

**SENATE**

**COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 514**

PROCEEDINGS

Submitted jointly by the Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; Migrant Workers; and Public Order and Dangerous Drugs on **FEB - 3 2025**

**RE :** The Privilege Speech of Sen. Risa Hontiveros on Human Trafficking, delivered on November 21, 2022, P.S. Res. Nos. 595, 611, 853, 977 and 1032

Recommending the adoption of the recommendations incorporated therewith

**Sponsor :** **Senator Risa Hontiveros**

**MR. PRESIDENT:**

The Senate Committees on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality; Migrant Workers; and Public Order and Dangerous Drugs to which were referred:

**"THE PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SEN. RISA HONTIVEROS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING, DELIVERED ON NOVEMBER 21, 2022;**

P.S. Res. 595 introduced by Senator Poe, entitled:

**"RESOLUTION**

**URGING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE/S TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND CYBER FRAUD OPERATIONS AT THE CLARK SUN VALLEY HUB CORPORATION INSIDE THE CLARK FREEPORT ZONE WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ELIMINATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CYBER FRAUD INDUSTRIES IN THE COUNTRY;**

P.S. Res. No. 611, introduced by Senator Gatchalian, entitled:

**"RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING INSIDE THE CLARK FREEPORT ZONE WHICH ARE BEING LINKED TO PHILIPPINE OFFSHORE GAMING OPERATORS (POGO), WITH AN END VIEW OF CRAFTING A LEGISLATION OR POLICY RECOMMENDATION, AS MAY BE NECESSARY;**

P.S. Res. 853, introduced by Senator Gatchalian, entitled:

**"RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF AN INTERNET GAMING LICENSEE OF THE PHILIPPINE AMUSEMENT AND GAMING CORPORATION (PAGCOR) ON THE ALLEGED CRIMES OR OFFENSES, PARTICULARLY PROSTITUTION, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, TORTURE, KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM, AND ONLINE SCAMS, WITH AN END VIEW OF CRAFTING A LEGISLATION OR POLICY RECOMMENDATION, AS MAY BE NECESSARY;**

P.S. Res. 977, introduced by Senator Gatchalian, entitled:

**"RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED HUMAN TRAFFICKING, SERIOUS ILLEGAL DETENTION, AND PHYSICAL ABUSE AND TORTURE IN THE PREMISES OF AN INTERNET GAMING LICENSEE OF PHILIPPINE AMUSEMENT GAMING CORPORATION (PAGCOR) IN TARLAC, WITH AN END VIEW OF CRAFTING A LEGISLATION OR POLICY RECOMMENDATION, AS MAY BE NECESSARY; and**

P.S.R No. 1032, introduced by Senator Gatchalian, entitled:

**"RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND INVOLVEMENT IN SCAMMING ACTIVITIES, VIOLATING THE CYBERCRIME PREVENTION ACT OF 2012, WITHIN MULTINATIONAL VILLAGE IN PARANAQUE CITY, WITH AN END VIEW OF CRAFTING A LEGISLATION OR POLICY RECOMMENDATION, AS MAY BE NECESSARY.**

**I. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Southeast Asia has become a focal point for the emergence of transnational scam complexes—highly organized criminal networks that exploit technological advancements and jurisdictional loopholes to perpetrate large-scale fraud. These operations are often disguised as legitimate businesses, leveraging weak governance and regulatory frameworks to establish hubs of illicit activity. A troubling dimension of these complexes is their reliance on human trafficking to sustain their operations, with thousands of individuals forced into criminality under inhumane conditions. A core part of this crisis is the Philippines, where Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs) have inadvertently provided regulatory cover for these illicit enterprises. In his State of the Nation Address, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr declared a ban on POGOs. This declaration was subsequently followed by an Executive Order<sup>1</sup> which laid down the details of a phaseout until December of last year.

Initially established as a means to boost economic growth through online gambling, POGOs have evolved into a significant industry in the Philippines, particularly during the previous administration. However, the rapid expansion of these operations has been accompanied by mounting allegations of criminal activities, including money laundering, tax evasion, and, most alarmingly, their role in facilitating

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<sup>1</sup>

transnational scam networks. POGOs often operate under the guise of legal businesses, but the investigation of the Senate Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality has revealed that many serve as fronts for illegal enterprises. Their regulated status has granted them a veneer of legitimacy, allowing bad actors to exploit systemic gaps while remaining shielded from scrutiny.

These scam complexes are intricately tied to human trafficking networks that lure individuals from across Southeast Asia and beyond with false promises of lucrative employment. Victims are often deceived into traveling to the Philippines, only to find themselves trapped in call centers or online hubs where they are coerced into perpetrating scams. From romance fraud and cryptocurrency schemes to phishing attacks and deepfake-enabled blackmail, these operations generate billions of dollars while destroying countless lives. The victims, stripped of their autonomy, face threats of violence, confinement, and severe penalties if they resist.

The involvement of former Bamban, Tarlac Mayor Alice Guo in the POGO industry has brought additional scrutiny to its links with scam complexes and human trafficking. Guo, a first-term Mayor with no ostensible political connections prior to running for public office, was immediately linked to a POGO facility in her town. This facility, located in the Baofu compound in Tarlac where Guo was an incorporator, was revealed to be a hub for human trafficking, money laundering, and other illegal activities.

Guo's case has underscored the vulnerabilities within the regulatory system, as well as the complicity of high-ranking individuals in enabling these crimes, and later, facilitating her escape. Her testimony during Senate hearings chaired by Senator Risa Hontiveros further highlighted the inadequacies of oversight mechanisms and the influence of powerful actors in shielding criminal operations. The Guo incident serves as a stark reminder of the systemic challenges in dismantling these networks and holding perpetrators accountable.

Guo's case demonstrates that beyond the devastating human cost, the rise of transnational scam complexes and their entrenchment within the POGO industry pose significant threats to national security. The influx of foreign nationals involved in these operations has raised concerns about espionage and the potential misuse of critical

infrastructure. There are growing fears that these networks could be exploited by hostile states or organized crime syndicates to undermine national sovereignty and stability.

Moreover, the economic implications of these POGO-related activities are profound. The revenue generated by POGOs is often overshadowed by the societal costs of their associated criminal activities, including the strain on law enforcement resources and the damage to the country's international reputation. As nations – particularly those whose citizens are victims of these fraud factories – increasingly scrutinize the Philippines for its role in harboring these scam complexes, there is a risk of diplomatic fallout and reduced foreign investment.

The lack of robust regulation and enforcement within the POGO sector has created an environment where these crimes can thrive. The regulatory framework governing POGOs, while extensive on paper, has proven inadequate in practice, with oversight bodies frequently outpaced by the rapid evolution of these networks. Corruption, limited inter-agency coordination, and insufficient international cooperation further exacerbate the problem. As a result, scam complexes operating under the POGO umbrella not only exploit victims but also erode public trust in governance and harm the country's reputation on the global stage.

This Committee Report examines the impact of these transnational scam complexes in Southeast Asia to the Philippines, both in terms of how they fuel the trafficking of Filipinos to various locales in the region hosting these complexes, and how they use the Philippines as host country. It explores how POGOs have provided regulatory cover for illicit operations, the methods used to traffic individuals into forced criminality, and the broader socio-economic impacts of these activities. By analyzing the evidence, testimonies, and financial flows, the report aims to lay down the impacts of this POGO industry on the country, impacts that may be felt well after the ban.

Ultimately, this report seeks to propose policy and legislative reforms to combat these interconnected crimes and ensure that the dangers of POGO do not outlive its regulatory demise. By addressing the vulnerabilities within the POGO regulatory framework, strengthening international collaboration, enhancing protections for victims, ensuring that the ban does not have any loopholes that can be exploited by

bad actors, the Philippines can take decisive steps toward dismantling these criminal networks and restoring integrity to its systems.

## **II. DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS**

### **1. Human trafficking for forced criminality**

The driving force of this investigation is the issue of human trafficking for forced criminality. Trafficking of human beings, from whatever nationality, across state borders, and coercing or deceiving them to operate scams and participate in illegal activities, is the newest form of modern slavery and is both global in reach and exponential in growth. This practice is increasingly evident in the outbound trafficking of Filipinos to scam compounds in the Golden Triangle region of Southeast Asia, as well as the trafficking of foreign nationals into the Philippines for similar operations. Victims endure physical abuse, psychological trauma, and legal jeopardy, while law enforcement struggles to navigate complex regulatory and jurisdictional challenges.

#### **A. Outbound Trafficking of Filipinos to Scam Compounds in the Golden Triangle**

The Golden Triangle—a region spanning parts of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos—has become a hotspot for trafficking operations linked to forced criminality. Filipino workers, lured by promises of high-paying jobs in technology or customer service, find themselves trapped in scam compounds, primarily operated by transnational criminal syndicates. These compounds engage in online fraud, including love scams, phishing, investment scams, and cryptocurrency schemes. Victims are subjected to grueling working conditions, often forced to operate under threat of violence. Reports detail how trafficked Filipinos face beatings, starvation, and solitary confinement if they fail to meet quotas.

The investigation was prompted by a privilege speech delivered by Committee Chairperson Risa Hontiveros subsequent to the rescue of 12 Filipinos from the border of Thailand and Myanmar, on the side of Myanmar. In the first week of November 2022, one alias "Rita", 31, contacted the office of the Chairperson to divulge that she was trapped in a compound known as Shwe Kokko, in the province of Myawaddy, Myanmar. Shwe Kokko is situated along the Thaung River, which separates Myanmar

and Thailand, approximately 16 kilometers from Myawaddy in Mae Sot, Thailand. Originally envisioned as part of the Yatai New City project, the area was developed through a controversial partnership between a Hong Kong-registered investment company with a questionable reputation, the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF), and the Myanmar military. Following the 2020 coup, the region transformed into a hub for cyber scams and illegal online gambling, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chilling details of her sorry saga then emerged.

“Rita” was working as a customer service representative (CSR) in a well-known Business Processing Office (BPO) in Manila when she saw a Facebook account posting a job ad for CSR positions in Thailand, with a salary of Php50,000.00 and free accommodation and food. She responded and after a few exchanges on telegram, her ticket was sent to her. She was promised that her work visas would be fixed once she reached Thailand. When Rita and her companion, another recruit, arrived at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Thailand, they were told to look for a Fortuner car that would pick them up. To their surprise, a man approached them and showed photos of them in the clothes they were wearing that day. The man was Thai, and due to the language barrier, they couldn’t communicate with him, so they reluctantly followed him. Curious about the journey ahead, they asked their recruiter how long the trip would take, and she told them it would be around three hours. Since they couldn’t converse with the driver, Rita relied on Google Translate to ask how much longer the journey would be. Panic set in when she realized they had been traveling for five hours, which eventually extended to eight. As the landscape changed drastically, Rita wondered if they were still in Thailand.

After an exhausting eight-hour journey, the two women were dropped off at a resort, only to be picked up again for another hour-long drive. They remained in Mae Sot, Thailand, but to reach the next destination, they needed to cross a river. At this point, they became hysterical as their recruiter was no longer reachable. Upon crossing the river, their vehicle was suddenly escorted by armed men in civilian clothing. Fearful of being harmed, Rita and her companion stayed quiet and didn’t resist.

The journey continued for another two hours before they finally arrived at their workplace, which was in Myanmar. It soon became clear to Rita what she had been

hired to do. During the orientation/onboarding, they were told to make multiple accounts on dating apps and social networking apps using profile photos of young and pretty women to target male Western clients, preferably older. The job entailed forming relationships with them, enticing them to invest in cryptocurrency, then eventually gaining access to their bank accounts to drain. Once done, they would immediately block the clients and remove any traces of their communication online.

