

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

FilAm to sue RP Gov't for alleged...

PAGE A1 ◀
 events that led to her capture and six-day ordeal by her torturers.

The UC San Diego alum said that she was in the Philippines to research on a writing project and help assist in a medical mission in La Paz, Tarlac.

After coming back from a recent survey trip on May 19, she claims that 15 armed military men wearing "ski masks" and holding "high powered rifles" barged through the door of the house where she was staying and abducted her and two companions - Juanito Carabeo and John Edward Jandoc.

"I kept shouting my name and was being punched repeatedly," said Roxas during the press conference held at the Echo Park Methodist Church and broadcast online simultaneously to the Philippines last Saturday. "They kept trying to tape my mouth but I kept taking it off and continued to say my name over and over again."

According to reports in the Philippines, neighbors recall hearing the commotion and told local authorities about what they witnessed.

Roxas said that she was held for six days in what she believes was a military base. She recalls hearing construction activities, gunfire as though

from a firing range and planes taking off and landing.

She said she was blindfolded and handcuffed to the back. She said that interrogators "punched", choked and accused of her of being a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

She denied their accusations and repeatedly told her interrogators that she was a US citizen. She demanded a lawyer.

"They told me even if a year passes, I would never see a lawyer, that in there I had no rights," she said. "They told me that it was people like me that is costing the government so much money."

Her captors continued to interrogate her and questioned her about the location of other members of the CPP-NPA, she recalls.

After six days, her captors brought her to a nearby relative's home. They threatened her to keep her silence about her abduction.

Roxas said that one of her two companions - John Edward Jandoc - is still missing. Carabeo was brought home. However, he has not spoken about the events.

"I want the Philippine government and the military to be held accountable for what they did to me," said Roxas. "What they did has been hap-

pening and continues to happen. I want them to be held accountable so this does not happen to anyone else."

Staged abduction

The Philippine government and military officials have denied any responsibility for Roxas and her two friends disappearance claiming her story and abduction was "scripted."

"There are two possibilities here and one is that indeed government troops may have something to do with it," Brig. Gen. Gaudencio Pangilinan of the Civil Relations Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines said in a statement.

If military agents were involved in the torture and abduction of Roxas, Pangilinan vowed that he would personally make certain that they would be punished "with the full might of the law."

"If that is the case, we guarantee you that to this date, our intelligence and investigative outfit are searching for any lead to identify these human rights violators," he said to Inquirer.net.

Pangilinan said another possibility was that Roxas' allegations were "scripted" to make it appear that her abductors were members of the AFP.

"If you read through the revelations, the supposed abductors must be morons to allow those

information to be heard by Ms. Roxas," he told Inquirer.net.

Deputy Presidential Spokesperson Lorelei Fajardo said Roxas should come up with evidence to prove her allegations.

And Malacañang, Press Secretary Cerge Remonde was also not immediately buying Roxas' account. "We know that there are groups that do nothing but destroy the President," he said.

Roxas was surprised by the denials of the government and military officials.

"No amount of their lies or denials could ever deny the truth of what happened to me," she said.

"It is such an absurd argument," added Rhonda Ramiro of BAYAN-USA. "Anyone who sees Melissa or reads or listen to her testimony or any of the thousands of victims of human rights violations knows that this is real...It's time for the government to stop being in denial and start doing something to stop the human rights violations."

Roxas will meet with California Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator Sanchez, according to Ramiro.

Roxas also said that she plans to pursue her legal action in the Philippines and the US. ■

DFA should...

PAGE A1 ◀

the government around P859.7 million in taxpayers' money and the agencies and companies involved have been getting away with it since 2007.

According to him, in behalf of millions of taxpayers, Anakpawis had asked the courts to reprimand the DFA, BSP and the French firm and to explain the deal, which has given rise to questions about its legitimacy and the motives of the parties involved.

"We are invoking the right of the people to information on matters of public concern and a full disclosure of their transactions regarding the e-passport project. We hope that our petition will help shed light on the issue," he said.

"What the court should decide here is whether the people can access the information surrounding the e-passport anomalous transactions. We are just seeking the truth. It's up to the presiding judge whether she will let the truth come out or let deceit and lies remain covered," Maglunsod added. ■

Filipino inmates famous...

PAGE A1 ◀

the video.

Crisanto Nieri, 38, was feeling a little extra stress. He danced Jackson's part in *Thriller*.

"Even as a kid, he was already my idol," said Nieri, who is serving seven years on drug charges. "I am happy that our video became famous, but I feel some pressure to perform well."

A crowd of 700 Cebuanos and foreign tourists watched the performance from a second-floor corridor, swaying to the music and applauding as the inmates, dressed in orange prison T-shirts and sweat pants, stomped and clapped in unison in the hilltop prison, behind thick stone walls topped by electrified razor wire.

Other numbers included *Ben, I'll Be There* and *We Are the World*. The inmates then held up a 5-by-10 foot (1.5-by-3 meter) tarpaulin showing Michael Jackson holding a sword with his name written below it.

Others waved the flags of the Philippines and other nations.

Before the show, the performers dedicated a prayer to Jackson's family.

"I was sad because one of

the songs of Michael Jackson, *Thriller*, made us famous around the world," said Francis Mercader, 36, who has spent a year in detention while on trial for drug charges.

Byron Garcia, the Cebu provincial security consultant who came up with the idea of adding synchronized dancing to poorly attended exercise sessions, said he was surprised by the popularity of the 2007 video — one of more than a dozen inmate dance numbers he has posted on YouTube.

Thriller has attracted 24.3 million hits since it was posted two years ago, with nearly a million of them in the 24 hours since news of Jackson's death spread.

The inmates "consider Michael Jackson as a god here," Garcia said. "If not for Michael Jackson, they would not have this international recognition."

"The fame brought them back their self-esteem," he told reporters. "So that's why we have these public performances."

Inmate Alfredo Gaballo, 52, says Jackson "inspired us, so we are all sad about his death."

"The performance on June 27 has been amazing," said Karen Benrad, 29, from London. She and about two dozen foreign and local tourists later joined the inmates at the prison quadrangle, dancing to the tune of *Macarena* and *I Just Can't Get Enough*.

Kim Hua-sung, a 23-year-old South Korean student in Cebu who watched the inmates' performance, said he is also a Jackson fan. "I'm sad that I can't listen to more songs from him."

In Taiwan, two top Michael Jackson impersonators donned fedora hats and sequined outfits Saturday, moonwalking to *Billie Jean* in their own tribute to the pop star.

Thirty-year-old Wang Chihwei told The Associated Press he secured a photo op with his idol during Jackson's whirlwind tour in 1993 after winning an impersonation contest.

"I didn't know much English so I could only tell him, 'I love you,'" Wang said. "He was very friendly. I melted when he put his hand on my shoulder for the photo." ■



MEMORABILIA. Rene Rivo, a Filipino record collector and audio shop owner, brings out his favorite Michael Jackson album as he shows his collection in suburban Manila on Monday, June 29. There has been a sudden demand for Michael Jackson albums since the death of the 'King of Pop'.
 AP Photo by Aaron Favila



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