

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

**PRESS BRIEFING OF MISS DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ,
DILG SEC. BENJAMIN ABALOS JR. AND PNP CHIEF RODOLFO AZURIN
FEBRUARY 1, 2023 (11:29 A.M. –11:51 A.M.)**

MISS PAEZ: Good morning, Malacañang Press Corps. Again, welcome to our second press briefing today where we are joined by the Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Benhur Abalos, Jr. and, of course, PNP Chief Rodolfo Azurin, Jr. We also have here some members of the PNP Press Corps. Welcome.

Secretary Abalos will share with us updates on the committee that will review the courtesy resignation of high-ranking officials in the Philippine National Police in relation to the renewed drive to cleanse the organization. Let's welcome, Secretary Abalos.

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Maraming salamat, Daphne. Of course kay General Azurin, sa ating mga kababayan, magandang tanghali po sa inyong lahat.

Halos isang buwan na noong tayo po ay nag-anunsyo na tayo ay umaapela na mag-resign ang mga heneral at mga koronel. At kamukha po ng ating napangako, tayo ay nagbigay ng halos isang buwan; and last day of filing of the resignation was yesterday.

Unang-una, gusto kong magpasalamat sa lahat ng mga heneral, sa lahat ng mga koronel na nag-resign po; alam ninyo, itong problemang ito ay talagang hinarap nila bilang isang institusyon. I would like to thank the Philippine National Police as a whole, bakit? Lumalabas po sa ating data that out of 955 generals and full colonels, 12 did not comply. Pero hindi po 12, kung tutuusin ninyo, isa na lang ang hindi nag-comply. Why? Of the 12, five have already retired, so that's leaves us with seven; of the seven, six are retiree. If we are going to look at the figures, technically, only one has not yet submitted the resignation out 955.

Muli, nagpapasalamat po kami sa ating mga heneral at koronel at sa buong Philippine National Police. Ngayon, kamukha po ng ating nasabi, magkakaroon tayo ng isang five-man advisory group. Gusto ko lang po i-reiterate, I would like to reiterate that this is just an advisory group. They have got no salary, nothing at all, no allowance. Nothing. They are doing this voluntarily; they are just advising.

And who are there five-man advisory group? Mamaya po babanggitin ko isa-isa, although ang isa po sa kanila ay ayaw ipabanggit iyong kaniyang pangalan, kaya pag-uusapan pa po namin ito on how to go about this problem kasi ang importante dapat ay maging transparent tayo. So, I will just be announcing four names.

So after this advisory group, ano ang mangyayari? They will be going to the records one by one. lisa-isahin po itong mga pangalan at pagkatapos kung may makuhang tatanggapin ang resignation, ito ngayon ay ibibigay sa National Police Commission o sa NAPOLCOM; from then on, ang NAPOLCOM naman ang isa-isang iri-review ulit ang mga pangalang tinanggap ang resignation.

Ngayon, let's go now to these five names. Actually four names, because one person, iyong isa ay ayaw po niyang ipasabi iyong kaniyang pangalan. They are known for their unquestionable integrity, credibility and untainted reputation.

As you very well know, the first is Mayor Benjamin Magalong, who is the incumbent mayor of Baguio City. He graduated from the Philippine Military Academy and served in the then Philippine Constabulary and the Philippine National Police for more than 38 years. He is a bemedaled police officer who retired as Police Deputy Director General.

Ang pangalawa, he is the person who will steer this committee and we owe it that he should be the one, of course. Ang sinasabi ko po ay walang iba kung hindi ang ating Chief PNP, Police General Rodolfo Azurin, Jr., is a current chief of the Philippine National Police; a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy and was the former commander of the northern police area.

The third is a civilian. Again, I would like to reiterate, this is purely voluntary and has nothing to do with government work; this is just an advisory group. He is the former secretary of the National Defense, Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Jr., a lawyer, politician and business executive. He studied law at the University of the Philippines, top the bar exams and obtained his master of law degree from Harvard University. He served as a congressman or representative of the First District of Tarlac for many years and later was appointed as secretary of the National Defense. After leaving government service, he joined private companies and held corporate positions.

Iyong pang-apat po ay is retired Major General, Isagani Neres. Currently, the undersecretary in the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Military Affairs. He is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy who was assigned to various posts in the Philippine National Police like the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response, the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force and the PNP Anti-kidnapping Group before he was appointed undersecretary.