The target was to scam at least one account in a day. If they don't have a successful scam, they will be punished. Rita said the Chinese team handlers would throw things at them if their "quotas" were not met. Rita and her companions worked at least 12 hours a day, then went back to their quarters within the compound<sup>2</sup>. They also have no days off. They were confined in the compound and were not allowed to go outside<sup>3</sup>. They were also not allowed to communicate with family or anyone else except their supervisors. It was through a stolen moment on her phone that Rita was able to contact the office of Senator Hontiveros, whose team immediately facilitated their rescue a few weeks later, together with the Department of Foreign Affairs and some international non-government organizations.

The rescue and the subsequent investigation, which included testimonies from Rita and her associates, revealed a phenomenon that has been deemed a humanitarian crisis due to its extensive scope and impact.

The logistical challenge of rescuing Filipinos from the Golden Triangle compounds is immense. Victims are often reluctant to seek help, fearing retaliation from their captors or criminal charges in host countries. The region's porous borders, weak governance, and the involvement of corrupt officials exacerbate the problem. Law enforcement agencies in the Philippines face difficulties in coordinating with local authorities in Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, who may lack the resources or political will to intervene, or whose laws identify victim-survivors as overstaying aliens, or worse perpetrators.

During the next hearing, the Committee then presented the case of trafficking to scam compounds in Cambodia, following a similar business model as the compound

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<sup>2</sup> Page 63 of Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 22, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Page 63 of Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 22, 2022



in Myanmar. The Committee was able to speak with Miles\*, one of the Filipinos trafficked to Cambodia, who has since been able to return to the Philippines. Miles reached out to Hontiveros to seek assistance as there are other Filipinos who need rescue in Cambodia.

According to Miles, they were promised customer service or call center jobs<sup>4</sup>. However, just as the senator learned from the victims from Myanmar, the OFWs in Cambodia also ended up being forced to dupe citizens from countries like the US and Canada of their life savings. "*Kapag wala kang nakukuhang kliyente, ang ginagawa, pinagtrabaho [kami] ng mahigit 16 hours, walang tulog, 7 days a week. Meron po akong nakita at narinig ko po mismo na kinuryente na kasamang empleyado,*" she testified.

Miles was trafficked out of NAIA and into Thailand, and was made to ride a van going to Cambodia. Others, she shared, would either fly from Clark airport in Pampanga and into Cambodia, or from Zamboanga and into Malaysia or other ASEAN countries before travelling to Cambodia. The Filipinos were rescued by Cambodian police officers during a raid of the scam compound effected by Cambodian law enforcement, but they were subsequently detained for allegedly violating the terms of their visa. They were eventually released, but not before allegedly being victims of extortion by their captors. Another member of the group, alias "Brando", testified that he passed through five countries after exiting the country from the Southern backdoor in Tawi tawi, Mindanao, before he was brought to Cambodia<sup>5</sup>, where he found himself in the same scam compound as Miles.

**ALIAS BRANDO:** *Kinabukasan po, 3:30 po ng hapon bumiyahen po kami ng pa-Tawi-Tawi to Sabah, Malaysia, seven hours po. Pagdaong po ng Sabah, pinaglakad po kami ng bundok, anim na oras po. Umaga na po kami nakarating. Tapos po, after po noon, sinundo ulit po kami ng van papuntang Kota Kinabalu, mga sampung oras din po. Kinuha po iyong passport namin. Parang doon po yata nila tinatakan pa-exit po. Tapos after po ng Kota Kinabalu, nagpahinga po kami ng isang gabi po— bale dalawang gabi po. After noon,*

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<sup>4</sup> Page 91 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated January 25, 2023

<sup>5</sup> Page 68 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated January 25, 2023

*pitong oras na naman po papuntang fish port po ng Malaysia, parang sa dulo. Speed boat na naman po ng dalawang oras papuntang border ng Malaysia at Brunei po. Tapos, pahinga po ulit ng 30 minutes. After po noon, punta po ng airport po ng Brunei. Doon na po, nag-plane na po kami from Brunei to Thailand po. And January 12 po, nakarating na kami, Thailand to Cambodia na po<sup>6</sup>.*

Outbound human trafficking is also, unfortunately, aided and abetted by unscrupulous government employees, particularly those in charge of our borders. Another individual, one alias "Ron" who was not part of Miles' group but was also trafficked to Cambodia, testified that he an immigration officer in Clark airport, Angeles City, was working in cahoots with the syndicates responsible for the trafficking to scam compounds in Cambodia.

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *Pero mako-confirm mo, kahit tagahanap lang kayo ng ipo-process na tao, na may iisang tao sa Immigration doon sa Clark na hindi lang sinasabi sa inyo ang pangalan kasi confidential.*

**ALIAS RON.** *Yes po.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *So, very special itong isang tao, ano po, ng Immigration sa Clark.*

**ALIAS RON.** *Yes po<sup>7</sup>.*

## **B. Trafficking of Foreign Nationals into the Philippines for Scam Operations**

Simultaneously, the Philippines has emerged as a destination for trafficked individuals coerced into scam operations. Foreign nationals, primarily from China, Vietnam, and Indonesia, are brought into the country under false pretenses. Scam compounds employ these individuals in fraudulent activities that target victims globally.

During the next hearing, it became clear that the scam compounds were located not only in dusty and remote villages, they were also mushrooming in the

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<sup>6</sup> Page 69 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated January 5, 2023

<sup>7</sup> Page 19 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated January 5, 2023

urban Philippines, many times right beside offices of local government units or national agencies. During the hearing dated April 19, 2023, the Committee presented alias "Ridwan", testifying virtually from Jakarta, Indonesia. According to him, he was trafficked to the Philippines to work in Bayport West NAIA Garden Residences. His testimony is below:

**ALIAS RIDWAN:** Our office space housed twenty Indonesians in the same room. The supervisor is a black man—I was told he is from South Africa—and a Chinese. They explained that we first have to create a social media character. This social media character has to be a woman who reads, who is young, who is smart, and successful. We need to find and grab photos online that we can use. Basically, we were instructed to steal the identities of other people and use their identities to scam targets. Our targets are our fellow Indonesians. We find them on Tinder, Facebook, and Instagram.

"Then after our targets fall in love with us, we make them invest in cryptocurrency; we need to get money from them and scam at least two targets a month. When we do not get victims, we will get punishment. My impression is that many employees have their salaries withheld from them.

"I also know there are secret areas where employees are punished and even get electrocuted. There were so many security guards all over the place. Based on my observation, the whole Bayport West NAIA garden residences is used for scamming.<sup>8</sup>"

As though corroborating the testimony of Ridwan, the raid in Pasay City in 2023 uncovered dozens of trafficked individuals, including Chinese and Vietnamese nationals. These workers reported being stripped of their passports, confined to the premises, and subjected to physical abuse if they attempted to escape. Many were forced to work up to 18 hours a day under the threat of violence.

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<sup>8</sup> Page 18 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated April 19, 2023.

After this revelation, the Committee became inundated with reports on scam compounds all over the Philippines, leading to an ocular inspection on a scam compound in Clark Sun Valley, Angeles, Pampanga. The Philippine Senate's investigation into the scam compound operating under a POGO license in Clark Sun Valley, Pampanga, has uncovered even more alarming details about human trafficking and forced criminality within the country. During a raid conducted by law enforcement authorities, over 1,000 victims from various Asian countries, including China, Vietnam, and Indonesia, were rescued from the compound<sup>9</sup>. Like Ridwan, these individuals were lured into the Philippines with promises of legitimate employment but were instead forced to work as scammers in illegal online operations. The victims were subjected to harsh working conditions, with their movements restricted, passports confiscated, and threats of violence used to maintain control. During the ocular inspection, the chairperson expressed shock to see "video rooms," or rooms staged like a set depicting various aspects of the life of a "model," in order to deceive the targets into believing they were speaking to a real person with romantic feelings towards them instead of a model employed to siphon money from them. Despite having a POGO license, witnesses detailed how the compound was run like a prison, with victims forced to engage in romance scams, cryptocurrency fraud, and phishing schemes targeting individuals worldwide. During the inspection, the committee was shown a "torture room," where individuals who were not able to meet their quotas were kept in isolation and deprived of food and basic needs. In the next ocular inspection at Smart Web Technology Corporation, an internet gaming licensee of the Philippine Amusement Gaming Corporation located in Pasay City, evidence of sex trafficking activities emerged. Of the three POGO hubs inspected, the Smart Web hub stands out for its clear gender dimensions. Upon inspection by the members of the Committee, it became clear that the premises were also being used as a prostitution den, with small rooms with glass walls to "view" the women offered for sexual services<sup>10</sup>.

## **2. Regulatory failures**

The involvement of local facilitators and the use of sophisticated document falsification techniques complicate efforts to combat this issue. Victims' reluctance to

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<sup>9</sup> Page 102 of Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated August 2, 2023

<sup>10</sup> Page 84 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated August 2, 2023

cooperate with authorities, often due to language barriers and fear of deportation, further hinders investigations. According to law enforcement, some of the bosses pretend to be “victims”, using the language barrier as an excuse not to cooperate or communicate.

Criminal syndicates exploit gaps in immigration policies and weak oversight of the POGO industry to traffic and exploit workers.

Regulatory failure is a persistent theme running through the investigation. In the Clark Sun Valley ocular inspection that the misuse of the POGO regulatory framework, which provided a facade of legitimacy to these criminal activities, was highlighted. According to some of the witnesses, they would be informed beforehand that a PAGCOR inspection was about to take place, and this cued them to ‘sanitize’ their desktop screens so that evidence of scam operations would not be visible and it would appear that they were just carrying out functions of a regular POGO. The hearings further highlighted the complicity of some officials and the failure of PAGCOR and relevant authorities—in this case, Clark Development Corporation—to adequately monitor the activities of POGOs, raising even deeper questions about the industry’s continued viability in the Philippines. During the hearing immediately after the Clark Sun Valley inspection, there was also opportunity to discuss the issue of inter-agency coordination among law enforcement agencies. This arose after comparison between the Clark raid and the raid of Xinchuang Network Technology, Inc., with the latter raid being called out for lack of coordination.

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** Sen Raffy, let us just quickly ask Usec Ty.

*Paki-confirm po o deny, mayroon po bang coordination sa IACAT?*

**MR. TY.** *Ang salita na ginagamit namin, “improper” iyong coordination.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. TULFO).** “Improper.”

**MR. TY.** *Iyong araw ng implementation ng raid, kinontak si PP Lledo ng 5:00 p.m.; 5:00 p.m., may search warrant na, ii-implement nila. Para sa amin that was last minute and perfunctory collaboration with IACAT. Ang national task force, headed ni PP Lledo, lagi namang handa tumulong. Kaya kahit papaano, kahit last minute, kahit na hindi kami involved doon sa secure ng search*

*warrant, nagpadala kami ng tao doon sa site. The day after, iyon, nalaman ko na na may search warrant na implementation, kinoordinate (coordinate) namin iyong mga different agencies para tumulong<sup>11</sup>.*

The hearing on the Rivendell raid also highlighted the deficiencies of regulatory bodies like PAGCOR in monitoring POGO sites to ensure that there are no illegal activities taking place. The following exchange between the Chairperson Senator Hontiveros and an official of PAGCOR demonstrates this:

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *So are you saying po, Attorney, na itong indications, items, paraphernalia that probably would be used, kumbaga, badges of human trafficking, are you saying na ang PAGCOR shineyr (share) ito sa ating law enforcement. Shineyr (share) ninyo ba ito sa IACAT? Ito ba ay naging udyok sa kanila to conduct this raid? Is that what you are saying, Attorney?*

**MS. FERNANDEZ.** For SA Rivendell, ma'am, I am not sure if this has been submitted already by the monitoring team.

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** So, if you are not sure, Attorney, probably, *hindi po*.

