



Introduced by **SENATOR IMEE R. MARCOS**

**A RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN
INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE PROLIFERATION AND
TRAFFICKING OF DEPLETED URANIUM AND OTHER NUCLEAR MATERIAL
WITHIN PHILIPPINE TERRITORY**

WHEREAS, Section 4, Article II of the 1987 Constitution declares that the prime duty of the Government is to serve and protect the people;

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the same article provides that the Philippines adopts and pursues a policy free from nuclear weapons within its territories;

WHEREAS, under Section 2 of Republic Act 5207, otherwise known as the Atomic Energy Regulatory and Liability Act of 1968, it is part of the policy of the State to control the production and use of nuclear energy materials and to protect against the unauthorized use of nuclear materials;

WHEREAS, in 2021, the Senate ratified the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which President Rodrigo Roa Duterte called a "milestone," underscoring that the Philippines is "faithful to the policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in our territory as enshrined in the 1987 Constitution";

WHEREAS, earlier this year, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) received information from the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI) regarding the illegal trade of depleted uranium taking place within the country;

WHEREAS, such depleted uranium were allegedly being marketed as "precious metals", in the form of rhodium or palladium, which can be sold for as much as Php 6.8 million per kilogram. These items were purportedly sold to foreigners by a group led by a certain Roy Cabezas Vistal;

WHEREAS, on 18 October 2024, NBI and PNRI personnel searched a condominium unit in Pasay City that is allegedly owned by Mr. Vistal where they recovered three (3) kilograms of black powder, rock, and other items that tested positive of Uranium-235 and Uranium-238;

WHEREAS, on the same day, the NBI conducted an entrapment operation that led to the arrest of two persons, Mae Zagala and Arnel Santiago, who were allegedly connected to Mr. Vistal. In this operation, the NBI was able to recover 23 kilograms of metal bars and black powder containing uranium;

WHEREAS, ten (10) days later, on 28 October 2024, the PNRI and the NBI, with the assistance from the military, conducted another search operation at the residence of Mr. Vistal in Mega Heights Subdivision, Cagayan de Oro City. The government operatives were able to arrest Mr. Vistal and recover radioactive materials, including a black pot that weighed 3 to 5 kilograms. The government operatives were also able to determine that various surfaces of the residence and the family vehicle were contaminated with uranium isotopes;

WHEREAS, on 08 November 2024 and 09 November 2024, the NBI conducted two more operations in Mandaue City, Cebu, after their investigation showed that Mr. Vistal purportedly sourced the depleted uranium from Cebu. The two operations yielded 60 kilograms of block metals that were positive for uranium;

WHEREAS, in the almost month-long series of operations, the NBI and PNRI was able to recover around one hundred (100) kilograms of uranium. Authorities said the three suspects were brought for inquest proceedings at the Department of Justice (DOJ) for violating Republic Act No. 5207;

WHEREAS, local officials said the group's reported sourcing of uranium showed the government's weak monitoring of hazardous materials and the need to strengthen regulatory oversight;

WHEREAS, according to the PNRI, depleted uranium poses a serious threat to national security because such can be used a source material for nuclear weapons and bombs, as well as, conventional armor-defeating rounds as it can pierce through armor plating and tank armor;

WHEREAS, in addition to the grave national security threat it poses, depleted uranium is also a health threat due to its radioactivity and toxicity;

WHEREAS, PNRI Director Dr. Carlo Arcilla stated that residual powder from uranium can be dangerous to the public, especially when the powder is mixed with bombs to create radiological dispersal devices (RDD) or inhaled by vulnerable individuals. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the element in small quantities is capable of causing alpha emission, a type of radioactive decay that damages living tissue;

WHEREAS, these recent developments are very alarming and a serious cause for concern as the unregulated possession and trafficking of uranium endangers the health of the Filipino people and the security of the nation. The series of events shows that the trafficking of depleted uranium is taking place in the entire country as these radioactive materials were recovered in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, thereby

causing not only local terror in the places where the uranium was confiscated but also a national outrage among the people;

WHEREAS, considering that the Philippines does not have any operational nuclear powerplant and expressly bans nuclear weapons within its territory, it is imperative to determine: a) where the depleted uranium was sourced from; b) how such materials were able to enter Philippine territory; c) who the buyers of such uranium were; d) whether there are other groups engaged in uranium trafficking in the country; and e) what measures can be taken to prevent the entry of uranium and similar materials in the country and to stop local trafficking of such materials;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE PHILIPPINE SENATE, that the appropriate Senate Committee be directed to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, into the proliferation and trafficking of depleted uranium and other nuclear material within the Philippine territory.

Adopted,


IMEE R. MARCOS