

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

**INTERVIEW WITH ACTING PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON AND CABINET SECRETARY KARLO**  
**ALEXEI NOGRALES BY KAREN DAVILA – HEADSTART/ANC**  
**FEBRUARY 2, 2022 [8:10 – 8:32 A.M.]**

**DAVILA:** All right. Joining us on Hotcopy today, we'll be talking about many issues, we have Acting Palace Spokesperson Karlo Nograles. Secretary Nograles, good morning to you.

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Magandang umaga sa'yo Karen at magandang umaga rin po sa lahat ng mga nanunood. Good morning.

**DAVILA:** All right. Umpisahan na po natin. Secretary, with the Executive Summary of the partial report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Pharmally, may we please get the statement from the Palace regarding this? Clearly the Senate committee has given very strong recommendations against certain personalities and even the Health Secretary.

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Well, una sa lahat hindi pa 'yan adopted ng committee 'no, partial pa lang 'yan and unofficial kumbaga at hindi pa 'yan in-adopt ng committee or kahit ng Senado so it's just... right now something that we cannot really comment on kasi hindi pa naman 'yan official and it's just a partial report 'no so mahirap magsalita about it kasi wala rin kaming official copy rin.

Pangalawa, siguro with that being said... ang gusto lang siguro naming sabihin is paulit-ulit na sinasabi naman ni Pangulong Duterte sa kaniyang Talk to the People program 'no, ang lagi niyang sinasabi is sa kaniya, file-an ninyo ng kaso ang kailangan ninyong file-an ng kaso, ang gusto ninyong file-an ng kaso – wala siyang pinuproteksiyunan dito 'no - at kung sino man ang dapat kasuhan eh kasuhan na ninyo.

Iyon lang, at one point sinabi lang din ni Pangulo na iyong paulit-ulit na na mga tanong at kumbaga pati iyong trabaho ng kaniyang mga kalihim ay naapektuhan na at may kinakaharap po tayong pandemya eh doon lang po umaksiyon si Pangulo na kailangan magtrabaho na iyong kaniyang mga kalihim.

At iyon naman po ay isang question of law na ngayon ay pending sa Supreme Court kaya hintayin na lang siguro namin iyong talagang report na adopted talaga ng committee. Kasi right now all we're hearing are things that are being reported in the media na wala namang kaming official copy niyan.

**DAVILA:** Okay. Just very quickly, let's not forget that at one point—sinabi po ng Pangulo ngayon wala siyang pinuproteksiyunan. Ngunit nagdaan din ang panahon na dinipensahan po niya si Michael Yang at maging po ang iba na involved sa Pharmally deal. At isa sa rekomendasyon ho doon ay i-deport ang dalawang personalidad kabilang po si Yang at ang isa pang Chinese-surnamed personality 'no – binanggit po ni Sherry Ann Torres. Nangangahulugan po ba na kung i-adopt po ito ng Senado, Malacañang will also heed the deportation recommendation of the Senate?

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Again 'no ang sinasabi ni Pangulo, kung sino ang dapat kasuhan, kung anong dapat gawin ay gawin. Ano 'yung dapat—sino man ang dapat kasuhan, kasuhan. Ang hindi niya lang gusto is that nagagamit nga iyong Senate hearing bilang plataporma para sa pulitika na nadadamay iyong trabaho ng kaniyang mga kalihim kaya pinagbigyan niya at one point.

Pero at one point noong napansin na niya na paulit-ulit na iyong mga tanong at ganoon lang din, wala namang—at minsan nga walang tinatanong pero pinapatawag, nasa-suffer na iyong public service. And that was at that point when feeling niya napagbigyan na niya ‘no as due respect to the Senate, at that point sinabi niya na, “*O trabaho na tayo,*” let’s focus now on the pandemic response ‘no.

But again paulit-ulit niyang sinasabi, “*Kasuhan ninyo kung gusto ninyong kasuhan. Durugin ninyo kung sino ang gusto ninyong durugin,*” pero huwag lang madamay ang ating pandemic response at ang trabaho ng gobyerno laban sa COVID.

