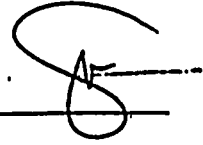


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC }  
OF THE PHILIPPINES }  
*Second Regular Session* }

Senate  
Office of the Secretary

SENATE  
P.S. Res. No. 725

'21 MAY 18 P 6 :01



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Introduced by SENATOR PANFILO M. LACSON

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**RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE KILLING OF CALBAYOG CITY MAYOR RONALDO AQUINO AND HIS TWO SECURITY ESCORTS IN AN ALLEGED SHOOTOUT BETWEEN THE LATE MAYOR'S TEAM AND MEMBERS OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE WITH THE END IN VIEW OF IDENTIFYING THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND LIABILITIES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE ALLEGED GAPS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS AND THE VERACITY OF THE SO-CALLED 'DRUGS WATCH LIST' WHICH RESULTED IN THE UNABATED AND UNRESOLVED KILLINGS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INCLUDED THEREIN**

*Whereas, Article II, Section 4 of the 1987 Constitution affirms that "the prime duty of the Government is to serve and protect the people."*

*Whereas, Republic Act No. 6985 or the "Department of Interior and Local Government Act of 1990" was enacted, with the goal to promote peace and order, ensure public safety and further strengthen local government capability aimed towards the basic services to the citizenry through the establishment of a highly efficient and competent police force that is national in scope and civilian in character;*

*Whereas, Republic Act No. 6975 was further amended by Republic Act No. 8551 otherwise known as the "Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998", affirming the role of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the community, and with emphasis that it is a service oriented agency responsible for the maintenance of peace and order and public safety;*

*Whereas*, on 08 March 2021, Calbayog City Mayor Ronaldo Aquino, together with his security escorts were traveling to a family-owned resort to attend his son's birthday celebration. It was around 5:30 in the afternoon when armed men on board two vehicles fired at the mayor's vehicle as it was passing along Laboyao Bridge in Barangay Lonoy, Calbayog City;

*Whereas*, a shoot-out allegedly took place between the two groups which resulted in the death of Mayor Aquino and two of his security escorts. The occupants of the other two vehicles turned out to be policemen. Two of them were likewise killed and another one was wounded;

*Whereas*, the killings were first reported, according to eyewitness accounts, as an ambush. The initial statements released by the PNP said that "*some police personnel*" were involved in the shooting incident;

*Whereas*, the PNP, through its spokesperson Brigadier General Ildebrandi Usana, issued a statement last 09 March 2021, revealing that the occupants of the two other vehicles were policemen from the Integrity Monitoring Enforcement Group (IMEG), which goes after scalawags, and Provincial Drug Enforcement Unit (PDEU). Those killed were Police Captain Joselito Tabada, police chief of Gandara, Samar, and Staff Sergeant Romeo Cobococ Laoyon of the PDEU. The wounded policeman was identified as Staff Sergeant Neil Matarum Cebu;

*Whereas*, the PNP's initial investigation revealed that the mayor's security escorts aimed at the unmarked police vehicle and shot first. At that time, the police vehicles were traveling along the same direction while on their way to "red teaming" inspection, a strategy being implemented by the PNP to test the operational readiness of the police units in the area;

*Whereas*, the abovementioned report is inconsistent with the report of former Chief-of-Police of Calbayog Lieutenant Colonel Neil Montaña and Police Colonel Oliver Cinco, investigator of the Provincial Director of Samar Provincial Police Office (SPPO), which stated that the mayor was ambushed. However, the same report was later changed into a shoot-out;

*Whereas*, the mentioned units of the PNP, i.e. IMEG and PDEU, denied allegations that Mayor Aquino was the subject of their operations. They claimed that they were unaware of the passengers on board the vehicles that fired upon them;

*Whereas*, upon review of the closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs), the vehicles used at the crime scene appeared to have been observing the movement of the late Mayor for several weeks already;

*Whereas*, affidavits executed by key witnesses stated that the late Mayor's vehicle was shot first and that the police were already waiting for the vehicle at Laboyao Bridge before the incident. One of Mayor Aquino's companions who survived the incident even stated that the late mayor was reviewing some documents and using his mobile phone when they heard gunshots nearing the bridge, and that he only fired back using his M-16 rifle. In addition, the witnesses' accounts provided that the police wore bonnets and were armed with a M-203 grenade launcher. Videos also reveal that the police even went back to the mayor's vehicle to make sure that Mayor Aquino was dead;

*Whereas*, based on the autopsy report on the body of Mayor Aquino, he suffered twenty-one (21) gunshot wounds. Reportedly, more than 700 rounds of empty shells from different calibers, including open-link ammunition from a negev light machine gun, were recovered from the crime scene;

*Whereas*, Calbayog City Police Chief Lieutenant Colonel Neil Montaña and nine other non-commissioned officers of the city police station were relieved from their post on March 14 in light of the shooting incident that killed Aquino and his two security aides;

*Whereas*, the alleged killing was said to be related to the accusations of former PNP Provincial Director Samar P/Col. Nicholas D. Torre III in 2018 that Mayor Aquino was a "drug protector." P/Col. Torre made reference to a document supposedly issued by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), which the agency later claimed to be falsified;

*Whereas*, Mayor Aquino has been added to the list of local officials slain under the administration of President Rodrigo R. Duterte since 2016. According to reports, he is the 25th local chief executive killed in this administration;

*Whereas*, these unabated and unsolved killings of local government officials included in the so-called "PNP Drug List" bring to light the question of whether they are really involved in said nefarious activities or is this watchlist merely being used by some unscrupulous members of the PNP to justify their acts of eliminating these local government officials for reasons known only to them;

*Whereas*, there is a need to address these questions in light of the statement made by PDEA disowning the said list that included the name of Mayor Aquino and other political figures in the province of Samar;

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE***, to direct the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the killing of Calbayog City Mayor Ronaldo Aquino and his two security escorts in an alleged shootout between the late Mayor's team and members of the Philippine National Police with the end in view of identifying the responsibilities and liabilities brought about by the alleged gaps in law enforcement operations and the veracity of the so-called 'drugs watch list' which resulted in the unabated and unresolved killings of local government officials included therein.

*Adopted,*

  
Panfilo M. Lacson  
Senator