

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

7 bodies retrieved from chopper crash site

by DELMAR CARIÑO & ELMER KRISTIAN DAUGOY
Inquirer.net

MANILA—Seven bodies have been retrieved from the wreckage of a presidential helicopter that crashed in Ifugao province, a police official said, hours after the aircraft was found in the hills of Tinoc town.

Senior Superintendent Danilo Pelisco, Benguet provincial police director, said that search and retrieval teams pulled four more bodies from the wreckage of the Bell 412 chopper with the tail number 1946, which had gone missing shortly after taking off from Baguio City's Loakan airport.

Governor Teodoro Baguilat Jr. said three bodies were initially recovered from the crash site in Barangay (village) Eheb and carried on foot to an area in Tinoc accessible by land transport and, from there, to the Tinoc District Hospital.

While Pelisco described one of the bodies as clad in a blue uniform and possibly that of a helicopter crewman, he said all the remains were "burned beyond recognition."

This leaves one of the eight passengers of the ill-fated helicopter, which carried aides of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, still unaccounted for.

Pelisco said the four recovered bodies would be transferred to the Tinoc Provincial Hospital before being flown to Baguio City for identification as soon as possible.

Arroyo, who is staying at the Mansion in Baguio City, has been informed of the development, Presidential Management Staff chief Hermogenes Esperon Jr. told reporters in Malacañang.

On board the aircraft were Arroyo's military aide, Brigadier General Carlos Clet, undersecretary Marilou Frostrom of the Presidential Management Staff, undersecretary Jose Capadocia Jr. of the Office of the Press Secretary, assistant director Perlita Bandayanon of the PMS' office of regional concerns, chopper pilot Major Rolando Sacatani, his co-pilot Captain Alvin Alegata, Petty Officer 1 Demy Reyno, and Air Force crewman Staff Sergeant Romeo Gem Perez.

Miners and mountaineers have been tapped in the search, Esperon said.

Damian said the reports he received indicated that the helicopter got entangled in a tree, causing the crash.

In a separate interview, Director Leopoldo Bataoil of the Directorate for Integrated Police Operations in Northern Luzon said they have deployed two helicopters and additional ground rescue teams to scour the crash site.

Senior Superintendent Samuel Diciano, deputy director of the Cordillera police, said a team of Benguet policemen aboard a helicopter found the wreckage past 2 p.m. in Sitio (sub-village) Mangngihi in Eheb.

In a telephone interview, Brigadier General Horacio Lapinid, commander of the 1st Air Division said that members of the Air Force's



A file photo of the presidential helicopter, a Bell 412 with the tail number 1946, which went missing after taking off from Baguio City Tuesday afternoon with five Malacañang officials and two pilots onboard. Reports on Wednesday said the wreck of the aircraft had been found in Ifugao.

AKP image file photo by Keith Bacongco

505 Search and Rescue Team have been sent to the crash site.

Lapinid said the Air Force team was on a US CH-46 chopper lent by the US embassy that was originally to be used for the Balikatan exercises in the Bicol region.

He said the Air Force's Safety Office would conduct the investigation into the crash.

Arroyo's aides were supposed to be the advance team for the President's inspection of the Bontoc-Banaue road project in the tourist town of Banaue, which was called off after the chopper was confirmed missing.

CBCP to Pinoys: Embrace your cross

by EVELYN MACAIRAN
Philstar.com

CATHOLIC Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) spokesman Monsignor Pedro Quitorio III said last April 7 kissing the feet of Jesus Christ on Good Friday should be a reminder for people to embrace the crosses in their lives, instead of just asking God to bail them out of their problems or sufferings.

"When a person kisses Christ who carries His cross, it also means that he or she is also kissing his or her personal cross. The irony is that many people thought, in their superstitious belief, that when they kiss the cross they want Christ to ease their burdens. People should embrace the crosses in their lives," Quitorio said.

He added that people are not expected to die like Christ on the

cross to show their love for God because "what He has done for us is enough."

Meanwhile, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales and the office of the Presidential Adviser on Climate Change (PACC) asked the public to donate the money they would save during their three-day fasting this Holy Week to the Pondo ng Pinoy's (PNP) social programs for the poor.

Charter change making Nograles unpopular—JDV

by JESS DIAZ
Philstar.com

CEBU—The persistent Charter change (Chacha) initiative of President Arroyo's congressmen-allies is making Speaker Prospero Nograles unpopular, his predecessor said last April 7. "People believe they are out to extend the President's stay in office beyond 2010 through Chacha," Pangasinan Rep. Jose de

Venecia Jr. told *The STAR*. Rep. Teodoro Casiño of the militant party-list group Bayan Muna voiced the same observation.

