



# ISSUE MONITOR

Center for Social Concern and Action

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## Mutiny in Makati

### Rebel Soldiers Ask GMA, Generals to Resign

On the eve of her State-of-the-Nation-Address (Sona), President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo faced a major threat to her government when mutinous soldiers stormed and occupied the Oakwood Premier Hotel in Makati City at 3 a.m. last Sunday, July 27, 2003.

The rebels demanded the President's resignation, her entire Cabinet and all generals. They accused the AFP hierarchy of corruption masterminding the recent bombings in Davao, southern Philippines. The bombings were staged to accuse the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as "terrorist" and to justify the request for U.S. military aid. The mutineers also exposed an alleged Malacañang plot to declare martial law in August following the execution of a secret plan to bomb Metro Manila. The plan seeks to extend the Macapagal-Arroyo presidency beyond 2004.

In a briefing early Sunday, military officials dismissed the mutineers' allegations as "pure lies." Lieutenant General Rodolfo Garcia, AFP vice chief of staff said that *"the military establishment would never sell arms and ammunition to the enemies of the state. They could have been fed false information; the government will never give over arms to the enemy because our soldiers will be directly affected by this."* He also dismissed the allegations the military perpetrated the bomb attacks in Davao sometime in March and April, which left dozens of civilians dead: *"The military merely responds to such attacks; it will never sow mayhem in Mindanao. Only those who wanted to sow terror there were capable of doing that,"* he told reporters.

A few hours later, Macapagal-Arroyo declared a *"state of rebellion"* and directed the AFP to suppress the rebellion. The President issued an ultimatum giving the rebels until 5 p.m. on the same day to surrender and return to their barracks. Around 700 Army soldiers and Marines loyal to the Arroyo administration were deployed around the areas occupied by the mutineers. They came aboard military trucks, armored personnel carriers (APCs) and other military vehicles.

Meanwhile, some members of the religious groups and civil society began gathering at Edsa Shrine in Quezon City in response to a pastoral letter issued by Manila Archbishop Cardinal Sin calling concerned Filipinos to defend the constitution and protect the government.

Hours before the first deadline came, around 15 out of more than 200 soldiers involved in the mutiny surrendered to government troops. And after a marathon meeting with Ambassador Roy Cimatu being the government negotiator together with middle level officers from the Navy and the Scout Rangers, the rebels surrendered peacefully and agreed to go back to their respective barracks the following day.

*"The crisis in Makati is over,"* a smiling President said in her broadcast. *"296 soldiers, including 70 officers, are standing down and returning to barracks. They will be investigated and their cases will be disposed of in accordance with the articles of war. They shall not be given special treatment"* she said.

Hence, retired former military chief Roy Cimatu told the reporters, the officers who led the mutiny would face military justice and the soldiers who were involved will be answerable to the articles of war, which govern the conduct of men in the uniform.

The President thanked the leaders of Congress, the church, the people and the international community for supporting her government. She added, *"I assure the world that this event does not in any way injure our national security and political stability... Once more, this has been a triumph for democracy."*

While it is true that some of the grievances the military mutineers have raised are legitimate, the methods they used to dramatize their concerns were illegal and immoral.

The **Center for Social Concern and Action (COSCA)** of the De La Salle University, which believes in human rights protection and active non-violence, is denouncing the mutiny in the strongest possible terms. **NO TO VIOLENCE! YES TO PEACEFUL REFORMS !**

WE SUPPORT the move to create independent commissions investigating the whole case and exposing unscrupulous military officials involved in graft and corruption as well as politicians behind the coup d'état attempt to destabilize our national economy. **WE RE-AFFIRM OUR CONVICTION TO A FAITH THAT SERVES, A FAITH THAT DOES JUSTICE!**