

**Presidential Communications Operations Office  
News and Information Bureau**

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON AND  
CHIEF PRESIDENTIAL LEGAL COUNSEL SECRETARY SALVADOR PANELO  
MARCH 5, 2020 (12:42 – 1:11 P.M.)**

**USEC. ROCKY IGNACIO:** Good afternoon MPC, kasama na natin si Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

**SEC. PANELO:** Good afternoon MPC and welcome back Joseph Morong!

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Secretary, what prompted the President or the administration to lift the suspension on the talks on the loans and grants from countries who supported the resolution on the drug war?

**SEC. PANELO:** I haven't asked him that. I will ask him. I intend to ask him.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** But this change of policies, this some form of easing of our hard line stance against, you know, countries perceived to be interfering with the Philippine sovereignty?

**SEC. PANELO:** That's why I'm going to ask the President.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** But what are the impact—what's the impact of this lifting? Ano iyong nakikita ninyong implication nito?

**SEC. PANELO:** Well you must remember that that was made because of what they—of this countries did when they passed that resolution condemning the war on drugs in this country. And it was more of an outrage reaction, having already expressed our stand on that, perhaps there is now a reason to change it.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** So may nangyari that prompted...

**SEC. PANELO:** Hindi naman. That's why I'm going to ask the President exactly what's the reason behind.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Salamat, Sec.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, I don't know if it has something to do with it 'no, pero 27 ni-lift right? And then March 2, the US Embassy, USAID announced that it's donating 37 million US

dollars para makatulong sa Pilipinas to fight the COVID. Hindi ba 'to sir iyong trigger to allow it?

**SEC. PANELO:** Hindi ko alam. I'll have to ask the President to be sure.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Okay sir, thank you.

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Sir, good afternoon. Sir, any update on the meeting of the President last night—

**SEC. PANELO:** On the what?

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Meeting ni President Duterte regarding Marawi rehabilitation.

**SEC. PANELO:** We haven't talked eh.

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Was it the President who asked for the meeting?

**SEC. PANELO:** Hindi ko alam. Kailangan tanungin muna natin.

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Sige sir...

**SEC. PANELO:** Hindi pupuwedeng magsalita ka nang hindi mo nakakausap ang Presidente.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Sir, iyong statement na lang doon sa helicopter crash.

**SEC. PANELO:** We already issued a statement.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Paulit lang, sir. Paulit lang...

**SEC. PANELO:** Of course, we were shocked and sad to hear about the chopper crash. At the same time we're glad that only minor injuries were suffered by the passengers.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Sir, would you know if the President will be visiting sila Gamboa saka iyong iba pang sugatan?

**SEC. PANELO:** Most likely, ganoon naman si Presidente.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Soon? I mean, like today or...?

**SEC. PANELO:** Depende. Resting pa siya eh.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Okay sir, thank you.

**JULIE AURELIO/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:** Sir, a bit related to the President. ‘Di ba si President Duterte usually takes choppers ‘pag going to events ‘di ba, given na this latest incident involved no less than the PNP Chief, although minor injuries lang naman. Is the PSG or is the Palace undertaking measures or considering iyong use ng choppers given na may recent incident? For the President’s safety, of course.

**SEC. PANELO:** According to the PNP, that’s a latest acquisition and it’s a very good chopper. So, apparently it’s really an accident.

**JULIE AURELIO/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:** I mean, if it’s a latest acquisition sir, nangyari pa rin po iyong accident. So ano po iyong magiging steps ng Palace to ensure the—

**SEC. PANELO:** Kasi hindi natin alam, hindi pa... iniimbestigahan pa kung whether it was a pilot error or engine... pero wala pa eh. Let’s wait for the investigation.

**JULIE AURELIO/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:** So as of now, the incident won’t affect the President’s penchant for taking choppers to events?

