

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK

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KAPIHAN WITH THE MEDIA

IN WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.: Hi, good afternoon.

As I'm sure you all know we just came back from the White House for a meeting with President Trump.

And in that meeting, we covered very, very many subjects. The first part of our meeting at the White House was in the Oval Office and most of that was actually televised. So, I don't need to take you through that.

But before the press was allowed in, again, he was very inquisitive about who – the situation in our country – what are the threats that we have to worry about, and how are the other countries around ASEAN, Asia Pacific, reacting to what's going on in West Philippine Sea.

He asked us many questions about the situation, including the status of the different militaries around the area. So, we had a very, very – we covered a great deal of ground.

Now, I think it's – I can already tell everyone, as it's come out already, that we managed to bring down the 20 percent tariff rate for the Philippines to 19.

Now, one percent might seem like a very small concession. However, when you put it into – in real terms, it is a significant achievement.

There is more to be spoken about with the United States concerning that the tariff rates and our trade deals. So that, I think, is...

So, we have a 19 percent rate coming from – for imports coming from the Philippines into the United States.

And however, comparatively speaking, we are still doing more... They told us that it is because of the special relationship between the Philippines and the United States.

So, that was the – that's the gist. I'm sure you have questions about it, and I'll open the floor.

But before we get to that, I am here – I have with me the latest report and update on Crising.

We already have 487,964 families affected; 49,617 people are inside 500 evacuation centers; and there are 2,790 families who are staying outside of the evacuation centers who are obviously being serviced by the DSWD for their needs. Relief goods have been supplied.

We have, unfortunately, we have to be -- we have to report the casualties. There are six dead, so far; five injured; and we have eight missing people.

And the rains have not really stopped. The floods have not subsided in Metro Manila, especially in Metro Manila. Pero kahit sa ibang lugar mukhang ganoon din.

Mayroon pa ring flooding - 1,875 areas have reported flooding: Region I, II, III, CAR, NCR, CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA, and BARMM.

Debris incidents – fallen debris incidents, we have nine rain-induced landslides, collapsed structures, et cetera.

So, I can provide you with these statistics later on. One thousand four hundred – eighty six thousand – eight hundred and seventy six people are being served either inside or outside evacuation centers. I've been to the casualties.

The main cause for casualties were fallen trees, drowning, and flood currents. We still have [garbled]. The damage to infrastructure, the estimate thus far is at – ang laki talaga: 4,007,442,667.75 – may 75 centavos pa.

But that is the estimate, as of now. As you all know, ano lang 'yan – that is still the immediate. The incident is not yet over.

So, loss to agriculture is estimated now at PhP134,655,000. MIMAROPA alone is already 113 million in terms of losses.

So, we have been watching it from the start since we have left. We spent most of the morning going through this to try and make sure – mukha naman maganda ang response ng mga teams natin.

They have been able to provide the relief goods. They have been able to evacuate as many people as possible as needed to be evacuated.

And so, we are just hoping for it – for the floods to subside, the rain to lessen, and the floods to subside so that we can start again the cleanup process.

All right, that's my statement to begin with. I'll open the floor to questions.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. President. On tariffs, we also saw the post of President Trump on Truth Social. So, he also indicated a lower tariff of 19 percent as you said. Although, he also said that the Philippines is going open market with the United States and zero tariffs. Can you elaborate more on this?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: He also said that?

Q: The Philippines is going open market with the United States.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes. Well, there were certain markets that they were asked to be opened that are presently right now are not open.

The one – the major areas that he said were automobiles. Because we have a tariff on American automobiles, we will open that market and no longer charge tariffs on that.

So, there's several. But also the other side of that is an increased importation from the United States for soy products, wheat products and pharma, actually, medicines, para makamura naman 'yung mga – maging mas mura 'yung gamot natin.

So, we are coming to those arrangements. There's still a lot of detail that needs to be worked out on the different products and the different exports and imports.

But basically, that's now our template. That's what we are following, is at 19 percent tariff rate on Philippine goods that are imported into the United States.

Q: But Mr. President, isn't the Philippines getting the shorter end of the stick here by having still higher tariffs from 17 percent, it's still higher at 19 percent, whereas, we're giving them zero tariffs for certain sectors?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, that's how negotiations go.

We came here, when we arrived in Washington, tariff rates were 20. So, why it came up from 17 to 20 is an internal matter with the United States government.

So, we – but the number that we had to work on was 20. So, we tried very hard to see what we can do. And we managed the one percent decrease in tariff rates.

