

# Filipino-American activists stage protest vs GMA

By Marvin Sy

While President Arroyo was basking in the afterglow of her meeting with US President Barack Obama, protest rallies were held in the United States against her administration.

Outside the White House in Washington D.C. and the Philippine consulate in San Francisco, California, rallies were staged by the Filipino-American activists, mostly belonging to the US chapter of the militant group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan or Bayan.

The protesters, who were allowed to rally outside the White House, carried placards calling on President Obama to stop US support for the Arroyo administration because of its alleged human rights violations and corruption.

Members of Bayan cited the alleged kidnapping and torture of one of its Filipino members, Melissa Roxas, in the hands of the military earlier this year in the Philippines.

In Manila, Bayan criticized Obama's meeting with Arroyo, saying "it did not result in any clear benefits for the Filipino people."

It also took issue with Obama calling the Philippines "the coordinating country in the US relationship with ASEAN," saying it is not a very flattering designation.

"It speaks of how the US still consid-

ers the Philippines its colonial outpost in Asia. The US expects us to parrot its position within the ASEAN," Bayan spokesman Renato Reyes said in a statement.

He said the term "coordinating country" makes the Philippines "America's glorified errand boy in the region."

"We're considered the US surrogate in Southeast Asia."

But a smaller group also gathered outside the White House to voice their support for Mrs. Arroyo.

In San Francisco, the protesters called on Obama to stop spending US money for military aid to the Philippines.

President Arroyo appeared oblivious to the rallies as she met with members of the Filipino-American community and Obama in the first two days of her working visit to the US.

When the two leaders faced the media for a brief interview after their 45-minute meeting, there was no indication that any of the controversial issues against President Arroyo was discussed.

The political opposition and the militant groups were hoping that President Obama would raise the issue of human rights during his meeting with Mrs. Arroyo but this apparently did not happen.

- With AP