

Philippine president recognizes abuses in drug war

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte acknowledged abuses have occurred in his war on illegal drugs, which has left more than 400 people dead in a month and alarmed rights activists, but refused to back down from a shoot-to-kill order for drug suspects.

Duterte said in a speech late Thursday that most drug dealers and addicts slain in gunbattles with police had put up a fight, but added that he was sure some were “salvaged,” a local slang for extrajudicial killings usually by law enforcers.

In the case of illegal killings, Duterte said the government will investigate.

“They really fight back, I know that,” Duterte said in a speech in southern Davao city, where he built a name as a mayor for his extra tough approach to crime before becoming president. “I’m sure there are some who were salvaged, I am also sure of that.”

Early Friday, he told reporters that he gave “shoot-to-kill” orders against drug dealers, including politicians involved in the illicit trade.

“I’ll really have you killed. Look at what you’re doing to the Philippines and I’ll forgive you?” Duterte told reporters, apparently enraged after visiting a town police chief who was shot in the chest by a suspected drug dealer and rushed to a Davao hospital.

“My order is shoot to kill you. I don’t care about human rights, you better believe me,” he said.

Duterte’s centerpiece anti-crime drive, focused on an ambitious campaign promise to end the widespread drugs problem in six months, has left more than 400 drug suspects dead, many of them either in firefights with police or under suspect circumstances. More than 4,400 have been arrested, police said.

ZEPEDA: Hopes to return to area after finishing school

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“I know she is capable, she is hard working,” she said.

Corvallis is 267 miles away from Hermiston, and Olivia said that it’s going to be hard on the family, especially Laura’s younger siblings, but she knows it’s what is best for Laura. “And what’s good for her is good for our family.” She said she knows that college is an opportunity for her oldest daughter to have a better life.

For Laura, the encouragement of her parents and extended family have been a big part of her path.

“I saw in their eyes (that) they saw potential in me,” Zepeda said. “So I just wanted to complete that goal for them and for myself.”

Her parents both made arrangements to take their daughter to Corvallis in September. Until they drop their daughter off at the steps of the OSU campus Laura’s parents are spending as much time with her as they can. Laura has a valid driver’s license, but her mom insists on taxiing her around when she can, just for those extra moments together.

Even though she’ll be saying goodbye to her parents and be hours away from her home and family, Laura said she’s ready for the challenge.

“No, everyone asks me, ‘Are you nervous?’” She said. “But I’m not.”

Zepeda said she feels like college is just the next step, but hopes to come back to the area when she’s done with school.

“I want to come back, yes,” she said. “For me it’s like whenever we go over to Portland, I feel like it’s too much, too much noise and so crowded and over here it’s so peaceful.”

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SCARS: No one investigating the crash talked to Ainsworth

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boyfriend, Chance Bissinger, 28, was in the passenger seat. They left their Pendleton home that morning to visit his family in Rieth.

The sun was bright, the sky clear. They came over the top of a blind curve a few minutes after 7 a.m. and saw a Dodge pickup coming right at them.

She swerved for the empty lane. She said she saw the driver look up. He swerved and again was heading toward Ainsworth and Bissinger. She jerked the car back into her lane. The pickup driver did the same.

They crashed. The other driver was Jacob Faber, 30, of Pendleton. He suffered cuts to his left forearm, a cut lip and bruises on his leg. He is married to a deputy with the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, the same agency that investigated the crash and cited him for failure to maintain a lane. He pleaded no contest to the violation in November.

Faber claimed the steering locked up on his 2012 Dodge R35 pickup, according to the crash report from former deputy James English, but it broke free when he slammed on the brakes and swerved.

English noted he saw no “skid/yaw marks on the road from either vehicle.”

Ainsworth and Bissinger said that is not the only problem with the report. They wanted to know if English checked Faber’s cellphone, for example, or determined if he was impaired. And while Bissinger’s statements are in the report, he said the crash knocked him out and he does not remember speaking with English.

And no one investigating the crash talked to Ainsworth — even though she was driving.

