

## 82 QC cops positive for COVID-19

### Policemen did not engage protesters

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At least 82 cops from the **Quezon City Police District (QCPD)** who were deployed during President Duterte's 6th and last State of the Nation Address (SONA) have tested positive for COVID-19. Citing information from the **city's Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit (CESU)**, the **Quezon City local government** said the policemen were detailed at QCPD's Police Station 3 (Talipapa) as well as Police Community Precincts 1 and 2 (Unang Sigaw and Bahay Toro).

They were part of the 161 police personnel who underwent a routine swab testing on July 23. The remaining 79 turned out negative.

Their test results came out on July 27 and 28.

According to QCPD Director Brig. Gen. Antonio Yarra, the policemen who tested positive for COVID-19 formed part of the police contingents that manned the Commonwealth Avenue area during President Duterte's SONA on Monday, July 26. He said they were assigned to route security and did not directly engage with protesters.

"There was no direct link with SONA yet, considering the testing was done July 23," Yarra said in a Viber message. "Their station commander tested negative and stays healthy."

CESU head Dr. Rolando Cruz said the COVID-positive law enforcers are all asymptomatic and have been fully vaccinated. They are currently isolated at the city's HOPE facilities.

Local government officials are currently discussing if they need to place communities near the police station and precincts where the policemen are assigned to under granular lockdown to avoid the further spread of the virus.

Police Station 3 Commander Lt. Col. Cristine Tabdi said their office will remain in operation, but will only receive reports and complaints outdoors. It will also be restricted to the public and the visitors. Tabdi also vowed to investigate how the outbreak occurred in her area of jurisdiction, the local government added.

**Mayor Joy Belmonte** said she "was doubtful" if the police personnel were deployed during SONA "as per protocol, after swabbing, they should have been quarantined." But Yarra's statement proved otherwise.

"The city government is prepared to contain the spread of the virus. Our CESU has the capability to deal with this situation," Belmonte said in a statement, adding that the public should "not to panic, especially the communities in which the precincts where these police personnel were assigned."

Concerns about the policemen's deployment were raised after some of the law enforcers figured in a skirmish with the rallyists which led to violations of the social distancing protocols. The policemen tried to block the rallyists who were marching towards Tandang Sora Avenue in Quezon City.

Gordon tests positive for COVID-19 Although he has been fully vaccinated, Senator Richard J. Gordon has been found to be COVID-19 positive.

“I received word this morning from our molecular laboratory at the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) that my RT-PCR test result has come back ‘positive’,” according to Gordon who is the PRC chairman. “I am feeling slightly under the weather but am exhibiting no other symptoms as of now and my doctor has advised me to rest and isolate at home. I will continue to observe my symptoms and report any significant changes to my doctor,” he said.

Gordon told Senate reporters that he prefers home quarantine but he might go to a hospital for blood chemistry and lungs test because he suspects a COVID-19 variant could have hit him.

He was not physically present during the opening of the third regular session of the 18th Congress at the Senate building in Pasay city last Monday. He attended it virtually.

Gordon said his wife, Kate, and staff members were tested negative but they would undergo another test after three days. He said he and Kate occupy separate rooms.

He said he suspects he could have been infected by a janitor who was wearing a face mask but he was not. The unidentified janitor was later reported tested.

“I’m a very exposed person. I go to the provinces, and hold meetings every day trying find ways to be bring vaccines faster to the people,” he said.

“I’m asymptomatic but I’m better protected because I’m vaccinated,” he added.

Gordon emphasized that If you are vaccinated, you could still be hit but survive it. “But if you're not vaccinated, you will be infected possibly with severe symptoma, and perhaps have a fatal outcome,” he pointed out.

Gordon said he was making the announcement in order to speed up the contact tracing process and call on anyone who might have had contact with him to isolate immediately and get tested by RT-PCR five to seven days after said contact.

“I have been fully vaccinated and am grateful for the protection the vaccine affords me today. While infections in vaccinated people are relatively uncommon, they can and do happen. What vaccines offer, as has been documented in countries with high rate of vaccination, is protection against serious illness, hospitalization, and death,” he added.

“Vaccines work and they save lives. I urge every Filipino to get vaccinated against COVID-19 if a vaccine is made available to you by your LGU (local government unit), your employer, the Red Cross, or any other organization that has access to vaccines. I call on the government, private sector, and humanitarian and civic organizations to work together to bring more vaccines into the country so that we can get as many people as possible vaccinated,” Gordon said.

“We are at war with an invisible enemy. Protecting ourselves and our loved ones is our best chance to win this battle. For as long as large numbers of people remain unvaccinated, the virus will creep into our homes and communities and destroy lives and livelihood,” he stressed.

“I want to remind everyone that the most effective protective measures remain the same and must be practiced at all times - wear a mask, observe physical distancing, and wash/ disinfect your hands regularly. These protocols should remain in place even for vaccinated people for as long as the majority of the population has not been vaccinated,” he added.