Q: Mr. President, a follow-up on the tariffs, first, before I ask about the ammunition hub. The US ranks as the Philippines' biggest import market, or rather export market, and yet it ranks only at sixth when it comes to imports, with China being our number one source of importation. How do you intend to address that deficit, considering that the deficit -- ?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Which deficit?

Q: The deficit between –

PRESIDENT MARCOS: With the US or with China?

Q: With the US, sir. Let me give you the figures first, but let me just find the page very, very quickly. Sorry for the delay, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, I mean, which deficits are you talking about? How do we plan to reduce the deficit?

Q: Sir, there is a big trade deficit between the US and the Philippines. As of 2024 data, we have a 4.9 billion –

PRESIDENT MARCOS: How much?

Q: 4.9 billion deficit.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Okay, okay, we have the same number.

Q: Yes, sir. It's up by 21.8 percent from 2023. How do you intend to address that deficit so that tariffs may hopefully be pulled down further from 19 percent?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Exactly as I said, we open – we will – I suppose it is a lie – it is a living thing. Maybe we can go back to this if the markets around the world begin – are able to adjust.

But the way, what really is, is to offset the trade balance deficit that we have, and that is by added – by increasing imports from the United States.

That's part of the new regime that we will be following in terms of trade with the United States.

Q: Sir, my original topic that I have listed. The US ammunitions hub that is planned in Subic. How is this related -- is this actually even related to your meeting with the CIA and with the Defense? What are the particulars that were already in place with regard to that planned ammunitions hub in Subic?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: I don't think anything was on that subject. We didn't do any work on that. That had been decided a long time ago

Not naman a year ago, but almost a year ago. We decided to -- we already had decided.

And like my – like I answered when we were in the Oval Office, kasama ito, tinutulungan tayo ng mga Amerikano sa SRDP natin, our Self-Reliant Defense Program.

That's really something that we were going to do anyway. Kahit wala tayong katulong, gagawin talaga natin 'yun. And they have offered to help. So, we will do that.

Q: Sir, do we have figures as to how many jobs it will actually create once that hub is already finalized? And how do you intend to face threats or warnings from China, considering that we expect them not to react positively with this development in Subic as well as the Luzon Corridor?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, before we get to your question on the jobs, there's been many – much comment and say that these infrastructures, military infrastructures, and the programs that we are initiating will make us a target for China.

Are we not already a target for China? So, I think that what we have to be thinking about is protecting the Philippines.

All right?

Q: Sir, Jom from Daily Tribune. Sir, may we know if there were any agreements or other defense and security areas that has been signed between you and President Trump in your earlier meeting with him? And if that's the case, we also wanted to clarify there's a line in US Defense Chief Pete Hegseth remarks from your meeting with him yesterday, he said that "we are also deploying a new cutting-edge missiles and unmanned system and revitalizing defense industrial bases." May we get – can you elaborate more on that, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Before I do that, let's go back to your jobs question. Maybe the Secretary of Defense can best answer that.

How many jobs will be created by the facilities that we are doing for the provision of ammunition for our military?

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE SECRETARY GILBERTO TEODORO JR.: I believe the original concept, although it is funded by the US Congress, it will be FDI. So, it's a foreign direct investment concept.

We can envision a private entity going about it on a commercial basis, so that they can hire people on a commercial basis.

Depending on the scale, initially about 200 to 300 people, highly technical people. But then, there are downstream industries. Of course, they will have to build access to port facilities. It will regenerate revenue on a commercial basis for Subic.

It will increase our trade flows. So, that is an example of US government-sponsored foreign direct investment to help our people and our self-reliance, too.

So, that will also cater to commonality of production of munitions, which is at a worldwide shortage at this time, of all calibers, whether direct fire or indirect fire.

And as we go on, we will review the business proposal, because it is on a business case basis, being foreign direct investment. And then after we finalize the details, we will have more to report.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: All right, and to your question now – stay here first because this is...

As a matter of fact, there were – during the meetings, there were no agreements that were up for discussion at the time, kasi sandali lang. Actually Secretary Gilbert, yes, Secretary Gilbert and the other Cabinet secretaries came ahead. They – some of them were here. They're 17, more or less around there.

So, maraming na silang napag-usapan. But you'll have to understand whatever defense arrangements were arrived at, not so we cannot talk about because there are operational details. But maybe there is something that you can discuss.

SEC. TEODORO: Well, sir, the gist of the discussion was the enhancement of our ongoing collaborative activities, bilaterally and multilaterally.

