Republic of the Philippines

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 1009

Introduced by
BAYAN MUNA Representatives CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE,
FERDINAND R. GAITE and EUFEMIA C. CULLAMAT,
ACT TEACHERS Party-List Representative FRANCE L. CASTRO,
GABRIELA Women’s Party Representative ARLENE D. BROSAS
and KABATAAN Party-List Representative SARAH JANE I. ELAGO

RESOLUTION
TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO THE
ISSUES OF IRREGULARITIES, EFFECTIVENESS, AND DATA PRIVACY IN THE
IATF’S STAYSAFE.PH PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Inter-agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), the
body that addresses the country’s COVID-19 responses, adopted StaySafe.ph as “the official
social-distancing, health-condition-reporting, and contact tracing system that will assist in the
government’s response to COVID-19,” based on IATF Resolution No. 27, dated April 22.
Consequently, the IATF issued Resolution No. 45, which authorizes the Multisys Technologies
Corporation, a application developer, to push through with the creation of the said web app;

WHEREAS, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. was reported to have
scheduled the presentation of StaySafe before the IATF earlier in April. On April 8, 2020,
Multisys signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the National Task Force (NTF)
COVID-19, the implementing agency of the IATF-EID, with NTF Chairperson and Defense
Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Carlito Galvez Jr. and Esperon signing for the government. The
project seemed to be cut-and-dried in favor of Multisys;

WHEREAS, Multisys is local tech firm owned by David Almirol Jr., a former migrant worker in
the Middle East, who then worked at a United States military camp in Iraq until 2014. He also
served as a consultant to the National Security Council until his contract ended in 2017. Multisys
boasts of 2,000 companies supposedly using their services. In 2018, PLDT Inc even infused
P2.15 billion for a 44 percent stake in the company;

WHEREAS, former Department of Information and Communications Technology
undersecretary Eliseo Rio said in a Facebook post that he was eased out of his post after

1 https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-dep/ph/263090-borderline-spyware-information-technology-experts-
    alarm-stay-safe-app Accessed 25 June 2020
2 Ibid.
3 https://www.manilastandard.net/index.php/business/biz-plus/317409/former-ofw-wants-to-emulate-bill-
    gates.html Accessed 25 June 2020
pointing out issues regarding StaySafe. In a news report, he cryptically said that he may have also "stepped on some toes".  

WHEREAS, Rio had resigned from his post in DICT in February 2020, after he was disgruntled over issues on the spending of the P20 million confidential funds in the department under the helm of DICT Secretary Gregorio Honasan. However, President Duterte did not act upon the resignation immediately. At least, not until he blew the whistle on StaySafe;  

WHEREAS, Rio questioned, in particular, the effectiveness of StaySafe as the sole contact tracing application in the country. In his Facebook post, he said that only 3G-capable phones can access the app, thus, highly limiting the use for the public. Only one percent (1%) of the population, or, just over a million people, have registered for StaySafe so far, making it inutile in proper contact-tracing;  

WHEREAS, Rio claimed that the app is a "Health Monitoring app with a location tracker, but up to now has no contact tracing capability as described... It just generates a database of cell phone numbers with their location, useful for surveillance purposes of people who reported themselves with symptoms, but of little value to people who report themselves as healthy."  

WHEREAS, aside from effectiveness of the contact-tracing app, Rio also raised issues on data privacy. He pointed out that permissions to access the camera, modify and delete content in phone storage, among others, are automatically granted when they register to StaySafe. "Is this to please the main sponsor of StaySafe who is involved in intelligence?" he queries  

WHEREAS, Israel Brizuela, CEO of data privacy consulting firm ePrivacyNow and a member of the National Association of Data Protection Officers of the Philippines described StaySafe as "borderline spyware." Among the worrisome permissions of the app are the following:  

- Camera  
- Contacts (permission to read, write, and delete contacts)  
- Location (permission to access fine and coarse location, bluetooth)  
- Microphone (permission to record audio)  
- Phone (permission to call phone, read and write call log)  
- SMS (permission to send, receive, and read text messages)  
- Storage (permission to read and write external storage)  
- Settings (permission to write settings)  

WHEREAS, contact-tracing has proved itself as an effective tool by other countries to curb the rise of COVID-19 infections, as is being done in neighboring countries Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. However, it is only in the Philippines that uses a third-party developer, according to the Data Protection Excellency Network (DPEX), a Southeast Asian organization that does research in privacy practices. It is usually government entities such as

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5 https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1279670/rio-resignation-accepted-i-may-have-stepped-on-some-toes. Accessed 25 June 2020  
6 Ibid  
8 Ibid  
9 Ibid
information technology or health ministries that collected data and developed the technologies
used;  

WHEREAS, these issues surrounding StaySafe touches many grounds for thorough
investigation by government bodies. From the process of selection, effectiveness, and data privacy,
the interests of the Filipino people are put to great risks. As all government funds, resources, and
efforts, not to mention crippling borrowings, are being put into COVID-19 responses, the
House of Representatives should be pro-actively on guard against issues of corruption, abuse,
and breaches to the rights and welfare of our people;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives conduct an
investigation, in aid of legislation, to the issues of irregularities, effectiveness, and data privacy in
the IATF’s StaySafe.ph Project.

Approved,

REP. CARLOS ISAGANI T. ZARATE  
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. FERDINAND R. GAITE  
Bayan Muna Partylist

REP. FRANCE L. CASTRO  
ACT Teachers Partylist

REP. ARLENE D. BROSAS  
Gabriela Women’s Party

REP. SARAH JANE I. ELAGO  
Kabataan Partylist

10 Ibid