



Chairman and Administrator's Group
PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Rm. 105, Bldg. 255, Barryman Rd., Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines 2222
Tel 047.252.4368/4338 Fax 047.252.4375 E-mail acllamas@sbma.com



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The Editor
Manila Times

Dear Sir:

This is to clarify matters raised in the editorial "How far up does the drug smuggling go?" of the Manila Times (August 18, 2013), which claimed, among others, that "officials of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) are definitely involved in the smuggling of 432 kilos of shabu valued at P2 billion, which was seized by the police in Subic, Zambales on Aug. 11."

With due respect, let it be made clear that this claim is unsubstantiated and without basis since the truth of the matter is that the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority had coordinated with the police in the operation that eventually netted the culprits and their illegal haul.

The Times editorial also strongly suggested that the drugs must have passed through the Subic Bay Freeport since the Port of Manila and Poro Point in La Union are already too far from Subic town where the drugs were confiscated. Yet this reasoning cannot stand on its own as it failed to consider the long unpatrolled coastline of nearby Zambales and Bataan provinces, or even the open sea near Subic Bay, where smugglers could just as easily unload the contraband.

The claim that SBMA officials are involved in the smuggling try likewise cannot stand on the basis of another speculation that the head of the SBMA Law Enforcement Department was recently relieved in connection with the incident.

The simple truth is that (Ret.) Gen. Orlando Maddela would only cease to be in the SBMA service because his temporary appointment will expire on August 31, 2013. As per Civil Service Commission (CSC) guidelines, the job vacancy needed to be posted and said announcement was posted on the CSC website on March 27, 2013. A memorandum from the SBMA Human Resources Department was also circulated on August 6, 2013 to inform all SBMA offices regarding the job vacancy, still in line with the guidelines.

The same editorial also stated that Zambales First District Representative Jeffrey Khonghun met with SBMA officials, and "told (SBMA Chairman Roberto) Garcia point-blank to 'Get SBMA in order because we suffer from your shenanigans'." That meeting between Chairman Garcia and Rep. Khonghun never occurred and could have existed only in the imagination of the writer or whoever it was that gave him that false information.

We also would like to point out, Sir, that the same editorial consistently mistook the SBMA (the agency) for the Subic Bay Freeport Zone (the place managed by that agency), referring to it variously as an "entry point" and a "haven" for smugglers. Likewise, the editorial was very insistent on blaming the SBMA for the recent drug smuggling try uncovered in Subic town because of the rice smuggling attempt that was foiled by authorities inside the Subic Bay Freeport Zone last year. The reasoning, like the confused description, is fatally flawed.

Finally, the editorial raised the issue of Mr. Garcia's appointment as chairman and administrator and went on to venture that he was appointed only as director and was only elected by his fellow members of the board as temporary presiding officer. Thus, so the editorial claimed, he did not have the power to "fire or even reshuffle SBMA executives...even for the gravest misconduct."

Apparently unbeknownst to the Manila Times, Mr. Garcia was appointed by President Benigno Simeon Aquino III as chairman and administrator in concurrent capacity on November 21, 2011. His term as SBMA chairman and administrator will end on June 30, 2016.

We hope these information would set the record straight.

Very truly yours,

(signed)

ARMIE C. LLAMAS

Manager, SBMA Public Relations Department