**MS. FERNANDEZ.** *Hindi pa po.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *So, hindi pa. So, what prevented PAGCOR from sending reports of these probable badges to the council responsible to put a stop to these operations?*

**MS. FERNANDEZ.** I think it is remiss on our part because right now I have just been informed that they are still preparing the report for transmittal to IACAT and the other law enforcement agencies.

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<sup>11</sup> Page 25 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated August 2, 2023

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** Being remiss, ma'am, Attorney, is really an understatement. *Kasi a month ago pa iyong inspection, you are still preparing the report. Again, buti na lang itinuloy na ng IACAT iyong kaniyang raid*<sup>12</sup>.

The hearings further revealed that PAGCOR (PAGCOR) utterly failed in supervising and regulating the activities of POGOs and their service providers. In screening POGO license applications, PAGCOR admitted that it only relied on documents submitted to verify the truth of facts alleged in submitted documents. It had attempted to outsource probity checks, but accepted that this too, did not work effectively.<sup>13</sup> They also admitted that they have no capacity to monitor the hundreds of POGOs who continued to operate despite having their licenses cancelled, and that illegal activities involving POGOs can mostly be traced back to service providers:

*"Doon po talaga sa walang lisensya, hindi na talaga namin mamonitor iyon. At hindi na rin po namin talagang masusubaybayan pa iyong criminal activities nila."*<sup>14</sup>

*"[L]umalabas po doon sa aming pagsasaliksik, nandoon po talaga iyong kalokohan sa service providers dahil wala naman po sila talagang karapatan na sila ay ma-involve sa gaming operations. Kaya po sila na-classify na service provider ay dahil sa dapat lang silang umasiste sa backroom operations, sa IT needs noong mga kompanya, ganoon din po sa administrative na mga needs noong mga kompanyang pinangangatawanan nila. At dito nga po, noong lumawak na iyong aming pagsasaliksik, sa tulong po ni General RP(?) Villanueva na nahirang ko po noong sometime in September 2022, lumalabas po sa nakita namin ay doon talaga ang problema sa mga service providers na iyon."*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Page 64 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated August 2, 2023

<sup>13</sup> Page 106 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Page 194 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 7, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Page 92 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 7, 2024.

DOJ-IACAT shared the following perspective on the problem of POGOs in the Philippines:

“This issue of illegal POGOs, this issue is not simply a human trafficking problem, it is not a cybercrime problem, it is not even an illegal POGO problem, it is actually an organized crime problem. And if we define organized crime as criminal activity that is planned and controlled by powerful groups at a large scale.

And in terms of the criminal activities that are involved here, we have already seen what kinds of activities are there: human trafficking, both sex and labor variety; you have cybercrime; you have scamming; you have torture; you have illegal gambling; you have kidnapping; you have falsification of government documents; you have—probably, you would have smuggling; and I would think there would be some corruption of public officers involved here.”<sup>16</sup>

### **3. Fraudulent Filipino Identities and Abuse of Visas**

The Pasay raid also revealed stacks of identification cards (IDs) from the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Land Transportation Office, and other agencies of government, with names and photos belonging to Chinese-looking individuals, but who were denominated as being Filipino citizens. PAOCC Undersecretary Gilberto Cruz confirmed that the IDs appeared to be authentic even as the identity details therein were false- concluding that foreign POGO actors were able to secure the same from “fixers” in government agencies.<sup>17</sup> Foreign elements were not only using POGOs as a cover for criminal activity- they were using fraudulently obtained Filipino identities to

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<sup>16</sup> Page 42 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 10, 2023

<sup>17</sup> Page 20 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 10, 2023.



legitimize their stay in the country, freely move around and conduct transactions<sup>18</sup>, and worst of all- to evade accountability from law enforcers.<sup>19</sup>

While rich in detail and compelling in narrative, none of the ocular inspections could have prepared the Committee for what was to unfold in then-Mayor Alice Guo's Bamban. What began as an ocular inspection of a compound in Bamban, Tarlac, led to the discovery of Guo's role in human trafficking operations, her ties to Chinese organized crime, and her eventual identification by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) as an agent of influence.

The inquiry into the human trafficking and cybercrime activities of Alice Guo began with an ocular inspection conducted by PAOCC of of a compound in Bamban, Tarlac. On March 13, 2024, PAOCC raided Zun Yuan Technology, Inc. (Zun Yuan), a POGO duly licensed by PAGCOR located in Bamban, Tarlac. Zun Yuan's operations were done in a huge compound owned by Baofu Land Development Corp. (Baofu).<sup>20</sup> Zun Yuan, consistent with other raided POGOs, was found to be engaged in organized crimes including systematic scamming operations.<sup>21</sup> The Baofu compound contained 36 buildings and around 7.9 hectares.<sup>22</sup> Within the complex were villas valued at over ₱40 million each, equipped with wine cellars and state-of-the-art kitchens. They also contained underground bunkers, a maze of tunnels which were used to hide from authorities.<sup>23</sup> According to independent engineering professionals, the estimated total cost for the Baofu compound was around ₱6.1 Billion.<sup>24</sup> POGOs with cancelled licenses (e.g. SkyCall, Brickhartz) were also found to be continuing their operations in the Baofu compound.<sup>25</sup>

This site was also revealed to house victims of human trafficking, most of whom were forced into cybercrime activities targeting foreign nationals. The raid was prompted by a call for assistance by a Vietnamese national who was held inside the premises. During this inspection, law enforcement officials already found documents

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<sup>18</sup> Page 28 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 10, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Page 55 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Page 124 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Page 27 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Page 39 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Page 21 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

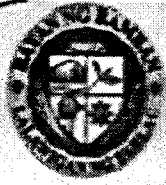
<sup>24</sup> Page 180 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Page 32 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

linking Alice Guo to the company, including utility bills in her name. The officials later found that the Application for **Letter of No Objection (LONO) (pictured below)** filed before the Municipal Council of Bambang was signed by one Ms. Alice Guo as authorized representative of then-Hongsheng Corporation, the predecessor of Zun Yuan, the subject of the raid. It immediately surfaced that Alice Guo used to be the majority shareholder of Baofu Corporation, the company owning the land leased by Zun Yuan for its POGO facilities, and Guo admitted that the land upon which the Baofu compound was built was previously owned by her.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Page 131 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.



Republic of the Philippines  
MUNICIPALITY OF BAMBAN  
Province of Tarlac



**OFFICE OF THE SANGGUNIANG BAYAN**

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF THE SANGGUNIANG BAYAN HELD AT THE SB SESSION ROOM, MUNICIPAL HALL ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020**

**Present:** Vice-Mayor William P. Cura, Presiding Officer  
Councilor Alvin Dale M. Sibal  
Councilor Johnny M. Sales  
Councilor Ernesto M. Salting  
Councilor Fortunato V. Mejia  
Councilor Jayson S. Galang  
Councilor Ariel Alimurong  
Councilor Nestor C. Peña  
Councilor Eduardo D. Gutierrez  
Councilor Joso M. Salting, Jr., President LnB  
Councilor Nikko T. Balilo, President, PPSK

**Absent:** No one

**RESOLUTION NO. 185, SERIES OF 2020**

**A RESOLUTION INTERPOSING NO OBJECTION TO THE APPLICATION OF MS. ALICE GUO FOR FRANCHISE/LICENSE/PERMIT OF HONGSHENG GAMING TECHNOLOGY, INC. TO NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, OFFICES AND BUREAUS, FOR THE COMPANY'S INTENTION TO ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MANAGE A BUSINESS OF AMUSEMENT, ENTERTAINMENT, RECREATION AND GAMING ACTIVITIES IN BARANGAY ANUPUL, THIS MUNICIPALITY, PROVIDED THAT THE GAMING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED THEREIN SHALL BE EXCLUSIVE ONLY TO THEIR MEMBERS AND THEIR COMMUNITY**

WHEREAS, in his letter to the Sangguniang Bayan dated 16 September 2020, Hon. Mayor Jose Antonio T. Feliciano requests that the Sangguniang Bayan enact a resolution "interposing no objection" to the application for franchise/license/permit to Ms. Alice Guo, representative of Hongsheng Gaming Technology, Inc. who has signified intention to establish, operate and manage a business of amusement, entertainment, recreation and various form of gaming activities, contests and exhibitions in Barangay Anupul, Bamban, Tarlac;



Republic of the Philippines  
MUNICIPALITY OF BAMBAN  
Province of Tarlac



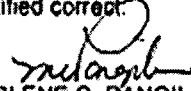
OFFICE OF THE SANGGUNIANG BAYAN

BE IT RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, that the Sangguniang Bayan hereby interposes NO OBJECTION to the application of Ms. Alice Guo, who is acting as representative of Hongsheng Gaming Technology, Inc. to national and local government agencies, offices and bureaus, for the Company's intention to establish, operate and manage a business of amusement, entertainment and recreation activities, including gambling activities or various games of chance, provided however, that the gaming business and activities shall be for EXCLUSIVE participation of its members or members of their community, located in Barangay Anupul, this Municipality, subject to compliance with existing laws, ordinances, rules and regulations.

RESOLVED FURTHER, let copies of this resolution be furnished Mayor Jose Antonio T. Feliciano, Ms. Alice Guo, at Hongsheng Gaming Technology, Inc. office in Barangay Anupul, Municipality of Bamban, the Municipal Treasurer/Licensing, and others concerned, for their information and appropriate action.

CARRIED.

Certified correct.

  
MARLENE C. PANGILINAN  
SB Secretary

ATTESTED:

  
WILLIAM P. CURA  
Municipal Vice-Mayor & Presiding Officer

The inspection again revealed significant irregularities within the compound, including the detention of individuals against their will and the use of these individuals in online scams. The severity of the situation moved the Chairperson to state, "What we are witnessing is not just a violation of human rights but a systematic exploitation of vulnerable individuals for criminal gain."

The Committee's investigations would eventually reveal that malign foreign nationals were not only able to assume fake Filipino identities through obtaining government IDs- they had been successful in perverting the process for civil registration.

Alice Guo's first appearance before the Senate Committee occurred shortly after the Bamban raid, with her connections to the Baofu compound prompting further

scrutiny on her identity and background.<sup>27</sup> In her first appearance at the hearings, Guo portrayed herself as an ordinary Filipino who was raised in a farm in Bamban, never went to school, and achieved success through the entrepreneurial spirit of her parents who allegedly owned a number of businesses.

Guo's Certificate of Live Birth ostensibly showed that she was born in the Philippines in Tarlac on July 12, 1986 to parents Angelito Guo (Filipino), and Amelia Leal (Filipino). It also indicated that her parents were married on October 14, 1982, and that she was their second child. However, her birth certificate was only registered in 2005, nineteen (19) years after Guo's supposed birth.<sup>28</sup> Guo initially stated that her father was a businessman, and she did not grow up with her mother.<sup>29</sup> Her father's name was Angelito Guo, while her mother's name was Amelia Leal.<sup>30</sup> The birth certificate indicated that Guo's father was Filipino, but despite initially claiming that Guo asserted that he was half-Filipino and half-Chinese<sup>31</sup>, Guo herself admitted that her father was a Chinese national.<sup>32</sup>

Alice Guo repeatedly alleged that she had a simple life<sup>33</sup>, but Senator Hontiveros pressed her on inconsistencies in her statements, observing that Guo's responses were vague, often contradictory, and downright unbelievable. If Guo's statements were to be believed, she never once stepped into a classroom, which is not plausible for someone raised in a town just two hours away from the capital in the mid-1990s.

