Drug war loses credibility amid controversy involving PNP chief — Drilon

By: Cathrine Gonzales

MANILA, Philippines — The drug war being waged by the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte is losing its credibility in the wake of the "ninja cops" controversy involving no less than Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Oscar Albayalde, Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon said Wednesday.

Drilon said Albayalde being dragged in the irregular anti-drug operation in Pampanga in 2013 when he was provincial director has already "tarnished" his stint as PNP chief, a month before he retires in November 8.

He described the claim of former Criminal Investigation and Detection Group director and now Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong against Albayalde in the Senate hearing on Tuesday as a "very serious allegation."

"Given the 'tokhang' campaign, which has killed thousands of people and supposedly drug dealers, the drug campaign loses its credibility when you hear of these allegations between high-ranking officials of the PNP," Drilon said in an interview with reporters.

"I don't really know what he can do. His credibility is tarnished one month before he retires," he said of Albayalde.

The senator said he finds the 2016 phone call of Albayalde to Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) chief Aaron Aquino, who was then Central Luzon police chief, to be "very improper."

During the Senate hearing on Tuesday, Albayalde said he only made the phone call to ask Aquino of the status of the case, which Aquino later confirmed before Senate reporters.

"Pero ang nakiusap na huwag muna i-implement (But Albayalde's request for Aquino not to implement it yet) is something in substance that I remember to be the narration of Gen. Aquino of his telephone conversation with Gen. Albayalde," said Drilon, referring to the supposed revelation of Aquino in an earlier meeting with him and Sen. Richard Gordon.

But Drilon said he is "not prepared to conclude that there was substantial change in the statement" of Aquino during the Senate investigation.

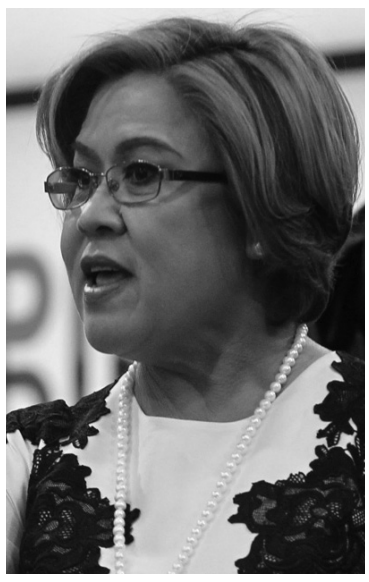
"What I am prepared to say is that there was some very clear hesitancy to repeat what he told us," said Drilon. "He said what he said during the open hearing, although we noticed already some hesitancy during the public hearing."

He said he was "certainly" disappointed with Aquino's sudden change of tone since he thinks the PDEA chief was "more forthright" during their meeting.

"I see Magalong to be the most credible of the three. When I was talking to Aquino, he appeared credible to me, except that, apparently, he was under pressure, to reveal his narration," Drilon concluded.

De Lima condemns, contests PH rejection of UN resolution on Rohingya crisis

By: Darryl John Esguerra



MANILA, Philippines – Detained Senator Leila De Lima on Wednesday slammed the Philippines' rejection of a United Nations resolution addressing the human rights situation of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

She called the move an "irrefutable proof" that the country is now turning into a "vassal state of China."

"It likewise signals an equally alarming trend towards the dehumanization of the current administration," De Lima said in a statement.

Of the 46 UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) member states that voted, only the Philippines and China thumbed down the resolution.

This is the third time that the Duterte administration rejected a UN measure addressing the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people.

De Lima, a former Commission on Human Rights chairperson, said the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) should be asked if its vote against the UN resolution is the "true and genuine" position of the Philippine government or if the same was influenced by China.

"Despite the indubitable evidence of grave crimes, however, the Philippine government looked the other way to follow the position taken by the despotic regime in Beijing," De Lima said.

"I condemn this vote. It does not represent who we are as people. We value everyone's dignity. We stand for humanity. We strive for justice," she added.

The UN resolution denounces "all violations and abuses of human rights in Myanmar, including against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities, and expressing deep concern at the reports of ongoing human rights violations."

The UN resolution also urged the Myanmar government to end all violence and violations of international law in Myanmar and ensure the protection of human rights of all human rights of Myanmar people including Rohingya Muslims and minorities.

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at hindi na po sila lalayo sa mga ospital para makakuha ng tulong," he added.

Detailing his experiences as Special Assistant to the President when hundreds would line up in his office requesting for medical assistance, Go said that this urged him to make healthcare more accessible to Filipinos, especially those in need.

"With this, Filipinos no longer have to endure long lines in different agencies to avail assistance," he added.

Currently, there are 42 Malasakit Centers nationwide serving 160,000 to 200,000 patients every month.

Aside from the aforementioned services, Go added that the proposed measure establishes the Malasakit Program providing a "policy framework for integrated people-centered health services in DOH hospitals."

"The program shall ensure and promote an organizational culture geared towards responsiveness; ensure appropriate infrastructure and processes; and promote client engagement and empowerment," said Go.

Ending his speech, Go asked for the support of his fellow senators for the proposed measure.

"It is with high expectations that we would be able to further streamline and expedite the delivery of services to Filipinos, especially to those who need them most. Thus, I urge fellow members of this august chamber to support the immediate passage of this measure," Go said.

"Ibigay natin sa Pilipino ang mabilis, maayos at maaasahang serbisyo, lalo na pagdating sa pangangailangang pangkalusugan. As I have said many times, pera nila ito, ibalik natin sa kanila sa pamamagitan ng mabilis, maayos, at maaasahang serbisyo mula sa gobyernong may malasakit," he concluded.

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