

# Why is Duterte so quiet about the rubout of the century?

By [RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO](#) on November 8, 2016 [Opinion on Page One](#)



RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO

It's been three days (as of this writing) since more than 15 policemen of the Eastern Visayas Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) motored for several hours from their headquarters in Tacloban City, to arrive in Baybay City in the wee hours of the morning, occupied the sub-provincial jail, disarmed its warden and guards, and executed Albuera mayor Rolando Espinosa with their Armalite rifles. The detained mayor had been awakened by the surprise visit of the police search team and asked if he could first go to the toilet. The scene was like shooting a goldfish in a fish bowl, or a sick dog in a pen.

Espinosa, as everyone in the country would know by now after Duterte himself named him as a drug lord, was to become a star whistleblower for the President's anti-drug campaign. His alleged 'affidavit.'

This alleged 'affidavit' pinpointed protectors of his son's illegal-drug syndicate, with Senator Leila de Lima at the top of the list and 225 others, including 19 politicians, four judges, 38 policemen, seven CIDG agents, a Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency operative, three from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, one Army man, and three from the media.

I haven't heard of a case that had involved such a brazen execution of a star witness, or anybody else for that matter. In a cell, by policemen? Even in the most imaginative mafia movie, the assassins of a stool pigeon were hardened inmates — not a platoon of policemen disarming jail guards. Even Marcos and his henchmen at the apex of the dictatorship couldn't have thought of such an execution.

The killing of Espinosa would, without a doubt, be known as the 'rubout of the century,' the most brazen ever here or even elsewhere in the civilized world.



(L) Would-be-whistleblower Mayor Espinosa, executed. (R) Half a day later, PNP Chief de la Rosa, unruffled on the ring celebrating Pacquiao's victory with Chavit Singson and Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach

And to think that Espinosa on nationwide television appealed to his son in August: "Surrender na lang tayo kasi tutulungan naman tayo ng ating Presidente at ng ating PNP chief (Director General) General Ronald Dela Rosa." (Let's just surrender, because you see, the President and the PNP chief would help us.)

### **Marcos had a search warrant**

What should add to our outrage is that the head of the Eastern Visayas CIDG, Police Superintendent (Lt. Col.) Marvin Marcos, who approved the operation led by Chief Inspector (Major) Leo Laraga, takes us for fools.

They claimed he was holding a search warrant, and based on the claim of an informant he wouldn't name, there were guns in Espinosa's cell. Obviously so that it wouldn't appear the CIDG platoon's aim was to exterminate Espinosa, another inmate, Raul Yap, was also killed as he allegedly had a gun and even illegal drugs in his cell.

Such ruthless slaughter was undertaken with a very bad script, as Senator Panfilo Lacson and Rep. Romeo Acop, both former police generals familiar with these things, said. Bad, I think since these people think they can either fool us, or frighten us to believe their preposterous story.

I find it strange that the PNP chief, after presumably having been told of the execution, didn't rush home from his junket in Las Vegas to watch Manny Pacquiao's championship. After all, he had given Espinosa and his son Kerwin his personal protection, that they wouldn't be killed if they became state witnesses.

What I found stranger, though — and worrying — is that the usually loquacious President Duterte has been totally mum over this crime, which is really a slap on his face,

as executed by the police who have been undertaking his war on drugs, his overarching project since he assumed office in July.

He had blown his top and called Ambassador Philip Goldberg an idiot and a gay when the US envoy said that extrajudicial killings threatened our rule of law. He went into a paroxysm of anger and blurted out “putang ina” when a reporter baited him with a question about what to say if President Obama raised in an upcoming APEC meeting with him the issue of extrajudicial killings.

But over the Espinosa killing, he has been as timid and quiet as a sheep.

I would have cheered him if he appeared on national TV hours after Espinosa’s killing and shouted putang-ina several times, and addressed a crisp curse at his factotum PNP Chief Ronald de la Rosa (Who was in Las Vegas three days before to watch Manny Pacquiao’s championship fight): “Putangina ina mo Bato, huwag mo nang panoorin si Pacquiao at umuwi ka na at pinatay ng mga bata mo ang star witness ko laban kay de Lima.”

