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COMMITTEE MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Dangerous Drugs jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability	HR 2068	Rep. Quimbo	Inquiry into the continued inability of the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to prevent large-scale smuggling of illegal drugs into the country	<p>The Joint Committee, co-presided by Rep. Robert "Ace" Barbers (2nd District, Surigao del Norte), Chair of the Committee on Dangerous Drugs, and Rep. Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental) of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, will deliberate further on the unabated large-scale smuggling of illegal drugs into the country in its next meeting.</p> <p>Based on HR 2068, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the BOC seized 500 kilograms of <i>shabu</i>, estimated to be worth P4.3 billion, concealed inside two magnetic lifters in an abandoned container at the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT) last August 7. The following day, four similar magnetic lifters, which were later discovered to have traces of illegal drugs, were found by authorities at a warehouse in General Mariano Alvarez, Cavite. Both the PDEA and the Philippine National Police (PNP) believe that the magnetic lifters found in Cavite are part of the shipment seized at the MICT.</p> <p>During the hearing, Customs Commissioner Isidro Lapeña branded accusations of his involvement in drug syndicates or covering-up illegal drug shipments as malicious efforts intended to undermine his attempts to reform the BOC. He also reported that several BOC personnel involved in the incident have already been charged accordingly.</p> <p>Lapeña, who previously denied there were illegal drugs inside the magnetic lifters found in Cavite, took back his words saying that after hearing the testimonies of the witnesses, he was convinced that the magnetic lifters that passed through the BOC were likely used to conceal illegal drugs.</p> <p>BOC X-ray inspectors John Mar Morales and Noli Martinez stood by their previous statements that the x-ray images of the magnetic lifters, as they passed through customs, did not show any indication that there was something inside that could alert them.</p>

<p>Continuation... Dangerous Drugs jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>Disputing her colleagues' statements, BOC Deputy Collector Lourdes Mangaoang believes that the contraband concealed in the magnetic lifters could have been intercepted had the standard operating procedures in examining and assessing shipments been made. She stressed that the x-ray inspectors of the questionable shipment did not make full use of the x-ray imaging system.</p> <p>SMYD Trading owner Marina Signapan testified that her company was used by former BOC Intelligence Officer Jimmy Guban as the consignee for the magnetic lifters without her consent. Guban affirmed the statement and revealed that he negotiated the consignment of the shipment with a relative of Katrina Cuasay, who was Signapan's broker.</p> <p>Robert Cantemprate, son of the owner of the warehouse in Cavite where the four magnetic lifters were found, denied his family's involvement in illegal drugs trade. According to him, the warehouse was leased to several Chinese nationals who were able to present their passports and other documents showing their identity.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Department of Public Works and Highways' (DPWH) Bureau of Equipment Director Toribio Noel Ilaog disclosed that after conducting tests and an assessment of the magnetic lifters found in Cavite and at the MICP, his team concluded that these magnetic lifters have characteristics peculiar from the magnetic lifters commonly used in some industries. Ilaog added that the seized magnetic lifters lack some parts to make the equipment functional. (Magnetic lifters are used in factories, docks, warehouses and transportation industries to lift or hoist steel plates, blocks, and other magnetic materials.)</p> <p>Rep. Romeo Acop (2nd District, Antipolo City) underscored the importance of accountability in government operations and appreciated the fact that cases have been filed against erring BOC and PDEA personnel.</p> <p>Rep. Barbers said that the incident clearly showed there was connivance between people in the government and big-time drug smugglers. He promised that the Joint Committee will dig deeper into the issue to prevent similar incidents from happening again.</p>
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DISCUSSIONS WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Metro Manila Development	Update on the flagship infrastructure projects in Metro Manila and continuation of discussion on the public utilities' services and installation of their "outside plant facilities" in Metro Manila	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo (2 nd District, Quezon City), continued its discussion with concerned government agencies on the status of implementation of the government's flagship infrastructure projects in Metro Manila and with

<p>Continuation... Metro Development Manila</p>	<p>public utilities on the installation of their facilities around the metropolis.</p> <p>Rep. Bayani Fernando (1st District, Marikina City) emphasized the need to inform Congressmen of the ongoing infrastructure projects in their districts in order for them to properly respond to the queries of their constituents pertaining to these projects.</p> <p>Rep. Castelo inquired on the status of implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects on Quezon Avenue and EDSA, and the Metro Rail Transit System Line 7 (MRT 7) project.</p> <p>Department of Transportation (DOTr) Assistant Secretary Mark Richmund de Leon said that DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade already wrote a letter to the Department of Finance (DOF) requesting the latter to proceed with the loan agreement for the BRT project in Quezon Avenue. On the EDSA BRT project, De Leon informed the Committee that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) withdrew its initial intent to fund the project and that a re-engineering study will also be conducted to improve the project.</p> <p>As for the MRT 7 project, San Miguel Corporation's Government Relations and Public Relations head Melissa Encanto-Tagarda explained that the delay in project implementation is due to right-of-way issues. According to Tagarda, construction should have started in 2008, but only began in 2016. Nevertheless, Tagarda said that San Miguel, the government's private sector partner, will still try to meet the target completion date of July 2019.</p> <p>On the other hand, Rep. Carlo Lopez (2nd District, Manila) inquired about the status of completion of the road construction projects in Metro Manila. Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) NCR Regional Office representative Edwin Luzon said that several dialogues are being conducted with concerned parties on the resettlement of affected informal settler families (ISFs), including the provision of financial assistance to them.</p> <p>Turning to the two water concessionaires in Metro Manila, Rep. Fernando asked Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Company Inc. if they observe a standard way of installing waterlines and meters to ensure safety and uniformity.</p> <p>Maynilad Assistant Vice President for Government Relations Marie Antonette de Ocampo replied in the affirmative. She added that Maynilad will look into the concern of Rep. Fernando that water meters are installed in various manners and scattered around places outside of residences.</p> <p>With regard to the installation of wires in electrical posts, Sky Cable Network Engineering head Lito Mapolon informed the Committee that Sky Cable has its own poles, adding that most of the poles of the Manila Electric Company (Meralco) are already crowded.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Fernando if Meralco is capable of putting up the posts that will be used by all public utility providers and can also serve as a private regulator for this, Meralco representative Jose Remillo Diangson said that Meralco will study the suggestion first before it can state its position on the matter.</p>
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