**SEC. PANELO:** I don’t think—you know naman the President eh. The President always says, *“If it’s my time, it’s my time.”*

**JULIE AURELIO/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:** Okay sir, thank you.

**SEC. PANELO:** Fatalistic siya eh.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Hi sir, good afternoon. During the Cabinet meeting sir, did you somehow discussed, because there are a lot of things that happened – there is COVID-19, then we had the Taal eruption, so medyo sunud-sunod iyong calamities. Did the Finance Department or I don’t know who’s in charge report if we need more help or support financially?

**SEC. PANELO:** The victims, you mean?

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** No sir, in general... with all the calamities that’s happening to support, you know, the Taal victims, COVID-19.

**SEC. PANELO:** But we have already protocols on that. All the agencies have been responding and have responded to the events that you mentioned.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Yeah. But do we still have enough funds? This is actually linked to the question of iyon nga po ‘yung sa—

**SEC. PANELO:** Yes, I think we have enough funds otherwise the President would have said that we need to get some more funds.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** So that's not—that won't be sir the reason why we're lifting the—not exactly the—

**SEC. PANELO:** I already answered that question.

**PRINCE GOLEZ/ABANTE:** Hi sir, good afternoon. Sir, reaction lang doon sa naging pahayag ni Senator Richard Gordon, na on Twitter it appears that the senator was blaming President Duterte for the crimes and risks brought in by POGOs. He said na hindi daw mangyayari ito if the government was not too soft on China.

**SEC. PANELO:** I disagree; then he does not know this President. The President is never soft on anything that relates to the national interest. He's a very decisive President.

**PRINCE GOLEZ/ABANTE:** Sir, what measures have been taken by this government sir to arrest the worsening issues related to POGOs?

**SEC. PANELO:** Well as I've said - was it yesterday? - Any malpractice, any corruption, any irregularity relative to any activity or project in this government are always being investigated. And after the findings, the President will act, as always, decisively.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Sir, reaction lang doon sa sinabi ni Senator Lacson na apparently there are reports that there are 3,000 Chinese soldiers in Manila.

**SEC. PANELO:** Three thousand soldiers?

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Yes.

**SEC. PANELO:** Chinese?

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Three thousand alleged members of the China's People's Liberation Army. Apparently they're in the Philippines now on an immersion mission, but Senator Lacson said that this report has yet to be validated. Pero has the Palace or the President received reports on that already, sir?

**SEC. PANELO:** None that I know of. Since he himself said it has to be validated, then it's a raw intelligence report on his part. Then we have to investigate.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Si President sir did he already say something about iyong case noong isang—iyong dalawang suspects na pumatay sa kanilang kapwa Chinese national na nahulihan ng mga IDs na members sila ng PLA?

**SEC. PANELO:** That was already investigated di ba.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** But what did the President say about it, sir?

**SEC. PANELO:** We didn't take that up in the Cabinet. You know when police enforcers do their job, the President let them. And the next step would be to prosecute if the perpetrators have been identified.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Sir, back doon sa 3,000 alleged... Will the Palace move to validate this report, sir?

**SEC. PANELO:** I'm sure the AFP is already validating that given that it is being reported by no less than a senator of the Republic.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Pero if ever sir na this report proves true, do you see this as a big concern?

**SEC. PANELO:** A what?

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Do you see this as a cause for alarm or concern po?

**SEC. PANELO:** We are always alarmed with respect to national interest issue.

**SEC. PANELO:** Okay sir, thank you.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Reaksiyon lang Secretary. Sabi ni Senator Gordon why is Palace hurt when China is involved in issues?

**SEC. PANELO:** Which is wrong, I cannot even understand why he is saying that. Remember, I think that came from one of our press briefings, when I was asked relative to his statement that there's money laundering... something? And I said, "then he can share us with the information" – that's the only statement I made. Which is I cannot even understand why he is reacting, because we are all government officials. If one particular agency or office or any department or branch of government has knowledge of any report on any anomaly or any violation of law, then it is the duty of everyone in this government to share information. We should be cooperating with each other. Certainly we are not hurt! In fact, I said that is welcome news coming from the Senator. That is precisely why I was asking and hoping that he could share that information to our police authorities, because if the police authorities do not know that yet, then that would be very welcome to them.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** So, what do you exactly want to tell Senator Gordon?

