Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City
EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1918

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE,
FERDINAND R. GAITE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT

RESOLUTION
DIRECTING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THROUGH THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY
TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE
CYBERATTACKS AGAINST INDEPENDENT NEWS WEBSITES
BULATLAT.COM AND ALTERMIDYA, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION
KARAPATAN TRACED TO GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2021, Swedish-based digital forensics non-profit organization Quirium reported that there had been “brief but frequent denial attacks against the Philippine alternative media outlets Bulatlat and Altermidya, as well as the human rights group Karapatan”¹ in an alert published on their website;

WHEREAS, according to Quirium, there were five HTTP GET or POST floods made to the three websites, on May 17, May 18, May 20, and two (2) on June 6. HTTP GET or POST floods are types of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks that are meant to overwhelm targeted servers with requests. When a target website is “flooded” with these requests—made by “bots” or interconnected computers—it is rendered unable to process the volumetric barrage of information, and a ‘denial of service’ will result from legitimate users of the website;

WHEREAS, alarmingly, the attacks were not made by a hacker, but traced to government agencies. The same report said: “A close look into the IP reveals that a Sophos firewall is behind the IP address. The appliance has a Certificate in the name of IP-Solutions Inc. The company (Lorna V. Zacate) signing the digital certificates of the appliances is a supplier of hardware and services to the Governmental Institutions in the Philippines”;

WHEREAS, the same Report added, the attacks dated May 18, 2021, 7:33 pm, originated from a machine with an IP address (202.90.137.42) that belongs to the Philippine Research, Education, and Government Information Network (PREGINET), a project under the Department of Science and Technology;

WHEREAS, another machine in the network which Qurium says has links to the attacks has the

IP address 202.90.137.43 with the details “acepcionecjr@army.mil.ph Taguig Red Server.” The mil.ph domain is reserved for the Philippine military;\(^2\)

**WHEREAS,** this is not the first time that alternative news sites and progressive organization websites were subject to cyberattacks. In December 2018, Bulatlat.com, Kodao Productions, and Pinoy Weekly were hit by DDoS attacks. The attack resulted in a civil case filed by Alipato Media Center Inc, Altermidya-People’s Alternative Media Network Inc, Kodao Productions Inc, and Pinoy Media Center Inc against IP Converge Data Services Inc and Suniway Group of Companies Inc, where the attacks were traced\(^3\);

**WHEREAS,** in 2019, Altermidya believed that "there is no one else that could possibly be behind these attacks than the Duterte administration itself, which has taken increasingly bold steps to curtail press freedom and the people’s right to know." Bulatlat.com also believes that the attacks were meant to silence their critical reportage on the Duterte administration;

**WHEREAS,** the latest digital forensic findings tracing the attack to military and even science agencies seem to affirm the news agencies’ suspicions on the origins of the attack;

**WHEREAS,** Bulatlat.com says that the attack came after they published a report on the designation of 19 individuals as terrorists by the Anti-Terror Council and the arrests of elderly peasant leaders: 59-year-old Marcela Diaz and a stage 4 cancer patient, and 70-year-old Virgilio Lincuna, a former political prisoner and stroke survivor with partial paralysis on May 17. On May 22-23, Bulatlat.com was updating their stories on the possible investigation of President Rodrigo Duterte on the International Criminal Court (ICC) related to crimes against humanity as a result of its War on Drugs, and other news critical of the administration. Altermidya, likewise, ran a report on the ICC investigation. Cristina Palabay, secretary general of Karapatan, said the May 17 attack on its website, which was overwhelmed by 350,000 hits in less than five minutes, also published its statement on the arrests of elderly peasant leaders from Northern Mindanao;\(^5\)

**WHEREAS,** the use of government resources to finance such attacks to news sites and human rights organizations is condemnable. It is a threat to free speech and democracy, and, a blatant misuse of public funds, thus, making it also illegal. It bears all the hallmarks of a tyrannical campaign versus government critics and the media;

**WHEREAS,** as lawmakers, it is our duty to ensure that public funds are used judiciously for the benefit of the people, and not used to violate their civil and political rights enshrined in our Constitution;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that the House of Representatives, through the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the cyberattacks against independent news websites Bulatlat.com and Altermidya and human rights organization Karapatan that are traced to government agencies.

\(^{2}\) Ibid
\(^{3}\) https://www.rappler.com/technology/cyberattack-alternative-media-philippines-based-attacker-quarium
Retrieved 24 June 2021
\(^{4}\) https://www.rappler.com/technology/altermidya-statement-ddos-attacks-against-member-sites
Retrieved 24 June 2021
\(^{5}\) https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1450227/cyberattacks-on-red-tagged-news-sites-traced-to-dost-army
Retrieved 24 June 2021
Approved,

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