It’s been surreal that not a single word has been heard from our crime-busting President, as if he had not even been informed or heard of the Espinosa execution.

### **Two speeches, not one word on Espinosa**

He made two speeches the other day. In that one on the occasion of the swearing in of the new officers of the National Press Club (NPC), he rambled for over half-hour on various topics – from his view that not all the media men who were gunned down were targeted because they were doing their job but for some other reason, to why he doesn’t support the past administration’s commitments to the world to reduce its carbon emissions but would still have to honor it.

In both speeches, Duterte has said not one word on the Espinosa rubout. It’s a demonstration of the sorry state of the media that the new officers of the NPC didn’t approach him to ask him about the mayor’s brazen murder.

While he hasn’t said a word on the killing, the PNP has been in disarray, with its top officials sending conflicting messages on what happened.

Police Chief Inspector (Major) Jovie Espenido, Albura municipal police chief, was livid as he asked, sarcastically, why Espinosa was killed over one gun. “It will have a chilling effect on the other witnesses against police and government officials,” he added. Guards of the municipal jail narrated over TV news broadcasts how they were disarmed and threatened to be shot if they resisted, how the CIDG cut the cell’s chains with a bolt cutter they brought with them, and how one police officer shot Espinosa, right after he asked if he could go to the toilet. The CIDG agents, they claimed, very methodically ripped out the hard disc that contained the closed-circuit TV video of those hours, and took it with them.

Police Superintendent Marcos, the CIDG officer who led the raid, arrogantly claimed during a TV interview that he and his men had no choice but to kill Espinosa because he fought back. As if oblivious to the consequences of such brazen slaughter of a whistleblower, Police Deputy Director General Francisco Uyami Jr. said the incident would be investigated as “a matter of standard procedure.”

Duterte cannot underestimate the consequences of the Espinosa killing and his lack of leadership – so far – in this episode.

Even Senators Panfilo Lacson and Richard Gordon — who defended him against the onslaught of Senator Leila de Lima to prove him responsible for the extrajudicial killings since he assumed power — wouldn’t accept the PNP’s absurd explanation. The Yellow Cult has smelled blood, with its leader, former President Noynoy Aquino, apparently waking up from his stupor to arrogantly tell the media that he is “monitoring the case.”

Duterte’s apparent paralysis in the past three days over the Espinosa slay would be in the same scale as those of President Benigno Aquino 3rd in the Luneta hostage crisis and the Mamasapano massacre.

### **A strong response needed**

While I would think that Duterte and his advisers, especially the veterans of so many political crises, would certainly know how to handle the crisis, a strong response would involve the following steps:

1. Duterte must order the suspension of all officers of the CIDG’s Eastern Visayas command and policemen involved in the raid on the Baybay jail, and have them taken to Camp Crame to be “kept” in circumstances that they would be unable to communicate with each other or with anyone else for the whole duration of an official inquiry into the case. This would ensure that they would be unable to concoct a false explanation or threaten or bribe those such as the jail personnel who witnessed the raid. The Baybay City jail’s warden and staff must also be brought to Manila and kept in secret locations to ensure their safety.
2. Duterte must order the CIDG, the PNP’s Internal Affairs, and even the National Police Commission to stop their announced plans to investigate the incident. Instead, it is solely the justice secretary, using the NBI, which is under his authority, or any other government agency that should investigate the case. Duterte must use his persuasive powers over Congress to request them to wait for the Justice Secretary’s report before they undertake their own investigation in aid of legislation.
3. Duterte must require the justice secretary to submit his report in 15 or even 30 days at most. This wouldn’t be at all difficult. Those involved wouldn’t number more than 30 — the CIDG national head who approved the raid, the CIDG Region 8 head, Marcos, CIDG officer Laraga, who led the team that executed Espinosa, together with his officers and men, the Baybay City jail warden and staff, and the inmates who witnessed the rubout. How would that be difficult?

