

# GMA adviser denies takeover of BIR unit

Presidential adviser on revenue enhancement Narciso Santiago Jr. was investigating a large taxpayer when he asked for data from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and had no intention of taking over the Large Taxpayers Unit (LTU) as some sectors have alleged, he said yesterday.

In an interview, Santiago said the taxpayer had reportedly failed to pay an estimated P7 billion in taxes.

His mandate under Administrative Order No. 263, dated May 6, is to investigate cases in the LTU, he added.

Santiago said Mrs. Arroyo wanted to find out the reasons for the LTU's shortfall in the collection of taxes.

LTU collections account for 60 percent of the BIR's total take, he added.

Santiago said he asked the BIR to provide him with certain data related to the case, but he was not given any response.

Santiago said Malacañang, through Executive Secretary Eduardo Iñiguez, had ordered Finance Secretary Margarito Teves to furnish his office with the documents needed to investigate the case.

Santiago said the documents were all public documents like the list of large taxpayers for the years 2007 to 2009; the basis for the computation of the taxes assessed; the amounts actually collected; and the names, ranks and positions of the BIR officials connected with the assessment and collections.

"But they did not want to furnish me with the documents," he said. "As if they are hiding something."

Santiago said the BIR invoked the confidentiality of the taxpayers, which carried no weight since the order had come from the President.

"I made repeated requests," he said.

"Around five written requests. If they had nothing to hide then they should have provided the documents."

"I have no quarrel with them (BIR). If they don't want to furnish me with the documents then there's nothing that I can do."

However, he has to report to the President so the problems he faced with the BIR would have to be disclosed, he added.

Santiago said he had not quarreled with former BIR Commissioner Sixto Esquivias IV, who has resigned.

He was not aware why Esquivias had resigned, he added.

Santiago said Esquivias is a friend, and that he met him twice to discuss his mandate.

"I told him if you have any problems with this then you should take it up with the President or Secretary Teves," he said.