

Arroyo's appointments' girl a workaholic

by TJ BURGONIO
Inquirer.net

SHE'S President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's appointments girl. Undersecretary Marilou Frostrom (nee Dematera) is one of the few ranking officials who holds two key jobs in Malacañang: she handles the President's daily appointments and heads the advance party in out-of-town sorties.

As the undersecretary for presidential engagements, Frostrom fixes the President's itinerary every day. On top of that, she also heads the Office for Regional Concerns (ORC).

When she wears the second hat, she motors to a town or city in the countryside a day ahead of Ms. Arroyo and her official party

so she could make the necessary preparations and arrangements.

Frostrom was on a similar mission when presidential chopper Bell 412 transporting her and seven others from Baguio City to Banaue disappeared in the deep forests of Ifugao.

The reason: Ms. Arroyo was scheduled to inspect the Halsema Highway in Lagawe, Banaue last Wednesday, April 8.

"As a boss, she's very workaholic and perfectionist," Susan Marquez, staff officer IV at the Presidential Management Staff (PMS), said in a phone interview.

"Full of zest and with passion for life, there are no dull moments when she is around," it read.

"Since the nature of our job is very tight, she sends us to out-of-town seminars where we can also

relax," Marquez said by phone. "She's very concerned about the welfare of her staff."

Frostrom joined the PMS in 2004 as head of the ORC. She was later re-designated as head of the advance party of Ms. Arroyo, a job which fits her to a T because of her PR and communication skills, according to the profile.

Before joining PMS, Frostrom worked as public relations officer at the Office of the General Manager of the Manila International Airport Authority, and Appointments Secretary to the President.

She specialized in consultancy work in human resources development, and in the training of administrative and executive assistants.

Frostrom graduated cum laude

from the University of San Carlos in Cebu with a Bachelor of Arts in English degree.

She was a candidate for Masters in Business Administration at the Ateneo de Manila University Graduate School in Makati City.

Frostrom was a "seasoned traveler." She has toured Asia, Australia, and Europe, and speaks several languages, including Swedish and Spanish.

She is married to Swedish engineer Jan Frostrom.

Her deputy, Assistant Director Perlita Bandayanon, was also among the missing passengers.

"She's a workhorse for the Office of the Regional Concerns," PMS head Secretary Hermogenes Esperon said over government-run Radyo ng Bayan. ■

Ill-fated chopper's pilots fought Abu Sayyaf

by TARRA QUISMUNDO
Inquirer.net

JUST about a week ago, helicopter pilot Captain Alvin Alegata gathered his Air Force friends and retired generals to the christening of his five-month old daughter, Angel.

"He was very happy. There was no inkling that something bad would happen," recalled retired lieutenant general Horacio Tolentino, former Air Force chief who Alegata served as aide.

Also at that gathering was Air Force Major Rommel Roldan, who worked closely with Alegata in Tolentino's office.

"I was texting him just yesterday...I asked for a contact number then he asked me if I wanted anything from Baguio," Roldan said on Wednesday, April 8.

Alegata's eldest child, 4-year-old Apple, was celebrating her birthday that same Tuesday, April 7, but the captain had to be at work.

Around 4:20pm, Alegata and Major Ronaldo Sacatani lifted off from Loakan Airport in Baguio City in a Bell-412 helicopter, part of the presidential fleet, with six passengers, including Malacañang officials, onboard.

The chopper was found a total wreck almost a full day later.

"I was also his teacher at the PMA [Philippine Military Academy] that's why I was already comfortable with him when I became [Air Force commanding general]," said Tolentino, who headed the Air Force from February 2007 to January 2008.

A 1996 graduate of the PMA, the 37-year-old Alegata flew attack helicopters in missions in Mindanao against the Abu Sayyaf, which pulled off a string of kidnappings from 2000 to 2001, recalled his senior at the academy, Army Major Roy Derilo.

He then served as aide of at least two successive PAF chiefs—Tolentino and his predecessor former lieutenant general Jose Reyes.

While detailed with the 250th Presidential Airlift Wing, Alegata was among pilots who flew the Bell-412 to the town of San Fernando in Sibuyan Island, Romblon to ferry officials and journalists at the height of search and rescue operations for passengers of the sunken MV Princess of the Stars.

Forty-year-old Sacatani, a serviceman for 19 years, also flew air strikes on the MG-520 attack helicopter at the time of the Sipadan hostage crisis that began in May 2000, the April 2001 kidnapping of American Jeffrey Schilling, and the daylong battle between rebels and government troops in Lamitan, Basilan in June 2001.

"He was my air support at the time in Jolo. I was with the Scout Rangers then," said Derilo, Sacatani's mistah or classmate in the PMA Bantay Laya Class of 1994.

Another classmate, Marine Major Ferdinand Marcelino, remembered the time he flew with Sacatani during strafing sorties in Indanan, Sulu around 2001.

Marcelino, also detailed at the PDEA, was assigned to Marine Battalion Landing Team 5 at the time.

"We worked together in many flights in Indanan, in Tawi-Tawi...I was his spotter. Because I was more familiar with the terrain, I directed him to the targets," said Marcelino.

"His flights always went nicely. He was a good pilot," said the Marine. ■

Group to meet on detainees' right to vote

by ANNA VALMERO
Inquirer.net

A technical working group (TWG) formed by the Commission on Elections (Comelec) is set to meet Tuesday (April 14) to discuss and resolve the lack of legal and administrative mechanisms to allow detainees to register and vote, an official said.

Comelec commissioner and head of the TWG Rene Sarmiento said detainees, or individuals detained without being sentenced, are still presumed innocent of

their accusations and retain their right of suffrage but fail to exercise this right due to "legal and administrative" limitations.

According to statistics of the Bureau of Jail and Management and Penology (BJMP), detainees comprise about 95 percent of the total jail population.

Citing BJMP statistics, Sarmiento said 43,391 detainees are qualified to register and vote in 2010.

Sarmiento said the group would draft the proposal containing legal and procedural inputs of on-site registration and voting

for detainees in their respective penitentiary before submitting the paper to the Comelec en banc for approval.

Detainees face issues on access to registration, polling places and information, given that they are displaced from their residences.

In Section 135 of the Omnibus Election Code, it was stated that "no polling place shall be located within the perimeter of or inside a military camp or reservation or within a prison compound."

Tapping jail personnel as members of the Board of Election In-

spector on election day and conducting campaigns for detainees are also issues that need to be resolved.

The TWG is studying if detainees can be included in the local absentee voting law and be allowed to exercise their right of suffrage, said Sarmiento.

If these legal and administrative issues preventing detainees to vote are addressed, "the 2010 elections will be historic, paving way for political leaders to listen to the plight of detainees," noted Sarmiento. ■

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