

# RP to benefit from added US spending on defense—Gates

by JAIME LAUDE  
Philstar.com

THE Philippine government stands to benefit from "a significant addition of money" the US government is putting into its 2010 defense spending worldwide.

"One of the fundamental tenets of the American foreign policy under (US President Barack Obama's) administration as well as the Department of Defense itself is the growing importance of partners around the world and building partner capacity. I put a significant addition of money in our fiscal year 2010 for this purpose," US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last June 1.

Gates assured local defense officials the Philippines would be part of the global defense build-up of the US government.

The amount, Gates said, would involve hundreds of millions of dollars that the US defense department would use to build up partner capacity of allies like the Philippines.

Gates, however, stressed the US government would be building partner capacity at a comfortable pace for allied countries.

"We will be moving at a pace that is comfortable with them and in a way that is comfortable for them to build relationships with us," Gates said. "We have to look at this and I think in the long

term, the stronger the foundation we can build under this partner relationship the longer their life will last and the more effective that will be."

Gates also assured the Philippines of Washington's continued support in the fight against terrorism.

"Together, we will not relent until this threat has been eliminated," Gates said before meeting with a group of Filipino troops last June 1.

Gates said he planned to tell them "that we are partners, and we'll continue to strongly support their efforts to defeat terrorists and extremists."

Gates spoke with his counterpart, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, of Washington's commitment to reaffirm security ties with the Philippines.

He promised to help the Philippines eradicate the remnants of the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf in Mindanao.

The US defense chief raised the issue of kidnapping during the meeting with Teodoro and offered more American assistance to help curb the abductions and other continuing terror threats.

Teodoro, for his part, said that being partners, both the Philippines and the US could always explore areas where it can translate into assistance for both nations.

He said the Philippines has to

continuously manage and develop its own resources and not simply rely on foreign assistance.

Gates agreed there are a number of areas in which both nations have the potential to be more effective partners.

Not only in terms of bilateral issues, Gates said, but also regional issues.

"I think what you can expect from the Obama administration (is) looking at the Philippines as an old friend of the US," Gates said.

"There are a lot of things we can do together and I think we will be looking for those kinds of opportunities to continue to broaden and deepen the relationship," he said.

### Not even Gates

Gates and his party were not spared from quarantine procedures against the Influenza A(H1N1) virus when they arrived in the country last Monday, officials said.

US Ambassador Kristie Kenney said a doctor of the US defense department traveled with Gates and made the necessary medical procedures in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH) in Manila.

"The quarantine procedures were properly coordinated with the DOH," Kenney said, adding the global concern over the spread of the flu virus does not exempt anyone. ■

# Puno to administration bets: Stick to presidential goal

by CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE  
Philstar.com

MANILA—Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno last June 2 dared presidential aspirants of the administration to stick to their goal and not slide down, which would only ease out current vice presidential candidates like him.

Puno, who is seeking the nomination of Lakas-Kampi-CMD as vice presidential bet in the 2010 elections, said he will respect the decision of the party whether or not he is chosen.

Puno told radio dzRH it would be better for the selection process if those who presented themselves as presidential candidates will be prohibited from sliding to a lower post so as not to muddle the picture

further.

There were insinuations that presidential aspirants who will not be chosen to become the party's standard-bearer would slide down as vice presidential candidate.

Puno said the administration coalition is considering Vice President Noli de Castro, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Sen. Richard Gordon and Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chairman Bayani Fernando as its presidential standard-bearer for 2010.

He said that Gordon, who is already popular, has yet to campaign in the party while Fernando is strong-willed and determined to run for the presidency.

Puno said Teodoro has just



Interior Sec. Ronaldo Puno started on his plans to seek the highest post in the country. ■

# Smartmatic a cinch for automated poll deal

by KRISTINE L. ALAVE  
Inquirer.net

The Smartmatic International and Total Information Management Corp. (TIM) consortium is the "virtual" winner of the contract to automate the 2010

elections, according to the Commission on Elections procurement committee.