**DAVILA:** All right. Moving now to another topic, let’s talk about the pandemic exit plan of the government. Step 1: Many senators are already open to the removal of the alert level system. Is it time already, Secretary, to remove the alert level system given that you have more than 90% of NCR already fully vaccinated at this point at marami ang naka-booster shots na rin?

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Hindi pa po panahon para tanggalin iyong alert level system kasi gaya ng sinabi mo, Karen ‘no, sa NCR yes – okay lang iyong mataas iyong ating vaccination but we still have to ramp up the vaccinations sa iba’t ibang mga regions, although we’re seeing very, very good numbers now in the different regions ‘no, number one.

Number two, even the health experts will tell you that we hope na itong Omicron would be—or the Delta, I’m sorry... the Delta would be the last variant of concern na deadly and hopefully the next mutations will go the way of Omicron – meaning to say kahit na more transmissible, less deadly siya for—or less fatal siya for the fully vaccinated ‘no. And hopefully, we have—hopefully that’s where it goes ‘no.

Again, we have to see, tingnan muna natin kung iyan ba iyong direksyong patutunguhan ng any further mutations or further variants of interest or variants of concern. That being said, hindi pa natin puwedeng tanggalin iyong alert level system. Pero iba ang usapan if you say puwede na bang mag-Alert Level 1 ang ilang lugar.

**DAVILA:** Let’s talk about that, first of all, what is the barometer that the IATF is looking for for the alert level systems to be removed? Kasi po alam natin may ibang mga bansa na, sa Europa, the continent of Europe is already considering that COVID be seen as a regular virus, that it’s there to stay. So may mga ganoon. The UK, for example, is treating it, I mean, much more than the common cold pero quite similar to the flu. So nandoon na ang ibang bansa, nagbubukas na po sila at tanggap nila posible lang magka-COVID.

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Yeah, that’s Alert Level 1, that’s Alert Level 1. Because in Alert Level 1, Karen, pagdating ng Alert Level 1, lahat ng mga restrictions in terms of indoor, outdoor capacity, mawawala na lahat iyon.

So sa Alert Level 2, 50%, indoor fully vaccinated; 70% whether you’re vaccinated or not in certain establishments. Nakalagay doon number 1, 2, 3, 4 etc.

Pagdating po ng Alert Level 1, very simply, ang nakalagay lang po sa Alert Level 1 is intrazonal and interzonal movement allowed without regard to age and even comorbidities; and number 2, all establishments, persons or activities are allowed to operate, work or be undertaken at full onsite or venue seating capacity provided consistent with minimum public health standards, provided further that face to face classes for basic education shall be subject to prior approval of the Office of the President.

So meaning to say, lahat ng mga sinasabing limitations in terms of percentages, mawawala iyon; halos back to new normal na tayo but very clearly na nandiyan po iyong minimum public health standards. Plus, hindi tayo puwedeng mag-Alert Level 1 until, number 1, iyong ating total bed utilization is below 49%. Meaning to say, iyong COVID cases natin in the hospital beds is below 49%. Number two, iyong ating two-week growth rate is zero or bumababa, iyong growth rate niya is decreasing. Number three, iyong ADAR mo is below one. So that's when we're really at the minimal risk classification.

But the reason why hindi natin tatanggalin ang Alert Level 1 is para just in case, new variant of concern—

**DAVILA:** No, ang alert levels ... iyong tanong ko, Secretary—

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Sorry, hindi natin puwedeng tanggalin iyong alert levels – sorry – hindi natin tatanggalin ang alert levels para just in case a new variant of concern or interest comes or nasu-surge ulit, mababalik agad natin sa Alert Level 2.

So maybe what we're asking for is kailan tayo mag-a-Alert Level 1, which is what you're saying na parang back to normal, but it's new normal because dapat mataas iyong vaccination rate especially for the A2 and A3 'no.

Para mag-Level 1 pala, which is our senior citizens and those with comorbidities, have to be 70% fully vaccinated or up or higher. And then, many of the establishments are adopting already iyong requirements natin for Safety Seal which is... para magkaroon ka ng Safety Seal is those establishments are already following the requirements for ensuring minimum public health standards are complied with in their workplaces.

