

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (jGLi) – The National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and G-8 leaders and rallyists have really one thing in common: They each want to end wars in Afghanistan and other countries.

They only differ on the means to do it. The NATO leaders led by President Barack Obama want to do it with lots of elaborate protocols, like doing it in the confines of air-conditioned rooms. While rallyists could do it anywhere, even under the rain-drenching night like last Sunday, May 20, in front of The Art Institute of Chicago at South Michigan Avenue corner East Adams St

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The day started with a violent standoff between anti-riot policemen and demonstrators at the corner of Cermak Road and Michigan Avenue in Chicago's southside. Several rallyists were injured while many more were arrested.

Although, the 25th NATO summit involves 60 nations, discussing mostly European concerns, some Filipino Americans tried to venture into the perimeter of the rally sites.

Chicago Filipino-American community organizer Marlon L.

Pecson said he is interested on what the United States will do after it withdraws its troops from Afghanistan in 2014. “Will the U.S. be interested to re-deploy its returning troops to Asia to deter China from its aggression in Philippine Western Sea (South China Sea) to open the sea lanes to international shipping traffic? This is something I would have loved to ask Mr. Obama if I had a chance to ask a question,” Mr. Pecson said.

Mr. Pecson is an officer of the Chicago chapter of the U.S. Pinoys for Good Governance, who obtained a permit to rally before the China Consulate in Chicago last May 11 against China’s intrusion in Philippine Western Sea.

“I just hope the U.S. will not leave the Philippines to fend off

threats from the menacing and pesky giant China neighbor, which is claiming Scarborough (Panatag or Huagyan) Shoal, which really belongs to the Philippines by virtue of the Shoal's proximity to the Philippines (within the Philippines' 200 exclusive economic zone)," Mr. Pecson added.

NO TO *UKAY-UKAY* JOURNALISM

For her part, Yvonne T. Hortillo, freelance writer and volunteer columnist of *The Filipino-American Community Builder*, a Chicago

monthly, said she wanted to cover the NATO rally just to be more relevant and more update with what is happening in Chicago

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The Manila-born Ms. Hortillo said, “I will really feel bad if I write a column or story about NATO that I will only base on local radio, television or Internet report. (She does not want to be identified with what former Filipino sports editor and former North Cotabato Gov. Manny Pinol calls as “*Ukay-Ukay*” [used-clothing or second hand-sourced] journalist.) When I have all the chance to see the NATO events unfold in front of my very eyes, I will be very authoritative to say that, hey, I was in Chicago to cover the historic NATO event even if I was not given a NATO press accreditation.”

For this reporter, covering NATO was like covering EDSA People Power in 1986, where thousands of people poured out into the street to force the overthrow of President Marcos from Power. But the NATO was tame in comparison to People Power in terms of security as the number of police nearly matched the number of hundreds of rallyists.

The NATO summit was long in planning and plenty of logistics

to boot. Its security is backed up by Blackhawk helicopters hovering over downtown (this reporter tried to take a photo of the helicopter under a pouring rain Sunday but the zoom lens was not capable of getting its clear picture), the Illinois National Guard, the Illinois State Police, the Secret Service and “other supplementary forces.”

During the People Power Revolution in the Philippines, I saw several planes from U.S. Clark Air Base hovering around

Camp

Aguinaldo

to deter any Philippine Air Force plane or Sikorksy gunship from threatening demonstrators.

NOT AFRAID OF THE RAIN

Despite the drenching rain, the rallyists in front of The Art Institute of Chicago did not scamper from getting wet. They stood their ground, speaking out, singing and dancing Hula Hoop and waving their placards that urged NATO to end all wars and devote moneys to prop up production, economy and jobs, instead.

I just notice that both the anti-riot policemen and rallyists were ready for the long haul. After almost four hours of standoff, I noticed not one of the rallyists nor anti-riot policemen headed to the urinals to relieve themselves. Perhaps, none of them did not drink a lot of liquids before the standoff.

Not only the CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) buses were mobilized to load the anti-riot policemen but also scores of limousine service vehicles were used to transport security people from point to point.

So that onlookers and rallyists could not form and start a group, anti-riot policemen were fielded in each street corner of prospective rally sites, preventing passers-by from getting near a rally site. It was adopting a “divide-and-rule” strategy as anti-riot policemen dispersed any group that tries to assemble in every opportunity.

After the 10 o'clock evening news, when some local televisions were still covering the rally on the spot, the rallyists started to get scarce.

The [standoff in front of The Art Institute of Chicago](#) dispersed about 11 p.m.

with no violence. I only observed one arrest after a man tossed some empty bottle towards the anti-riot policemen, not knowing that there were some plainclothes men mixing with the rallyists. He was arrested in front of me without a struggle.

There was a new phenomenon though that I observed at the rally. Many rallyists were armed with their own cell phone photo and video cameras. The cell phones have become the rallyists' best weapons to document police brutality.

Might as well, after all, when the President of the United States is in the caller's vicinity, it is very hard to call on a cell phone but one can still manage to send a text message. # # #

Editor's Note: To contact the author, please e-mail him at: (lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net)