



## PHILIPPINES SPECIAL REPORT ARROYO LIFTS STATE OF EMERGENCY March 3, 2006

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo announced on national television on Friday that she was lifting the state of national emergency that she had declared a week earlier. The announcement puts an end to the state of emergency, which she had said was intended to crack down on a conspiracy to unseat her by the left, the right, and the government that preceded hers. The statement's text was victorious, with Arroyo saying that she had neutralized a plot by individuals she described as self-serving and malicious, but her delivery was typically wooden and she appeared tired. The speech was taped, delivered in Tagalog, and took about two minutes to finish. This was Arroyo's third state of emergency during her five-year-long presidency, but the first one that was declared nationwide. On both previous occasions, Arroyo had felt threats to her power and declared an emergency that lasted only days or weeks. In that sense at least, the most recent state of emergency fits Arroyo's pattern. The quantity and quality of arrests made this time, however, were unusual for her and indicate that she was both more nervous and more focused on repaying political debts (see below).

In easing the state of emergency, Arroyo was giving in to pressure from her economic team – who warned her that the state of emergency was turning off foreign investors – and the international community, which chided Arroyo for failing to consult them before skirting close to violating human rights. Even members of her own inner circle had begun pushing her to return to business as usual. Arroyo, however, had also been under pressure from the police and the military to extend the state of emergency to allow them to round up more troublemakers. They had been asking Arroyo for years for more freedom in fighting the left, and the number of leftist arrests so far appears to indicate that this was a primary goal of the state of emergency. Arroyo's government says that state of emergency or no, investigations into those who hoped to topple her will continue. This is likely an attempt to appease those who wished the state of emergency had lasted longer.

### **Summary of Events**

Arroyo declared the state of emergency on February 24, 2006 citing a conspiracy of political opponents, military adventurists, and communist rebels to topple the

government in a violent coup d’etat. Malacanang promptly cancelled all rally permits, and ordered the deployment of security forces and checkpoints all over Metro Manila. Coup d’etat and rebellion charges were filed against 16 opposition figures, four of whom were leftist congressmen. Over 50 people were arrested without warrants – mostly known leftists – to include a lawmaker and a retired police general. Some military and police officers were either relieved or placed under “restrictive custody.” It was also during the seven-day state of national emergency that a former communist-rebel-turned lawmaker was arrested under a 1985 warrant, and seven arrest warrants were issued against a former senator and six others involved in the failed 2003 Oakwood mutiny.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
Rep. Crispin Beltran	Arrested under a 1985 warrant of arrest
Rep. Joel Virador	Arrested without warrant
Rep. Satur Ocampo	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; under protective custody of Congress
Rep. Teddy Casiño	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; under protective custody of Congress
Rep. Liza Maza	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; under protective custody of Congress
Rep. Rafael Mariano	Charged with inciting sedition
PNP Gen (Ret) Ramon Montano	Arrested without warrant
Former senator Col (Ret) Gregorio Honasan	Issued arrest warrant for involvement in 2003 Oakwood mutiny; at large
Col (Ret) Ernesto Macahiva	Issued arrest warrant for involvement in 2003 Oakwood mutiny; at large
Col (Ret) Virgilio Briones	Issued arrest warrant for involvement in 2003 Oakwood mutiny; at large
Col (Ret) Romeo Lazo	Issued arrest warrant for involvement in 2003 Oakwood mutiny; at large
Navy Capt (Ret) Felix Turingan	Issued arrest warrant for involvement in 2003 Oakwood mutiny; at large
George Duldalo	Issued arrest warrant for involvement in 2003 Oakwood mutiny; at large
Lina Reyes	Issued arrest warrant for involvement in 2003 Oakwood mutiny; at large
Col Ariel Querubin	Relieved as Marine brigade commander
BGen Danny Lim	Relieved as Scout Ranger commander
1 <sup>st</sup> Lt Lawrence San Juan	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; arrested
1 <sup>st</sup> Lt Patricio Bumindang, Jr.	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; at large
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Aldrin Baldonado	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; at large
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Angelbert Gay	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; at large
Atty. Christopher Belmonte	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; arrested

BGen (Ret) Jake Malajacan	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; arrested
Capt (Ret) Felix Turingan	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; arrested
CSupt Marcelino Franco	Relieved as commander of the PNP’s Special Action Force; under restrictive custody
Supt Benjamin Magalong	Under restrictive custody
Senior Inspector Ryan Paloma	Under restrictive custody
Chief Inspector Ericson Dilag	Under restrictive custody
NPA rebel Albert Sungcal	Arrested
CPP Chair Jose Maria Sison	Charged with coup d’etat and rebellion; at large
KMU leader Dennis Dionisio	Charged with inciting to sedition; arrested
Gloria Step Down Movement spokesperson Marcial Dabela	Charged with inciting to sedition; arrested

Soon after police raided a local newspaper known for its biting critiques of the Arroyo administration, the government released guidelines ordering the media not to print or broadcast false information that may incite sedition or rebellion. Troops were later deployed to major radio and television stations, drawing sharp criticism from journalists in the Philippines and media advocacy groups abroad.

On Sunday February 26, 2006, a prayer vigil inside the Fort Bonifacio chapel, led by a popular and decorated marine brigade commander to protest the alleged unjust relief of the Philippines’ Marine Corps commandant, soon turned into an anti-administration affair. As a plethora of text messages about the alleged gripes of the Marines against the Arroyo administration was systematically released to the public, a number of Arroyo’s leading political opponents trooped to Fort Bonifacio in the hopes of finally being able to oust her. Hours later, the rebellious marines stood down and the crowds quickly dispersed.

