



President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (standing, third from right) and Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo (right) pay respects as the coffin containing the remains of UN civilian worker Jerome Yap passes them. Joining them is Navy Rear Admiral Emilio Marayag (second from right). (photo by: Tony Bosa Jr. DFA-PISU)

02 February 2010- Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo today paid tribute to four Filipino peacekeepers who perished in last month's deadly earthquake that struck Haiti, saying their sacrifice will serve as an inspiration for future generations of peacekeepers.

This morning, Secretary Romulo joined President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and other government and military officials and family members in the emotional homecoming at Villamor

Air Base for Air Force Sergeant Janice Arocena, Navy Data Processor-3 Pearly Panangui and Army Sergeant Eustacio Bermudez of the 10th Philippine Peacekeeping Contingent in Haiti and United Nations staff member Jerome Yap.

Secretary Romulo met and expressed his condolences to the families of each of the four victims, whose flag-draped remains arrived on board Philippine Airlines flight PR 103 from Los Angeles at 5:25 this morning.

The four remains arrived home exactly three weeks after the earthquake leveled the capital, Port-au-Prince, leaving more than 112,000 people dead.

"Today, it is with heavy hearts that we welcome our fallen home. But it is with deep pride that we can say that this great loss will serve as a real inspiration, not just for future generations of Filipino peacekeepers, but for all those working towards world peace," said Secretary Romulo, who also heads the Interagency Council on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

"As we grieve over our loss and the devastating tragedy caused by the earthquake in Haiti, we comfort ourselves with the thought that our fallen comrades spent the final moments of their lives in the service of peace and humanity," Secretary Romulo added, noting that all four were on duty at the United Nations Headquarters in Port-au-Prince when the earthquake struck.

The four Filipinos were among those killed when the multi-story headquarters of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) collapsed after the capital was struck by 7.0 magnitude earthquake on January 12. The dead included Ambassador Hedi Annabi, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Haiti and his deputy, Luiz Carlos Da Costa.

Romulo also paid tribute to members of the 10th Philippine Peacekeeping Contingent in Haiti led by Lieutenant Coronel Lope Dagoy and the Philippine National Police component led by

Senior Superintendent Rodolfo Fuentes for immediately responding after the earthquake by taking part in search and rescue efforts as well as in looking after members of the Filipino community in Haiti.

Two other Filipinas remain unaccounted for and are believed to be in the rubble of the Caribbean Supermarket in Port-au-Prince.

Secretary Romulo said the death of the three military peacekeepers is the single biggest loss suffered by the Philippines in the 46 years it has been participating in UN peacekeeping operations.

Captain Emmanuel Rabaya was killed when an improvised explosive went off while serving in the UN Guard Contingent in Iraq in 1996 while Staff Sergeant Antonio Batomalaque of the 1st Philippine Peacekeeping Contingent in Haiti was killed when gunmen attacked UN peacekeepers in Port-au-Prince in 2005.

Secretary Romulo said Yap was the fifth Filipino lost while in the service of the UN since 2003 when a terrorist attack at the UN Headquarters in Baghdad claimed the life of Ranillo Buenaventura.

Three other UN staff members from the Philippines were killed in terrorist-related incidents: Jossie Esto of the UN Volunteers Program in Kabul in 2009; Perseveranda So of the United Nations Children's Fund in Peshawar, also in 2009; and Gene Luna of the World Food Program in Algiers in 2008.END