**DAVILA:** Okay. Coming from the argument of Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion, you removed the quarantines for foreign travelers, anyway, right? Fully vaccinated ones. When you travel across the Philippines like Boracay, for example, even the RT-PCR requirement was removed again. So when you think about it, isn't a time already to really go on Alert Level 1 in Metro Manila and just let businesses flourish? Because there is no more 'no vaxx, no ride' policy anyway; the requirements of private establishments, they do have requirements on vaccinated individuals to be inside, right, unvaccinated is take out.

But in other words, isn't a time to just let private establishments make their own rules and let business flourish and go on Alert Level 1?; because we are also vaccinating five- to eleven-year-old.

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Yes, so the protocols natin sa IATF, we do not de-escalate until every 15 days 'no, after every 15-day period. So titingnan natin by February 16 kung puwede na bang mag-Alert Level 1 ang NCR. Remember, we were looking at this possibility before, noong December, when the cases were really low, two-week growth rate sa NCR was really low, the ADAR was really low and our hospital utilization rate was very low and then Omicron happened 'no.

But again, tingnan natin by February 13, presumably, or February 12 or 13, we'll be taking a look again at the numbers of NCR kung puwede na ba siyang mag-Alert Level 1.

**DAVILA:** Okay. And very quickly: Joey Concepcion is also advocating that we prioritize on attending or going back to face-to-face classes, and it make sense. He says, vaccinated kids belonging to 70% vaccinated households or no unvaccinated senior citizens in the house and living in the areas with 80% of

the population should already attend face to face classes, right? I mean, most public school teachers are vaccinated, clearly, they are frontliners; and you are starting with the 5 to 11.

**CABSEC. KARLO NOGRALES:** Yes. If you would remember, one of the Talk to the People ni Pangulo, si Secretary Briones presented to President Duterte the proposal to expand iyong face to face classes in other parts especially kapag nag-Alert Level 2 na.

So now, there are several provinces, including NCR, that already in Alert Level 2, then we hope to be able to see a more, you know, an expansion of the number of schools, public schools that already can do the face-to-face classes upon the assessment ng Department of Education pati ng Department of Health.

That being said, iyong mga private schools na gusto na rin magsimula ng face to face classes especially in the Alert Level 2 areas can now begin making their representations with the Department of Education para mabigyan din sila ng pahintulot ng DepEd na mag-face-to face classes na rin sila.

**DAVILA:** Okay. At palagay ninyo po, Secretary, kailan po ito sisimulan?

**CABSEC. KARLO NOGRALES:** Well, now it's Alert Level 2 in NCR, Batanes, Bulacan, Biliran, Southern Leyte, Cavite, Rizal and Basilan. So iyon, sa Alert Level 2, puwede na pong ... upon the DepEd assessment and the DOH assessment, they may now start expanding, again, face to face classes in the public schools and then those in the private schools can already begin talking to DepEd.

**DAVILA:** Another question is pinag-uusapan na po ba sa IATF ang pandemic exit plan?

**CABSEC. KARLO NOGRALES:** Well, we've always been talking about that because mayroon kaming... may sub-TWG kami on the recovery. So may task group kami diyan and they are the ones that are building up and putting the details to this resiliency plan that we have. And that's the reason why slowly we've ... unti-unti 'no nakikita natin iyong mga resolutions ng IATF that are beginning to open up industries kasama na diyan sa tourism, 'di ba. Kasama na rin diyan iyong sa face-to-face classes. Kasama na rin diyan iyong pag-shift natin to the alert level system. And now, we also have Alert Level 1 that we're also hoping to be able to implement, and that really puts a premium now in, you know, empowering now the people to do the proper protocols, iyong minimum public health standards because they are already fully vaccinated and many are already boosted.

**DAVILA:** Oo. Tanong ko lang quickly: Are you seeing, Secretary, matutulad tayo tulad ng UK or other countries na tatanggapin na natin that COVID is like the flu, kumbaga we will start moving in that manner?

**CABSEC. KARLO NOGRALES:** We have to wait for what the health experts will tell us 'no. Right now, wala pa talagang consensus diyan eh. The health experts are still wary about—of course, they are optimistic at papunta na 'yan sa parang flu, na parang seasonal na because of what they saw with Omicron and because of how they saw the vaccines operate 'no, how the vaccines were able to really work. Because even with the surge in the number of cases, you did not see naman the same surge happening ... a parallel surge happening sa hospitalization.