Of course, we are nuancing The Balikatan as an interoperability exercise that in the case too, it also readies the Armed Forces of the Philippines to adapt to new skill sets, face new threats and challenges, and ultimately acquire this necessary infrastructure for introducing new systems, including the current systems.

And so this is a major part of the takeaways from this trip the enhanced cooperation, including assurance of support for our continuing modernization of the military, our armed forces through the Philippine sectors, Security Sector Assistance Roadmap and the Philippines Enhanced Resilience Act.

And we're very thankful for the continued advocacy of the Trump administration for it in connection with the US legislature under the leadership of President Marcos.

Q: Sir, different topic lang po. May we know if the topic of the immigration, particularly on the undocumented Filipinos, has been raised or not?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: It's not been raised. It was not – not in this forum. But we are, of course, well aware of the situation.

And thus far, I think, in our situation estimation, what the United States is doing now is not anything different than they've been doing before.

Ito 'yung mga may record o 'yung mga wanted, o 'yung mga convicted, lalong-lalo na kung sila ay illegal, TNT sila, iyon ang mga pinapauwi nila.

Sa ngayon, 'yung mga pinapauwi nila ganoon pa rin. Those that have been convicted of committing crimes that are also, in fact, illegal. So, that's the situation with the immigration so far.

Q: Sir, good afternoon. Sir, ES Bersamin mentioned that you were dismayed with the preparation of – for putting up tarpaulins days before your SONA. Can we have more details about that, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Yes, yes. Well, it was a surprise. I only found out early this morning when I got up. That's what they're doing.

And that's why I fully agree with what has been done. It is highly inappropriate. And I suppose may utos sila na magtayo – maglagay kayo ng ano kung saan. Hindi na nasabi. Eh baha na nga, bakit pa kayo maglagay diyan.

So, the order didn't go out, but it has now. We say just... Ipaubaya ninyo na muna 'yan. Ayusin ninyo na muna 'yung ating response Crising.

So, yeah, that is an unfortunate misjudgment on their part. But we've corrected it, and I trust it will not happen anymore.

Q: But, sir, may we know where are we, or where are you in terms of the preparation of SONA. It's already on Monday. So gaano po ba kahaba 'yung ine-expect natin? How different is this SONA from your previous SONAs?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, they're all a little different from each other. But they will be different because the situation – and you have to remember it's the State of the Nation Address. And the state of the nation today is different from what it was last year and the last year before that.

So, of course, necessarily it will be different. We will be talking about mainly the same things about the social projects of the government for people in need.

We will talk about the programs that we are going to – that we have initiated and will continue to promote and endorse as we – until the end of – certainly – at the very least, until the end of this term. Hopefully, it will continue after my term. So, that's what we expect from the SONA.

How far along are we? Well, when I knew that I was coming to the United States to meet with President Trump, I've cleared my schedule, and I said, we have to take – we're going to lose four days. So, we have to make it up.

So, I cleared my schedule. We've been working very hard on it. As soon as I get back, we'll be working on it again.

But I'm – we will be there – we will be back Wednesday evening. We'll start work on a Thursday. I'm sure we'll work on it over the weekend.

So, mahahabol namin 'yun. I think we'll be all right. Because what we have already written is substantial in terms of... The SONA is about 80 percent written. So, kaunti na lang 'yung ano fine-tuning.

Q: Sir, pahabol lang po on other issue. Related po sa typhoon. May we know kung bakit po na-approve 'yung request ni Secretary Jonvic Remulla na siya na 'yung mag-announce ng suspension of work and classes? Ano po 'yung wisdom doon sa DILG?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: So that the dissemination of information is better. That is very simple.

Because if there is... Ganoon 'yun kasi halimbawa ikaw 'yung -- it affects you, where do you? Who do you -- where do you go? Which website do you consult?

So, pagka ganito, basta't sinabi na, the SILG will make the announcement and that is what... Wala ng fake news. Iyon na 'yung katotohanan. Iyon na 'yung totoo.

So, it's just simple. It's just to make things clearer because sometimes nagkakaproblema because... Hindi naman malicious, misinformed lang, tapos pino-post. Sinusundan ngayon ng tao, mali naman pala. So, we're just trying to improve that system.

Q: Sir, on the DILG topic. Sir, Secretary Remulla has been drawing flak for how he actually tweets or posts his statement in the words of netizens, "it's too informal." Medyo pa-joke po kasi 'yung sabi niya. Have you advised him on this matter? What do you make out of these criticisms? And go ahead, sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Criticize people. Criticize me for the way I speak. But what -- that's the way I speak; that's the way he speaks.