So, ito po iyong maibibigay kong pangalan. Kamukha ng sinabi ko, iyong panlima ay ayaw po munang ipasabi ang kaniyang pangalan, kaya ito ay pag-uusapan pa po namin how to go about this. I am definite that this advisory group shall remain apolitical throughout the process of screening and in the end, [will] penalize only those guilty and involve in the illegal drugs trade.

Rest assured that the government is working continuously to gain renewed and better trust – of course, the Philippine Police – of the public. As our police remain committed to their mandate to serve and protect.

Lastly, maski paulit-ulit kong sasabihin, ako ay taos-pusong nagpapasalamat sa ating mga kapulisan. Talagang hinarap po nila ang hamon, they stood up to the challenge as an institution. Maraming salamat po.

MISS PAEZ: Thank you, Secretary Abalos. And now we are open to some questions. We are on a tight schedule, I believe. So, we will entertain just a few questions and I ask that you please keep your questions within this topic. Thank you. We have Maricel Halili, or Katrina Domingo of ABS-CBN.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Good morning, sirs. Sir, may we know the profile of the lone police official who did not submit his resignation letter? If you are not allowed to divulge his name, can we just know which province he came from, his rank and his reason for not submitting a courtesy resignation?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Ah, the one who did not file? Huwag na muna nating ilabas 'no. Pag-usapan na lang muna natin.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, kahit province or district lang?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Huwag na muna, huwag na muna.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, his reason for not submitting his courtesy resignation?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Chief Azurin could better be in a position to answer this question.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, please.

PNP CHIEF AZURIN: Ma'am, according to him, that's his personal prerogative po.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Follow-up question. Would he be—what is the PNP or the DILG's response to his refusal to submit that courtesy resignation?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: We fully respect his right. As I have told you before, we are not ordering or commanding anyone; it was just an appeal. I would like to reiterate, it's an appeal. No sanctions will be done – nothing at all. But siyempre aalamin namin bakit ayaw niya iyon. Aalamin talaga namin nang husto iyon. But other than those, as I have told people time and again and assure the police, no sanctions at all. Thank you.

MARICEL HALILI/TV 5: Hi, sir. Good morning po. Pero, sir, itong isang general o colonel na hindi nag-submit ng resignation, will he still be investigated despite his refusal?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, actually, Maricel, and I would like to reiterate this again, even without this call for resignation of the generals and colonels, there will always be continuous monitoring about drugs, continuous build-up of cases. Importante iyan, up to the lowest rank, tuluy-tuloy lang.

And after this, probably, it's time to even review the organization itself, the structure, even the recruitment itself – the Philippine National Police Academy. Tingnan anong kulang, anong kulang na support? Ano ang dapat nating maitulong pa nang husto? Just look at the gaps 'no. Kasi nga we are now into cleansing, so ibig sabihin nito at ang nililinis, dapat hindi na maulit. Anong kulang? So probably we'll have dialogues with retired police officers, with active police, ano ang kailangan ninyo? Ano ang dapat nating gawin pa? There could be gaps 'di ba. Nothing is perfect.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Sir, iyong sa 5-man team, iyong last na kukumpleto ng 5-man team, kung hindi siya puwedeng pangalanan, can you just give us a brief background? Galing ba siya sa pulis, sa military?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Huwag na muna, huwag na muna. Mahirap na. Ayaw kong—it's a very sensitive issue as far as the family is concerned. Huwag na muna.

MS. PAEZ: Thank you. Do you have a microphone there?

Q: Sir, kasama po si General Azurin sa 5-man committee na sasala doon sa mga nag-submit ng courtesy resignation. Eh nag-submit din siya, sir, ng courtesy resignation, so paano po iyong magiging screening sa kaniya, sir?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, actually 'no, ini-screen na siya at nag-usap kami ng Presidente tungkol dito. It is only but proper since, of course, obviously hindi tinanggap ang kaniyang

resignation. That he is needed there, the Chief PNP to also, you know, steer, steer the committee. He is in a position to give, probably, recent intelligence report, etc., etc., tungkol sa committee.

