

Ombudsman impeach rap to House panel

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

THE House of Representatives has set into motion the impeachment complaint against Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez after it was sent last March 5 to the committee on rules.

On the last day of session for the month-long break of Congress, Speaker Prospero Nograles referred to Majority Floor Leader Arthur Defensor, concurrent chairman of the rules committee, the complaint to be put in the order of business.

The complaint will be tackled by the committee on April 14. It will be referred during the plenary to the justice committee headed by Representative Matias Defensor, Nograles said in a text message.

The justice committee will schedule hearings to determine if the complaint is sufficient in form and in substance, said Nograles.

Gutierrez has been accused of betrayal of public trust and culpable violation of the Constitution in the complaint filed by 31 individuals from civil society groups and former government officials, led by former Senate President Jovito Salonga.

Department of Justice: Mancao can be state witness

by SANDY ARANETA
Philstar.com

FORMER police senior superintendent Cesar Mancao may turn state witness in the Dacer-Corbato double murder case and whatever charges against him will be dropped, Justice Sec. Raul Gonzalez said last March 5.

"We can consider him (Mancao) as a witness. If he qualifies as a witness, then whatever case the state has against him, he will in effect be exonerated. But he must first testify," Gonzalez told reporters at the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Gonzalez explained that Mancao should testify first to avoid a situation wherein once he is set free, he would change his mind and turn against the government.

The letter of publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer's daughter, Carina, to the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) dated Feb. 24, 2009, had mentioned that new evidence has surfaced which will help identify other people who allegedly had a hand in her father's brutal slay in 2000.

Mancao, however, was not identified as the source of the new evidence.

Carina is now planning to file charges against more people

believed to have been involved in the murder of her father and his driver Emmanuel Corbito.

"There is a possibility that we will be filing complaints against additional persons in the next few weeks," Carina told VACC founding chairman Dante Jimenez in her letter.

"Given the sensitive nature of this case and the people involved in my father's murder, I wish to ask for your assistance in any way to help move the case forward and its immediate resolution," she said.

In a separate interview with ABS-CBN broadcaster Ces Drilon, Carina accused Sen. Panfilo Lacson of obstruction of justice for keeping the whereabouts of Mancao from authorities.

"He said he talked to Mancao in September, he knows that the guy has a pending criminal case in the Philippines. Alam pala niya kung nasaan sina Mancao, isn't that obstruction of justice? He is a senator, and he knows

where (former police officer) Glenn Dumlao and Mancao (are and yet) he never extended help to find them," Dacer told Drilon.

Carina also branded as a "showbiz response" Lacson's allegation that Mancao is being pressured into admitting and naming the wrong people in the kidnapping and murder of the PR man, adding that it was still too early for Lacson to conclude that he has been named by Mancao in his affidavit.

Lacson, for his part, said: "It is wrong to claim that I am liable because of command responsibility. In the first place, I resigned from the PNP and the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force (PAOCTF) was dissolved shortly after EDSA 2 in January 2001 while these officers were still in active service when they left the country.

"What obstruction of justice are they talking about? If he (Mancao) fled the Philippines, it is because he lost trust in the Philippine justice system," Lacson added.

Last Tuesday, March 3, Mancao met with Carina during his extradition hearing at Fort Lauderdale in Florida, where he allegedly made an agreement with Dacer's daughter to reveal the principal players in the case.

Jimenez forwarded Carina's letter to the DOJ to seek assistance.

In response, Gonzalez is

offering protection to the Dacer family and to any new witness.

Gonzalez said the wife of Mancao sent an email to him sometime between November and December 2008.

"From the first time we received the email of the wife, there is already the inference they need protection if they will come out, and in fact he doesn't want to be placed at the PNP headquarters," said Gonzalez.

Aside from Mancao, two former police colonels of the defunct PAOCTF headed by then PNP chief Lacson are among the 22 people charged in the double-murder case before the Manila Regional Trial Court.

The other two are ex-police Senior Supt. Michael Ray Aquino and Dumlao, who are both in the US and are facing extradition charges. Aquino was earlier convicted of spying in the US.

Lacson earlier said Mancao contacted him last year and complained of being pressured by a group to admit to the killing.

The senator said his conversation with Mancao happened after the former police officer personally met with Maj. Gen. Romeo Prestoza, chief of the military's intelligence service and President Arroyo's former chief security aide.

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita denied Lacson's allegations and asked him to present proof.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines, for its part, assured the public of its full cooperation in whatever investigation might be conducted upon the arrival of Mancao in the country to testify on the murders of Dacer and Corbito.

National Bureau of Investigation Director Nestor Mantaring also said at least two agents from the NBI Interpol Division would fly to Florida to fetch Mancao.

5 solons press Smith transfer to RP-run jail

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

FIVE partylist lawmakers called for the immediate transfer of convicted rapist Lance Corporal Daniel Smith to a Philippine-run detention facility, close to a month after the Supreme Court ruled that he should not be held under US custody.

House Resolution 1042 filed by partylist Representatives Liza Maza and Luz Ilagan of Gabriela, Satur Ocampo and Teodoro Casiño of Bayan Muna, and Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis said the ruling of the high tribunal should now be implemented.

In its February 11 ruling, the high court said the 2006 executive agreement between Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney that led to Smith's transfer from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy was inconsistent with the provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement.

It also ordered Romulo to "forthwith negotiate" with a US representative to agree on the detention facility for Smith.

"Justice has been long delayed to victim 'Nicole' and the delay in the acquisition of custody of Smith is in violation of her right to speedy disposition of cases as provided in Section 16 of the Bill of Rights under the Philippine Constitution," the lawmakers said.

The group said that Smith had the privilege to choose his "detention facility" while Filipinos and other foreign nationals accused or convicted of a crime could not negotiate for their place of detention.

The Makati regional trial court found Smith guilty on Dec. 4, 2006 of raping "Nicole," a 22 year old girl in Subic in November 2005. He was sentenced to a maximum of reclusion perpetua or 40 years in prison.

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