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN HONTIVEROS).** *At saan pala po kayo ipinanganak, sa ospital ba, sa bahay ba, sa lying-in clinic ba?*

**MS. GUO.** *Your Honor, ang sinabi po sa akin, sa bahay po.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *Sa bahay. Saan po iyong bahay ninyo noong ipinanganak kayo?*

**MS. GUO.** *Your Honor, hindi ko na po alam. Opo.*

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<sup>27</sup> Page 32 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Page 8 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>29</sup> Page 89 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Page 115 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>31</sup> Page 145 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>32</sup> Page 45 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Page 90 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** And then, still out of more than curiosity, *saan po kayo nagtapos ng elementary?*

**MS. GUO.** *Homeschool po ako, Your Honor, kasi sa loob po kami ng farm.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *Anong taon po kayo nagtapos sa homeschooling sa elementary?*

**MS. GUO.** *Your Honor, diredirectso po.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *Bandang anong taon natapos po iyong Grade 7 sa homeschooling?*

**MS. GUO.** *Your Honor, tutorial po kasi ang ginawa po sa akin. Sa loob po kasi kami ng farm nakatira po<sup>34</sup>.*

"If you are not hiding anything, you must cooperate with us fully," Senator Hontiveros urged during the hearing. Despite repeated questioning, Guo's demeanor remained evasive. When she was asked details about the late registration of her birth certificate, she claimed to have no knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the same. She explained that she was born in at their family's home but was unable to say the location of their residence.<sup>35</sup> Asked about her education, Guo claimed that she was homeschooled for grade school and high school by a certain "Teacher Rubilyn."<sup>36</sup> She did not have any records or diplomas to show for her story.<sup>37</sup> Guo was unable to share any childhood memories growing up in the Philippines<sup>38</sup>, and only managed to repeat that she grew up in a farm, as if reciting from rote memory.<sup>39</sup>

Her second appearance before the committee further deepened suspicions. Senator Sherwin Gatchalian was able to identify red flags related to her financial involvement in Baofu.

**SEN. GATCHALIAN.** *Can we flash iyong last slide ng PAOCC? Can we flash ito muna, itong incorporation papers? Tiningnan ko kasi itong incorporation papers ninyo and then mayroon isang Huang Zhiyang, one of the incorporators na,*

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<sup>34</sup> Page 90 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> Page 90 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Page 93 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>37</sup> Page 95 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>38</sup> Page 198 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

<sup>39</sup> Page 200 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

*interestingly, Cypriot from Cyprus. So, na-curious ako kasi Chinese, Zhiyang iyong name, pero Cypriot iyong kanyang nationality. Nasaan ba iyon? There, ayan. So, one of your partners is Huang Zhiyang na Cypriot iyong kanyang nationality. And I saw kanina in the presentation ng PAOCC, si Huang Zhiyang is a fugitive. Can we flash that, iyong sa PAOCC? Iyan. Na sabi rin kanina ni Dr. Casio is, also, hawak niya is three passports, isa diyan is a Cyprus passport. So, in other words, iyong partner mo is a fugitive.*

**MS. GUO.** Your Honor, *hindi ko po alam na fugitive siya. Ngayon ko lang po nakita, kanina sa screen.*

**SEN. GATCHALIAN.** Okay. But this puts you in direct link and direct business—doing business with a fugitive.

**MS. GUO.** Your Honor, *hindi ko po alam na fugitive po siya.*

**SEN. GATCHALIAN.** *Okay. And then kanina sinabi mo na Baofu iyong nagpatayo lahat. And then we look at the financial statements of Baofu—can we flash this? Mayroon ba tayo nito? I-flash lang namin— lumalabas, iyong kanyang capital is only 1.2 million. I will flash it, but I will dictate it for now— 1.2 million in assets; zero liabilities; 1.2 in equity. So, paano siya nagpatayo ng ganoong kalaking building nang ang equity niya is only 1.2 million?*

**MS. GUO.** Your Honor, *hindi ko po alam.*

**SEN. GATCHALIAN.** But you owned 50 percent.

**MS. GUO.** *Doon sa lupa po. Iyon po iyong usapan namin, Your Honor, na joint venture; sa akin lang po iyong lupa.*

**SEN. GATCHALIAN.** And then when we look at the sales, zero sales. We will flash it later—zero sales<sup>40</sup>.

While she reiterated her denials, investigators had begun uncovering evidence that raised questions on her claim that she was born in the Philippines to a Filipino mother. "Her testimony raises more questions than answers," remarked Senator Hontiveros. With the details of her birth certificate in question, the true identity and nationality of Guo was thrown wide open. As the Chair noted: "Your birth certificate

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<sup>40</sup> Page 134-135 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024

is riddled with holes. And if your birth certificate is the basis of your citizenship, so *pati po iyong citizenship ninyo ay riddled with holes.*"<sup>41</sup>

The committee also took notice of an interview granted by Alice Guo on May 20, 2024 to television newscaster Karen Davila where she claimed that her mother was a house help of her father who had his own family and who, because of shame, kept her in a farm and did not allow her to go to school. Given that Guo's father was Chinese, her claim to Filipino citizenship hinged on the fact that her alleged mother Amelia Leal was Filipino.

But even this proved to be false, as requested data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) **(pictured below)** yielded information that the father and mother identified in her birth certificate, Angelito Guo and Amelia Leal respectively, did not exist, and there was no record of marriage between her mother and father. The PSA also noted that contrary to prevailing rules and regulations on delayed registration of birth certificates- a Certificate of Live Birth was issued for Guo even though no documents were submitted to support the alleged facts contained therein<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Page 48 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

<sup>42</sup> Page 141 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.





REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
**PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY**



Reference No. 24CRS01-0978

08 May 2024

**HON. RISA HONTIVEROS**

Senator, Chairperson  
 Committee on Women, Children, Gender Equality, and Family Relations  
 Senate of the Philippines  
 Room 527 & 9 GSIS Building, Financial Center,  
 Diokno Boulevard, Pasay City

**SUBJECT:** Request for Certificate of Live Birth and Certificate of Marriage

Dear Hon. Hontiveros:

This refers to your request for the Certificate of Live Birth (COLB) and Certificate of Marriage (COM) of Angelito Guo and Amelia Leal, relative to an ongoing investigation being conducted by your office.

Below are the results of verification made on the Civil Registry Documents of the abovenamed individuals, from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Civil Registry System (CRS) database, on the basis of the information provided:

NAME OF SUBJECT	TYPE OF DOCUMENT	RESULTS OF VERIFICATION
Angelito Guo	COLB	Negative record of birth in the PSA CRS database
Amelia Leal	COLB	Negative record of birth in the PSA CRS database
Angelito Guo and Amelia Leal	COM	Negative record of marriage in the PSA CRS database



PSA Complex, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1101  
 Telephone: (632) 8938-5267  
[www.psa.gov.ph](http://www.psa.gov.ph)

Three other figures also emerged, identified siblings of Alice Guo named Sheila Leal Guo, Wesley Guo and Siemen Guo. They share the same mother and father in

their late-registered birth certificates and are the co-incorporators of Guo in at least five other companies. Alice Guo initially denied that these individuals were her family members.

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *And then ito pong tanong batay po sa general information sheet ng inyo namang meat shop. Kapatid ninyo po ba sina Seimen Guo at saka Shiela Guo?*

**MS. GUO.** *Hindi po.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *Pero kaapelyido ninyo po?*

**MS. GUO.** *Opo.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *Kamag-anak ninyo po ba?*

**MS. GUO.** *Hindi po ako sigurado.*

Xxx

*Sino naman po sina Jian Zhong Guo at saka Lin Wenyi? Dahil pareho po ang address nila bagaman at Tsino po sila.*

**MS. GUO.** *Opo. Bale mga kasama po sa negosyo, doon sa meat shop po.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *So mga kasama po ninyo sa negosyo at parehong address sa inyo?*

**MS. GUO.** *Hindi ko po masyadong sigurado doon sa address, pero magcheck po ako kaagad, Madam Chairman.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *All right. Kasi sa impormasyon namin pareho po ang address nilang dalawa sa address ninyo.*

*Sabi ninyo naman po kanina tungkol kina Seimen Guo at saka Shiela Guo, hindi ninyo sigurado kung kamag-anak ninyo?*

**MS. GUO.** *Opo.*

**THE CHAIRPERSON (SEN. HONTIVEROS).** *Pero kaapelyido?*

**MS. GUO.** *Doon po sa SEC, nakalagay po doon, Ser<sup>43</sup>.*

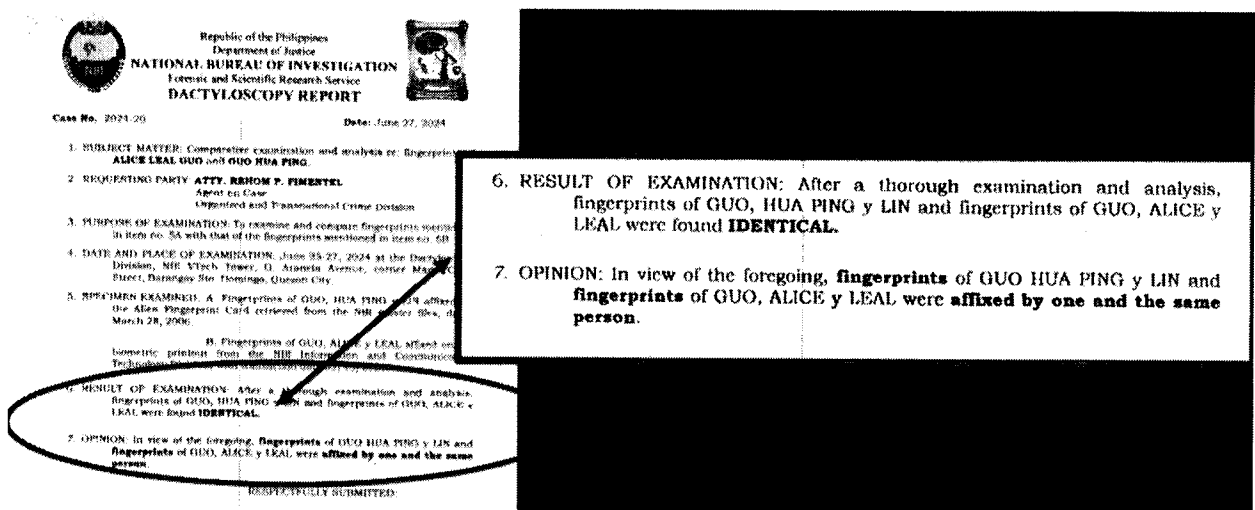
The above exchange provides evidence of the lack of candor and forthrightness of Guo in answering questions involving her family and her origins. In subsequent

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<sup>43</sup> Page 112 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024