So, that shows that the vaccines work. So, many are hopeful but cautious pa rin 'yung optimism ng lahat. So it's still a little bit of wait and see but there's a hope in seeing this as being more of like a seasonal flu.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Okay.

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** But again, people are...our health experts are very careful and they'd like to take one step at a time muna.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Alright, two more questions, Secretary, but not anymore related to COVID. Malacañang recently defended the granting of ABS-CBN's frequencies to certain personalities allied with Malacañang. But some sectors have said that the granting of these frequencies were quite arbitrary on the part of the government, of course given by the NTC but sanctioned by the President. Here are the financial statements of these companies: Number one, *Advanced Media Broadcasting System* with the Villars had a net loss of three million in 2020 but to be fair to them, there were earnings over one sector; Quiboloy's *Swara Sug*, 20 million; and *Aliw Broadcasting*, 11 million.

So, you have Swara Sug and Aliw with a deficit that has reached 218 million and over 50 million. So, to be fair to AMBS, that's the parent company of Planet Cable, [garbled] over 700 million in revenues in 2020.

Pero ang tanong ng marami: Why would these companies be given those frequencies when clearly lugi ang mga kumpanyang ito? They don't have the financial capacity. There was no transparent outright bidding for these frequencies. Bakit po binigay sa mga kumpanyang ito?

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** That's NTC decision. The statement coming from Malacañang and, as I know it, coming from the Department of Justice was that when NTC sought opinion from DOJ and sought opinion from Malacañang or more specifically, the Office of Executive Secretary, there was no mentioned of any personalities or names, there were just simply questions of law without naming any names.

So, when a decision was rendered by the DOJ, and coming from the OES, it was based on a question of law without naming any names. So, sinagot lang ng DOJ at sinagot lang po ng OES, but ultimately it was NTC's decision.

**KAREN DAVILA:** But, would that be justifiable? I mean given that you have Pastor Apollo Quiboloy, who's clearly and openly an ally of the President, and he gets the DZMM frequency, and his own company, Swara Sug, has lost 20 million pesos in 2022; and you have Aliw Broadcasting losing 11 million.

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Well, again, it's up to NTC to answer those questions. They have their own rules and procedures and I am not privy to the details doon sa loob ng NTC.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Another question: You are also a high-ranking official of PDP-Laban, and until today the ruling party doesn't have its own presidential candidate. Ano ang plano ng PDP-Laban, Secretary, sa totoo lang? You've already adopted Mayor Sara, but why won't PDP-Laban adopt Bongbong Marcos? What is the problem?

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Ah, dumadaan pa ng proseso ng PDP-Laban, we're still trying to seek consensus sa loob ng PDP-Laban.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Okay. Pero ano po ang—sino ba ang mga posibleng kandidato po na iendorso ng PDP-Laban? Posible po bang si Bongbong Marcos o si Isko Moreno? Kumbaga may mga kandidato po bang pinagpipilian ang mga miyembro?

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Well, 'yung ano kasi, 'yung bawat kandidato na tumatakbo bilang Pangulo ay may kaniya-kaniyang partido 'di ba? So it's really a discussion not only with the personality himself but also with the party; party-to-party discussions din po 'yan.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Oo. Because there are Isko - Sara posters that are also out, and some have wondered, are those coming from PDP-Laban?

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Ay, hindi po, hindi po.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Hindi po.

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Hindi po.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Okay, hindi po. So, kailan ang anunsyo, Secretary, ng sino ang kandidato ng PDP-Laban?

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Well, abangan na lang natin 'no because siyempre pinag-uusapan pa namin. Hindi pa, again, it's still consensus building, we're still trying to get really a consensus from the party. Dumadaan pa kasi ng proseso 'yan, not just from the officials of PDP-Laban but obviously—not just from the executive committee but also with the other officials, especially on the ground sa mga regions.

**KAREN DAVILA:** Alright, on that note, maraming salamat po, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, for your time this morning, sir. You take care and you stay safe!

**CABSEC NOGRALES:** Thank you. ingat din, Karen. Ingat po lahat. God bless everyone.

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