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Real Criminals Unmasked:

Corruption and Crime in the AFP and PNP

The anti-crime and anti-graft stance of the Estrada regime is nothing but a big lie.

Under a semicolonial and semifeudal system, the Filipino masses are criminally exploited and oppressed by the joint dictatorship of the big comprador bourgeoisie and landlord class under US imperialist direction. The worst criminals are those in power who uphold this anti-national and anti-people system. At the forefront are their armed defenders, the AFP and the PNP and their superiors.

This rotten system breeds and coddles notorious criminal syndicates, “uniformed scalawags,” and all corrupt politician-thieves and bureaucrats. From the lowest to the highest rungs of the military and civilian bureaucracy, anomalies and conspiracies between criminals persecuted by law and the supposed champions of the law, are commonplace.

It is no secret that Estrada and other politicians have close connections with known “lords” of criminal syndicates. According to the Presidential Task Force on Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence itself, 2,423 police and military forces are members of syndicates; 1,842 of them are in active service. They form the backbone of 507 syndicates with 6,020 members operating nationwide.

The heated dispute between the generals and Secretary of Defense Orlando Mercado only indicates that anomalies within the military bureaucracy can no longer be concealed from the public. The generals’ plunder of billions of pesos intended for benefits of ordinary soldiers (like the Retirement and Separation Benefits System) has been exposed.

Squabble for Posts in the Bureaucracy

When he assumed power in Malacañang, Estrada immediately strengthened and consolidated his control over the armed forces and the police bureaucracy.

Estrada primarily relies on the faction of the late fascist dictator Marcos, some elements of the Rebolusyonyong Alyansang Makabansa and a few other Ramos men within the AFP. To fortify his control over the AFP, Estrada appointed Mercado to the Department of National Defense. They are in cahoots with new AFP chief Lt. Gen. Joselin Nazareno. Nazareno was chosen in spite of his lackluster administrative record, to reward him for protecting Estrada’s votes in Mindanao.

To ensure control over the police, Estrada appointed himself Secretary of Interior and Local Government, the agency administering the PNP. Like a small town mayor, he is shaking down

and reshuffling the PNP to position his own men and demonstrate to the police and criminals who the new boss is.

He has appointed Gen. Roberto Lastimoso as new PNP chief despite the latter's lack of "seniority"—thereby infuriating high-ranking police officials. His staunchest henchmen, who all belong to the Philippine Military Academy Class of '71 and who became his "boys" in the Philippine Anti-Crime Commission, have been appointed to the PNP's strategic commands. They have long-held records as human rights violators. During the early years of martial law, they were junior lieutenants of the Philippine Constabulary under Col. Rolando Abadilla's despised Metropolitan Intelligence and Security Group (MISG). The MISG was responsible for the arrest, torture and murder of hundreds of activists, progressive forces and other opponents of the Marcos dictatorship.

Estrada has warned PNP and AFP forces who refuse to tow the line, threatening that corrupt police and military "will not be given a second chance." But he has also tried to woo them by promising additional wages, allowances and housing projects. A large budget deficit, however, soon forced him to retreat from granting wage increases; instead, he has pledged to raise the soldiers' "take-home pay" by reducing their tax deductions.

Repressive Policies Behind the Anti-Crime Program

The Estrada regime is demagogically using the people's widespread anger at the prevalence of crimes and anomalies in society to put his repressive programs in place.

He has established the Presidential Commission Against Organized Crime (PCAOC) to divert critics and protesters from focusing on his death squad: the powerful Task Force Against Organized Crime (TFAOC). He has given civilian anti-crime groups seats in the Commission in an attempt to boost the name of Gen. Panfilo Lacson and his other minions in the former PACC. Under Estrada's leadership, the TFAOC is authorized to disregard even bourgeois-reactionary legal and judicial processes. Within the TFAOC lurk more people who have lengthy records of committing atrocities and abuses. Estrada will surely use them to eliminate smalltime rivals of his ally, syndicate boss Atong Ang and of other crime "lords" composed of PNP and AFP officials.

<i>Estrada's Henchmen in the PNP</i>	
Panfilo Lacson	Presidential Task Force Against Organized Crime
Reynaldo Velasco	Directorate for Plans
Dominador Domingo	Directorate for Logistics
Rene Acop	Directorate for Comptrollership
Rex Piad	Directorate for Police Community Relations
Jewel Canson	Chief of Directorial Staff

The people should vigilantly guard against the Task Force and its extraordinary powers to surveil and suppress even the progressive movement, opponents of anti-national and anti-people policies and Estrada's reactionary political rivals.

The possibility is not remote for Estrada to mimic anti-drug operations in Latin America used by the US government to intervene directly in military and police matters and participate in campaigns to crush the revolutionary forces. In the Philippines, there have been instances (in the '90s) when US Drug Enforcement Agency personnel joined AFP troops in alleged anti-marijuana operations in the Cordillera.

Protest

Estrada's hurry to control the AFP and PNP can only provoke further rifts, especially since this would infringe on the interests of reactionary anti-Estrada groups and rival criminal syndicates.

The police and military are rotten to the core. They maintain "peace and order" only for the benefit of the ruling classes and their criminal cohorts.

In the face of the worsening economic and political crisis and rising criminality, the people's apprehension is rapidly giving way to the condemnation of the state which has not only proven itself inutile in persecuting and punishing criminals but is also in cahoots with big syndicates.

Each and every exploitative, oppressive and criminal scheme cooked up by the regime will surely be confronted by the people's intensifying struggles. **AB**

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