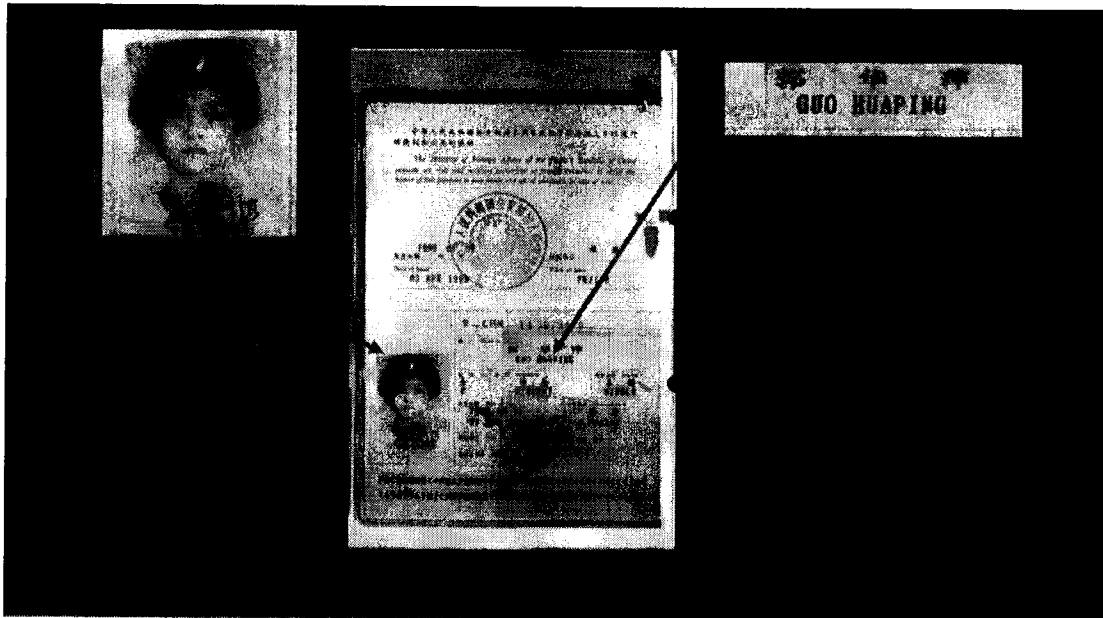
hearings, the Chairperson was able to produce evidence not only that Alice, Siemen and Shiela share the same mother, they also went on travels together. The description of "Jian Zhong Guo" and "Lin Wenyi" as "*mga kasama po sa negosyo*" is also disingenuous – as these individuals would later turn out to be her parents, with whom she clearly continues to have a close relationship.

Eventually, a major breakthrough in the case happened when the National Bureau of Investigation confirmed that the fingerprints of Guo and Chinese national Guo Hua Ping are identical, establishing that they are the same person. According to the NBI, the examination was conducted between June 25 to 27 at the agency's Dactyloscopy Division in Quezon City. Specimens used were those of Guo Hua Ping, affixed on the Alien Fingerprint Card retrieved from the NBI master files, dated March 28, 2006 and the fingerprints of Guo, affixed on the biometric printout from the NBI Information and Communication Technology Division, with a transaction date of March 10, 2021.

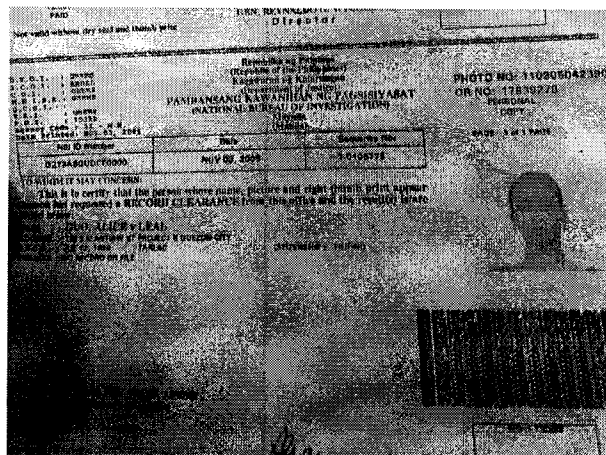


Documents presented by Committee member Senator Sherwin Gatchalian indicated that Guo entered the Philippines as a teenager using a passport under the name Guo Hua Ping, identifying her nationality as Chinese. School records of Guo Hua Ping from Grace Christian High School were also revealed, with application documents including a Chinese birth certificate indicating her parents to be Guo Jian Zhong and Lin Wenyi.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Page 190 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 7, 2024.



Even stranger, an NBI clearance document surfaced with the name of Alice Leal Guo but with a completely different photo. Who the woman in the photo is remains a mystery to this day.



As confirmed by BI, it turned out that Guo Hua Ping was able to enter the Philippines as a “dependent daughter”<sup>45</sup> under the Special Investment Resident Visa (SIRV) obtained by Lin Wen Yi<sup>46</sup> on May 25, 2000<sup>47</sup> (pictured below). A representative of the Board of Investments (BOI) explained:

“Ms. Lin applied for SIRV along with her dependents Guo Hua Ping, Guo Jiang Long, and Guo Xiang Dian. Their SIRV were granted 25 May 2000. She invested

<sup>45</sup> Page 92 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>46</sup> Page 8 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>47</sup> Page 36 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

\$75,000 in Triumph Embroidery Center, Incorporated, formerly Hua Fei Embroidery Center, Incorporated, a business enterprise engaged in rendering embroidery services. The said firm is considered an eligible form of investment under the SIRV rules and regulations.

The existence of the said investment was confirmed via an ocular inspection conducted by the BOI on May 22, 2002. The following documents were submitted for the revalidation of their SIRV, because this is part of SIRV process po: valid Chinese passports; alien certificates of registration; SEC registration; and articles of incorporation of Hua Fei Embroidery Center; a certificate of inward remittance issued by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas - the time dated September 30, 1999.

Now, in line with our rules, after revalidation of foreign national's eligibility for SIRV, their names were endorsed to the Bureau of Immigration for the grant of the visa. The Bureau of Immigration conducts its own validation process, and then acts on the BOI endorsement by implementing the visas in sticker form onto the holder's passports."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Page 37 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

June 4, 2024

**HON. NORMAN G. TANSINGCO**  
Commissioner  
**BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION**  
Magallanes Drive  
Intramuros, Manila 1002

Dear Commissioner Tansingco:

This refers to your letter dated June 4, 2024 requesting for the details of the Special Investor's Resident Visa (SIRV) of Chinese national, LIN WENYI.

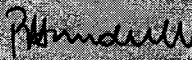
Please be informed that, per our records, the said foreign national and her dependents were previous holders of SIRV issued pursuant to the provisions of Book V of E.O. 226, otherwise known as the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, as amended, with the following details:

Name/ Date of Birth	SIRV No. / Date Issued/ Place Issued	SIRV Status
LIN WENYI (Principal)/ 27-Mar-1971	M-000831/ 25-May-2000/ Makati	Cancelled on 22-Aug-2011
GUO HUA PING (Dependent Daughter)/ 31-Aug-1990	M-000831-A/ 25-May-2000/ Makati	
GUO JIANG LONG (Dependent Son)/ 23-Jul-1991	M-000831-B/ 25-May-2000/ Makati	
GUO XIANG DIAN (Dependent Son) / 23-Feb-1993	M-000831-C/ 25-May-2000/ Makati	

The Principal's residential address on file was at 30 Lamco Ave., Lamco Compound, Lawang Bato, Valenzuela City. She invested in Triumph Embroidery Center, Inc. with business address at 56 T. Santiago, Canumay, Valenzuela City.

For your reference.

Very truly yours,

  
**ATTY. BOBBY G. FONDEVILLA**  
Executive Director

  
RTR/KMG

The SIRV application confirmed that Guo's real mother was Chinese national Lin Wenyi. This was further corroborated by the AMLC, who revealed that Guo herself had declared Lin Wenyi as her mother in a bank application document.<sup>49</sup> After Lin's SIRV was cancelled on August 22, 2011, she subsequently applied for a Special Resident Retiree's Visa with the Philippine Retirement Authority:

<sup>49</sup> Page 98 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

"As represented by the letter of the holder's authorized representative, they were applying for a Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV) with the Philippine Retirement Authority. This was as of September 12, 2011 po. Upon verification by BOI with PRA, the said foreign nationals are currently active holders of the SRRV."<sup>50</sup>

The findings show that Guo Hua Ping- a Chinese national who had entered the Philippines as a teenager and had applied for a residency Visa- was able to obtain a fake Filipino identity. This shows how easily the system of civil registration- specifically the delayed registration of birth- was abused by foreign nationals as a fast-track way to obtain Filipino citizenship. It also reveals that the availability of multiple Visas enabled the entry of foreign nationals intent on defrauding the country and committing crimes here. PSA reported that in 2023, at least 208 foreign nationals were found to have obtained fraudulent birth certificates and presented themselves as Filipino citizens. Most of the foreigners were Chinese nationals.<sup>51</sup> On the use of Visas by POGO-related bad actors, PAOCC explained:

"Most of them, Your Honor, originally, had tourist visas that were later on converted to 9G visas. But then, again, as the BI knows, the 9G visas that are associated to certain POGOs are not really for those actual POGOs. For example, may 9G siya, ang sabi ay IT siya ng isang kumpanya na hindi doon sa POGO kung saan siya nakukuha. So there is that problem also that we have encountered."<sup>52</sup>

#### **4. Stolen Identities Used to Incorporate POGO companies**

At the Committee hearing held on May 26, 2024, one of the co-incorporators of Hongsheng testified that her identity had been stolen and used without her knowledge and consent. Merlie Joy Manalo-Castro alleged that she was a Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) employee who had no idea what Hongsheng was and connections to the POGO industry.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Page 37 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Page 157 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>52</sup> Page 142 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>53</sup> Page 64 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

Castro showed a copy of her TIN ID, which contained a TIN number different from that indicated in the incorporation of Hongsheng. BIR confirmed that Ms. Castro's TIN ID was legitimate, and that the TIN number appearing in the Hongsheng Articles of Incorporation was fictitious.<sup>54</sup> She also alleged that her signature therein was forged.<sup>55</sup> Castro also testified that she was acquainted with the other alleged co-incorporators of Hongsheng Rowena Evangelista and Thelma Laranan, but shared doubts as to their capacity to be involved in a major company given that they were vendors of food and produce at their local market in Concepcion, Tarlac.<sup>56</sup>

Another case of stolen identity used in the incorporation of POGOs involved Lt. Jessa Mendoza of the Philippine Navy. Mendoza testified that unbeknownst to her, her name was used in the incorporation of Xin Wanhao Online Game Technology, Inc., a POGO whose license was subsequently cancelled. Mendoza stated that she only found this out when she received a Letter of Authority from the BIR for tax deficiencies linked to the POGO.<sup>57</sup> Mendoza reached out to the SEC and found out that her identity had been used to incorporate 193 corporations without her knowledge:

"To my surprise and dismay, my name, taxpayer identification number, and signature were used to incorporate no less than 193 corporations. Of the said number, more than half or around 102 have foreign-sounding names. Prior to the result of the reverse search, I was not aware of the existence of any of these corporations."<sup>58</sup>

The use of stolen identities in incorporation, especially of companies created as a shield for illegal activities, is deeply concerning. Without truthful and accurate information on the personalities behind these companies, they are able to violate the law with impunity and absent any accountability. POGOs' theft of identities of ordinary Filipinos, including members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, reveals an utter lack of regard for the legal system and the welfare of our countrymen.

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<sup>54</sup> Page 103 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>55</sup> Page 71 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>56</sup> Page 68 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>57</sup> Page 85 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 7, 2024.

<sup>58</sup> Page 97 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 7, 2024.



