

Committee Daily Bulletin



17th Congress
First Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. I No. 120
June 7, 2017

COMMITTEE MEETING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Public Order and Safety jt. w/ Games and Amusements and Tourism	<i>Motu Proprio</i> inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the Resorts World Manila incident	<p>The three Committees, respectively chaired by Reps. Romeo Acop (2nd District, Antipolo City), Gus Tambunting (2nd District, Parañaque City), and Lucy Gomez (4th District, Leyte), held a joint inquiry into the incident at the Resorts World Manila (RWM) that occurred on June 2, 2017. While the inquiry was going on, a team of House Members also conducted an ocular inspection of the RWM, which is near the NAIA Dignitaries' Lounge in Pasay City, the venue of the hearing.</p> <p>With the decision to continue the inquiry next week, the Committee Chairpersons underscored the need to look deeper into the circumstances surrounding the grim incident that left 38 people dead, including the culprit. The inquiry, they added, aims to identify security lapses in the handling of the incident and the policies that need to be reviewed or put in place in order to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again.</p> <p>The subject of the inquiry was the incident that happened at past midnight of Friday, June 2, wherein a lone suspect, identified as Jessie Javier Carlos, barged into the Resorts World Manila's casino firing gunshots and setting the casino on fire.</p> <p>Despite Congress being on recess, the inquiry was able to bring together more than 60 House Members led by Speaker Pantaleon "Bebot" Alvarez (1st District, Davao del Norte) and Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas (1st District, Ilocos Norte). More than a hundred resource persons and guests also attended the hearing, including officials of the Resorts World, the Philippine National Police (PNP), Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), and other government agencies.</p> <p>Police Chief Superintendent Tomas Apolinario Jr., Southern Police District (SPD) director, reported on the status of the PNP's investigation and the measures undertaken by the PNP in response to the incident. He also mentioned that the PNP is still awaiting the results of tests being undertaken by the Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) including DNA test, autopsy of the suspect's body, and macroetching and ballistic exams of the armalite rifle he used.</p> <p>RWM President Kingson Sian presented video footage of the incident as proof that his company was able to execute its security and emergency plans which led to the evacuation of more than 12,000 employees and guests of Resorts World within a span of 27 minutes. Contrary to some allegations, he insisted that the casino's sprinklers activated in a timely manner, fire safety protocols were observed, and there were sufficient fire exits.</p> <p>Sian also explained that fear played a major role in the death of the 37 employees and guests of RWM who hid in bathrooms and small rooms inside the casino for safety, thinking that there were many assailants at that time, but were instead suffocated by the thick and toxic fumes.</p> <p>PAGCOR Chair Andrea Domingo disclosed that the Resorts World voluntarily suspended its operations immediately after the June 2 incident. However, Majority Leader Fariñas was not pleased with it, insisting that PAGCOR should have been the one which immediately suspended RWM's operations.</p>

		<p>On the query of Speaker Alvarez, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Regional Director Oscar Albayalde maintained that the Resorts World incident was a mere case of robbery and not a terrorist attack, explaining that terrorism involves the use of violence in furtherance of a political objective. Albayalde added that it is an act of violence that results in massive number of casualties and creates massive fear.</p> <p>The Majority Leader asked Armeen Gomez, chief of the Resorts World's Safety, Security and Surveillance Office, about the company's security protocol in handling the incident.</p> <p>The RWM security officer claimed that when he was first informed about the incident, he instructed his personnel to go after the assailant and execute RWM's evacuation and emergency protocols. When he realized that the situation was beyond his team's control, he called the police for reinforcement.</p> <p>Majority Leader Fariñas, Rep. Acop and other House Members grilled Armeen Gomez about his academic background and professional experience which could be the reason for his mishandling of the crisis situation. Gomez later admitted that he was not able to finish his college education.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Tambunting and other House Members on why it took the police and the Resorts World security personnel several hours to locate the gunman, Albayalde, answering for the PNP, said that the police were relying on the information given to them by Resorts World, which has full knowledge of the area. Albayalde complained that the PNP was not promptly informed that there was a back-up surveillance center in Remington Hotel (which is part of Resorts World and was not affected by the fire) where they could monitor the assailant's whereabouts and movement. He added that the surveillance center was only disclosed to the police when PNP Chief Ronald dela Rosa arrived at the scene.</p> <p>On hearing the testimonies of the resource persons, the House Members firmly believed that there was serious lack of coordination and proper communication between the Resorts World and the PNP at the time of the incident. They also chided the executives of Resorts World for the unfortunate incident that should not have happened had their security and emergency plans were in place or properly executed.</p> <p>Rep. Gomez called for a review of the process of accreditation of security personnel by the PNP's Supervisory Office for Security and Investigation Agencies (SOSIA).</p> <p>Meanwhile, the power of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) to issue fire safety clearance and building permits to establishments or locators within its jurisdiction was also questioned by the House Members. It was PEZA, and not the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), which issued a fire safety inspection certificate to Resorts World Manila, having been declared as an economic zone under PEZA.</p> <p>Officials from the BFP said that the conduct of fire safety inspection and the issuance of the corresponding certificate to establishments, even if within an economic zone administered by PEZA, should be done by the BFP and not PEZA. The Committee will issue a show-cause order to BFP Chief Bobby Baruelo for him to explain his absence during the meeting.</p> <p>The Committee will issue a subpoena <i>duces tecum</i> to Resorts World to require the submission of its casino's CCTV footage from May 31 to June 3. It will also invite in the next meeting the lady guard, who was stationed at the entrance of the mall through which Carlos passed, and other RWM employees who were manning its surveillance centers during the incident.</p>
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