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Local gov't crooks

Rody's next target:

President Duterte is now training his sights on scalawags in local government after firing several appointees accused of corruption and other irregularities,

Malacañang said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Duterte's anti-corruption drive was one of the topics discussed during last Monday's Cabinet meeting.

"The President stated that he would continue with the process of cleansing the bureaucracy and that he will focus on local government units, including the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao," Roque told reporters.

Asked whether there were new complaints that prodded Duterte to make such pronouncement, Roque replied, "None. But he said he would focus not just on presidential appointees but also on local government officials."

Roque said the cleansing was related to the involvement of some local executives in the illegal drug trade.

"I'm sure it's all connected. But I guess the President mentioned in the Cabinet meeting his resolve to cleanse the ranks of the local government executives to highlight that it's not just presidential appointees that would be subject to this campaign to promote public accountability," he said.

Duterte has dismissed several appointees, including those who helped in his presidential bid, over alleged irregularities such as excessive foreign trips.

They include former interior secretary Ismael Sueno, who was implicated in an allegedly anomalous truck deal with an Austrian firm; former National Irrigation Administration chief Peter Laviña, who was accused of asking money from contractors; former Presidential Commission on Urban Poor head Terry Ridon and his four commissioners; Development Academy of the Philippines president Elba Cruz; former Dangerous Drugs Board chairman Dionisio Santiago; former Maritime Industry Authority administrator Marcial Amaro III over unnecessary trips, and budget undersecretary Gertrudo de Leon over alleged corruption.

The President has also announced a plan to dismiss at least 60 policemen, including three superintendents, involved in corrupt practices.

Last year, Duterte warned governors and mayors involved in illegal drugs and protecting drug lords. He has also threatened to punish local executives

* ~~RAPE~~ CORRUPTION
* DUTERTE, RODRIGO

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who allowed corruption to thrive in their jurisdiction.

A total of 165 local chief executives were stripped of their operational control and supervision over the police last year.

Roque said Duterte has initiated a crackdown on rogue officials even if the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission has not been constituted.

"Even without the commission, he has fired many of his presidential appointees," Roque said.

"The President has shown that with or without it, he has a firm resolve against corruption and he will implement it," he added.

Roque said the Office of the President has received at least three new complaints against government officials but did not elaborate.

"He never ignores these complaints. But in fairness, he does his research and he always appoints an entity to investigate and when I make an announcement he gives me a copy of the report submitted to him after investigation has been conducted," he told *CNN* Philippines in an interview aired last Monday.

"Let's just say that he has given the message to everyone, that if you want to travel, if you want to make money join the private sector, you have no place in government," he added.