

'Nothing more to say on ZTE'

by PAOLO ROMERO
Philstar.com

reported golf game with ZTE officials in China.

He said Mrs. Arroyo, by nature of her position, meets with many people. He said if there would be malice imputed in the golf game, the conclusion would be that the First Couple was involved in the alleged anomaly.

Explain golf game in China

Gordon earlier said the First Couple must explain their presence at the ZTE main office in China at the height of the controversy surrounding the contract in 2006, adding that the President and her husband should be cited for impropriety or possible violation of ethical conduct.

Gordon said the Arroyos went to the Shenzhen Golf Club in China, even played golf and had lunch with ZTE officials on Nov. 2, 2006. A scandal erupted later, with reports alleging that the award of the NBN contract was being rigged to favor several individuals, Gordon said.

Gordon said the President should explain her meeting with ZTE officials at a time when there were supposed efforts by the camps of the son of former House speaker Jose de Venecia and former Commission on Elections chairman Benjamin Abalos to corner the multimillion-dollar deal.

"Well, if you are the President and there is a big contract, you should not be playing golf with those who are pushing the contract. You should not dine with them. That is where the doubts arise," he pointed out.

Gordon explained the Senate is not looking for the criminal aspect of the issue but to point out indications of unethical conduct on the part of the

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MANILA – President Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo have nothing more to say regarding the scrapped \$329-million national broadband network (NBN) contract with ZTE Corp. of China as the Senate resumes hearings on September 1 on the botched deal, officials said on August 31.

Deputy presidential spokesman Anthony Golez issued the statement as Sen. Richard Gordon, chairman of the Senate Blue Ribbon committee, called on the First Couple to shed light on their role in the deal that Mrs. Arroyo ordered cancelled in October 2007.

"First of all, there is nothing more the President and the First Gentleman will explain because, as a matter of fact, the President canceled this contract," Golez told a news briefing.

He said while he respects the independence of the Senate and the call of Gordon, nothing new is expected to come out of the inquiry as the issue had been exhaustively tackled in 2007.

"With regard to the merits of the case, I think it has been exhaustively answered. The questions were exhaustively answered already. In 2007, this (hearings) already came out and it was called a telenovela. For every telenovela, usually there is a break and there is season two. The problem with this season 2, if the story remains the same, it is called a replay," Golez said.

He, however, could not comment on Gordon's statement that the First Couple should clarify their

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