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**SENATE**  
**P.S. RES. NO. 709**

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**Introduced by SENATOR FRANCIS "TOL" N. TOLENTINO**

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**RESOLUTION**

**URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO THE DISCOVERY OF A MASS GRAVE AT A SEPTIC TANK INSIDE THE MAXIMUM SECURITY COMPOUND OF THE NEW BILIBID PRISONS.**

**Whereas**, on 21 July 2023, Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla of the Department of Justice (DOJ) directed Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) Director General Gregorio Catapang Jr. to conduct a thorough search of the 10.87 hectares area of the Maximum Security Compound of the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) to find a Person Deprived of Liberty (PDL) who was reportedly missing;<sup>1</sup>

**Whereas**, the PDL who was reported to be missing as early as 15 July 2023 was identified as a certain Michael Angelo Cataroja, 25 years old, who was convicted of violation of the Anti-Fencing Law and has a pending case for carnapping;<sup>2</sup>

**Whereas**, due to the massive area covering the NBP, the BuCor sought the assistance of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) through their PCG Search and Rescue Team which has the capability to search missing individuals through their search and rescue dogs. However, as of 21 July 2023, the joint rescue team has not yet even covered half a hectare yet;<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/21/23/remulla-orders-manhunt-for-missing-inmate-inside-bilibid>

<sup>2</sup> <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1805198/coast-guard-joins-search-for-missing-maximum-security-inmate-at-new-bilibid-prison>

<sup>3</sup> <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1805198/coast-guard-joins-search-for-missing-maximum-security-inmate-at-new-bilibid-prison>

**Whereas**, someone gave a tip to the BuCor that there is a septic tank in the security compound that is being used as a mass grave. Thus, the PCG later on brought in cadaver dogs specialized in detecting decomposing flesh;<sup>4</sup>

**Whereas**, among the areas that the cadaver dogs focused on was the septic tank of Dormitory 8 Quadrant 3 of the Maximum Security Compound of the NBP where authorities found severed body parts of an undetermined number of people;<sup>5</sup>

**Whereas**, BuCor officials say they could not yet determine whether one of the remains belongs to the missing PDL Cataroja since there are many missing PDLs in the NBP whom the BuCor cannot identify whether they have escaped or have already died;<sup>6</sup>

**Whereas**, according to NBP Officer-in-Charge Supt. Angelina Bautista, the camp commander, as well as 30 security officers have already been relieved following the incident;<sup>7</sup>

**Whereas**, meanwhile, on 26 July 2023, after an altercation transpired between two (2) members of the Bahala Na Gang and Batang City Jail, one PDL identified as Joseph Serrano "pulled out a gun and started shooting at different areas of the penitentiary" which led to the injury of several PDLs;<sup>8</sup>

**Whereas**, the same incident likewise led to the death of another PDL, identified as Alvin Barba, who was stabbed with an ice pick and was declared dead on arrival at the hospital;<sup>9</sup>

**Whereas**, the BuCor's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team was able to recover One (1) cal. 45 with two aguanes and twelve rounds of ammunitions at the area of occurrence."<sup>10</sup>

**Whereas**, as of December 2022, the NBP which is about 254 hectares in land area housed 29,338 PDLs, exceeding its ideal capacity of 6,435 resulting to a congestion rate of 356%;

**Whereas**, it must be noted that BuCor data as of December 2022 records a total of 673 deaths at the NBP, 8 of which are caused by Asphyxia, 1 was caused by Gunshot Wounds, 6 were caused by stab wounds, and 3 were caused by traumatic head injuries;

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2023/07/27/2284063/mass-grave-found-bilibid-septic-tank>

<sup>5</sup> <https://radio.inquirer.net/332128/nawawalang-presong-bilibid-natagpuan-sa-poso-negro>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2023/07/27/2284063/mass-grave-found-bilibid-septic-tank>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2023/07/23/2283195/search-missing-bilibid-inmate>

<sup>8</sup> <https://news.abs-cbn.com/amp/news/07/26/23/bilibid-under-red-alert-after-prison-fight-leaves-1-dead>

<sup>9</sup> <https://news.abs-cbn.com/amp/news/07/26/23/bilibid-under-red-alert-after-prison-fight-leaves-1-dead>

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.abs-cbn.com/amp/news/07/26/23/bilibid-under-red-alert-after-prison-fight-leaves-1-dead>

**Whereas**, one wonders how these contrabands, i.e. guns, ice picks and other weapons, which caused death and injury to people were in the possession of these PDLs and found their way inside the Bucor despite the protocols being observed therein by Bucor personnel and why the bodies of several dead PDLs were found inside the septic tank without these Bucor personnel knowing about it until recently;

**Whereas**, a thorough investigation of the same is needed to shed light on how these things happened within the Bureau of Corrections without the people manning the same knowing anything about it; **NOW, THEREFORE**

**BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved**, to direct as it hereby directs the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation, into the recent happenings at the Bureau of Correction that compromise the safety and security of the PDLs detained as well as pose danger to the lives and limbs of the Bucor personnel therein.

Adopted,



**FRANCIS "TOL" N. TOLENTINO**