

With the rest of the Filipino people, I wish to offer our deepest condolences to the families of the victims whose lives were lost in the hostage situation at the Quirino Grandstand. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs has conveyed our deep feelings of sorrow to the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China and the people of Hong Kong through Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang. I have tasked Secretaries Soliman and Lim to provide everything necessary for the recovery and return home of the survivors. I have directed the fullest cooperation with the Hong Kong authorities on the part of our officials.

From the onset of this incident, the hostage-taker seemed to not be belligerent, as shown by the release of hostages. These were encouraging signs. We were going to wait him out. The idea was to let the ground commanders who are the experts in this field handle the operation with minimal interference from people who are less expert.

But the situation deteriorated rapidly when, during the course of the negotiations, he was given the letter of the Ombudsman in which she promised to personally review his case. As he was reading the contents of the letter, while talking to an unknown individual on the phone, he became increasingly agitated.

The presence of his brother also added to the tension.

At this point, he threatened to kill a hostage. The police decided to remove the brother from the scene. As the negotiators were departing, the negotiators were shot at.

Media coverage of his brother being taken into custody further agitated the hostage-taker.

Shots were fired. They seemed to be warning shots, as there was no audible indication of tumult or chaos to show that the hostages were in immediate danger.

Nonetheless, the negotiators tried to reestablish contact the hostage-taker but they were unsuccessful as the cellphone of the hostage-taker was continuously busy. He also refused to

answer the throw-phone provided for him by the authorities.

The escape of the driver, combined with his reports that the hostages were being harmed, forced the assault to happen. When the vehicle began to move, and with reports that he had hand grenades, a decision was made to immobilize the vehicle as it would have made the situation even more dangerous.

As we know, the incident tragically ended in the deaths of eight innocent civilians.

We expect more of the facts to come to light and I have ordered Interior and Local Government Secretary Jesse Robredo and Justice Secretary Leila de Lima to thoroughly lead this review. END