

Palace says GMA won't end up like ousted Honduras leader

By PAOLO ROMERO

Malacañang assured the people yesterday that President Arroyo would not suffer the fate of Honduras President Manuel Zelaya who was arrested by his own military and sent to exile in Costa Rica for trying to force amendments to the Constitution to allow him to run again for president.

Deputy presidential spokeswoman Lorelei Fajardo said the situation in Honduras could not be compared to the Philippines. She said Mrs. Arroyo has no intention of perpetuating herself in power and that the Palace has nothing to do with moves in the House of Representatives to amend the Constitution.

Zelaya was ousted by the military with the support of the Honduran Supreme Court and the legislature for trying to amend the Constitution to prolong his term against the will of the majority of the Honduran people.

"We are confident that this (coup) is not going to happen to us," Fajardo said. "The leadership of the AFP is united and solid behind the Constitution so we don't have to worry that this could happen in the Philippines."

She said moves to oust Mrs. Arroyo are not needed as she "is sensitive to the sentiments of the people, and all these concerns will be answered in time."

She also brushed aside reports that a certain group, which calls itself Kadamay, has been soliciting signatures against the convening of the constituent assembly and to compel Mrs. Arroyo to step down from office.

"I think we must just wait for her term to end. She has a few months left before she steps down. This is not going to be productive anymore," Fajardo said.

Senators warned President

Arroyo and her allies yesterday of the possible consequences if they push through with plans to amend the Constitution to extend the President's term similar to political developments that triggered a military coup in Honduras.

Senators Loren Legarda, Panfilo Lacson, Francis Pangilinan, and Francis Escudero said Mrs. Arroyo would suffer the same fate of Honduran president Zelaya.

"The military coup in Honduras sends again a warning to the world, including the Philippines, that government leaders can be overthrown if they are overcome by their petty ambitions to prolong their hold on power in violation of the Constitution," Legarda said in a statement.

Zelaya's fate should serve as a serious warning to Mrs. Arroyo, Lacson said.

"She shouldn't push her luck too hard. *Baka abos na swerte niya, hindi niya lang alam* (Her luck might have run out, she just doesn't know it)," he said.

Pangilinan said pushing for an "illegal constituent assembly (con-sas)" might push the people and the military to stage a coup to oust the President.

Escudero did not discount the possibility of a Honduras experience for the country.

"The possibility is always there but let's not wish for that in our country, not for Arroyo's sake but for the sake of our country, our people and our economy," Escudero said.

Cuban embassy hits Honduran coup

Former Cuban President Fidel Castro sent yesterday a strong statement that the Honduran military high command should be asked to abdicate so the young officers who are not involved with the oligarchy could take charge of the mil-

itary command.

"There is no way to negotiate with that putschist high command. They must be asked to abdicate while other younger officers, unin-

olved with the oligarchy, take charge of the military command; otherwise, there will never be in Honduras a government of the people, by the people and for the peo-

ple. There is no hope for the cornered and isolated putschists if the problem is faced with determination," Castro said in his "Reflections of Comrade Fidel" issued by the Cuban Embassy in Ma-

nila.

Castro said ousted President Zelaya would be recognized by the world as the only constitutional president of Honduras. — With Christina Mendez, Pia Lee-Braço