## 5. Public Office used in the Malign Interest of POGOs

Guo had not only managed to assume fraudulent a Filipino identity- she managed to assume office as an elected public official, and used her position to enable the criminal activities in her jurisdiction. Guo was a first-term mayor who entered politics in 2022. Before then, she was a complete unknown.<sup>59</sup> Upon being asked how she was able to mobilize finances for her campaign, she could only say that she received assistance from the previous administration and unnamed friends.<sup>60</sup> Guo claimed to be engaged in business before her election<sup>61</sup>, and categorically denied involvement as a POGO operator, protector, or coddler.<sup>62</sup> She claimed to have no knowledge of the POGO operations in the Baofu compound<sup>63</sup>, despite it being next to the Municipal Hall of Bamban.<sup>64</sup>

As discussed, PAOCC found that in 2020, while still a private citizen, Guo was the representative who applied for Hongsheng.'s Letter of No Objection with the Sangguniang Bayan of Bamban.<sup>65</sup> On February 23, 2024, when Guo was already elected Mayor of Bamban, Hongsheng was raided for fraudulent cryptocurrency and investment operations. Despite this, Guo allowed Hongsheng to continue its operations unhampered, reasoning that they had been able to obtain a provisional license from PAGCOR.<sup>66</sup>

Guo also denied having any knowledge of the workings of Zun Yuan.<sup>67</sup> However, it was Guo in her official capacity that approved the business permit of Zun Yuan.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Page 78 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>60</sup> Page 86 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>61</sup> Page 80 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>62</sup> Page 81 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>63</sup> Page 83 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>64</sup> <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1972544/ombudsman-ousts-guo-as-mayor-for-pogo-role>.

<sup>65</sup> Page 39 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>66</sup> Page 101 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>67</sup> Page 103 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>68</sup> Page 107 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

In succeeding hearings, it was pointed out that Zun Yuan's representative in the SEC documents was a certain Nancy Gamo, whose name also appears in the SEC documents of Guo's family business including 3LIN Q Farm, QJJ Slaughterhouse, QSEED Genetics, Siopao Bulilit, and QJJ Smelting Plant.<sup>69</sup> Guo initially denied knowing Gamo, but Gamo eventually testified that it was Guo who requested her assistance for the incorporation of Zun Yuan.<sup>70</sup> It was also made apparent that Zun Yuan was connected to Hongsheng, since the email address used for the incorporation of Hongsheng was also used as the contact for Zun Yuan in its General Information Sheets. The same email address also appears in the SEC documents of two (2) of Guo's companies.<sup>71</sup> According to the testimony of Gamo, she was referred to Guo by JP Samson, Guo's co-incorporator in Westcars.

Based on the findings of PAOCC, the DILG formed a task force to conduct a fact finding probe on the involvement of Guo in the POGO operations in Bamban. The DILG found that local officials, including Guo, were implicated in graft and corrupt practices. However, they expressed frustration that under the law, DILG does not have disciplinary powers over local chief executives.<sup>72</sup>

Guo's declared net assets also seemed to grow substantially from P36,000,000 in a SALN dated July 1, 2022 to P177,553,060 as of December 31, 2023. The legitimate accumulation of these assets were also found to be questionable, since the scale of Guo's businesses did not seem to account for them.<sup>73</sup> In the meantime, evidence of Guo's lavish lifestyle soon surfaced. A luxury, a limited-edition McLaren, was presented in a car show under her name. In Land Transportation Office (LTO) documents, sixteen vehicles were registered under her name. Among these vehicles were a Ford Expedition, two Ford Rangers, a Toyota Land Cruiser, a BMW and a Hyundai Tucson. A helicopter was also discovered to be registered under her name. She initially claimed

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<sup>69</sup> Page 61 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

<sup>70</sup> Page 46 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 29, 2024.

<sup>71</sup> Page 64 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

<sup>72</sup> Page 47 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 7, 2024.

<sup>73</sup> Page 176 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

that the helicopter was sold to a British company, but subsequent evidence demonstrated that the sale did not take place or was cancelled.

On June 2, 2024, the DILG filed criminal charges for graft and corruption against Guo.<sup>74</sup> On August 14, 2024, the Ombudsman ordered Guo's dismissal from service as the local chief executive of Bamban, Tarlac for grave misconduct and "willful intent to violate the law or disregard established rules."<sup>75</sup>

But Guo was not the only public official involved in criminal activities related to POGOs.

## **6. Ties to Sual Mayor Dong Calugay**

Further hearings uncovered Guo's connections to Sual, Pangasinan Mayor Dong Calugay, a former police officer and local politician implicated in facilitating the operations of scam hubs. Witnesses testified that Guo maintained a close relationship with Calugay, who allegedly provided logistical support and protection to the syndicates operating within his jurisdiction. Documents presented to the Senate Committee showed communication records and financial transactions linking Guo to Calugay and indications that Guo and Calugay shared a personal and business relationship also surfaced<sup>76</sup>, further complicating her claims of innocence.

Specifically, the Committee in Executive Session was in receipt of an affidavit from an individual, "Ka Dante", who supposedly assisted in the notarization and who confirmed under oath that it was the secretary of Mayor Calugay, Cheryl Ordon Medina, who contacted him to facilitate the notarization of an affidavit. He was then directed to secure the affidavit from the trusted staff of Guo Hua Ping, Cath Salazar. In the Senate hearing, Cath Salazar spoke in detail about being instructed by her boss to go to her house and find a brown envelope inside a drawer. Inside the envelope, according to Salazar, was a piece of paper signed by Guo made to appear as the last page of a counter-affidavit. According to Salazar, Guo instructed her to attach the page with the signature to the counter-affidavit in the human trafficking case, and then facilitate its notarization. The document was notarized by one Atty. Elmer Galicia,

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/908786/dilg-files-graft-charges-against-bamban-mayor-guo/story/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1972544/ombudsman-ousts-guo-as-mayor-for-pogo-role>.

<sup>76</sup> Page 42, 130 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated September 9, 2024.

an associate of “Ka Dante”. Cath Salazar’s account of finding a signed affidavit in the drawer has since been dispelled by findings from the National Bureau of Investigation indicating a signature mismatch between her actual signature and the signature in the counter-affidavit.

Senator Hontiveros expressed alarm over the assistance provided by the office of the Sual Mayor, stating, “This underscores the dangerous nexus between organized crime and local political figures. We must ensure accountability at all levels.” The revelation of Guo’s ties to Calugay added another layer to the investigation, highlighting the complicity of certain local officials in enabling transnational criminal networks.

The ties, however, go beyond the local government. On June 5, 2024, a POGO hub in Porac, Pampanga owned by a company called Lucky South 99 was raided, resulting in the rescue of 187 foreign and Filipino nationals believed to have been trafficked to work in the complex. Aside from human trafficking, suspected illegal activities such as scamming, money laundering, illegal detention were believed to be taking place in the hub. The organizational chart of Lucky South 99 lists one Katherine Cassandra Ong as the consultant/ authorized representative, but first-hand testimonies suggest that she managed the operations, or at least, exercised a significant degree of supervision and control over the same. In the mentioned organizational chart, former Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque was listed as “legal”. According to PAGCOR Chairperson Al Tengco, Atty. Roque approached him on behalf of Ong to seek a renegotiation of the terms of payment of Lucky South’s arrears to PAGCOR. The encounter was described by Chairperson Tengco as follows:

**MR. TENGCO:** Gusto ko lang pong, sa pagkakataong ito, ikuwento iyong nangyari sometime in July 2023 kung saan mga ikatlong linggo po iyon ng Hulyo 2023 tumanggap po iyong aking tanggapan ng tawag mula kay dating Secretary Harry Roque at doon ay humihingi po siya ng appointment sa akin. So, noon pong ikadalawampu at anim ng Hulyo 2023 din, nagkaroon po ng pagkakataon na bumisita po sa aking tanggapan sa PAGCOR, noon po ay nasa Ermita pa kami, siya po ay nabigyan ng appointment at siya po ay dumating sa aking tanggapan. Kasama ko po noon sa aking tanggapan ay si

Atty. Jessa Fernandez na nandito rin naman. Siya po ang head ng OGLD. Dumating po si dating Secretary Harry Roque kasama po ang isang babae at ipinakilala po niya sa amin ni Atty. Jessa ang babaeng iyon ay si Cassandra Lee Ong.

At sa kanya pong pagpapakilala sa amin ay sinabi po niya na may problema po na hinaharap si Binibining Cassandra Lee Ong at ito ay nauukol sa kanyang pagbabayad ng lahat ng mga billing ng kumpanyang kinakatawan niya sa PAGCOR. So, tinanong ko po si Binibining Cassandra Ong kung ano ba iyong problema. At ang sabi po niya, siya raw po ay nagtiwala sa kanilang authorized representative na nagngangalang Mr. Dennis Cunanan. At iyon daw po anim na buwan na dapat ibinabayad nilang mga buwis sa PAGCOR ay ibinibigay niya kay Ginoong Cunanan para ibayad sa PAGCOR. At bukod daw po doon, sa mga buwan ng mga dapat bayaran sa PAGCOR, ang sabi po ni Binibining Cassandra Ong ay may sinisingil pa raw na mga additional fees na fines and penalties si Ginoong Dennis Cunanan kay Cassandra xxx

A former staff of Atty. Roque, Alberto Rodulfo (AR) de la Serna has also been confirmed to have stayed for an extended period of time in one of the rooms inside Lucky South 99. However, in media interviews as well as in the Senate hearing, Atty. Roque denied any official involvement in Lucky South 99, and maintained that his only involvement was with Whirlpool Corporation, the company leasing the land to Lucky South 99.

In evidence received by the Committee in open hearing, a house in Tuba, Benguet was visited by the Bureau of Immigration in fulfillment of a mission order. The BI disclosed that it was acting on information that one of the supposed occupants of the house was a Chinese woman who is a person of interest in the Bamnan investigation. The BI then found a man who identified himself as Cambodian citizen "Khuon Moeurn" but who later turned out to be Sun Liming, a high-level suspect who is the subject of an Interpol red notice for fraud. Roque disavowed knowledge of Sun Liming and said that there was a valid lease contract between the lessor corporation and the lessee, a Chinese woman named Wan Yun. The lessor is a corporation called

PH2, which is owned by Roque's family corporation Biancham Holdings and Trading. According to Roque:

**MR. ROQUE:** Well, unang-una po, magandang umaga po kay Senate President Pro Tempore; kay Madam Chairperson, Senator Hontiveros; and kay Senator Gatchalian; at sa lahat ng mga bisita rito. Now, ang bahay po na tinutukoy ninyo sa Tuba, Benguet, ay rehistrado sa isang korporasyon. Tinirahan ko po iyan noong ako po ay umalis ng gobyerno, and I do have an interest in the corporation that owns it. Pero wala po sa akin ang possession ng bahay na iyan dahil as of January of 2024, iyan po ay pinaupahan ng korporasyon at ang umuupa po ay isang Wan Yun(?) na isang Chinese national, na noong siya po ay pumirma sa contract of lease ay ni-require siya na magpakita ng alien certificate of registration at lumalabas po na siya ay holder ng isang 9G working visa. Meaning, she has the right to be in the Philippines. So, ang rehistradong lessee po diyan, at iyan ay rehistrado rin sa homeowners association ng subdivision para sila ay makapasok, ay itong babae na isang Wan Yun<sup>77</sup>.