**SEC. PANELO:** Exactly what I said – we are not hurt. Were eve welcoming what he said and that is precisely we are requesting if he can share information with the police authorities if they do not know that yet.

**JULIE AURELIO/PDI:** Sir, medyo I–rephrase ko lang po iyong kay Pia. What would be or what is the extent of the Palace’s alarm or concern regarding reports that there are 3,000 Chinese PLA soldiers in Manila, even if it is not yet validated. Considering that it’s not just a national interest issue, but an issue of national security?

**SEC. PANELO:** We have to validate that first. We cannot be making statements relative to anything that is based on speculation and unverified report. We do not want to be irresponsible in issuing a statement.

**JULIE AURELIO/PDI:** So, not unless there’s any validation of its veracity, we cannot issue any statement that express alarm concern.

**SEC. PANELO:** Of course, that goes without saying. All we can say is we in the government is always concerned when any issue affecting the national interest and national security.

**JULIE AURELIO/PDI:** Sir, the President when it comes to certain issues like for example crime or drugs, we know his very clear stands on it na galit siya, na he is very active in campaigning or fighting it, directing the PNP, AFP to do its part. When it comes to POGO sir, ano po exactly iyong sentiments ni Presidente given na may mga lumilitaw nang issue surrounding POGOs and not just economic issues – may concerns of national security, immigration?

**SEC. PANELO:** Di ba pinaiimbestigahan nga niya di ba? He issued directive to investigate all these reports of illegal practices, acts of corruption.

**JULIE AURELIO/PDI:** Pero, is he against POGOs or in favor of POGOs at this point?

**SEC. PANELO:** Since it’s still operating, so wala pa siyang sinasabi na he is against it. You must remember that the POGO is giving us – from what I gather from Chairman Fred Lim – 17 billion pesos in the last three years. Prior to this, we were only receiving about 57 million on online gambling. In other words, it’s a huge source of income for this government where it can be used to all kinds of projects. In fact, I remember the President even saying that the increase in salary of nurses could be taken from them. If there is anything wrong with the system on POGO then we have to review it, evaluate it and then streamline it, improve it. And all the agencies involved must do their job, so that any corruption, any unlawful acts can be either neutralized or completely stopped.

**JULIE AURELIO/PDI:** So whatever, kumbaga, despite iyong mga controversies surrounding POGOs the economic benefits at this point, kumbaga make it hard for the President to make a stand kung dapat bang ayusin or ipagbawal iyong POGOs?

**SEC. PANELO:** Not that it make hard for him. We have to wait for him, because he will be waiting for reports coming from all agencies relative to this issue and then he will make a decision on that.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Sir, can we just at least, if the President is still studying whether to ban POGO in the country or not. Can we just suspend it first, while the investigation is ongoing, why not just suspend it?

**SEC. PANELO:** That will depend on the President's judgment.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** So for now, you don't find it necessary to suspend the operation even if there are a lot of controversies surrounding?

**SEC. PANELO:** As I said, it's for the President judgment, I will ask him, we see him today, we talk today.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Sir, do you think the country is having more benefits with the POGO than disadvantages na nakukuha natin, considering all the reports ng sex den, drugs, money laundering? Do you still feel that we are getting more benefits?

**SEC. PANELO:** Well, if you can stop all these illegal practices, then POGO is good.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** But it seems that we cannot stop it yet?

**SEC. PANELO:** What do you mean we cannot stop it yet?

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** I mean, there is still an issue on the...

**SEC. PANELO:** There are incidents involving and they are precisely being addressed at by the concerned agencies.

**JOSEPH MORONG.GMA7:** Sir, you said a while ago – regarding iyong mga presence ng mga PLAs – that it is the country, that the Palace is deeply alarmed or always alarmed when it comes to national interest issues. Do you think that is a national security issue?

