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SENATE

P. S. Res No. 421

Introduced by SEN. WIN GATCHALIAN

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE VULNERABILITIES OF THE ENTIRE AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM, GIVEN THE RECENT TECHNICAL GLITCH AFFECTING THE COMMUNICATIONS, NAVIGATION AND SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS FOR AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT (CNS-ATM), WITH THE END VIEW OF SAFEGUARDING OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY INITIATIVES FOR THE TOURISM AND TRANSPORTATION SECTORS, IMPROVING SECURITY AND REDUNDANCY MEASURES INVOLVING SIMILAR INCIDENTS, AND ENSURING THE SAFETY, CONVENIENCE AND RIGHTS OF AFFECTED AIR PASSENGERS

1 **WHEREAS**, on January 1, 2023, thousands of holiday travelers were
2 stranded as hundreds of flights to and from Manila were canceled, delayed, and
3 diverted due to a power outage affecting the communications, navigation, and
4 surveillance (CNS) system of the Philippine Air Traffic Management Center
5 (ATMC), which unfortunately resulted to the closure of the Philippine airspace
6 for more or less ten (10) hours ("New Year Air Traffic Management incident");¹
7 **WHEREAS**, on the same day, Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista
8 reported that there were two main problems that contributed to the New Year's
9 Day disruptions, namely, the failure of one of the Uninterruptible Power Supply
10 (UPS), which had no link to the commercial power and had to be connected

¹ AvGeek Philippines. "What really Caused the Philippine Airspace Blackout on New Year's Day?" Jan. 3, 2023. Available at <https://www.avgeekph.com/what-really-caused-the-philippine-airspace-blackout-on-new-years-day/>, Last accessed on January 10, 2023.

1 manually, and the power surge due to the power outage, which affected critical
2 equipment for communication and navigation;²

3 **WHEREAS**, Secretary Bautista was reported to saying that the
4 Philippines is at least 10 years behind Singapore when it comes to air traffic
5 systems. He further said that a backup system situated in another location is
6 needed, which would cost more than Php13 billion. However, the current
7 CNS/ATM system used in the Philippines, which became fully operational only
8 in 2018, was described during its inauguration as to put the country on the
9 same level as developed countries, notwithstanding its procurement dating
10 back as far as November 2010;³

11 **WHEREAS**, various speculations were reported as to the cause of the
12 collapse of the CNS/ATM system, including vulnerability of the system to
13 cyberattacks, sabotage, diversion of budget allotted for the system to non-
14 essential civil works at NAIA, absence of a back-up system outside airport
15 premises, plain incompetence, among others.⁴ These reports must be verified
16 to apprise the public of what really transpired, to enable proper government
17 authorities to take necessary actions, including redundancy measures, and to
18 hold airport authorities accountable for the incident, if necessary;

19 **WHEREAS**, the New Year Air Traffic Management incident has
20 unfortunately disrupted the restoration to normal levels of air travel, affecting
21 not only the passengers from various points of departure within and outside
22 the country but also leaving a negative impression to foreign travelers. Causing
23 a "domino effect", the incident greatly adds to the issues and challenges that
24 already beset the tourism and transportation sectors. The crippling of the

² Yu, Lance Spencer and Jodesz Gavilan. "What we know so far: Philippines' air traffic system fiasco." Rappler, January 2, 2023, 7:51pm. <https://www.rappler.com/business/what-we-know-philippines-air-traffic-management-system-fiasco-january-2023/>, Last accessed on January 10, 2023.

³ Ibid, 2.

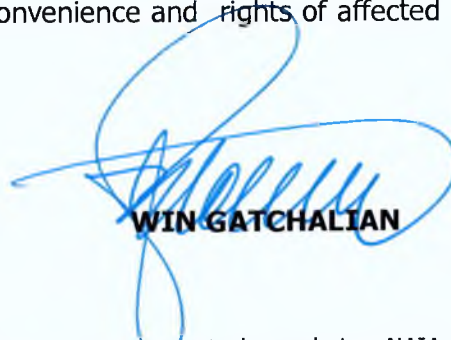
⁴ Ibid, 2; Column: "Biz Buzz: Secret Probe's Focus: Sabotage", Philippine Daily Inquirer, January 9, 2023, 2:09AM, Available at <https://business.inquirer.net/381373/biz-buzz-secret-probes-focus-sabotage>; "New Year's Day Airport Fiasco: Tugade Allegedly Diverted P13-B for Air Traffic System Backup for Cosmetic Projects." January 2, 2023. Available at <https://bilyonaryo.com/2023/01/02/new-year-airport-fiasco-tugade-allegedly-diverted-p13-b-for-air-traffic-system-backup-to-cosmetic-projects/business/>; All last accessed on January 10, 2023.

1 country's flagship airport and the shutdown of the Philippine airspace, even for
2 less than a day, undoubtedly caused significant losses to the air transport and
3 tourism sectors, considering the correlation between said sectors. It sets back
4 the government's initiatives to promote the country as a tourist destination,
5 thereby, warranting an inquiry into the vulnerabilities of the entire airport
6 infrastructure system to help these sectors to recover;

7 **WHEREAS**, numerous affected passengers from all walks of life have
8 verbalized their dismay over the incident, including overseas domestic workers
9 whose employment abroad were in limbo after failing to return to their
10 respective jobs. Complaints were reported about chaotic scenes at the airport,
11 including the absence of dedicated staff to handle inquiries and rebookings
12 following flight cancellations and diversions, inadequate flight information
13 updates, absence of hotel or transport compensation, disorganized distribution
14 of meals or the lack thereof, among others. These complaints deserve to be
15 heard and acted upon as the New Year Air Transport Management incident
16 stopped these passengers from going back to their homes or their work, and
17 leaving them at the mercy of airline authorities;⁵

18 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE**, to direct
19 the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation,
20 on the vulnerabilities of the entire airport infrastructure system, given the
21 recent technical glitch affecting the communications, navigation and
22 surveillance systems for air traffic management (CNS/ATM), with the end view
23 of safeguarding our economic recovery initiatives for the tourism and
24 transportation sectors, improving security and redundancy measures involving
25 similar incidents, and ensuring the safety, convenience and rights of affected
26 air passengers.

Adopted,



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⁵ Ku, Russell. Rappler: "What a New Year's Day! Passengers recount chaos during NAIA outage", Jan. 2, 2023, 2:34 PM. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/passengers-experiences-new-year-glitch-naia-january-2023/>. Last accessed on January 10, 2023.