

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## Opposition wary over Arroyo-Obama meeting

by THEA ALBERTO  
Inquirer.net

MANILA – The public must be wary of the upcoming meeting of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and United States President Barack Obama which could be “for their own gain” only, opposition groups said.

United Opposition and Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay said Arroyo might use the meeting to secure Obama’s support for efforts by her allies to amend the 1987 Constitution, in exchange for the return of US bases in the country.

“The 1987 Constitution ex-

pressly prohibits foreign military bases in the country. But with Arroyo allies intent on amending the Constitution, the ban can be amended to allow the US to again open military bases in the Philippines,” Binay said in a statement.

“The main political concern of the US is that the elections push through in 2010. Mrs. Arroyo has assured the US there will be elections, but she did not say it will be under a presidential form,” he said.

“We all know the elections that they (administration allies) are contemplating is for a parliament where Mrs. Arroyo plans

to become prime minister,” he added.

The left-wing Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) meanwhile said Arroyo would take advantage of the meeting through photo opportunities while Obama would try to “reinforce neo-colonial interests.”

“Both Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and US president Barack Obama plan to utilize the meeting for their own gain. Arroyo needs the publicity as a boost for her failing regime. Obama needs this to ensure US that economic, political and military interests in Southeast Asia are maintained. It remains to be seen though if

the people stand to gain anything from this meeting,” said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes in a separate statement.

Arroyo will finally meet with Obama at the White House on July 30, following two failed attempts to meet the US leader.

Over the weekend, the White House announced that Obama would meet Arroyo for talks on “ways to enhance US-Philippine cooperation on critical global issues, including counterterrorism and climate change, as well as further the traditionally strong alliance and bond between our nations.” ■

### SOLONS SAY

## Arroyo, Obama must tackle military, economy

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ  
Inquirer.net

MANILA – President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should make a pitch for increased military assistance and strengthened economic partnership with the United States when she meets with President Barack Obama, leaders of the House of Representative said on Monday.

At the same time, several lawmakers from the opposition said Arroyo should also discuss the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with Obama, saying this affected the country’s relations with the US.

The White House announced over the weekend that the two leaders would meet on July 30, their first meeting since Obama won in November last year and barely a year before Arroyo steps down after nine years in Malacañang.

“The economy and its recovery and the peace and regional security against terrorism, especially the Mindanao problem must be addressed,” Speaker Prospero Nograles said in a text message.

The House leader said the technology available to the Armed Forces of the Philippines should be beefed up to make it more responsive in detecting and pursuing terrorist and kidnap-for-ransom bandits.

Italian aid worker Eugenio

Vagni was released over the weekend after six months in captivity.

Vagni and two fellow Red

Cross workers – Swiss Andreas Notter and Filipino Mary Jean Lacaba – were abducted by the Abu Sayyaf on Jolo Island, in

Sulu province on January 15. Lacaba and Notter were released on April 2 and April 8,

► PAGE A10

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