Q: Sir, ano po ang magiging kapalaran ng mga hindi nagsumite ng courtesy resignation?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Huwag po kayong mag-alala 'no, sa ating mga kababayan, kamukha ng sinasabi ko, kasi maraming nagsasabi noong una about the human rights, etc. Kamukha ng sinabi ko po, ako'y hindi nag-o-order ng tao; ako ay nag-aapela sa kanila. Sinabi ko ang problema noon, iyong mga nahuli nating pagkalaki-laking mga droga, ang nahuli ay mga pulis 'no – si Mayo, and then ang PDEA.

Kaya ako ay umaapela 'no na nakikita namin mayroong mga taong nasa likod nito na humahawak ng kritikal na posisyon. And so, sa pag-aapelang ito, ako'y masaya dahil lahat, technically, lahat dahil isa lang eh. So they stood up to the challenge. At iyong isang iyon, wala ho tayong ibibigay na sanction – karapatan niya iyon. We respect that right.

Q: Pero, sir, nabanggit ninyo po before na magpapatuloy pa rin iyong monitoring at saka investigation.

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Yes, yes, yes, even without that resignation. Ang punto ko rito, maski hindi magri-resign, maski sino, lahat iyan. Dapat lang talaga maging maagap tayo ngayon. Kaya ako'y nananawagan sa mga taumbayan, sa mga kababayan natin, kung may alam kayo na mga ganitong mga ano, magsabi lamang kayo at papalakasin natin ang investigative process dito, dapat talaga matutukan ang bawat isa.

Remember, ang ating protector pagdating sa mga problema, sa [garbled] ay ang ating kapulisyahan. Sabi nga ng Constitution, there should be a police force only national in character and only one police force civilian in character. So klaro po iyan. Iyan ang magpuprotekta sa atin. Kaya importante they've got the highest degree of morality. Napakaimportante niyan dahil mahirap naman, kamukha iyong mga pulis na mga bata, lumalaban ka, hindi mo alam iyong kalaban mo o iyong nasa taas mo pa ang kalaban mo. Mahirap na iyon. Kawawa din iyong pulis na iyon at kawawa iyong taong pinagsisilbihan.

Q: Sir, nabanggit po ninyo, sir, iyon nga, kawawa iyong mga possible na apektado nitong pagkakasangkot ng ilang mga opisyal natin sa iligal na droga. Sir, if ever po na napag-alaman na natin kung sino talaga iyong mga may kaugnay sa iligal na droga, isasapubliko ninyo po ba ito, sir?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, ganito po iyan 'no, of course, kung malakas ang kaso, demandado iyan. Kamukha ng sinabi ko, no letup in the case build up. Demandado at papangalanan natin iyan. Salamat.

MS. PAEZ: Thank you. Any further questions from the floor? Job Manahan of ABS-CBN News Online.

JOB MANAHAN/ABS-CBN NEWS ONLINE: Hello po. This question po is for Secretary Abalos and for PNP Chief Azurin. Ano po ang update sa BIDA program natin? And ngayon pong, iyon nga po, niri-review natin iyong courtesy resignations sa mga police officials, ano po iyong parang mga programa natin ngayon?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, ganito po iyan 'no, sana maunawaan ng ating kababayan ang kapulisyahan at ang atin pong mga NBI, ang PDEA, sila po ay tiga-huli. Pero parang sanga ng puno iyan eh – habang huli ka nang huli, hindi imposibleng may tutubong bagong sanga. Dapat habang pinuputol mo ang sanga, pinuputol mo rin ang ugat. At ang punong ito, ito ang puno ng problema ng droga.

Iyon po ang ibig sabihin ng BIDA program. It's a whole-of-nation approach. Alam naman natin kung minsan ang problema sa droga, ang tina-target [ay] ang mga bata; ang pressure ng barkada; iyong iba walang trabaho; iyong iba may problema sa pamilya; low confidence level. So diyan papasok ang interagency – nandiyan ang Department of Health for the rehabilitation; nandiyan ang DTI sa mga negosyong puwedeng maitulong; nandiyan ang Department of Labor sa mga trabahong puwedeng maitulong; mga chamber of commerce on the ground. Of course, nandiyan ang LGUs; nandiyan ang BADAC, ang Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council; nandiyan ang ADAC, ang Anti-Drug Abuse Council dahil from the ground, alam nila kung sino ang gumagamit, bawat barangay. Alam nila kung sino ang nagtutulak. Puwedeng tawagan ito at, you know, magbagong buhay.

