

SENATE

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COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 60

Submitted by the Committees on National Defense and Security and on Public Order and Illegal Drugs on 24 NOV 2004.

Re: Proposed Senate Resolution No. 417

Recommending the adoption of the recommendation and their immediate implementation.

Sponsors: Senators Biazon and Villar, Jr.

MR. PRESIDENT:

The Committees on National Defense and Security and on Public Order and Illegal Drugs to which was referred Proposed Senate Resolution No. 41, introduced by Senator Defensor-Santiago, entitled:

**"RESOLUTION  
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE  
COMMITTEE/S TO INQUIRE ON THE  
ALLEGED CONTINUOUS ACQUISITION BY  
THE MILF OF WEAPONS AND  
AMMUNITIONS"**

have considered the same and have the honor to submit the report on their inquiry back to the Senate recommending the adoption of the recommendations as contained in this report and their immediate implementation.

I. **Background**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 41 was submitted to the Senate and referred to the Committees on National Defense and Security and on Public Order and Illegal Drugs to inquire on the alleged continuous acquisition by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) of weapons and ammunition.

The resolution stemmed from an article that appeared in the 3 August 2003 issue of the newspaper *Philippine Star* where it was alleged that a large shipment of automatic rifles and ammunition landed in the coastal towns of Sultan Kudarat and Lanao del Sur.

The allegation was met with denial from the MILF through its spokesperson, Mr. Eid Kabalu, and Mr. Benjie Midtimbang, head of the MILF ceasefire panel.

The resolution of the issue bears utmost importance in the light of the ongoing peace negotiations with the MILF and also in the pursuit of maintaining peace in the Mindanao region.

## **II. Committees' Action**

Pursuant to said referral, the Committees conducted a joint public hearing on 7 October 2004 at the Senator Claro M. Recto Room, Senate of the Philippines, Pasay City. Those invited to testify and share their views and comments include officials of the Department of National Defense, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

The Committees are tasked to determine if a huge shipment of firearms and ammunitions for the MILF was in fact landed in the aforementioned areas.

## **III. Discussion**

Reports on the alleged or possible landing of firearms along the shorelines of Central Mindanao are already known to the Intelligence community of the AFP as early as 19 July 2004, with the target landing of shipment to be made on the first week of August.

The concerned operational commanders of Southern Command were tasked to ensure that the occurrence of such landing would be negated. The combined efforts of air, naval and ground forces were initiated in order to conduct intensive patrol and also reconnaissance of the sea and coastlines for the period before and after the alleged date to land the shipment.<sup>1</sup>

Troops of the Sixth Infantry Division under General Relano led in the verification of the report regarding the shipment of weapons by going to the particular landing sites, the municipalities of Palembang (Sultan Kudarat) and Kapatagan (Lanao del Sur). The Army's aero-scout elements conducted imagery operations to verify the landing sites while the Naval Security Group (NSG) launched ship on the sea area.

## **IV. Findings**

There was no truth that shipment of weapons and ammunition for the MILF was made.

The AFP issued a report on 5 August 2004 in response to the two directives from the Department of National Defense to verify and validate the information regarding said shipment.

<sup>1</sup> (TSN LPamorca II-4 Oct 7, 2004 11:05 am p4-6)

Defense Undersecretary Edgardo Batenga confirmed this when he testified to the report of the AFP as follows:

*MR. BATENGA: "Xxx. So that on 19 July, Mr. Chair, we have directed the Armed Forces to verify, validate this information. And on 21 July, we again sent a directive to verify and validate. So that on 5 August 2004, we received a written report from the Armed Forces and allow me to read a portion of that report.*

*THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, you proceed, please.*

*MR. BATENGA: "After a thorough evaluation of reports, there are no concrete indications that such firearms shipment indeed took place as of this report. Intelligence received by this office showed no conclusive evidence or clear indication that the reported arms landing was ever consummated, neither was there any information that would suggest that such ever took place."*

The source of the information on the alleged or possible shipment of weapons and ammunitions came from unreliable source. It was claimed that the source of information that was relied upon is a member of the MILF group that was tasked to land the shipment.<sup>2</sup>

Along this line, it is noteworthy to mention the report of the Philippine National Police on the possibility that the story on the arms landing could be part of the disinformation campaign done deliberately to confuse the government forces, and also to project an image that the MILF is a success story with enough firepower to preempt government forces. Moreover, it was stated that there are information peddlers in the area who provide information for monetary consideration.

