

Lawmakers find irregularities in unloading of garbage in Misamis Oriental

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Lawmakers questioned Tuesday the Bureau of Customs (BoC) decision to allow the transfer of cargoes containing over 6,000 metric tons of garbage and other solid waste from the port of Tagoloan to Verde Soko plant site in Misamis Oriental despite the lack of import permit.



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Antipolo Rep. Romeo Acop (FACEBOOK / MANILA BULLETIN)

At yesterday's joint panel probe on illegal entry and dumping of hazardous plastic garbage from South Korea to the port of Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental, Antipolo Rep. Romeo Acop, who served as police comptroller, said with the BOC's flawed policies, he is not wondering why the country is flooded with illegal drugs.

"Imbestigador po ako pero nalilito pa rin ako, ang sinasabi po ninyo dumating yung cargo may special permit na, nung dumating pinayagan nyo na madala sa Phividec, tama?," he asked BOC district collector Atty. Floro G. Calixian Jr., who responded affirmatively.

“Nagwo-worry ako bilang pulis at galing sa military kaya siguro napupuno tayo ng shabu dito sa Pilipinas dahil sa ganyan na pamamaraan, di po ba?” Acop said.

Calixihan assured Acop that the shipment did not contain any illegal contraband when it was transferred to the Phividec Industrial Estate, citing that the cargoes were also examined in the port of origin.

“You said na may mga Customs na nagbabantay which I doubt, nakikita ko naman yung area open eh, ang bakod lang yun ata lumang yero, the way it was presented. There is not a possibility na pwedeng may kontrabando yun,” Acop said.

“Yung ini-smuggle po dito through Customs sa port of Manila na-examine na rin dun sa port of origin eh pero nakakalusot at nakakalusot pa rin.

I do not wonder anymore why we are flooded with shabu here in our country,” he said.

Calixihan told the joint panel, presided by Misamis Occidental Rep. Henry Oaminal, that the discharge and transfer of cargo from port to the Verde Soko plant site has legal basis.

“At the time of request of transfer, there was no derogatory information received from regulatory agencies such as DENR, DA, DOH, LGUs and NGOs,” he pointed out.

“There is no release, but merely transfer to the consignees’ plant site,” Calixihan explained.

“If you transfer it to the consignees, it is same as releasing it to the consignees,” Oaminal said. “Why did you not order the return of the cargoes?,” he asked.

Deputy Speaker and South Cotabato Rep. Ferdinand Hernandez agreed with Oaminal that the BOC should have ordered the immediate return of cargoes due to lack of import permit.

“Kung walang permit to import hindi dapat nandun ang cargo. They are not allowed in that area, dapat pinaalis agad,” he said.

During the hearing, Phividec Industrial Authority vice-chairman and administrator Atty Franklin Quijano said they have not issued any import permit.

“None of our locators sought import permit from us,” he said. Verde Soko Philippines Industrial Corporation is a locator in the Phividec Industrial Estate.

Misamis Oriental Rep. Juliette Uy noted that from July 21, 2018 up to August 5, 2018, the supposed hazardous and toxic materials were unloaded in a Phividec private port inside the premises that is controlled by the Phividec Industrial Authority.

“This importation was found to have been deliberately misdeclared and supported by falsified documents from the country of origin and that they are not recyclable,” she said.

“The magnitude of the problem posed is huge as it seriously threatens public health and promotes unmitigated damage to the environment. Hence the matter cannot be ignored much less tolerated,” she said.

She laments that the importation of the foreign wastes “was done in collusion with some officials of the concerned government agencies who were charged with the strict enforcement of the laws.”

Bayan Muna partylist Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate said the BOC should have inspected the cargoes before it decided to unload them and should have checked if the shipment has import permit.

“We have to ask basic question, tiningnan nyo ba kung may basic document, was there an import permit? yan ang unang tinitingnan,” he said.

“Pinalabas nyo yan sa barko at dinala sa four-hectare property pero hindi nyo man lamang tinanong kung anong animal ito. May problema talaga sa inyong procedure,” Zarate said.

He described as “highly questionable, anomalous and criminal” the decision of the BOC to allow the unloading of garbages.

“It is very questionable, anomalous, even criminal, because they allowed the unloading of these garbages even without clear import clearance or permit,” he said.

“But it’s not only BOC that should be held accountable here – DENR, EMB, Phividec and other officials should be held accountable, too,” he said.

The joint panel decided to compel the attendance of BOC Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero, and Verde Soko officials to attend the next hearing.

It adopted Acop’s motion that should Neil Alburo, president of Verde Soko Philippines Industrial Corporation, and Nathaniel Carampatana, Verde Soko’s operations manager fail to attend the hearing, they would be subpoenaed.

Uy’s filing of House Resolution 2317 and the privilege speech of Iligan City Rep. Frederick Siao prodded the House Committees on Good Government and Public Accountability, Ecology and Local Government to conduct a probe on the matter.

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2019/02/26/lawmakers-find-irregularities-in-unloading-of-garbage-in-misamis-oriental/>