The highest officer who is really accountable for this shame on the nation is of course, PNP Chief Director General Ronald de la Rosa. What kind of a message did his behavior send to the PNP, appearing unruffled by the rubout back home and staying on to enjoy watching the Pacquiao fight in Las Vegas? Just five months in his high-profile strategic job, with the war against illegal drugs still unwon, and he takes a one-week vacation?

The strongest message Duterte could send – that he is undaunted in his war against crime – is to fire de la Rosa. But there seems to be no other such person Duterte can trust, or follow his orders without question.

The nation and I, myself, have been cheering Duterte’s fight against illegal drugs and crime. But then his own police officials undertook one of the dastardliest crimes this nation has seen. What a pathetic country we’ve become.

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## 11 Comments



jose b. taganahan on [November 9, 2016 6:17 am](#)

The President maybe silent on the murder of the late Mayor Espinosa inside a government prison cell by policemen because in an affidavit allegedly executed by the late Mayor, one of the drug lords named in the affidavit was Peter Lim, the “kumpadre” of President Duterte. Peter Lim was even given an audience by the President in Davao City but until now was not charged with any crime by this administration even if Duterte himself also named Peter Lim as one of the drug lords in his first list of drug lords and drug lord protectors released to the media.

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ardie on [November 9, 2016 5:06 am](#)

Yes,Sir I agree with you without any reservation.It seems we have two successive presidents who will lead us to total perdition.This is too much.I support a war against drugs and all forms of criminality even to the extent of using extra powers but what is happening is a bloodbath.I wonder what will satisfy the bloodlust of the man in Malacanang.

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atozet on [November 9, 2016 4:03 am](#)

It is obvious that you are not a fan of Digong. Have you ask yourself who will benefit most if Espinosa is out of the picture on Digong's drug war? The people who wants to eliminate drugs or the people who wants to propagate drugs? There are stray dogs in the police force who most likely did the EJK. Their sole motive is to silence their enemy so they can continue their drug business as usual.

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Julio on [November 9, 2016 3:48 am](#)

I am not a great fan of Mr. Tiglao but this time I completely agree with him on his outrage against the brazen killing of Mayor Espinosa inside his cell by supposed protectors of the people.

[Reply](#)



nicky lee on [November 9, 2016 3:08 am](#)

very true.

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Joe a. on [November 9, 2016 2:44 am](#)

What good is it for any alleged drug dealer to surrender if they are going to be lied to and executed anyway? Beware, because the day may come when other groups or categories of people are hunted down for whatever claimed reason.

[Reply](#)

7.



D1nonly on [November 9, 2016 1:44 am](#)

DU30 speaking on Espinosa will add 1 more voice to the disparate cacophony of voices talking over each other. Its best that the matter be investigated credibly and swift justice applied to those involved.

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8.



Nin on [November 9, 2016 1:24 am](#)

My guess is PDU30 is too mad to talk about it just now. Waiting for more facts.

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9.



King Lee on [November 9, 2016 1:19 am](#)

I agree, Dela Rosa's choice of staying with Pacquiao is a really wrong move. He may not make it in time if he opted to go home, but him staying in Vegas created much doubt about his attitude being an officer.

If he keeps doing such acts, he's no different from Napenas who went partying while his men are being slaughtered.

[Reply](#)

10.



To the Max on [November 9, 2016 1:08 am](#)

The CIDG raiding team knew that this is a very high value target. That they are going to be in trouble unless the 15 police are so stupid. Somebody promised them protection. That is the only credible answer. This person must hold a very high position in government' that these police believed him and risked their jobs and their future. I am sure that these 15 policemen will be out of work and might go to prison. Like the police that killed Benigno Aquino.

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guillermo avila on [November 9, 2016 12:53 am](#)

Such a wonderful comment and reporting!

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