**SEC. PANELO:** Which one?

**JOSEPH MORONG.GMA7:** The presence of the Chinese military?

**SEC. PANELO:** If that is validated, then we will make our appropriate response until such time, it's just a speculation.

**JOSEPH MORONG.GMA7:** Kasi sir, we have an interview before kay Secretary Esperon as early as July, ang isyu pa noon, was iyong influx ng mga Chinese workers and he at that time, tinitingnan na niya iyon as a problem, as concern. From July up to now, wala pa tayo sir opinion, na we are not worried about the influx? Whether this breeds iyong mga criminal activities or iyong mas high risk na they might be spying on us – wala tayo, sir?

**SEC. PANELO:** I have not heard anything from Secretary Esperon and Secretary Lorenzana with respect to this.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Sir, reaction lang. Last night nag-isyu ng statement iyong Chinese Embassy in regarding doon sa mga incidents of crime involving Chinese.

**SEC. PANELO:** Yeah, they are saying that these are isolated incidents. They are saying that they are doing their very best to coordinate with the agencies of the government especially when it involves illegal acts.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** So sir, does the Palace agree with the Chinese embassy?

**SEC. PANELO:** Well, that is their position. That is precisely we are investigating all these alleged practices.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Yeah, but for the Palace sir, isolated lang iyong mga nangyayari all around?

**SEC. PANELO:** I do not know whether they are isolated or not. We have to record those incidents if it's really isolated.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** And also sir, sabi din po ng Chinese embassy they are against na ginagamit iyong isyu, iyong sa mga criminal activities for political motives.

**SEC. PANELO:** Actually, they are saying that it's being politicized. In other words, they are referring to the critics of the President.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Why is it easier for the President to decide on suspending the operations of lotto following iyong mga issues doon? But why is it, well it seems that it's so difficult for him to decide now?

**SEC. PANELO:** No. I don't think it's difficult. You know, when the President decides on something, he has the goods to back up his decision. If he has not received a comprehensive report on these illegal practices, then you cannot hurry him up. Ganoon si Presidente, abogado ito eh. Kaming mga abogado ganun eh, palaging kailangan may ebidensiya.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV 5:** Meaning sir, walang enough information or reports na natatanggap si Presidente now—

**SEC. PANELO:** Sinabi ko na nga. 'Hindi ba under investigation lahat kaya nga may in-order siya na imbestigahan lahat 'yan, kaya nag-aantay siya ng comprehensive report.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV 5:** Sir, sino po ba 'yung gumagawa ng—

**SEC. PANELO:** In fact, ‘yung sa... ‘di ba sa Immigration mayroon na silang ginagawa.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV 5:** Uhm. So, who’s doing the investigation now, sir—or what kind of investigation? Mayroon po bang efforts coming directly from the Office of the President to address these issues?

**SEC. PANELO:** The President has directed the concerned agencies like the Customs, the Immigration, the NBI, all of the law enforcement agencies.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV 5:** Thank you, sir.

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Sir, with the money laundering issue, do you think it’s timely to pass a law amending the Absolute Bank Secrecy Law?

**SEC. PANELO:** That’s for the legislators to decide.

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Sabi po kasi ni Finance Assistant Secretary Tony Lambino, they will be in coordination with Congress to push again for the amendment of the Bank Secrecy Law kasi po twice na po na nilagay nila doon sa Bill sa Congress and then tinanggal ng Congressmen ‘yung provision on Absolute Bank Secrecy— amending Absolute Bank Secrecy Law. So, do you think it’s time?

**SEC. PANELO:** If that is the position of the Department of Finance, certainly the President will support it.

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Well, if a Bill is filed, will the President be certifying it as an urgent measure?

**SEC. PANELO:** I do not know whether it will be certified as urgent. What I’m saying is if that is the official position of the Finance Secretary and he can support his position with the President, the President listens and usually support Secretary Dominguez.

**JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM:** Thank you, sir.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Secretary, if I recall correctly ‘no, dati nung sinuspend ‘yung STL, ‘yung sa lotto pending the investigation, so there’s such thing as a preventive suspension. So, why can’t we do the same sa POGOs and then eventually – sabi n’yo kasi kanina, hangga’t walang comprehensive report hindi mo siya puwedeng madaliin mag-decide – but then again, eventually ‘yung STL na-clear pero bago sila na clear, na-suspend muna sila.

**SEC. PANELO:** Eh, kasi mayroon siyang mga natanggap na reports kaya sinuspinde niya.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** So, in the case of the POGOs why can't we do the same pending the... pending the receipt—

**SEC. PANELO:** Let's not hurry up this President. This President is a very... what kind of...

**MPC:** [OFF MIC] Judicious.

**SEC. PANELO:** Judicious is one.

**MPC:** [OFF MIC] (UNCLEAR)

**SEC. PANELO:** You know, he is a lawyer. 'Pag lawyer kasi hindi basta gumagalaw eh, kailangang pakitaan mo ako ng malaking... gaya ng sinabi ko kahapon, kung talamak 'yan at makikita niya ay may gagawin 'yan.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** So, if that's the case, what's the difference between 'yung sa STL, etc. as against POGOs?

**SEC. PANELO:** Ay hindi ko alam kung ano ang di—Unang-una, how can you even compare? Wala pa tayo eh. 'Yung sa STL, mayroon na siyang desisyon doon eh; dito wala pa nga, kasi nga ininvestigasyon pa eh.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Well, we can compare because both are supposedly tagged in illegal activities and gambling.

**SEC. PANELO:** You cannot compare kasi nga 'yun tapos na 'yung investigasyon niya doon, eh dito hindi pa nga eh.

**MPC:** [OFF MIC] (UNCLEAR)

**SEC. PANELO:** Hindi pa nga siya—hindi pa nga. As far as he's con—

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Suspend siya and then tsaka na-clear.

**SEC. PANELO:** No. Teka muna. As far as the President is concerned nung sinuspinde niya 'yun mayroon siyang basis. Eh, dito wala pa nga siyang basis eh, pinag-aaralan pa nga eh

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Hindi, kasi na-clear eventually 'yung ano eh—

**SEC. PANELO:** Kasi siguro naayos. Kumbaga 'yung diperensiya ayusin n'yo 'yan para magkaayusan kayo. Hindi ba maraming ginawa noon? Like itong gawin n'yo—may mga steps/procedures, nung ginawa nila, o 'di ni-lift niya. Ganun din siguro gagawin niya rito?

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Sige, Sec. Thank you.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Other issues lang. Secretary, this is with regards to the removal of Congressman “Sid” Ungab as chairperson of the Committee on Appropriations sa Congress ano po. May statement kasi ang Hugpong ng Pagbabago at part of their statement sabi po nila: ‘He was specifically chosen by President Duterte as chairman of the committee and the last time we checked, the President never ordered the removal of Ungab. If anything, the removal was an insult and affront to the President and not the Party.’ What is your thought on this?

**SEC. PANELO:** The President, as I said, will not interfere in the intramurals inside Congress.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** [OFF MIC] It’s not interference.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Oh yeah.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Hi, sir! ‘Yung question ni Henry is not about the President meddling. The point is, does the Palace consider nga na ‘yung pagkatanggal ni Ungab ay hindi ‘yan affront sa HNP but the President. Hindi ba ganun ‘yung pagtingin ng Palasyo?

**SEC. PANELO:** That is to assume na may kinalaman siya doon sa paglalagay doon sa kaniyang ano—

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sabi nga ng HNP, sir...

