

SENATE

RECEIVED BY: 

P.S. Res. No. 1506

Introduced by Sen. Antonio "Sonny" F. Trillanes IV

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEES ON NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY, PUBLIC ORDER AND ILLEGAL DRUGS AND OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE TO INQUIRE, LOOK INTO AND INVESTIGATE THE ALLEGED GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED DISTRIBUTION AND/OR PROLIFERATION OF HIGH-POWERED FIREARMS AND MILITARY ARMAMENTS TO PRIVATE ARMED GROUPS IN ORDER TO CONDUCT AN ACCOUNTING AND INVENTORY OF SUCH WEAPONS, PUT AN END TO PRIVATE ARMIES, ADDRESS THE UNCHECKED CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AND IMPUNITY IN OUR COUNTRY AND AID IN THE CRAFTING OF REMEDIAL LEGISLATION.

WHEREAS, the nation and the whole world is still reeling in shock in the aftermath of the so called "*Maguindanao Massacre*" last 23 November 2009 where, according to latest reports¹, at least fifty-seven (57) people, including women members of the Magundadatu clan, two (2) lady lawyers and around thirty (30) members of the media, were mercilessly slaughtered in cold-blood in the town of Ampatuan in Maguindanao allegedly by the members of the Ampatuan clan and their armed supporters led by Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan, Jr., among others, in the run up to the May 2010 National and Local Elections;

WHEREAS, this dastardly deed was committed with impunity and evident premeditation in broad daylight purportedly by members of the Ampatuan clan, who are publicly acknowledged by Malacañang to be close political allies and personal "*friends*" of Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and hundreds of armed supporters who are purported members of Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs) and/or Special Civilian Armed Auxillary (SCAAs) and/or Civilian Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGUs) and whose firearms and ammunition have been provided, supplied and/or sanctioned by the Government allegedly in the presence and/or with the participation of several Police and Army Officers;

WHEREAS, there were reports in the past that more than 4,000 high powered firearms were in fact distributed to private armed groups by the Government itself in Mindanao in the run up to May 2007 elections as part of the political accommodation and/or payback to powerful

¹ Per the news update of radio station DZBB (594 Hz) at around 5:30 pm of 29 November 2009.

local politicians in exchange for their support for the administration. In fact, the distribution of said high-powered firearms to armed groups controlled by local politicians was legitimized by the issuance of Executive Order No. 546 by Mrs. Arroyo herself² sometime in July 2006;

WHEREAS, this fact has been confirmed in part by the Maguindano Massacre as well as by recent media reports confirming that the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have disarmed and/or deactivated around four hundred (400) followers of the Ampatuans³, purportedly members of Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs) and/or Special Civilian Armed Auxillary (SCAAs) and/or Civilian Armed Geographical Units (CAFGUs) in three (3) Municipalities in Maguindanao alone, particularly the towns of Datu Unsay, Ampatuan and Shariff Aguak;

WHEREAS, the legally-sanctioned distribution of high-powered firearms to armed groups controlled by local politicians by the current administration in Mindanao, an area known for widespread political strife, volatility, clan wars and sporadic violence and wracked by a decades-old secessionist struggle as well as by banditry and terrorism, is a clear formula for disaster and amounts to a monumental blunder on the part of the national leadership, if not a testimony to its arrogance and depravity. This places the burden of responsibility for the Maguindanao Massacre squarely at the doorstep of Malacañang. Indeed, this tragedy is clearly self-inflicted and the Frankenstein monster that is now haunting this administration is a product of its own indiscretion;

WHEREAS, it is utterly unthinkable how the current dispensation has allowed and even authorized and legitimized the proliferation of thousands of high-powered firearms, including automatic assault rifles, grenade launchers and other military armaments including fifty caliber machine-guns and armored personnel carriers (APCs), particularly in small towns and in the hands of local political warlords. The same has clearly overwhelmed and virtually emasculated local PNP and AFP units and even placed the lives of members of the PNP and AFP and the general population in mortal danger. Moreover, this is a sure-fire formula for more massacres, more violence and more political abuses particularly in the run up to the May 2010 National and Local Elections;

WHEREAS, in fact, during the *National Summit on Firearms Control* conducted by the PNP in Camp Crame, Quezon City on 18 May 2009, it was reported that during the 2004 and 2007 Elections, there were a total of 274 recorded election-related violent incidents involving the use of firearms in the country. Among the country's regions, it was the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) which reported the highest number of such incidents, followed by Region IX and the Cordillera Administrative Region. Furthermore, a 2007 study conducted by the *Philippine Action Network on Small Arms* show that crimes involving firearms in the country were politically-motivated, criminality-related and/or group conflict driven;

² See: Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Daily News Reader: PDI Press Release on 25 October 2006 entitled: *EO 456 empowers local execs, PNP in fight vs terrorism*; Retrieved from the Philippine Information services website with web address at: <http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&r=R10&y=09&no=09&fi=p061025.htm&no=56>; Retrieved on 29 November 2009.

³ Burgonio, T.J.; *400 Ampatuan bodyguards under probe*; Philippine Daily Inquirer; Retrieved from Inquirer.net with web address at: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view/20091126-238548/400-Ampatuan-bodyguards-under-probe---PNP>; Retrieved on 29 November 2009.

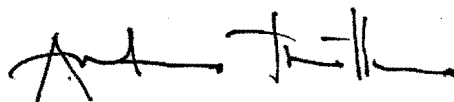
WHEREAS, moreover, according to military reports in 2001, some one hundred (100) private armies were behind about eighty percent (80%) of all election-related violence. A special military task force estimates that these private armies are responsible for 68 of the 98 deaths recorded in the 2001 elections⁴;

WHEREAS, likewise, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Philippines is already ranked tenth (10th) in gun homicide rates worldwide⁵. In fact, the Philippines, with a rate of 9.64 gun homicides per 100,000 persons per year, is the only South East Asian country in the top thirty (30) in the list;

WHEREAS, in the light of all of these, there is an imperative necessity for Congress to look into this government-sanctioned distribution and proliferation of high-powered firearms, which has bred a culture of arrogance, violence and impunity and which has legitimized the existence of local political warlords and their private armies, to conduct an inventory and accounting of all such firearms issued by the Government and to address this problem and put the same in check through remedial legislation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to direct the Committees on National Defense and Security and Public Order and Security and other appropriate committees of Senate, to inquire into and/or investigate the government-sanctioned distribution and/or proliferation of high-powered firearms in the hands of private armed groups which has bred a culture of arrogance, violence and impunity and which has legitimized the existence of local political warlords and their private armies; to conduct an inventory and accounting of all such firearms issued by the Government; and to address the problem and put the same in check through remedial legislation.

ADOPTED,



ANTONIO "SONNY" F. TRILLANES IV
Senator

⁴ Patino, Patrick & Velasco, Djourina; *Election Violence in the Philippines*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Online Papers. Information retrieved from: http://www.fes.org.ph/papers_elecviolence.htm#edu1; Retrieved on 24 July 2008.

⁵ World Health Organization (WHO); *UN Office of Drugs and Crime Report of 2005*; A paper presented during the *National Summit on Firearms Control* conducted by the PNP in Camp Crame, Quezon City on 18 May 2009