Ferdinand Rafanan, chair of the special bids and awards committee, said the committee would recommend by late Tuesday night that the Comelec en banc award the contract for the P11-billion automation project to the consortium consisting of the Netherlands-based Smartmatic International and the local TIM.

"It should be obvious. It's the Smartmatic-TIM consortium," said Rafanan when asked if the committee was ready to recommend a bidder.

"Congratulations! Let us work together. Let's shock the cynics. We must always follow the law while aiming also to follow our own goal honest, orderly and peaceful electronic elections," he said.

### Only qualifier

Of the seven companies that submitted bids last May 4, Smartmatic-TIM was the only one that passed all the eligibility, financial and technical requirements during the month-long bidding process that saw rival bidders trading barbs against each other and sessions stretching late into the evening.

The consortium's tender was P7.2 billion, about P4 billion lower than what the Comelec had originally budgeted.

"They passed all the criteria, the legal eligibility, the technical and the financial. They submitted a complying financial bid and then we tested the machines against all the 26 criteria," Rafanan said.

After receiving the recommendation, the Comelec en banc is expected to deliberate on it and make an announcement within a week.

With only one bidder qualified for the P11-billion electronic voting project, Rafanan said it is highly unlikely that the en banc would reject the recommendation.

### Fair to all bidders

He said the bidding process was fair to all bidders and hoped that the losing companies would not challenge the decision as it was made with openness.

"Everything they did here was recorded," he said.

As the winning bidder, Smartmatic-TIM not only will have to supply the Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) machines, it also has to implement and manage the information technology aspect of the elections, where about 50 million Filipinos are expected to participate.

The PCOS is a ballot-based voting and counting machine that will be installed in each precinct. After the precinct closes, the data from the machine will be transmitted to the next canvassing level.

The Comelec hopes that computerization would minimize large-scale electoral fraud and cheating, which have plagued previous exercises.

TIM is a Philippine-based information technology solutions company established in 1985. It has implemented IT projects for government departments like the Social Security System, the Department of Trade and Industry and Government Service Insurance System, among others.

Its list of corporate clients include banks, manufacturing firms and telecommunication companies.

Both the TIM and Smartmatic have had previous experience with the Comelec. ■

# Teodoro rating disappoints Malacañang

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presidential aspirant.

"Before my mother's birthday on Oct. 22, there will be a very clear signal on what I would do," she said.

Claudio said Teodoro should have fared better in the Pulse Asia survey.

The President's political adviser said the survey rating was not a "reflection of the capability" of Teodoro.

### Time to catch up

Claudio noted that the survey was conducted about a year before the May 2010 elections and the Cabinet official "has all the time and opportunity to catch up."

"Secretary Teodoro has every reason, every opportunity, every determination to make his position, capabilities, qualification and vision of government better known to the public so as to have a more positive influence on forthcoming surveys," he said.

Claudio said he had spoken with a number of people who had "high praises" for Teodoro following the presidential aspirant's appearance in a recent leadership forum at the Ateneo de Manila University.

"A lot of people were impressed by his performance there," he said. "I think in his case, it's just a matter of being able to project himself and expose himself a little more to the public."

### Selection process

But Claudio made it clear that the new Lakas-Kampi-CMD party was not necessarily endorsing Teodoro's bid to become the administration's standard-bearer pending the start of the official selection process.

He said Bayani Fernando, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chair, had "as much time and opportunity to be able to expose himself in a better light, in a better way to the public."

Despite an aggressive effort to make himself known nationwide, Fernando registered a miserable 0.3 percent in the Pulse Asia survey.

"We have been very supportive of his efforts, not only as a Cabinet member, but as a presidential aspirant," Claudio said of Fernando.

"We do wish that people will give him a better chance in terms of trying to get to know the fellow and getting themselves better acquainted with the accomplishments that he has made in his current position," the political adviser said.

Teodoro's and Fernando's ratings aside, Claudio said the administration was "elated" that De Castro got a high survey rating.

"We would like to think that this is in recognition of the good work that he is doing in the President's Cabinet," he said.

"The Vice President is certainly able to project very well the caring and the work and the efforts that he is exerting to address the concerns and the plight of the poor segment of our population," Claudio said. ■

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