### **Mounting Pressure**

Arroyo came under critical pressure to lift the state of emergency. Various members of the international community expressed concern over the President’s recent proclamation. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan reportedly called Malacanang to demand an explanation and seek assurances from the President that civil and political rights were unharmed. The Philippines, a signatory to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, apparently violated the pact when it failed to duly inform other signatories of the treaty and the UN Secretary General of her intent to declare a state of emergency. On Tuesday February 28, the US State Department, which has been closely monitoring the political turmoil engulfing the

country, advised the Arroyo administration to lift the state of national emergency as soon as possible, fearing a breakdown in the country's democracy. Both international and local media groups also protested Arroyo's state of emergency declaration and subsequent crackdown on media organizations. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists asked Arroyo to reverse the steps her government had taken to control the media. Members of the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines and the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters ng Pilipinas* similarly decried government attempts to curtail press freedom, urging the government to lift the state of emergency or at least clarify latest media guidelines.

The administration's attempt to arrest leftist lawmakers allegedly involved in the coup plot met resistance from Congress, primarily from sometime Arroyo ally Jose De Venecia. Congress swiftly passed a resolution giving protective custody to the wanted congressmen. Even some of Arroyo's supporters, including congressmen Teodoro Locsin and Prospero Nograles, described the President's actions as a suppression of human rights, insisting that Congress would only handover the wanted lawmakers if sufficient documents were presented and standard procedures were followed. Other Arroyo allies in Congress such as Juan Miguel Zubiri, Jesli Lapuz, and Joker Arroyo also called for the immediate lifting of the state of national emergency to dispel fears of martial law and to show that government was back in control. Former president Fidel Ramos, who had hitherto supported the Arroyo during her times of crisis, described the state of emergency as overkill, stressing that his support for the President was waning. It is also significant to note that Vice President Noli De Castro for the first time publicly diverged views with Arroyo, saying there was no longer a need for Proclamation 1017 as the threats against the government has clearly dissipated. The former newsreader further stressed the importance of respecting and safeguarding the freedom of speech and the independence of the media.

The President's economic team also had been anxious to have the order lifted as soon as possible to ease investor worries and mitigate damage to the economy. After Arroyo declared the state of emergency, the peso dropped to a three-and-a-half week low while the stock market fell 1%. Financial markets recovered swiftly, betting that the state of emergency didn't affect the likelihood of a debt default. Economic officials argued that the recovery of the peso and the stock market suggested that the situation had normalized. This explanation is overly simplistic: many portfolio investors treated the state of emergency as an opportunity to pick up more bonds on the cheap and weren't overly concerned that a lack of political freedoms would put government finances into disarray. Long-term foreign investors in the Philippines – those who build factories and hire thousands of fresh graduates to work in their call centers – were much more nervous, and the prices of the Philippines' stocks, bonds, and currency didn't reflect that fully.

The chorus of dissenting voices, most importantly from Arroyo's allies, has likely been a major reason for the President to lift the state of emergency. Had she not done so, she

would have further alienated large and diverse groups, including her most powerful allies. She had to lift the state of emergency before provided her opponents with a common cause, convinced Arroyo allies to rally against her, and roused the so-far been a passive middle class. An extended state of emergency would also have pitted her against the Supreme Court, which is set to meet on March 7, 2006 to decide on the proclamation's constitutionality.

### **Interim Prospects**

During the seven-day state of emergency, Arroyo attempted to portray herself as a resolute, decisive president. She labeled her enemies selfish and greedy, suggesting that if she is removed, the nation will find the replacement just as bad, if not worse. The President, however, has not fully recovered from the attacks against her. Arroyo remains in a precarious position and knows that she needs her allies to brace her position. The President's continued insecurities is underscored by Malacanang's warning that despite the lifting of state of emergency, media must continue to adhere to the new guidelines set by the National Telecommunications Commission. A special task group was formed to counter any threat in the capital, especially since there are rumors that some Marines remain restless. The group, comprising 1,200 elite soldiers, is based at the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, near the Marine headquarters.

While the crisis has probably passed, the ingredients for more mischief-making remain. Coup plotters rarely, if ever, see serious consequences for their actions. Expanding one's political power base is best accomplished through back-room deals, and the best leverage on this president appears to be fear. The opposition will continue creating the impression of mass unrest, and rumblings of an impending coup plot will likely persist. Throw in a few paper bags with unassembled bomb components well-positioned for discovery, and follow it up with an orchestrated text messaging campaign, and you have anew the illusion of revolt. With an insecure and paranoid President at the helm, it doesn't take much for the senior military brass to scare her while posturing that they are on top of the trouble. This gets Arroyo to lavish more largesse on the senior military to keep them loyal, which often appears to be their intent. Clients should expect the mischief-making to continue as long as Arroyo occupies the palace. In fact, two explosions took place shortly before the time she was originally scheduled to lift the state of emergency, perhaps as a warning to her. The causes of that explosion were not immediately known.

True political upheaval is still a ways off, however. Arroyo is resilient and an adept deal-maker. The middle class, which has ousted two previous presidents, is disgusted with her but cannot bring itself to remove her. And the opposition is deeply divided, poorly organized, and unappealing to the professional classes.

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