



STATEMENT

BICOL CARAVAN AGAINST THE BALIKATAN MILITARY EXERCISES

Legaspi City, Albay

25 February 2009

Dios maray na aldaw sa indo gabos.

I add my voice to the call of the many fearless Bicolanos in opposing the RP-US Balikatan military exercise. We must push the Arroyo administration to protect our people from further foreign military intrusion. The rest of the country must emulate your example.

Let me be clear and straight: the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement must be abrogated. It is a one-sided agreement filled with duplicity. It is an agreement that only serves America's hegemony. These Balikatan exercises, born from the VFA, have no place in the present time as the world moves towards peaceful conflict resolution and negotiations, and not provocation and bellicosity which these war games essentially encourage. The presence of US troops only puts our country in peril.

Moreover, the Balikatan is an exercise in sheer futility; inutile and irrelevant at a time of global economic recession. The money spent for these war games could better be spent on the indigent Bicolanos' needs. Bombs and bullets should be converted into books and paper for school children. Tanks should be transformed into ploughs. Marching soldiers replaced with farmers' subsidies.

Pending the outcome of the Senate's review of the Visiting Forces Agreement, I call for the suspension of all Balikatan exercises to prevent additional injury to our country and people. Our local governments, too, must be well advised not to extend servile hospitality to those who continue to defile our country's sovereignty.

Rizal said that there are no slaves where there are no tyrants. We are presently held captive by two tyrants – our own government and the United States. The latter extends hegemony worldwide to protect its interests while the former acts as its ever willing and loyal lackey.

The task is simple: let us cut the chain that has bound us for more than a century! Let us cut the chain that strangles our sovereignty!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "M.A. Madrigal", written in black ink.

M.A. MADRIGAL