

TF USIG News Releases 2007

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PRESS STATEMENT OF POLICE DIRECTOR GEARY L BARIAS Director for Investigation and Detective Management May 01, 2007

On the instructions of PNP Chief, Director General Oscar C Calderon, Task Force USIG will establish correspondence and channels of communication with the European Parliament to enlighten the body on the issue of unsolved slay cases of militant activists and journalists in the country.

Our intention is to inform the European Parliament of the significant results of our effort to arrest and prosecute persons responsible in high-profile murder cases involving militant activists. This will be similar to our intention in providing the UN Special Rapporteur and the US Senate with relevant and accurate information in order for them to get a better understanding and perspective of the real situation.

With all due respect to the European Parliament, we believe that the resolution recently passed by the body during its plenary session in Strasburg was based on information gathered from sources in the front organizations of the local communist movement, and from other sources which we consider to be of doubtful nature.

May I mention that the group Karapatan, which is among the sources of information of the European Parliament, had a hard time explaining before the hearing of the US Senate committee on foreign relations how it came up with a list of more than 800 names of victims of political murders. Although Karapatan has acknowledged some errors made by its field volunteers in their reporting, we are very cautious in taking this kind of information without the benefit of thorough validation, and we have so far narrowed down our own list to 116 verified cases.

We beg to disagree with the European Parliament that there is "systematic intimidation and harassment of witnesses" in the slay cases that we are prosecuting. In our opinion, all the 116 cases that we are presently investigating are separate and unrelated, and part of the responsibility of Task Force USIG is to eliminate all impediments to the successful prosecution of cases.

We welcome the acknowledgement of the European Union for the progress made by government in addressing the issue of unsolved slay cases, but, it is entirely unfair to say that there is lack of police action, particularly in the case of Sichi Gandinao in Salay City, Misamis Oriental last March.

In fact, we have filed charges against military and CAFGU personnel for alleged inaction over their failure to respond to calls for assistance

during the incident. In the same manner, we have relieved the Chief of Police of Salay City for apparent neglect of duty.

There are just too many other factors and aspects that the European Parliament may have overlooked on the issue of unsolved cases of slain militant activists, including the trend of communist insurgent activity, which of late has been riding on the tide of political violence.

As the lead unit investigating these cases, Task Force USIG is in a position to make a more realistic analysis of the situation based on accurate facts and information. And we will be glad to enlighten the European Parliament on this concern.