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Lacson to DOH on ambulances: Issue is pricing, not bidding process

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SEN. Panfilo Lacson yesterday said he doubts the “overpriced” ambulances bought by the Department of Health and given to local government units underwent the formal bidding process as the DOH claimed.

Lacson was referring to the ambulances bought under Health

Enhancement Facilities Program for P2.5 million each, which he said was worth only P1.5 million each based on his inquiries from local government units (LGUs) and private firms.

Lacson said he will present the full details of the DOH-purchased ambulances today at the resumption of the Senate Blue Ribbon committee’s hearing on alleged

overpriced medical supplies purchased for the DOH by the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PS-DBM).

The DOH, in a statement last Saturday, said the purchase of ambulances was “compliant with the licensing standards set forth

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in Administrative Order 2018-0001 and have undergone competitive bidding to get the lowest price possible.”

Lacson said did not cite figures on the total number of ambulances involved in the alleged overpriced purchase but said that the DOH distributed at least 98 units to the Southern Tagalog region.

He expressed belief the formal bidding process was not strictly followed.

“Ewan ko papaano nila i-explain. Sabi nila sunod sa proseso ng bid-dings. Di naman yan ang pinag-uusapan. Ang pinag-uusapan dito may overpricing ba? Maski lowest bid pinanalo mo, kung lowest bid higit P1 million ang difference ng halaga sa ambulance pati ang gamit, may problema (I don’t know how they will explain this. They said they followed the bidding process. But that’s not the issue. What we are talking about here is was there overpricing? Even if you award the

contract to the lowest bidder, if the lowest bid was P1 million higher than the others, there’s a problem here,” Lacson told radio dzXL.

Lacson said he received information on the alleged overpriced ambulances after several LGUs and private firms bought their own ambulances with the same specifications and found out that the ones procured by the DOH were priced P1 million higher.

“Bumili sila ng parehong brand at model, parehong sasakyan, Nissan cargo van. Binihisan nila at sinunod nila lahat na equipment na naroon sa pinadala ng DOH na ambulance. Ang ginastos nila, higit P1 million sa unit at binihisan nila gumastos sila 300K, so 1.45 million. Nakita namin sa ledger mga 2.5M sa DOH. (They bought the same brand, same vehicle, Nissan cargo van. They bought the same equipment based on the ones given them by the DOH. They spent more than P1 million each and around P300,000 more for the equipment. So, each unit costs around P1.45 million.

But the DOH ledger says that each unit costs around P2.5 million),” he added.

Sen. Christopher Go on Sunday asked those summoned to the hearing to face the investigation, specifically Michael Yang, former presidential economic affairs adviser, to shed light on allegations of his links to Pharmally Pharmaceutical Corp. from which the PS-DBM bought overpriced face masks, face shields, and personal protective equipment, using P42 billion of the DOH’s COVID-19 response funds.

Yang was shown in a video footage showed him with President Duterte welcoming Pharmally executives in a gathering in Malacanang in 2017.

Yang’s “one peso per annum” contract expired on Dec. 31, 2018 and was not renewed by Malacanang. He was linked by former PNP Drug Enforcement Group deputy director for administration Eduardo Acierto to the illegal drugs trade. Malacanang denied the allegations.

