

Belmonte: Ensure public safety during operations

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Following the deadly shootout between police and drug enforcement operatives at a Quezon City mall on Wednesday, Mayor Joy Belmonte has called for better crowd management during operations to ensure public safety.

Belmonte yesterday met with officials of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD), barangays and other relevant agencies to discuss how crowding in encounter sites could be prevented in the future.

“Public safety is paramount. We need to reexamine and look for ways to better impose crowd control in dangerous scenarios where stray bullets can hit anyone, or a running gun battle can ensue,” she said in a statement.

“We already learned during the Quirino Grandstand hostage crisis that keeping media and civilians a safe distance away from ground zero or an encounter site is very crucial,” she added, referring to the 2010 Manila hostage-taking that led to the deaths of eight foreigners. While no civilian was wounded during the recent shootout between personnel of the Philippine

National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), Belmonte noted amateur videos showing civilians standing near the encounter site.

Four people died in the incident: two members of the QCPD special operations unit, a PDEA agent and an alleged informant.

Belmonte said she will leave it to the joint inquiry board created by the PNP and PDEA to determine the details of what transpired and who should be held accountable.

However, she said the local People’s Law Enforcement Board may also conduct a separate investigation on the matter of safety of the civilians in the area.

“The incident showed that certain protocols or guidelines could be institutionalized to ensure the safety of our civilian populace in such delicate operations,” Belmonte said.

The mayor said she will also meet with business owners around the encounter site to determine how the city government can help regain consumer confidence in the area.

She also urged the public to refrain from spreading misinformation about the incident.