

Written by Joseph G. Lariosa  
Thursday, 18 March 2010 18:08 -

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By JOSEPH G. LARIOSA

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## **Filipino Americans Ask President Obama Through Secretary Clinton to Send Observer Teams in RP Elections**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A Filipino-American delegation led by Atty. Loida Nicolas-Lewis met recently with United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, expressing concerns on doubts of “clean, fair and credible” presidential elections in the Philippine s in May.

Attorney Lewis asked Secretary Clinton “to recommend to President Barack Obama to send an observer team similar to that headed by Sen. Richard Lugar in the 1986 Philippine Snap Presidential Elections.”

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Senator Lugar, still a ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, headed the team composed of incumbent Sen. John Kerry (now the current chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations) and some 30 others that observed the elections called by President Marcos. The team reported cheating, fraud and abuse during those elections.

In an audience held on March 10 in the U.S. State Department with Mrs. Clinton, Mrs. Lewis said that if the power shortage – energy crisis – in the Philippines is true, it could imperil the conduct of the first automated elections.

Lewis told the top U.S. diplomat that as a result of the failure of elections, other schemes and scenarios, the Philippine government has been reported to be placing the entire country “under a state of emergency.”

Mrs. Clinton commented that she will take the concerns “very seriously.”

She immediately ordered her deputy chief of staff for foreign relations, Jake Sullivan, who consulted and met with the group to elaborate on their concerns for more than two hours.

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The Philippine government will use for the first time an automated election, using the system owned by Smartmatic Corporation, a Boca Raton, Florida-based software electronic voting machine manufacturer that is partly owned by dictator Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

{xtypo\_quote} The Arroyo Administration has 'politicized' the Philippine military, when appointees to top commanding generals of the various branches of the Armed Forces were limited to the Philippine Military Class of 1978, which has created 'restiveness' to the more senior classes. It noted that Cabinet members of Mrs. Arroyo are mostly retired military officers.  
{/xtypo\_quote}

Mrs. Lewis presented a letter from "Concerned Filipino-Americans, U.S.A." that claimed that "pilot tests of this automated election system's precinct count optical scanners (PCOS) are erratic and unreliable.

"The system can only be operated by Smartmatic employees and there is not enough time to train all the Commission on Elections (Comelec) personnel, and public-school teachers, who are deputized poll workers."

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Because of the lack of time, the petitioners fear that the Comelec has so far been only able to deliver 74,000 PCOS out of the reported 260,000 precincts needed throughout the country.

In combining PCOS into clusters to fit into one polling place, it could invite “confusion, overcrowding, and voter disenfranchisement.”

The petitioners also expressed concerns that the Smartmatic has “disabled the PCOS ultra-violet rays reader of each ballot’s barcode. In so doing, it removed the safeguard and protective measures against multiple counting of the same ballot resulting to cheating and possible vote padding.”

The two-page petition also told Mrs. Clinton that the Philippines has “politicized” the Philippine military, when appointees to top commanding generals of the various branches of the Armed Forces were limited to the Philippine Military Class of 1978, which has created “restiveness” to the more senior classes. It noted that Cabinet members of Mrs. Arroyo are mostly retired military officers.

It also said that “in the 2004 presidential elections, it has been reported that the military was

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behind the scandal that fraudulently padded the votes in favor of Mrs. Arroyo.” It was “done in concert with the Ampatuan Clan of Maguindanao” some members of which are “now on trial for the gruesome massacre of 57 people, including 31 journalists.”

It said in case of failure of elections in the presidency and vice presidency, if Mrs. Arroyo wins in the House of Representatives and becomes the Speaker of the House, Mrs. Arroyo is in line to become Acting President.

Because NAMFREL was not accredited in the upcoming elections for the first time since 1986, the Fil Am group urged Mrs. Clinton to send an observer team that will ensure “an independent and credible” elections. The Comelec, instead, recognized the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), a newly formed organization that has no track record in poll watching.

The other members of the delegation were Celia Pangilinan-Donahue (Washington, D.C.); Angie Cruz, Ph. D. ( New York ); Marlon L. Pecson ( Chicago , Illinois ); Jose A. Golez ( Texas ); Florita Tolentino Miranda ( Texas ); and Angelito Miranda ( Texas ). Also on hand included this reporter, Rodney Jaleco (

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*Manila Mail*  
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When asked by this reporter as to who will benefit from the failure of elections, Mrs. Lewis said, "the sitting President," referring to Mrs. Arroyo. (lariosa\_jos@sbcglobal.net)

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