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Ocean Wave

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PANDIMAN PHILIPPINES Inc.
P&I Correspondent in the Philippines

Topics of interest relating to the Philippine Maritime Industry and Shipping

PHILIPPINES – Appointment of Gina Lopez as Environment Secretary rejected by Commission on Appointments.



Business as usual for the mines ?



Pandiman Philippines Inc.
Pandiman Building
General Luna Street
Intramuros
Manila

Tel: 527 7831 to 40

Email mis@pandiman.com

Visit us at
www.Pandiman.Com



The appointment of Gina Lopez as Environment Secretary and Head of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is rejected by the Commission on Appointments

On Wednesday the 3rd of May at a hearing for the confirmation of Gina Lopez as Environment Secretary and Head of the DENR (a role she has undertaken for the past 10 months) was rejected in a 16 to 8 vote by the Commission on Appointments.

President of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte on hearing the news said *“he was saddened with the rejection of the ad interim appointment of Regina “Gina” Lopez as an environment secretary”* Duterte said *“money worked in the rejection of Lopez but he did not elaborate”*.

The friction between Ms. Lopez and the Mines is well known and her controversial move to close 23 mines and cancel 75 mining permits.

Several environmental groups have expressed disappointment at the rejection, however the most disturbing comments come from Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and their armed movement the New Peoples Army (NPA).

The CPP is an outlawed party in the Philippines and was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States in August 2002 and by the European Union in November 2005. The NPA normally engage with the Philippine military and extort money from farmers and local businessmen, especially the mines in Mindanao to raise funds. The NPA's founder, Jose Maria Sison, lives in the Netherlands in self-imposed exile. In October 2011 the NPA initiated armed attacks on two large scale mining facilities in the Surigao area, the local press at the time reporting that refusal of Taganito Mining Corp. (TMC), Taganito HPAL Nickel Corp. and Platinum Group Metals Corp. (PGMC) to give-in to the NPA demand for a “revolutionary tax” prompted the attacks.

The Communist Party of the Philippines said it lost a friend in its struggle to defend the environment with the Commission on Appointments’ rejection of the appointment of Gina Lopez as Environment secretary.

The CPP said *“mining fund and political influence played in Lopez’s rejection. Considering what is at stake, big bourgeois comprador interests in the mining industry surely mobilized hundreds of millions of pesos and employed their vast political influence to ensure that the Senate’s Commission on Appointments would reject the appointment of Lopez,”*

The CPP said *“the Filipino people and revolutionary forces lost an ally in the mission to defend the environment and the livelihood of the people, especially the masses of peasants and national minority peoples.”*

“It only underscores the necessity for the people to rely primarily on their unity and strength in opposing and resisting the entry of mining companies which plunder the country’s patrimony and employ the military and armed groups to oppress the people and their communities.”

This raises concerns that there maybe be violent repercussions and it would be prudent for masters of vessels calling at locations in Mindanao (Surigao and Tubay) to load nickel ore, to maintain vigilance and security procedures and restrictions on shore leave.

As to the nickel ore trade itself, concerns remain in regards to cargo that is being supplied by the mines, it would appear that while the DENR is in flux that it is business as usual. We refer to our earlier updates and that cargo nominated from the Philippines, it would be prudent to undertake analysis before loading due to the high incident of wet cargo being presented. We respectfully remind all that whether a cargo complies with the IMSBC can only be determined through a full analysis in a laboratory.

Capt. Andy Malpass

President & GM
Pandiman Philippines Inc.

