



PRESS RELEASE

No.

Releasing Officer:

Date Feb.21, 2010

MARINA M. AGUSTIN

Acting Chief, Office for Public and Legislative Affairs

Office for Public and Legislative Affairs, Department of National Defense, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City

Telephone Nos: 911-3339 / 911-4529

Catex: 911-6001 to 12, loc. 8445/8444

Fax No.: 911-7113

Gonzales discourages PMA adoption of politicians

THE practice of adopting politicians into Philippine Military Academy classes should be stopped to insulate the Armed Forces from narrow, partisan politics.

Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales aired this guidance yesterday to PMA classes as they ended their annual alumni homecoming.

Gonzales noted that the practice of adopting politicians into PMA classes drags the AFP into partisan politics and taints the selection of the AFP chief of staff and processes internal to the military such as promotions.

This cannot be avoided because most AFP officers come from the PMA, Gonzales added.

"The practice is harmful to our Armed Forces. It runs counter to efforts to professionalize them and to rebuild their image as the true guardians of our democracy," the defense chief said.

Gonzales said the practice tends to degrade the AFP because it puts military officers into a patron-client relationship with their respective classes' adopted politicians.

Gonzales also pointed out that the practice is "divisive" to the military. "The officers become identified with their respective adopted 'mistahs' who are usually engaged in intensive, destructive political competition, especially during election seasons like now."

"Instead of being nonpartisan protectors of our people, our Armed Forces become entangled in our country's bad politics," Gonzales emphasized.

The defense chief stressed: "Our Armed Forces must be astute in politics so that they can tell the enemies of democracy from the allies. But they should never, never be engaged in narrow, partisan politics."

Gonzales is suggesting a possible alternative to the practice of adoption. "If there are political leaders whom PMA officials or alumni really believe should be recognized for some honorable deeds, these leaders can be conferred with honors by the PMA or by the whole alumni. In that way, the identification with a certain class is removed."

The practice of adoption began during Martial Law in the 1970s when political backing became necessary for military officers to get promoted.

###