

The accused in the Pestano case are trying hard to divert public attention from the murder charge filed against them by the current no-nonsense Ombudsman for the killing of naval Ensign Philip Pestano in 1995.

There are circumstances in the killing of Philip and certain acts that indicate not only the involvement of the accused in the murder but also in the subsequent cover-up of the crime.

Their assertion that Philip committed suicide was belied by forensic experts -- local and international -- who were presented by the parents of the victim before various investigative agencies over the course of the last 15 years since the murder was committed.

The accused insinuate that an old wound that left a small scar on Philip's wrist showed that he was suffering from depression and had previously cut himself. Their facile conclusion was that, therefore, he had committed suicide.

The fact is that the 'wound' was but a superficial scratch that was caused when Philip used a knife on an empty soft drinks can to shape it into some kind of an ash tray.

In fact, Dr. Jose del Rosario, MD, then a Lt. Colonel and a neuro-psychiatry screener, who attended to Philip on the day when he got the wound said that it merely required three stitches "on the whole skin". In layman's terms, the wound was simply skin deep.

Moreover, Robert Clement Bosch, now a Lt. Commander, who accompanied Philip to the doctor, said in a sworn statement filed with the Ombudsman that "I personally noticed that the wound looked superficial and did not injure any major blood vein in his wrist. As a matter of fact, the wound already stopped bleeding while we were on our way to the hospital and it took only a few minutes for the medic to attend to it."

Psychiatrists have also testified in preliminary hearings that Philip was not suffering from any psychological or mental depression or ailment. Their testimonies have not been rebutted.

As to the 'frustrated romance' angle which the accused are noisily exploiting through their mass media releases, the thing is that Philip was happily engaged to be married shortly before he was killed.

It might be better for them to present their testimonies before the trial court so that the truth will out and where the guilty will thereafter be punished and the innocent freed according to the requirements of law and justice. # # #