De Venecia and Casiño were commenting on the results of the first quarter survey of the Social Weather Stations (SWS), which showed that Nograles had a net rating of -22, down by five points from -17 in the previous quarter. "This is the lowest rating yet

for Speakers of the House of Representatives since 1990," SWS said.

It was in that year that SWS started asking people periodically about what they think of House speakers. It was the late Palawan Rep. Ramon Mitra Jr. who was Speaker in 1990. In fact, Mitra was the first Speaker of the post-martial law Congress.

Nograles shrugged off his negative ratings in popularity.

Puno moral force movement in place

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in the United Methodist Church in Manila's launch of its own moral force movement, said the Philippines has become a "moral pariah" in the community of nations because of widespread corruption.

Puno said that the country was a "social volcano about to explode."

"We would like to choose and have elected transformational leaders from the highest post to the lowest post being contested in the forthcoming 2010 elections and the moral force movement would also like to unite all similarly minded organizations," Marquez said.

He said that the core group in its two meetings was briefed by Jesuit experts and has decided to focus on defining leaders that would bring about transformation in the country.

"It will not be endorsing any specific candidate. It will only give the qualities of the candidates that we need to be elected," Marquez said.

He said that a technical working group of volunteers has been formed to assist the movement.

"The core group will again meet after Holy Week. In between meetings, a lot of assignments are being given to the technical working group," Marquez said.

Advocacy vs corruption
Marquez said the movement is Puno's personal advocacy against corruption. "This is a personal call, a personal crusade of the Chief Justice. It does not involve the court in whatever manner," he said.

"The judiciary is as much as possible being shielded from this," he said. Once the movement is in full operation, Marquez said Puno plans to step aside.

He said the group would have its launch sometime in May, a year before the 2010 elections.

"We don't want it to be identified with the administration nor do we want any of the members identified with the opposition or supportive of either group," Marquez said.

"So it was really not very easy to get a respected member of the business community who is not allied one way or the other," he said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo

Ermita welcomed the movement.

"That serves as a wake-up call for many, especially those serving in government. That's how we should look at it. We can't say we're all clean," he told reporters at the Mt. Samat Shrine in Bataan province.

Ermita, however, said that rooting out corruption was part of the program of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who has ruled for more than eight years since January 2001.

"All leaders of countries would like to rule under a program of morality," he said.

Ermita also said that it wasn't surprising that Puno made such a call, pointing out that having rose through the ranks of the judiciary he was "aware of the causes of anomalies."

Touchy issue
"Chief Justice Puno knows what to do, and knows why our morality has dipped because of the crimes he has witnessed," he said.

Corruption has been a touchy issue to the Arroyo administration, which has been rocked by a string of scandals since 2001.

Confidence on RP economy remains

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region are helping to cushion the impacts on the most vulnerable people," Jim Adams, WB vice president for the East Asia and Pacific region, was quoted in a statement. "With unemployment likely to increase, especially as jobs in manufacturing and construction disappear, social protection efforts will have to expand to meet very real human needs."

The WB noted that the Philippine government's conditional cash transfer (CCT) program has been scaled up to benefit 360,000 at the start of this year, from only 20,000 in 2007 when the CCT was on pilot mode.

A new program to help returning overseas workers who have lost their jobs is also part of the stimulus package, it added.

In its country report on the Philippines, the WB noted that the country's financial sector remains sound although job losses, exports slump and potentially

a decline in remittance inflows and revenues would engage the country's policymakers.

"A key downside risk lies on how vulnerable remittance inflows are to the global recession," according to the WB country update on the Philippines. "Domestic demand, boosted to a large extent by strong remittances since 2001, has been the most important growth driver for the economy."

On a regional basis, the WB said China would drive growth in East Asia and the Pacific although global recovery would still be pinned on how advanced economies like the US perform.

The WB update noted that China could begin to recover this year on account of its huge economic stimulus package. The entire East Asia and Pacific region could stabilize when China's economic recovery takes full hold by next year, it said.

Over the medium term, the

WB said growth of East Asian economies would hinge on innovation. "Over the medium term, the countries of developing East Asia can achieve high rates of economic expansion in a slowly growing world economy to the extent they are able to extract more growth from domestic demand, boost competitiveness, penetrate new markets, and further improve the attractiveness of the region as a key destination for foreign investment."

It added: "Convergence to developed countries will depend to an ever greater degree on the ability of firms to move closer to the technological frontier and be driven more by innovation than imitation. Innovative firms need different public institutions and policies, including more openness, less government intervention, enhanced flexibility, a more educated labor force, and better developed and properly regulated private finance." (PNA)

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