

DNA test shows Asian suicide bombers pulled off Jolo blasts, police say

By: Consuelo Marquez

MANILA, Philippines — The suicide bombers in the Aug. 24 twin blasts in Jolo, Sulu were Asians as shown in a recent DNA test results, police said Thursday.

“Pagdating sa DNA, they (Crime Laboratory members) said na yung dalawang (that the two) suicide bombers are both Asians. They could not determine the age, unfortunately,” Lt. Col. Kris Conrad Gutierrez, spokesman of special investigation task group for probing the Aug. 24 attack, said in a phone interview with Inquirer.net when sought for updates about the DNA test of the suicide bombers.

Gutierrez said the DNA tests also showed that the recent suicide bombers were not related to the perpetrators of the Catholic church in Jolo, Sulu in 2019. Authorities said the suicide bombers in the church were an Indonesian couple.

Police have yet to compare the DNA of Norman Lasuca, the first Filipino suicide bomber, with the recent suicide bombers, Gutierrez noted.

“Ang nangyari po ngayon is yung DNA ng Cathedral bombers yung na-compare dun sa recent na bombers so hindi pa nagagawa yung Lasuca and recent bombers,” he said.

(What happened was the DNA of Cathedral bombers were the only ones compared but we have not yet conducted a DNA comparison of Lasuca



and the recent bombers.)

In a previous report, Army chief Lt. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana, former chief of Western Mindanao Command, said the female suicide bombers of the twin explosions last Aug. 24 were likely the wives of Lasuca and Talha Jumsah who had links with the Islamic State.

Lasuca died in June 2019 after detonating a bomb inside a camp in Indanan, Sulu where more than 10 people were killed.

Since the DNA test could not further identify the bombers, Gutierrez said the bombers’ family members can coordinate with police to help them verify the identity of the perpetrators.

“Otherwise may lumabas na kamag-anak na sabihin na kamag-anak siya or kung may database na sinasabi na itong DNA ng bombers is related to bombers na mga nauna, medyo technical na yun at profiling na gagawin doon,” he said.

(Unless otherwise there is information that they are relatives of these suicide bombers and we have a database that confirms that the DNA of these bombers are related to past bombers, this will be technical

“Some of them are ASG members. ‘ Yung iba naman, we are still looking at the affiliation of others”

and we will do profiling.)

Cops file raps vs suspects

Police have filed criminal complaints against almost 30 suspects believed to be involved in the suicide bombing incident in Jolo which left 15 people dead and 75 wounded, the task group spokesman said.

“Regarding sa filed cases, we filed last Sept. 4, 15 suspects sa first blast. 14 sa second blast,” Gutierrez said.

(For the filed cases, we filed last Sept. 4, 15 suspects in the first blast and 14 for the second.)

The first blast happened at a food shop in Barangay Walled City in Jolo. After an hour, another explosion occurred at the Goteckleng Building, one hundred meters away from the first attack.

Gutierrez said he has yet to disclose the names of the accomplices but noted that some are suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

“Some of them are ASG members. ‘Yung iba naman tinitignan pa kung ano affiliation nung iba (We are still looking at the affiliation of others),” he said.

Aside from this, police also discovered that the explosive device used in the twin explosions was a pipe bomb.

“They conferred it, na yung composition is ammonium nitrate fuel oil and type of IED (improvised explosive device) or explosive device is the pipe bomb,” Gutierrez said.

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lodged as lump-sum appropriations in the central office of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

He said another P73 billion worth of DPWH projects, covering a total of 2,933 items, had been “reappropriated” with incremental amounts, with some getting as much as 50 percent of the original allocation.

“Why is this so and how did this happen? Primarily because of the constitutional issues involved, I don’t think we should allow this when we finally pass the budget measure before year-end,” Lacson told Mr. Duterte’s

economic team at the budget hearing.

“These would easily fall under the Supreme Court decision ... that ruled that these are lump-sum appropriations and therefore, patently illegal,” he said.

One of the projects was a road in Southern Leyte, which received a total of P100 million for 2020 but was allocated with another P42 million for next year.

Another was a provincial road connecting Pangasinan and La Union, which already got P6.5 million this year but was given P650,000 more in the latest spending program.

Lacson said this could be the first time that infrastructure projects of the DPWH and the Department of Transportation (DOTr) were getting “reappropriations” in his years of reviewing the annual budget measure as a legislator.

DPWH budget late

“This is the first time it happened, or at least the first time to be discovered. I’m still trying to find an explanation for it,” Lacson said.

“If it’s lump sum, we know that a project is unimplementable because there are no items corresponding to the amounts appropriated,” he said.

Lacson said he received information that the DPWH had actually failed to present to the economic team and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) its expenditure plan within the prescribed 30-day period.

He said this prompted the

DBM to “simply submit what now appears to be reappropriations” for projects that had already been budgeted.

“Worse, the remainder of the appropriations for those items are lodged in the central office of the DPWH as lump-sum appropriations, hence unconstitutional,” Lacson said.

“My worry is that it might result in insertions by some legislators that will be embedded in the corrected NEP,” he added.

Responding to Lacson’s queries, Avisado said the lockdowns to contain the new coronavirus prevented the DOTr, DPWH and other state agencies from completing the projects on time.

He said Public Works Secretary Mark Villar submitted the list of projects that needed partial funding for these to be finished by next year.

‘Relisting of projects’

“That’s why there’s a relisting

of the projects and the balance was provided appropriations precisely to complete the projects as brought out in the budget this year. That’s really the reason. That’s why there’s a repeat of the projects listed,” Avisado said.

But Lacson said Avisado’s explanation would violate the Supreme Court’s July 2014 decision that struck down the Disbursement Acceleration Program and similar budgeting system as unconstitutional, and the constitutional provision on the realignment of national budget.

“If there’s no discontinuance of the budget by reasons stated under the Supreme Court ruling, you cannot declare portions of the appropriations as savings. You may realign the whole item as funded, but you cannot pull out an increment of the allocation,” he said.

Roque proposes staggered visitation in cemeteries for ‘Undas’ 2020

By: Krissy Aguilar

MANILA, Philippines — Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque on Thursday said he will propose a staggered visitation scheme in cemeteries as the government’s COVID-19 task force looks into alternative options for the observance of All Saints’ Day.

“Titignan po natin kung merong mga alternatibo dahil naniniwala naman po ako na importante sa mga Pilipino ang Undas,” Roque, who is also spokesperson of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases, said in an online briefing.

(We will see if there can be alternatives because I believe that



Undas is important to Filipinos.)

“Ako po mismo, ang aking rekomendasyon, gawin na lang natin na All Saints’ Day kung hindi siguro mag-allot tayo ng apat o limang araw depende sa

family name ng namatay kung sino ang pupwedeng pumunta sa sementeryo nang ‘di po lahat magdagsaan sa iisang araw lamang,” he added.

(My recommendation would be to allow four or five days when they can visit depending on the family name of the deceased so that the public won’t crowd into the cemetery in just one day.)

Both the local governments of Manila and Mandaluyong have already decided to close all public and private cemeteries located in their respective jurisdictions during this year’s “Undas.”

This is a bid to prevent mass gathering and curb the spread of COVID-19.

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