There are two clear connections between the Bamban POGO and the Porac POGO: the first one is Cassandra Ong herself, who admitted to being in a romantic relationship with Wesley Guo, Guo Hua Ping's brother. The second one is convicted plunderer and former head of the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC) Dennis Cunanan. Records held by the Committee confirm that Cunanan applied for the license of Lucky South 99. According to testimony of both PAGCOR Chair Tengco, Roque and Ong asked him to give Lucky South 99 a chance to pay their arrears for six months amounting to around US\$500,000, which they said they already paid through Dennis Cunanan. Their payments were not received by PAGCOR, and the firm's license was about to expire.

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<sup>77</sup> Page 60 of Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 29, 2024

The Committee was also able to unearth links to the Pharmally scandal, a COVID pandemic era scandal involving anomalous purchases of overpriced pharmaceutical supplies. At the raid in Bamban, authorities found documents of Brickhartz Technologies, Inc. (Brickhartz), a POGO which license had already been cancelled by PAGCOR. PAGCOR surmised that despite being shut down, Brickhartz had just transferred to the Baofu compound to continue its illegal operations. It was also revealed that Gerald T. Cruz, an incorporator of Brickhartz, was also an incorporator of Pharmally Biological- a company mired in controversy for massive corruption during the pandemic.<sup>78</sup> Cruz is also involved in Full Win Corporation, whose president is former special economic adviser to the President Michael Yang.<sup>79</sup> Thus, it appears that Guo allowed associates and/or conduits of Yang to operate illegal POGOs in Bamban. Tony Yang, the brother of Michael Yang, was also shown to have connections with POGOs. At the hearing held on September 24, 2024, it was revealed that Oro one Corporation is a POGO service provider to Xionwei Technologies, Inc. Xionwei Technologies, in turn, is associated with Lin Weixion or Alan Lin, whose name has surfaced in the Pharmally investigation. As explained by the Chairperson, "A POGO associated with Tony Yang, Oro One Corporation, lists him as president. Itong Oro One ay service provider ng Xionwei na alam natin na binaliktad na pangalan ni Lin Weixion alias Alan Lim ng Pharmally. Ang email naman ng Xionwei — ginagamit ng isa pang POGO — Brickhartz — na ang papeles ay nakita sa Bamban. Mukhang iisang network – o happy Pharmally – lang talaga ito".

Further, the Committee also discovered through documentary evidence from the ALMC that one of the incorporators of Hong Sheng Gaming Corporation, one Zhengcan Yu, held a joint bank account with Hongjiang Yang, a brother of Michael Yang and Tony Yang. The bank account of Hongjiang Yang and Zhengcan Yu had an almost P2 billion cash flow from 2018-2022.

Tony Yang testified that he is a Chinese national<sup>80</sup>, but as with Guo and other POGO personalities, Yang had a falsified birth certificate and presented as Filipino in

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<sup>78</sup> Page 87 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 7, 2024.

<sup>79</sup> Page 88 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated July 7, 2024.

<sup>80</sup> Page 33 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated September 24, 2024.

official documents.<sup>81</sup> Yang admitted that his false Filipino identity was for the purpose of money-making.<sup>82</sup>

## **7. Philippine POGOs as a Criminal Network**

The findings of the Committee revealed that illegal POGOs within the Philippines are connected, with cancelled POGOs resurfacing in the premises of duly licensed companies, and licensed companies continuing the same illegal activities. The Committee found that Huang Zhiyang, Guo's co-incorporator in Baofu, was also an incorporator of Sun Valley Clark Hub Corp., another POGO which had been closed down for involvement in alleged criminal activities including cryptocurrency investment scams, serious illegal detention, and human trafficking.<sup>83</sup>

A representative of PAOCC explained that indeed, POGOs constitute an interconnected criminal network:

“[A] good number of our perpetrators have been around three, four, five POGOs.

One that I have interviewed, for example, has said he has been in the Philippines since 2017, transferring from Clark, Angeles, Pasay, and so on and so forth, iyong mga ganoon. So, paikot-ikot lang talaga sila. That could basically explain why you are able to get a thousand there because they came from other smaller POGOs that closed shop, they transferred there.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Page 35 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated September 24, 2024.

<sup>82</sup> Page 40 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated September 24, 2024.

<sup>83</sup> Page 9 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated May 22, 2024.

<sup>84</sup> Page 143 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.



We can definitely say that, based on the evidence that we have on hand, that the two major scam hubs that were raided in these recent months by different government agencies, they are interconnected.”<sup>85</sup>

Beyond national networks, the nexus to transnational organized crime also became clear. As the Senate investigation progressed, evidence emerged linking Alice Guo to a network of Singapore-based money launderers and Chinese organized crime syndicates. She set up Baofu company with the help of two individuals involved in Singapore’s 3 billion dollar money laundering case, Chinese nationals Zhang Ruijin and Lin Baoying. The two individuals, believed to be lovers, were each sentenced to 15 months in jail in Singapore after pleading guilty to charges of money laundering and forgery. They were then deported to Cambodia after serving their sentence. In later revelations, it was also found that the other associates of the couple, also convicted in Singapore after pleading guilty, had clear business connections in the Philippines. This was revealed in a communication to the Committee by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

**ASSETS**

NAME	NATIONALITY	PAID UP CAPITAL	ADDITIONAL PAID UP CAPITAL	TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	MODE OF PAYMENT
ALICE LEAL GUO	Philippine	P225,000.00	P0.00	P225,000.00	Cash
ZHANG RUIJIN	Chinese	P162,500.00	P0.00	P162,500.00	Cash
BAOYING LIN	Chinese	P162,500.00	P0.00	P162,500.00	Cash

**INDIVIDUALS**

NAME	NATIONALITY	PAID UP CAPITAL	ADDITIONAL PAID UP CAPITAL	TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	MODE OF PAYMENT
ALICE LEAL GUO	Philippine	P225,000.00	P0.00	P225,000.00	Cash
ZHANG RUIJIN	Chinese	P162,500.00	P0.00	P162,500.00	Cash
BAOYING LIN	Chinese	P162,500.00	P0.00	P162,500.00	Cash

**News Article:** Couple with S\$325 million in assets seized in billion-dollar money laundering case denied bail

The court heard new details including how Lin Baoying obtained multiple passports and the common assets held by Zhang Ruijin.

Lin Baoying and Zhang Ruijin, suspects in the billion-dollar money laundering case in Singapore. (Illustrations: CNA/Lydia Lam)

<sup>85</sup> Page 145 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

These operations highlighted the transnational nature of the syndicates, with money laundering schemes spanning the Philippines, Singapore, Cambodia, and other Southeast Asian countries.

Reports from the investigators following the financial trail of Guo and her associates provide basis for initial speculation that Guo's multiple companies laundered money for POGO operators. In the course of the Committee hearings, AMLC found and reported that Guo had 36 bank accounts, in which billions of pesos worth of transactions were done from 2019 to 2024.<sup>86</sup> Despite the present laws against money laundering, it became clear that Guo had also managed to covertly conduct illicit transactions.<sup>87</sup>

These connection highlights the regional and transnational nature of the issue, and the multiple ways by which bad actors are able to permeate fragile borders. Describing the operators of Luck South 99, a POGO raided in Porac, Pampanga, a PAOCC representative stated:

"[T]hey are not ordinary criminals. This is the only first time that members of the commission of a secretariat are getting death threats that are nerve-racking and chilling because these are not ordinary money launderers, Madam Chair, Your Honor, these are honest-to-goodness transnational criminals with records dating back to decades in China, Hong Kong, and Macau. So, how they were able to ally with local syndicates, we have yet to find out."<sup>88</sup>

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They are international criminal group members, sir. And they have been in the Philippines for so long, in plain sight."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/913138/alice-guo-billions-unjustified-money/story/>

<sup>87</sup> Page 259 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated September 17, 2024.

<sup>88</sup> Page 140 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

<sup>89</sup> Page 146 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated June 26, 2024.

A representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime explained the magnitude of the issue concerning POGO activities in the Philippines, thus:

“With respect to the scale, it is quite clear that these interconnected, transnational organized crime groups are not merely targeting the Philippines. They are targeting other jurisdictions across the region. Casinos, and increasingly online casinos, crypto-integrated casinos, and primarily under regulated or illegal operators have quite clearly driven some large challenges in the organized crime space.

With respect to the scale of the problem, we are quite obviously speaking about a multibillion-dollar criminal industry across the region taken together.

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“[I]n any case in which large, agile, sophisticated organized crime groups are managing to find such fruitful operating conditions in which they can build out these massive, in one of these cases, 36-unit compounds, there are serious reasons for concern.”

Amid mounting evidence and intensified scrutiny, Alice Guo fled the Philippines, evading authorities and raising questions about security lapses. Her escape became a focal point of the hearings, with Senator Hontiveros questioning how a person of interest in a high-profile investigation could leave the country undetected. Guo’s flight, however, was short-lived. She was apprehended in Indonesia on charges related to human trafficking and cybercrime. Her arrest was facilitated by intelligence sharing and coordination between Philippine authorities and their Indonesian counterparts. It was Sheila Guo and Cassie Ong who were arrested first en route to Singapore in the Batam port, and a few weeks later, the authorities reported the capture of Alice Guo. Senator Hontiveros commended the swift action, stating, “Her capture is a testament to the importance of regional cooperation in combating transnational crime.” Guo’s arrest not only reinforced the need for strengthened regional enforcement

mechanisms but also brought renewed attention to her activities. However, to this day, there is still no clarity as to how Alice, Sheila and Wesley Guo left the Philippines.

## **8. POGOs and national security**

The final chapter of the Alice Guo saga unfolded after international media outfit Al Jazeera released a documentary featuring POGO boss She Zhijiang, owner of Yatai Corporation, which continues to run Shwe Kokko (incidentally, the site of the scam hub where Rita and associates were rescued). In that documentary, She Zhijiang intimated that Guo Hua Ping, already confirmed to be a Chinese national, was, like him, an agent working for the Ministry of State Security of the People's Republic of China. According to She, they were both recruited by one Ma Dong Li, an official from the same Ministry. When the Committee checked the travel records of Ma Dong Li, it found that Ma Dong Li travelled multiple times to the Philippines, and was here during the period that She said he was recruited. Interestingly, it also found that Ma Dong Li was here on the strength of various visas, including visas issued by the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority. For his part, She was issued an EO 48 visa, a special investors visa and a 9A visa.

The Committee tried to gain access to She Zhijiang, currently in jail at a Thai prison, but access has not been granted as of this writing. However, the Committee was able to speak to Wang Fugui, who shared with the Committee documents from She Zhijiang's files containing the personal information of Guo Hua Ping and her family. According to Wang Fugui: "In fact, the content of the declassified file kept by Mr. She is large, and I only have declassified a portion under his authorization. She was a spy, but not a special one. It just so happens, there is a copy of her state security background there, and her situation with Mr. She has a lot of similarities."<sup>90</sup> Evidence from Wang also showed that Michael Yang, brother of Tony Yang, is also in the dossier of She, raising suspicions that the former is involved in intelligence-gathering activities as well.

During the last hearing of the Committee, NICA confirmed that, after investigation, Guo Hua Ping has been identified as an agent of influence. According to the

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<sup>90</sup> Page 25 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated October 8, 2024.

representative of NICA, Deputy Director General Acedillo: "Which brings us to the question, is she an agent of influence? We do not have currently an legislation or any convention in our country that defines what an agent of influence is. However, within an historical context, Madam Chair, given that these activities have been common, especially during the Cold War, the activities and the facts that have come to light so far in this Committee and in other committees, especially in the House, point to the fact that she is, and even in discussions within the intelligence community, there is consensus that indeed she is an agent of influence."