Ito ang masasabi ko, ayon sa data – you will be surprised – lahat nang nakakulong ngayon, 70% are drug-related cases. This is according to the Bureau of Jail Management, 70%. And this is another issue na nakakatakot: Iyong mga nakawala, 30% are repeat offenders or recidivists. Ibig sabihin, umuulit. So kung iyong 30% na iyon ay magkaroon ka ng honest to goodness drug program na hindi sila uulit, for example, maihanap mo ng trabaho tapos pa-check mo kung talagang gumagamit o hindi 'no. Tapos on the ground naman, I'm talking of interagency on the ground, the church could help. The school could help. PTA could help ... the family as an institution.

And I tell you this 'no, ito ay sinabi sa akin ni General Gilbert Cruz, mayroong isang experiment noong daga. Iyong mga daga, binigyan ng choice: Is it water or water-laced with methamphetamine. Alam mo kung saan pumila ang daga? Doon sa drugs. Lahat ng daga naging adik. But they tweaked the experiment: Nilagyan nila ng maraming activities – nga maze, mga wheels – so napagod iyong daga. And you know after that experiment saan pumunta ang daga? Sa tubig. Lahat iniwasan ang drugs, at iyon ang puwedeng maitulong ng LGU sa buong Pilipinas – Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao – maraming activities, into sports, culture, etc. But have our kids, have that confidence to say no to drugs. If the church is with you, the family, everyone, I tell you this, we can defeat this drug problema. That is what BIDA is all about.

JOB MANAHAN/ABS-CBN NEWS ONLINE: Sir, last na po. Ano po iyong timeframe ng committee? And ano iyong magiging process ng—

DILG SEC. ABALOS: About three months. Sana matapos kami ng three months. The sooner we finish this, the better.

MS. PAEZ: Okay. Thank you. We have time for only one more question, from Allan Francisco of PTV 4. Please pass the mic.

ALLAN FRANCISCO/PTV4: Hi, sirs. Good morning po. Sir, kanina ang pinag-uusapan natin, mga matataas na opisyal ng PNP in particular 'no. Paano, sir, kung nasa lower ranks iyong mga allegedly involved sa narco cops, paano po iyong possible investigation sa kanila?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, it's like this, tuluy-tuloy talaga ang case build up, ang monitoring. Ang tanong kasi rito, bakit inuna ang generals and colonels? At inuulit ko, hindi sila ganoon kadami

ha, kukonti lang ito. pero maski kaunti, they could do a lot of damage because they occupied very critical and very sensitive positions.

So it's just like, you know, you cut off the hydra, the head and then iyong tentacles will follow. So iyong sa ilalim, iyan, imbestigasyon na iyan. Diri-diretso na iyan hanggang dulo. If we're not going to do this, remember what we found out, close to seven billion of methamphetamine na bodega. lisang bodega pa lang iyon ha. After that, I could be narco-politics. It could seep through. Because if you would recall, after that incident, after four months, in Taguig, ang nahuli ay PDEA head kasama ang mga agents in a PDEA office. So that's why ginagawa natin lahat pong ito. Okay, thank you.

MS. PAEZ: Thank you. Before we close, I'd like to ask General Azurin if you have anything to add to this presser?

PNP CHIEF GEN. AZURIN: [Unclear]

MS. PAEZ: [Laughs] Is there a time or we're good?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Sige, isa na lang.

MICHELLE GUILLANG: Good afternoon po, Secretary Abalos. My question po, may we know the specific guidelines for the screening process? Also, how do we ensure that the screening process will be fair, objective and transparent by the 5-man committee?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, they will be the ones to have their own guidance 'no, regulations with reference to this. Probably, that's why the Chief is there, to guide them. Probably, pwede tayong mag-suggest nang kung papaano, but at the end of the day, there will be very independent. Mahirap maimpluwensiya eh. Let them decide for their own. We could just provide information, intelligence report, etc.

MICHELLE GUILLANG: So, sir—sorry, follow-up question lang po. So there will be no specific guidelines as to how the process [unclear]

DILG SEC. ABALOS: There is, there is. But ibibigay namin for them to approve it later on. It will also come from them. Okay? I'm sorry but I really have to go. I have to go to the PICC.

MS. PAEZ: Thank you so much, Secretary Abalos and of course, PNP Chief Rodolfo Azurin as well. Thank you for this morning and we wish you all the best.

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Thank you, Daphne. Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.

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