

July 27, 2009

Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo  
New Executive Building  
Malacañang Palace Compound  
J. P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila

Dear Mrs. President:

In connection with your visit to the White House towards the end of this month, may I respectfully suggest that in addition to your administration's agenda, perhaps you can take up, at least, three additional issues with President Obama:

1. the problem of 10 Filipino civilian workers who have died or were injured in Afghanistan in a helicopter crash last July 19. For the record, the 10 were: Celso Q. Caralde, Ely I. Carino, Ernesto C. De Vega, Manolito C. Hornilla, Leopoldo G. Jimenez Jr., Mark Joseph C. Mariano, Marvin P. Najera, Rene D. Taboclaon, Ricardo E. Vallejos, and Noli M. Vista.

They were employees of a US-based construction firm, The AIM Group, Inc.

I understand that they were all covered by insurance and that the U.S. government has paid more than \$1.5-billion in premiums for the war-zone insurance coverage for the said civilian employees. Individually, the employees were entitled to \$300,000.

To the best of my information, the wounded workers and/or the heirs of those killed have applied for the benefits but the insurance companies like the American Insurance Group (AIG) have either rejected the applications or have offered token sums.

In an earlier incident that might be instructive, a Filipino worker, Rey Torres, was killed in Iraq. An American newspaperman, T. Christian Miller wrote in an article published in the Los Angeles Times on July 19, 2009 that the AIG had offered only \$22,000 to the surviving heirs of Torres. Mr. Torres, a native of Pampanga, was supposed to receive insurance benefits amounting to at least \$300,000. His heirs are contesting the offer through a lawyer but that will cost them a fortune and of course litigation time.

Incidentally, as you know, the AIG is the parent company of the Phil-Am Life Insurance corporation. Phil-Am Life, I am told, is the only wholly owned subsidiary of AIG that did not suffer problems from the recent economic meltdown that hit many a major corporation in the US and in Europe. It might also be pertinent to mention this matter to the US President.

2. the possibility of our country's getting a reasonable yearly quota out of the expected 1,000,000 nurses that the US would reportedly need by 2021.

If we can get say a quota of 20,000 nurses a year, that would a great economic bonanza for our nurses and their families; and

3. the hope that the US would help solve the Moro secessionist problem in Muslim Mindanao not by going to war there but by providing educational, economic and humanitarian assistance to the Moro peoples.

Mrs. President, kindly forgive this offer of an unsolicited advice but I do hope that you would take it in the spirit in which it is given: to help our people and your administration get a better deal from the US which has always been our ally and our friend.

God speed, Mrs. President.

Respectfully yours,

(Signed)

AQUILINO Q. PIMENTEL, JR.