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**MEDIA INTERVIEW BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. FOLLOWING THE
126TH PHILIPPINE ARMY (PA) FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

[Held at the Philippine Army Headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City | 22 March 2023]

Q: Sir, may we know how many housing units are you planning to build? And also sir doon sa modernization, ano po'ng mga wishlist ninyo na mga asset na gusto ninyong i-acquire?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: First of all, doon sa housing, dahil very – well, siyempre inuna natin ang housing for – socialized housing for those who are in need, 'yung mga informal settlers, 'yung mga nasiraan ng bahay sa bagyo, et cetera. So inuna natin 'yun. But we found a property in Cavite that we find is suitable to begin a housing program, not only for the military but also for the PNP.

So ang ka-meeting ko kahapon ang Chief of Staff at saka ang Chief PNP kasama natin the Acting SND and their staff at pinag-usapan namin kung papaano ang magiging sistema dahil kailangan naming i-design 'yung sistema kasi naiba ang sitwasyon, lalo na 'yung military kaysa sa civilian population.

So slowly we are – the very beginning we decided sa pilot program to build 1,000 units, 500 for the military, 500 for the PNP. And we will see how that goes.

Ang naging – hindi naman problema 'yung pagpatayo kung hindi papaano ang magiging financing scheme kasi iba naman ang sitwasyon. For example, the military, how do we handle the transfer of – 'pag lilipat sila sa ibang lugar, what can they do? Nawawala na lang 'yung bahay nila. So what's the financing that we can provide?

So ngayon those details are being worked out. But we have to make sure because in – alam naman natin ang dami sa pulis natin ay homeless. Kung saan-saan na lang nakikitira and the truth be told, 'yung iba squatter talaga at wala na silang matirahan.

So we have to remedy that situation. At marami tayong pinapagawa sa kanila. The military is the same thing. We have to help them with their housing because again, I, in my view, it's – whatever it is that we – whatever efforts we put into this is an investment. It's not a financial investment. It's just an investment in the well-being of our uniformed personnel so that 'yung kanilang serbisyo hindi nila kailangan alalahanin kung saan sila uuwi at saan uuwi ang pamilya nila.

Malaking bagay 'yun. So that's what we discussed yesterday.

Q: Good morning, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good morning.

Q: Sir, may plano daw po ba kayong magtalaga ng head ng...?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ng? Talaga ng?

Q: Head po, head po ng oil spill operation para daw sa coordinated response.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: The head of the task force for the oil spill is the Coast Guard. Admiral Abu heads it. So there's no need. You see, there's no need to organize something for everything. The idea is to have the assets in place so that 'pag may mangyaring ganyan, may response na tayo. We do not have to organize a special group, a special committee, a special task force. They're ready already as it is.

So as it stands, the – nakahati ang duties. Of course, the Coast Guard is heading the effort because they have the assets, et cetera. And they also are the ones coordinating with the foreign aid that's coming, that has been coming. 'Yung mga ROV, 'yung mga boom, 'yung mga special equipment na dinala ng Japan, pinapadala ng US, pinadala – 'yung mga expert na pinadala sa atin. Sila nagko-coordinate niyan lahat.

Ngayon, on the ground, ang DENR, ina-assess nila kung ano 'yung damage, kung ano 'yung kailangan linisin, ano 'yung mga area na kailangan bantayan. That's what DENR's role is.

DSWD comes in now to – dahil 'yung mga mangingisda ay hindi makapangisda ngayon dahil hindi maganda 'yung isda dahil nakalubog sila sa langis. So what we are – we instituted a cash-for-work program. Naglilinis sila and we pay them for that.

That's a continuing effort. Of course, all of these are in coordination with the LGU, specifically in [Oriental Mindoro], si Gov. Bonz Dolor and he has been taking care of his constituency in terms of providing assistance to what they need.

So we are even providing food packs. We are providing not only cash-for-work, pero mayroon pa rin tayong mga pantulong para nga doon sa mga mangingisda na hindi makapangisda ngayon. So that's how generally the structure works and that is the assignment of tasks between the different agencies.

Q: Hi, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hello. Good morning.

Q: Sir, may binabanggit po si Congressman Teves na mayroon daw pong information na natanggap siya na 'yung order daw po para idiin siya ay galing sa Malacañang at hindi daw po niya alam kung nagagamit kayo at ang puno't dulo daw po nito ay e-sabong, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Ang puno't dulo nito ay e-sabong?

Q: Opo, sabi po niya.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hindi, ang puno't dulo nito ay pagkapaslang kay Governor Degamo. Nagka-problema na kami sa e-sabong noon. But that's not what this is about. Because noong nagkakaroon ng e-sabong doon, hindi naman natin ginawa itong reorganization, hindi natin nilipat 'yung mga pulis, hindi natin pinasok ang military dahil sa e-sabong. This is about the killing of Governor Degamo. Pure and simple.

Q: Ini-urge niyo ba siya na umuwi na dito, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I'm sorry?

Q: Ini-urge niyo po si Congressman Teves na umuwi na sa Pilipinas?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, I have no direct contact with him. Ang nakakausap niya is the Speaker dahil 'yun ang Speaker niya. So he's the leader of the House, nakakausap niya. And ganoon pa rin ang sinasabi niya may banta daw sa buhay niya. Kami naman sa intelligence, the best intelligence we have is that we are not – we don't know of any threat. Saan manggagaling 'yung threat?