As long as he gets the message across, that's what it's for. That's what all of these postings are for and get some information across. And as long as he achieves that, then -- he is... He manages to do what he sets out to do, I don't really...

I am not exactly a judge of -- how do you say? -- literary style. I don't know how you want to put it. So that's really... I have to consider that out of my purview.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. President. As you assess the administration this year, as we will hear on Monday in your address, and given your consistent performance review, are there changes, or what are the changes you want to make, and can we get an update on the performance review, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Wait for the SONA. Ikaw naman. You will steal my thunder, 'di ba? Mawawala 'yung ano ko.

Like I said, hindi pa naman tapos. But I think everything that the -- all that we need to impart to the people will be in the SONA, in the speech in the SONA.

Q: Yes, sir. Sandra po from GMA-7. Mr. President, there was mention of US assistance, especially the Armed Forces of the United States helping us with the relief operations. And may we get more information. How are we going to operationalize, for instance, the use of EDCA sites, and are they going to bring in relief goods or equipment perhaps to help us?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: The answer is simply yes. All of them. As a matter of fact, Admiral Paparo, the commander of the Indo-Pacific Command of the United States, left early upon our suggestion na makabalik na siya para maumpisahan na ang pagdala ng tulong para sa ating mga naging biktima dito sa Crising.

And I know that – I think he spoke to Secretary Gilbert this morning and last night, and sabi niya nag-umpisa na. So, maybe you can thresh that out?

SEC. TEODORO: The EDCA sites that are up and running maybe Fort Magsaysay, do contain relief goods already prepositioned.

Now, what we need as of this time, not yet, but we foresee, because of the merging of the two tropical depressions and the incoming monsoons, that we will need their assistance in terms of airlift and other capabilities.

And so, Admiral Paparo is coordinating with General Brawner, our J3, and the INDOPACOM- J3 Operations are already coordinating so that the needed capabilities are brought in.

But I repeat, that there are relief goods in place already that have been prepositioned by the US government.

Now, it is the mobility assistance that we do need. We do have sufficient Black Hawks in order to lift goods to vulnerable areas when conditions permit.

But if we need to do it on a higher scale, for example, like what happened in Naga City last year, which we need to plan for, we have to have the coordinated mechanisms for easy deployment of these capabilities.

Every deployment, mind you, is very costly on both our side and their side, more so on their side. Because these capabilities are coming out of the theater – into the theater, so they entail considerable costs.

Therefore, even on our utilization of our own air assets, this has to be coordinated so that we make maximum use of the asset and do not waste cargo space, and flying time, and ship time.

We will also have assistance because we need the assistance and the coordination first -- before assistance, coordination -- on mobility, because a road network sometimes cannot carry heavy loads.

So, we need to airlift them. We need the V-22 Ospreys. We need the Chinooks. If ever there comes a time which we anticipate because the rains will come, that we will need a coordinated response.

So, that needs advanced planning. Hence, Admiral Paparo's return to Hawaii and General Brawner's constant communication with him.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: If you remember when I visited the repacking plant, if you want to call it, at the DSWD, we were saying that ready already. When we first -- when I first came into office, the reserves in terms of relief food packs was half a million, 500,000.

That has now been increased to 3 million. And I bring it up only to further illustrate how EDCA is being used for HADR.

And 'yung iba doon, doon sa 3 million na food packs, doon nakaistasyon na 'yan sa EDCA areas, especially those in the most vulnerable areas for typhoons and for flooding.

And also, of course, ngayon we have to worry about Kanlaon, we have to worry about 'yung pagputok ng bulkan. So, those incidents as well, and any other incidents that may come up that we cannot predict.

Q: Good afternoon po, sir. Chzian Salazar from RMN. Going back po sa tariff, how would you justify po sa Filipino people, especially to our small exporters and manufacturers, that a 19 percent tariff is acceptable or fair?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: It is not our decision. So, I don't have... I will justify any decision I make, but it's not my decision.

That number doesn't come from the Philippine government.

So, you will have to ask whoever imposed the 19 percent tariff how they justify it. I couldn't answer it.

Q: Last po, sir. Your reaction po because Senator Imee Marcos suggested pushing for a 10 percent tariff in dealing with the US trade policy. Was this issue raised during your bilateral meeting po?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Which the?

Q: Ten percent po 'yung sina-suggest na --

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Our bilateral meeting with whom?

Q: With President Trump.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: No, it didn't come up.

Again, if anyone can bring us down to 10 percent, it will certainly be welcomed. But no, it didn't come up at all.

All right? With that, o sige, maraming salamat.

Thank you very much. Good afternoon.

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