

POPE FRANCIS' VIST:

SECURITY NIGHTMARE

By Jess Dureza

During my call on former **President Fidel V. Ramos** recently in his Makati office, he wondered what kind of security contingency measures were in place for the Pope's visit. He recalled how "**Operation Bojingka**" of foreign terrorists from the **Middle East** planning to assassinate **Pope John Paul** during his visit in the **Philippines** in the **1970s**, was timely discovered and aborted.

ACCIDENTAL -- The assassination attempt was accidentally discovered when the improvised explosives the foreign assassins were starting to assemble in a hotel room in Metro Manila prematurely ignited causing fumes and smoke coming out catching the attention of the hotel staff. They called the police. The security forces immediately went into action. The hotel smoke led to a more sophisticated -- and deadly -- plan to knock off the head of the Catholic world. And in all places, right here in the Philippines! Arrests were made and the assassination plot was scuttled. It would have been a global tragedy.

EXPOSED -- Consistent with his way of doing things, the Pope will surely not agree to ride in a bulletproofed vehicle. He shunned the usual VIP trappings. And we expect he will openly mingle with the crowd. So, if anyone wishes him harm, he will be exposed and be an easy target.

We are raising this grim scenario not to trigger alarm or create hysteria. But it is to forewarn our government and the private sector that we have a treasure in our midst whom we should do everything to protect. Government security cannot do it alone. The millions of those who will flock and attend the Pope's several activities must all help to see to it that the Pope's visit will be memorable. And that he will be kept safe and secure from those who wish him ill.

Hence, this visit demands intensive intelligence buildup and work, not to mention convergence of other international assets -- both human and electronics. But most important of all, the laity and the faithful must be there to literally shield him from harm. We cannot be complacent.

PAPAL EXORCISM -- During his visit, our **Holy Father, Pope Francis** will sanctify our country with his presence. We hope this will also exorcise us all from the evils of corruption and greed! That's the reason why I do not agree that politicians keep away from the Pope. They need exorcism more than anyone else. They must be close enough to benefit from the Papal blessings.

BBL CHALLENGES --- I got copies of the legal research made by former **Supreme Court Justice Vicente Mendoza** and another paper by the **Philippine Constitution Association** detailing why the

MILF

agreement is full of unconstitutional provisions. I am getting more worried about the fate of the MILF agreement.

CLEAR SIGNAL -- In the meantime, I am getting first hand information that the MILF is going full blast in its work to organize the **United Bangsamoro Justice Party**. This is the clearest signal that

Kagi Murad

and his rebel followers are dead serious and dead set in pursuing the Bangsamoro aspiration by joining the mainstream political process and putting the fate of the MILF in the hands of the democratic process. And Kagi Murad was heard telling his flock, when asked what would happen if they would lose. His curt answer was: "

If we lose, we lose

!" That simple. He is submitting fully to the will of the people! Wow! If this cannot be an indication of sincerity, then I do not know what is! This is a clarion call for all to come around and give full support. As I always said, and I will say again now, we may never have this same chance for peace at any other time. So, let's not squander it.

BETTER TO GIVE -- During the Christmas Season, we all say that it is "better to give than to receive". But this is not only true to those who are generous. To boxers, like Champ

Manny Pacquiao

, this is also as true. Better to give (a punch) than receive!

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL -- from all of us in the DUREZA family.

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