Amid the proliferation of scam compounds, evidence has emerged suggesting a link between these operations and Chinese espionage efforts. The Chinese government has long been accused of employing unconventional methods to gather intelligence, including leveraging private enterprises and criminal networks<sup>91</sup>. Scam compounds provide a unique opportunity for espionage due to their structure, technology, and personnel. The primary activities of scam compounds—phishing and online fraud—involve the collection of sensitive personal and financial data. One can assume that this data, while primarily used for financial exploitation, can also be leveraged for intelligence purposes. For example, personal information gathered from foreign nationals could be used to identify potential intelligence targets or vulnerabilities in foreign systems. Second, scam compounds often utilize advanced technological infrastructure to execute their operations. These systems, capable of bypassing cybersecurity measures, can be adapted for espionage purposes. The expertise developed in hacking and fraud can be redirected toward state-sponsored cyber operations, blurring the line between criminal and state activities. Lastly, workers within scam compounds often include individuals with technical expertise or access to sensitive networks. These individuals, under duress or through financial incentives, could be coerced into conducting espionage on behalf of state actors. Furthermore, the movement of trafficked individuals across borders provides opportunities for intelligence collection and infiltration.

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<sup>91</sup> Page 108 of the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated October 8, 2024.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Human trafficking for forced criminality presents unique regulatory and enforcement challenges. The transnational nature of these crimes requires multi-jurisdictional cooperation, which is often hampered by differing legal frameworks and priorities among countries. In the case of Filipinos trafficked to the Golden Triangle, the lack of robust bilateral agreements with nations like Myanmar limits the Philippines' ability to protect and repatriate its citizens.

Domestically, the enforcement of anti-trafficking laws faces significant hurdles. Agencies like the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) are underfunded and understaffed, limiting their capacity to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases effectively. Multiple testimonies in the Senate hearing speak to the complicity of Bureau of Immigration agents in the arrival of foreign victims of human trafficking, and the departure of Filipino victims. This ties into the findings of this same Senate Committee in the 18th Congress. The proliferation of POGOs and similar entities in the Philippines complicates matters further. Weak regulatory oversight allows these operations to thrive, often with the complicity of corrupt officials who facilitate illegal activities or shield perpetrators from accountability. The role of technology also poses a challenge. Scam operations rely heavily on digital platforms to conduct fraudulent activities, making it difficult to trace and dismantle their networks. Law enforcement agencies often lack the technical expertise and resources to combat cyber-enabled crimes, leaving victims and the public vulnerable to exploitation.

On the other hand, scam hubs leverage encrypted messaging apps and VoIP platforms to communicate securely and anonymously. These tools allow operators to coordinate scams, manage trafficked individuals, and maintain contact with victims while evading surveillance. The use of end-to-end encryption poses significant challenges for law enforcement, as it limits their ability to intercept and monitor communications. Deepfake technology is used to create realistic audio or video recordings, impersonating trusted individuals or institutions to deceive victims. These tools allow scam hubs to scale their operations without requiring large human workforces. Cryptocurrencies provide scammers with a decentralized, pseudonymous means of transferring funds, making it difficult to trace and recover stolen assets.

Blockchain technology is also exploited for creating fraudulent investment schemes, with perpetrators leveraging the technology's complexity to deceive victims about its legitimacy. But technology can be used as a force for good. For example, predictive analytics can help identify potential scam hubs, track financial transactions, and uncover links between criminal networks. These technologies also assist in prioritizing high-risk cases for investigation. What is clear is that there is an urgent need to develop effective policy tools that take emerging technologies into account – both as a tool for bad actors, but also as weapons that can help make law enforcement more agile.

The Alice Guo saga, as revealed through the Senate Committee on Women's hearings, exemplifies the complexities and interconnections of transnational crime, corruption, public safety and national security. From her initial appearance as a small-town Mayor, to the baring of her true identity as a Chinese citizen using falsified documents to claim Filipino citizenship, to her identification as a key player in organized crime, and finally to the eventual confirmation of her status as an agent of influence, Guo's case highlights the multifaceted challenges of combating human trafficking, cybercrime, and geopolitical interference. By uncovering these connections, the Committee underscores the critical need for robust policy responses, regional cooperation, and accountability at all levels. As the investigation terminates, its lessons will serve as a foundation for addressing the broader threats posed by transnational criminal networks.

A clear area of reform is in the Bureau of Immigration, as testimonies from the witnesses (both Filipinos trafficked outside the country, and foreigners trafficked into the country) demonstrate a consistent pattern of involvement and complicity of corrupt Immigration Officers (IO). Despite the recommendations of the Senate in the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress after the hearings of this Committee on the Pastillas scam, it appears that corruption in the Bureau persists, if not has gotten worse. It is also clear that there is a need to streamline our visa granting processes,

While the investigation has ended, the need for continued vigilance remains. Aside from the need for stricter border controls and punitive measures against errant immigration officers, the hearing has also surfaced revelations that POGO in its new

iterations are emerging. In the face of the announcement of the President of a complete ban on POGOs, new information is surfacing that some POGO bosses are reinventing their enterprises to fly under the scrutiny of regulatory bodies. A few of these methods include the breaking up of scam compounds into smaller, work-from-home guerilla units<sup>92</sup>, the transformation into BPO or Business Processing Outfits<sup>93</sup>. The Committee itself has identified a possible gap in the Executive Order issued by the President. Section 1(b) of the EO says that offshore gaming operations shall "exclude online games of chance conducted in PAGCOR-operated casinos, licensed casinos, or integrated resorts with junket agreements." The Committee, subsequent to the final hearing, has received evidence to the effect that employees from shuttered POGOs have now been transferred to offshore gaming operations within large casinos in Metro Manila.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A. After investigation, for the relevant authorities to file criminal cases under Republic Act No. 3019 and other related laws against public officials involved in illegal activities related to POGOs and in the protection of Guo Hua Ping/ Alice Guo, including Sual Mayor Liseldo Calugay;
- B. After investigation, for the relevant authorities to file criminal cases against Yang Jianxin in relation to his obtainment and use of fraudulent Filipino identity;
- C. After investigation, for the relevant authorities to file cases of Economic Sabotage under the Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act against those apprehended in POGO-related raids after July 2024 or the passage of Republic Act No. 12010 or the Anti Financial Account Scamming Act of 2024;
- D. For the relevant authorities to investigate the financial links between Hongjiang Yang and Yu Zheng Can and if warranted, file cases for money laundering and other financial crimes against both;
- E. For the relevant authorities to deepen preliminary information received on the possible intelligence work of Michael Yang, and possibly Tony Yang and Hongjiang Yang, for a malign foreign influence;

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<sup>92</sup> Page 75 of Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 26, 2024.

<sup>93</sup> Page 76-77 of Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 26, 2024.



- F. For the relevant authorities to pursue with vigor the cases of Qualified Human Trafficking and Money Laundering filed against Guo Hua Ping alias Alice Leal Guo, and her co-accused;
- G. To direct the Department of Foreign Affairs to continue efforts to reach out to She Zhijiang through the Thai authorities in order to get more information on Guo Hua Ping's possible involvement in espionage and malign foreign influence;
- H. To request the Executive to clarify Executive Order No. 74, particularly Section 2(b) which states: "This definition excludes online games of chance conducted in PAGCOR-operated casinos, licensed casinos, or integrated resorts with junket agreements";
- I. To direct the Bureau of Immigration to immediately report to the Senate the reforms implemented in order to address not just the escape of Guo Hua Ping, but the reported involvement of BI personnel in the inbound trafficking of POGO workers and the outbound trafficking of Filipinos to work in scam compounds abroad; To streamline the issuance of visas by different authorities and to have a single database similar to Homeland Security in the United States of America where all visa information for individuals seeking to enter the country is stored and accessible by relevant authorities, allowing for a unified view of a traveler's visa history and their potential security risks;
- J. To direct the Anti-Money Laundering Council to: (i) promptly investigate and report to the Committee the circumstances behind the abject failure of banks and other covered institutions to report the suspicious and covered transactions of Guo Hua Ping as required by the Anti-Money Laundering Act; (ii) create an inter-agency coordination plan to ensure that information from appropriate government agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission are utilized in the investigation of possible money laundering; and (iii) provide an update on its efforts related to transnational investigations and prosecutions and mutual assistance with other countries;
- K. To direct the Securities and Exchange Commission to review its procedures for verifying the identities of incorporators and the authenticity of other documentary requirements, and to draft rules to institutionalize effective validation;

- L. To direct the Department of Labor and Employment to continuously update the Senate on its efforts to provide appropriate assistance to the Filipino workers affected by the POGO ban;
- M. To direct the Philippine Statistics Authority to investigate the number of Filipinos whose births remain unregistered, and to create policies, programs, and projects to make immediate birth registration more accessible.

**The following remedial legislation is hereby proposed:**

- N. The further amendment of the Anti-Money Laundering Act to: (i) strengthen reportorial requirements of banks and other covered institutions and provide higher penalties for responsible officers who fail to report covered and suspicious transactions to the Anti-Money Laundering Council; and (ii) consider the use of cryptocurrencies in money laundering and unlawful activities.
- O. The amendment of Sections 270 and 278 of the National Internal Revenue Code, as amended, such that access to tax returns and other related information obtained by the Bureau of Internal Revenue may be provided to government agencies, as appropriate in the context of investigations of any illegal activity.
- P. The amendment of the Omnibus Election Code in order to grant the Commission on Elections the authority to deny due course to applications for Certificates of Candidacy, on its own or upon complaint, based on the lack of basic eligibility requirements.
- Q. The limiting of late registration of births to reasonable circumstances, and providing ample and appropriate identity verification requirements.
- R. The imposition of higher penalties for: (i) public officials complicit in the falsification of civil registry and other identification documents; and (ii) individuals who make use of the same.
- S. The rationalization the grant of Philippine Visas to foreign nationals.
- T. The criminalization of moonlighting by police officers and providing penalties for law enforcement agents engaged in private security services.
- U. Granting transparency to the Statement of Assets and Liabilities of public officials, in line with the Constitutional principle that public office is a public

trust and that public officers and employees must at all times be accountable to the people.

- V. The grant to the Department of Interior and Local Government the authority to conduct investigations on any malfeasance, misfeasance, and nonfeasance by local chief executives, and granting appropriate administrative authority and accountability mechanisms over them.
- W. The amendment of the Omnibus Election Code to grant the Commission on Elections, on its own or upon complaint, the authority to investigate and determine the basic eligibility requirements of persons filing Certificates of Candidacy, and to deny due course to persons not eligible for candidacy under prevailing laws.
- X. The amendment of the Expanded Anti Trafficking in Persons Law to add "forced criminality" as one of the offenses under human trafficking
- Y. The urgent enactment of a law totally banning offshore gaming entities and activities, as well as their concomitant service providers, to provide harsh penalties for public officers who in any way aid and abet the continuation of POGOs, to make this ban as comprehensive and as decisive as possible, covering in particular online games of chance conducted in PAGCOR-operated casinos, licensed casinos, or integrated resorts with junket agreements.

Respectfully submitted:

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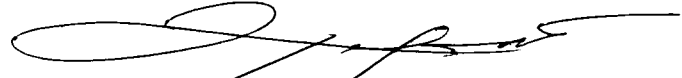
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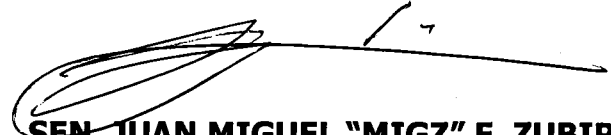


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