On the other hand, the AFP has deemed it proper to conduct investigation in order to pinpoint the person responsible in leaking to media the gathered information regarding arms shipment for possible prosecution.

## **V. Recommendations**

With the foregoing considerations, the Committees recommend that:

- a. the hearing on the subject resolution be terminated;
- b. the AFP continue its investigation on the source of information regarding the alleged or possible shipment of weapons and ammunitions that was leaked to the members of the media with the end in view of coming out with appropriate legislation.

<sup>2</sup> (TSN SNTupaz IV-4 Oct 7, 2004 11:26 am p2)

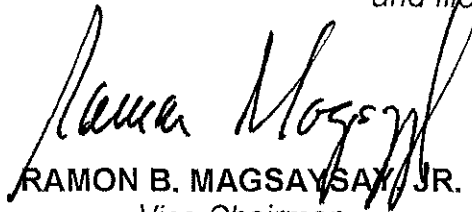
*Respectfully submitted.*



**RODOLFO G. BIAZON**  
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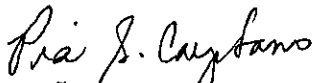


**MANUEL B. VILLAR, JR.**  
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Committee on Public Order  
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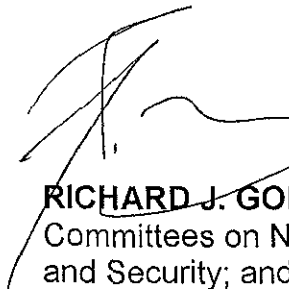


**RAMON B. MAGSAYSAY, JR.**  
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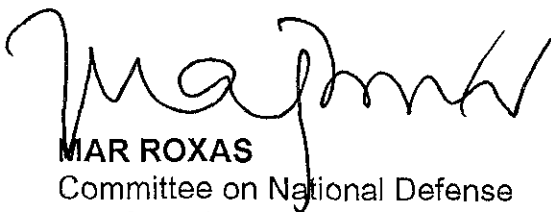
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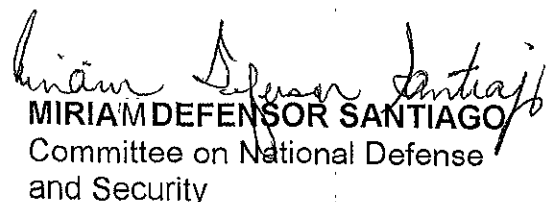
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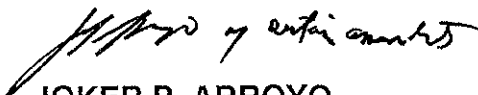
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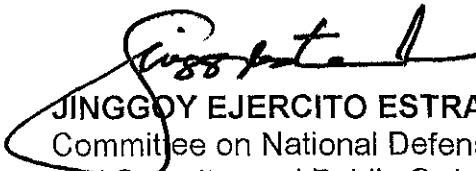


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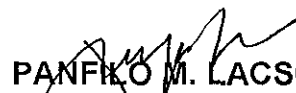
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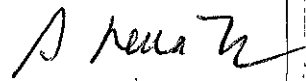
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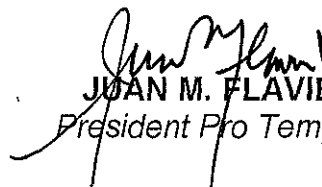


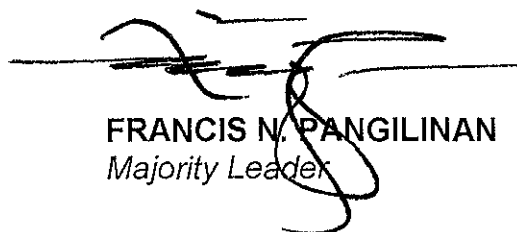
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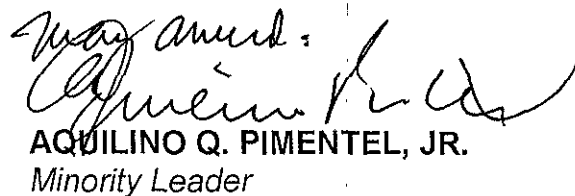


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