants to join the discussion, let them join the discussion. But he has made up his mind as far his personal conviction on it is concerned, he is not for it.

**WEBB:** Okay, but what about it being constitutional, what are your thoughts about that, being a lawyer yourself?

**SEC. ROQUE:** About the revolutionary government? I'm sorry, I didn't hear you, the volume now has a little bit of problem, we are stable now with the internet connection, but the volume is problematic now. Can you repeat the question again?

**WEBB:** Secretary kayo po ay abogado. Sa inyo pong pananaw, ito po bang revolutionary government, is this constitutional or not?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Of course, it's not, it's not constitutional. As precisely it's called revolutionary, because it does not fall within the framework of the Constitution and as far as I am concerned, the President was elected to a fixed term office, he will finish that fixed term of office, and although people can talk about it, because they may have criticisms against the system, I joined the President in our belief that the Constitution should be upheld, because all public officers took an oath to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the land.

**WEBB:** Secretary, I wish I could have maybe just three more minutes with you, but we gonna have to shift on Facebook, because we are already overtime on television. I hope you can stay, but in the meantime, I'd like to thank you for joining us this morning. Thank you to Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

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**WEBB:** You're watching The Source on CNN Philippines; our guest today, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

Secretary, thank you for extending so I'm gonna jump right into this. As we were saying that this revolutionary government is unconstitutional, that's what I've heard last sir 'no. So if that is so, my question is: Why the openness of the President to actually discuss this publicly?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, why not? Because the theory behind the marketplace of idea is the true test is a power of a thought to be accepted in the free marketplace of idea 'no; and we're no strangers to revolutionary governments 'no. Cory Aquino's government was a revolutionary government and it was during her term of office that we came up with the '87 Constitution. So revolutionary government as the court has ruled 'no, in the case of Cory Aquino's government is unconstitutional but if the people ratify it then it becomes constitutional.

So for now, there's a probability that perhaps the people—

**WEBB:** Right, right...

**SEC. ROQUE:** —will it in the future, if some point in the future, ratify a revolutionary government. But for now, the President remains committed to the framework of the '87 Constitution.

**WEBB:** But this has a different face, Secretary Roque, this is a revolutionary government that wants to install the sitting president. From what I understand, the revolutionary government wants to actually unseat the sitting government and designate a new one. Iba ho ito eh.

**SEC. ROQUE:** In fairness, I don't know what they want. They claim to be supporters of the President so why would they want to unseat a constitutional president 'no. So I find it strange, the whole exercise to me is incomprehensible.

**WEBB:** Okay. Also I want to find out from you, what do you think of this bill filed by Senator Ping Lacson that would actually allow the President to designate possibly a Cabinet member in case ha, in case all three successors will not be able to succeed him if something happens? Is this a good idea?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well you know, I think it's based on a TV series 'no – designated survivor 'no. And of course while the TV series is based on fiction where everyone in government explodes away 'no because of a terrorist attack during the State of the Nation Address 'no, there is that scenario that should be addressed 'no. We have a clear line of succession all the way down to the House Speaker but what happens in fact if similar to what happened in the TV series, everyone perishes 'no.

So perhaps there is a—there is definitely wisdom in the bill filed by Senator Lacson but he would now have to file a counterpart measure in the House because the author in the House has withdrawn her authorship of the bill ‘no, Congresswoman—

**WEBB:** Withdrawn, yes. Precious, opo. Okay last topic, blacklisting of Chinese companies by the United States. Let me just bring this in, Secretary Locsin said that he would strongly recommend that the Philippines terminate our relationship with companies involved in reclamation in the South China Sea. But as you said yesterday and the President said the night before these contracts will push through. Would you say Secretary there’s some sort of a difference in what the DFA Secretary’s direction that we should take and what the President wants to take or chooses to take?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I speak for the President and the President has actually spoken on the matter. It was not televised but he spoke up and he said that we will pursue the national interest and the national interest dictates that we finish the flagship projects of the Build, Build, Build and therefore he will not follow the footsteps the Americans. He will respect the contracts that we have entered into with Chinese companies.

**WEBB:** But wouldn’t doing such a thing as what the United States is doing, wouldn’t that show some sort of resolve from the Philippine government that we do not—that the country does not condone what is happening or the militarization or the reclamation in the South China Sea?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well you know, there is already a decision there that the Philippines has sovereign rights where they built the artificial islands and that means that whoever built those artificial islands had no legal basis to do so ‘no; and we’re satisfied with the decision ‘no. For as long as that decision stands, we can proceed forward on matters that we think we can push on such as trade and investment and meanwhile set aside matters that we cannot resolve perhaps in our lifetime. But we are satisfied that the UN Tribunal of the Law of the Sea ruled that only the Philippines could have built those artificial islands because they form part of our exclusive economic zone.

**WEBB:** And on a last topic, sir. Was there any expectation? I know yesterday you said that you were supposed to be at liberty to name the new PNP Chief but I think at the last minute you were told not to do so during your press conference yesterday and then at about 6:30, General Cascolan was named. Mayroon ho bang expectation or marching orders si Pangulo to the new PNP Chief?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well to the PNP Chief of course, number one is to maintain... uphold integrity of the rule of law as far as the PNP is concerned. Number two, rid its rank of corruption because that’s the reason why the President doubled the salary of the armed forces and military. And number three what is closest to his heart, sustain the gains of the drug war.

**WEBB:** Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque, maraming salamat po sa inyong oras sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maraming salamat and I'm sorry that the volume was a bit problematic. I'll find a solution for the next time. Okay, thank you.

**WEBB:** Thank you, sir and thank you for joining us here on The Source. I'm Pinky Webb, you're watching CNN Philippines.

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