But anyway, if to reassure him, we'll provide all kinds of security kung anong gusto mo. Mayaman ka naman. May private jet ka naman eh. Mag-landing ka kung saan mo gusto, papaligiran – sa Air Force base. Mag-landing siya sa Basa, papaligiran natin ng sundalo, walang makalapit na isang kilometro. So what – that will guarantee his security.

So we have made all of these offers pero siyempre hindi pa siya nagde-decide. But the advice, the only advice I can give to Cong. Arnie is that habang tumatagal ito, mas nagiging mahirap ang sitwasyon mo. So mas maaga kang makauwi, mas marami pang option ang mangyayari.

Pero pagka masyado ng late, wala na, mapipilitan na ang gobyerno. We will have to move without any discussions with him.

Q: Thank you, sir.

Q: Hi, sir. Good afternoon. Sir, doon sa Mandanas ruling. Do you see na 'yung EO 138 po that gives more responsibilities and autonomy sa LGU po is an alternative to charter change?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No. The charter change efforts are directed at the economic provisions on the Constitution, as far as I understand. And so that's what that is about. And the reason given by the House by the proponents in the House and those in the Senate is that they need to be changed because these conditions have changed. And for us to take full advantage of the new economy, we have to amend the Constitution.

So that's not the same thing as... What I think you are referring to is the way we are going to handle the devolution, for example, of different functions to the LGUs vis-à-vis the Mandanas-Garcia ruling. Pinag-aaralan pa namin 'yun. In fact, we had a very long meeting yesterday, the other day, because it is very important that we get it right.

Ang worry namin is 'yung mga 4th, 5th, 6th class na communities, na LGUs, 'pag kinalkula mo 'yung makukuha nila na extra IRA against the extra functions that we are saying we will devolve, lugi pa sila. They're in a poorer, financial condition than they were before the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, which is contrary to the spirit of the Mandanas-Garcia ruling.

The Mandanas-Garcia ruling in my view, as a former LGU executive, I had always – and I worked with Dodong Mandanas with this and Jesse Robredo when he was the DILG Secretary and I was the Local Government chair in the Senate and Gov. Dodong was the one who was agitating actually about this.

And the idea was that number one, we would give – what extra funds will be there will be given to those LGUs na nahihirapan bayaran ang kanilang mga ospital. Dahil if you ask any LGU, city, province na may ospital, nung dinevolve (devolve) ‘yan, biglang lumaki ang kailangang bayaran dahil ang salary grade ng local at saka ‘yung salary grade ng national iba kaya’t medyo nahirapan. So assistance ‘yun para doon.

Pangalawa, ‘yung 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th class na LGUs, bibigyan ng tulong precisely because alam natin kakaunti lang ang kanilang...

For example, I won’t name the municipality, but with the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, this small municipality, 4th class, will receive maybe 1.5, 1.7 million extra. ‘Pag dinagdag mo lahat nung functions na nabigay, lugin-lugi talaga sila.

So you cannot – we have to re-examine the Executive Order 138 of President Duterte. Titingnan natin kung – para maging patas naman. Hindi naman... The conclusion that we arrived at is that hindi puwedeng one size fits all. Iba-iba kasi ang bawat ano. Maraming common problems, pero ‘pag titingnan mo, sasabihin mo 3rd class municipality, malaking range ‘yun ‘yung 3rd class.

There’s also a bill, as a matter of fact, there’s also a House bill, a proposed bill in the House of Representatives to do the reclassification of classes ng ano. So marami tayong ginagawa para maging maayos naman ang pag-distribute nung extra funds ng Mandanas-Garcia – the product of the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, number one.

And that the functions that belong to the national government should belong, should stay with the national government. The functions that stay with the province, for example... For example, one of the ano was garbage. Ang garbage hindi kaya ng maliliit na municipality. Besides, their garbage is not enough. So it has to be the province that will organize it.

So ‘yun ang mga ina-identify namin. ‘Yan garbage has to be with the province. ‘Yung iba has to be still continue to be with... Whatever requires planning on a national scale, the function should remain, in my view, with the national government dahil hindi ka makapagplano kung iba-iba ‘yung ginagawa ng iba’t ibang constituency.

So it’s entirely different from the charter change.

Q: Good morning po, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good morning.

Q: Good morning po, Mr. President. Can you identify na po the four new EDCA sites na napagkasunduan?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: We’ll make a formal announcement. But yes they have been identified and we can already – before I announce it, we will formalize it with our partners in the United States so that sabay-sabay naman ang ano, hindi natin i-preempt ‘yung kanilang pinaplano.

So there are four extra sites scattered around the Philippines. There are some in the North, there are some around Palawan, there are some further South. So iba-iba talaga. It’s really to defend our eastern coast.

Pero mayroon ding element that is there because of our continental shelf which is on the eastern side of Luzon. So that's something also that we have to look out for.

Q: Last question po, Mr. President. Did you reach out po to the local governments who expressed opposition on the EDCA sites in their locality?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes, we explained to them why it was important that we have that and why it will actually be good for their province. And mukha namang naintindihan nila because most of the – those who had interposed some objections are really right now, naintindihan naman nila and they come around to support the idea of an EDCA site in their province.

Q: Thank you po.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you.

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