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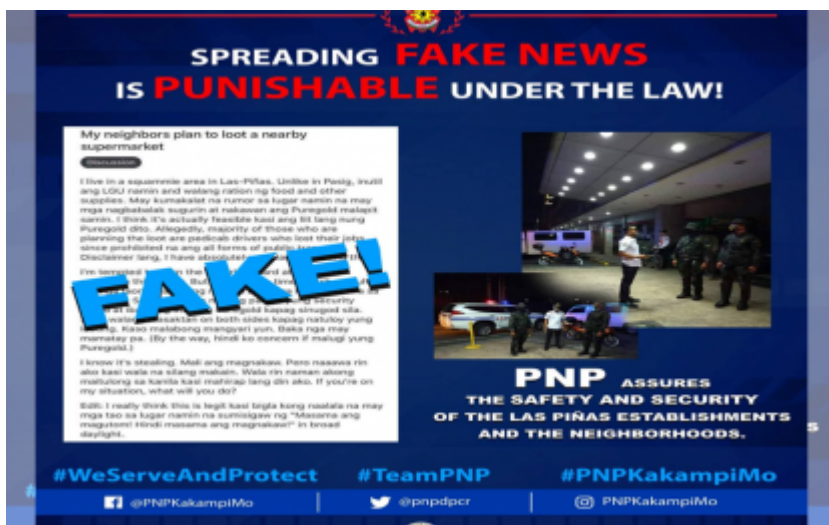
PNP to go after purveyors of fake news on social media

By Christopher Lloyd Caliwan March 23, 2020, 12:36 pm

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MANILA — The Philippine National Police (PNP) is now conducting an investigation to unmask the persons behind the spread of fake news about coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), including helicopter spraying of pesticide around the country to contain the virus.

PNP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Bernard Banac denied the reports that the government, through the police and the military, will spray pesticides in the country using helicopters in the bid to kill the virus that causes Covid-19.

“This is patently fake news and must be disregarded outright. The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) has denied any such flight operations,” Banac said in a statement.

He noted that there is no such order and that the Department of Health has already made it clear that pesticides are only for pests and not for viruses.

Banac said the PNP-Anti Cybercrime Group (ACG), headed by Brig. Gen. Dennis Agustin, has already “initiated a technical investigation to identify the authors of this disinformation to make them accountable for their actions.”

“Properly informed citizens are effective against Covid-19,” said Banac, adding that the IATF-EID “has established a fact check system to negate the proliferation of disinformation.”

“Be informed. Disregard, do not share, and report fake news and unverified information to authorities,” he said.

Banac also debunked fake news reports about supposed looting in many parts of Metro Manila as security forces are implementing the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine.

“In fact, as of today, it (situation) is very peaceful and the people are staying in their homes... Based on the latest information that we received, it's very peaceful and orderly not only in Metro Manila but also in the entire Luzon,” he said.

Earlier, PNP chief Gen. Archie Gamboa warned the purveyors of fake news of charges for spreading false information.

Gamboa appealed to the public to refrain from sharing unvalidated reports on social media that may induce panic.

He tasked the PNP-ACG to monitor the posts in social media spreading false news.

“The PNP will go after you. *Huwag nyo kaming subukan at hahabulin namin kayo* (Don't test us because we will run after you), and as a matter of fact, my directive to the ACG and the different regional directors, *mag-sample tayo para makita ng publiko na kaya natin mag-aresto at mag-file ng kaso kapag nagpo-post ng fake news* (let's

make an arrest for the public see that we are serious and can make arrest and file cases against those spreading fake news),” he said. (*PNA*)

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