**SEC. PANELO:** Sabi ni ano?

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Na it was the President’s decision—

**SEC. PANELO:** Ay, hindi na—hindi ko alam ‘yun.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Ayun, sir. Now, again read—

**SEC. PANELO:** I do not know that. We have to ask the President kung may kinalaman nga siya.

**MPC:** [OFF MIC] (UNCLEAR)

**SEC. PANELO:** ‘Yun ang sabi, we are not privy to that. We have to ask him.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** [OFF MIC] So, you’re doubting Sara?

**SEC. PANELO:** Not... not necessarily. It only means I will not enter into the realm of speculations.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Secretary, Ito kasi ‘yung eksaktong statement huh... verbatim: “He was specifically chosen by the President, President Duterte as chairman of the committee and last time we checked, the President never ordered the removal of Ungab. If anything, the removal was an insult and affront to the President and not the Party.” This was the statement of HNP headed by the Presidential daughter and the Mayor of Davao.

**SEC. PANELO:** Statement of HNP not the Mayor herself.

**MPC:** [OFF MIC] (UNCLEAR)

**SEC. PANELO:** But did—was she the one issued that? And even assuming that... even assuming that she issued that, your question is: Does the President consider it an insult?

**MPC:** [OFF MIC] Yes.

**SEC. PANELO:** Then I will ask him.

**MPC:** [OFF MIC] (UNCLEAR)

**SEC. PANELO:** I cannot be reading the thoughts of this President. You have to ask him.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Okay, sir.

**SEC. PANELO:** Eh, kung sabihin niya, “Wala yan, hayaan mo sila.” O ‘di tapos na agad.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Alright, we are resting our case.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Sir, regarding ‘yung statement ulit ng Hugpong ng Pagbabago. Sir, do you know anything about this, ‘yung sinasabi nila? Did President Duterte choose the leadership of the committees?

**SEC. PANELO:** Kaya nga hindi ko nga alam ‘yun. ‘Di ba, sabi ko lang kanina hindi ko alam ‘yun. I’m not privy to that; so hindi ko pa alam. I’ll ask, don’t worry.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** But you said that the President never interferes with—

**SEC. PANELO:** O ‘di ba hindi naman siya nakialam. Nung lumapit sila kay Presidente—

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Nung lumapit?

**SEC. PANELO:** Oo, hindi naman sila lumapit—hindi naman sila lumalapit ngayon ‘di ba? So—

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Nung lumapit on the Speakership—

**SEC. PANELO:** With respect to the Speakership.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** But on the leadership of the committees, sir?

**SEC. PANELO:** Ah, hindi ko alam ‘yung sa committee. Parang I never heard... hindi ko alam ‘yun eh... parang ngayon ko nga lang narinig ‘yun eh.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** So, you’re not saying that ‘yung statement ng Hugpong ng Pagbabago is true or false, you’re just saying I don’t know anything about it?

**SEC. PANELO:** Yeah, I don’t know anything about it. That’s why precisely I will ask the President.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, presscon ulit tayo ‘pag nakausap mo na si sir.

**SEC. PANELO:** Oo ba! Hindi... I will just issue a statement.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Ambush na lang mamaya.

**SEC. PANELO:** I will just issue a statement.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Hindi, sir ganito. ‘Yung sa PLA – okay, fine – ang sabi n’yo po is I’m sure that the AFP is validating that report already ‘no. But Malacañang, the Palace ‘no, the President, are you going to proactively try to at least know what’s going on?

**SEC. PANELO:** The Palace doesn’t have to do that because precisely kaya ka nga nasa Executive eh. Kung ginagawa na ang trabaho ng mga opisina mo, under your territory, o eh bakit ko pa gagawin ‘yun, trabaho nila ‘yun. So, when their job is done, they report to the President and the President will makes a decision.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** This is not naman, sir, nonchalance or wala lang paki?

**SEC. PANELO:** No. Basta kailangan—kailangan palaging mayroong basis si Presidente.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Okay, okay.

**USEC. ROCKY:** Okay. No more questions, MPC? Okay. Thank you, MPC. Thank you, Secretary Panelo.

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*Source: PCOO-NIB (News and Information Bureau-Data Processing Center)*