

Press Release



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ONE MAN'S VIEW

By Nonoy Mendoza

Once again, the Filipinos are being made a laughing stock by US lobbyings - thanks to GMA's blundering advisers

WASHINGTON, Dec 20 (PGON) - My friend, Ms. Jennie L. Ilustre reports in an article appearing in Manila's daily "*Malaya*" *The National Newspaper*, with a stunning headline : "Gov't hiring US lobbyist \$50M contract for six months".

The reports continues: "The Philippine Government is hiring Covington & Burling, LLP, a top US lobby group, to "promote the interests of the Republic of the Philippines with the US Congress and the US Government on a range of political, economic, and security issues and other tasks." An independent source said the \$50 million contract for six months which can be renewed is "already a done deal."

According to the report: "The contract provides that the term of the individual consultant shall be, at most, six months, renewable at the option of the appointing Head of the Procuring Entity referring to Philippine Ambassador to the United States Willy C. Gaa. The consultant will work closely with the Embassy of the Philippines in connection with the following tasks: • Promote the interests of the Philippines with the US Congress and the US government on a range of political, and security issues. • Support efforts that can result in increased US trade opportunities for the Philippines. • Support efforts that can result in increased foreign direct investments fro US companies. • Support efforts to develop new initiative or expand current programs that support the ability of the Philippine Armed Forces to strengthen capabilities in the areas of security and antiterrorism. • Work with Philippine government officials to promote increased levels of US Development Assistance to the Philippines. • Ensure the members of the US Congress and government officials are regularly and accurately updated on developments in the Philippines to promote understanding of the importance and positive developments taking place in the country. "

What strikes me most is the nonchalant reactions of the Filipino-American news media (kuno). None of my friends in the Filipino media groups seem to care although, most of us, consider ourselves PR people (kuno)... including yours truly. How come \$50M - at the rate of 42 to 1, that is: PhP 2,100,000,000.00 = *Two Billion, One Hundred Million Pesos!* That is a lot of money that the Philippine government can use for shelter, classrooms and creating livelihood for the poorest of the poor.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should rethink or disapprove "this" move fast undoubtedly suggested again by one of Her Excellency's usual blunderers. Real fast. That is a lot of money for any PR jobs. Maybe if we are an Arab nation, an oil-money making nation, \$50M is a drop in a bucket. But for a country, the Philippines, depending entirely on the remittances of OFWs, income from Overseas Filipino Workers. *Have pity, naman. #*