Ainsworth does not think the sheriff’s office was trying to cover up anything. Rather, she and Bissinger stressed, the agency ran a shoddy investigation into a life-threatening crash



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Rebeca Ainsworth shows the scar running down her left arm where doctors made the incision to go in and reconstruct her shattered elbow.

involving the spouse of one of their own.

Sheriff Terry Rowan said nothing prohibits an agency from investigating crashes involving its own officers or their family, but he acknowledged it is best practice to have outside law enforcement do that work. He said he did not learn about crash when it occurred, only hearing about it a year later after Ainsworth called him.

She claimed she left messages for the sheriff in August 2015, but he said he never received them. Still, Rowan said that after talking to Ainsworth he took the original report to Lt. Mike Turner, the commander of Oregon State Police in Pendleton.

“I asked him if there was something more to be done, something more to look at,” Rowan said.

The two police heads “speculated what could have

happened and what should have happened,” Rowan said, and concluded the citation was appropriate.

Turner confirmed Rowan brought him the crash report and he found nothing out of the ordinary. He also said he told Ainsworth there was nothing more state police could do.

“We weren’t going to re-investigate the crash,” he said.

Rowan and Turner said Pendleton police responded to the crash, and Turner said a state trooper also made it there too. Rowan said having officers from other agencies at the scene gives him confidence in the report and citation.

Something apparent at the scene, such as a driver who is impaired, would be in the report, he said. Still, Rowan said he would have preferred that English’s report showed that he checked for impair-

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— Terry Rowan, Umatilla County Sheriff

ment and cellphone use. And the deputy should have interviewed Ainsworth.

“There are a couple of things that should have happened that, frankly, didn’t,” Rowan said.

Rowan said that Faber and Bissinger gave consistent statements that Faber was not on a cellphone, although that is not in the report. Bissinger and Ainsworth say that Faber was looking down before the crash, possibly at a cellphone.

The *East Oregonian* could not reach English or Faber for comment. Rowan said English left the sheriff’s office in April to go into private business, and Faber did not return a call Friday.

The sheriff’s office responds to 15,000-18,000 incidents a year, Rowan said, so there are plenty of “avenues for things to slip through the cracks.” Part of his role as sheriff is to reiterate to his deputies to follow best practices and use common sense.

“If we come on a scene and learn it’s a family member of a deputy, try to make sure we get another set of eyes on it,” he said. “And if possible, have (another agency) take over the investigation.”

Even so, he said, the deputy was the first law enforcement officer at the crash, which demanded urgency. The deputy helped care for the wounded and needed to clear vehicles and debris from blocking lanes.

“I certainly feel for Rebeca,” Rowan said. “She’s had a long row to hoe ... and I understand her frustrations.”

Ainsworth worked a full-time janitorial job before the wreck, she said, but lost that because she can no longer lift the equipment. Her doctor still has not cleared her to work, she said. She used to

ride a bicycle for fun and now must walk with a cane. Even caring for her hair is chore. Her left arm, she said, will never regain its full range of motion.

Faber had \$50,000 in insurance, she said, but ambulance rides, a flight in an emergency helicopter, two surgeries each on the arm and leg, weeks in a hospital bed and hours of therapy sent her bills well beyond that.

Bissinger said bill collectors are calling, so he is picking up as many shifts he can at his job at Barhyte Specialty Foods Inc., Pendleton.

“I’m working 10-12 hours a day just to make sure everything is paid for,” he said, while still being there for Rebeca.

“You don’t expect to be 28 and having to take care of your girlfriend,” he said.

Social Security denied her claim for benefits, Ainsworth said, and her insurance on Monday informed her it was stopping payments of 70 percent of her wages. That coverage was only good for a year.

“Just when we thought it couldn’t get any harder, it did,” she said.

One sliver of silver lining came from Echo Bike & Board in downtown Pendleton. She said the business customized a bicycle for her. And the crash taught her a tough lesson to double-check insurance coverage, which she urged others to do.

Ainsworth and Bissinger tremble and cry when they recall the crash. One moment, she said, changed everything for her and her boyfriend. She wants to move past all of this, she said, and she is trying to do that.

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