

6 arrested in PNB exec's kidnapping

By NON ALQUITRAN

Police arrested yesterday six men for allegedly kidnapping a Philippine National Bank (PNB) official, whose family was reported to have paid P5 million for his safe release.

Members of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (PACER) are currently conducting massive follow-up operations to catch the remaining members of the Ilonggo group, headed by Romy Amolo, who is responsible for kidnapping Ramon Murillo, a vice president of the PNB.

STAR sources said his kidnapers released Murillo yesterday after his family handed out P5 million during the payoff near the SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City.

The police said four of the suspects kidnapped Murillo in Quezon City. His kidnapers turned Murillo over to their companions while the four of them proceeded to Rizal town in Nueva Ecija. A negotiator then contacted Murillo's family and demanded a ransom of P15 million.

The family of Murillo kept the kidnapping under wraps, but the Nueva Ecija police got wind of the kidnapping when one of the four suspects, believing that his companions were out to "silence" him and get his share of the loot, walked into the office of Rizal town police chief Senior Inspector Sammy Avila Wednesday to report that he was a kidnap victim.

A former technical division chief of the PACER, current Nueva Ecija police provincial director Senior Superintendent Napoleon Taas dispatched a lawyer and seasoned investigators to Rizal town to handle the case.

During tactical interrogation, Taas' men found out that the kidnap story was a hoax and that the reportee was not a kidnap victim but a kidnapper himself.

Taas' men arrested three other suspects while they were about to leave an eatery in Rizal town. The four suspects then led

Taas to a parked gold Honda CRV, with a shattered left side mirror. The policemen recovered Murillo's identification card inside the vehicle.

During questioning, the suspects admitted abducting Murillo and boasted that the police cannot do something about the case as the family had already paid the P15 million ransom.

Taas immediately notified PACER chief Senior Superintendent Dindo Espina of his accomplishment. Espina confirmed the kidnapping and directed Taas to keep the arrest of the four suspects under wraps as Murillo had not yet been released.

Taas turned over custody of the four suspects to PACER in Camp Crame. The STAR gathered that the suspects still at large were also worried that four of their companions have gone missing. They did not know that their four companions had been arrested.

"The kidnapers' negotiators asked the victim's family, at the height of their negotiation to lower the ransom to P5 million, whether they reported the case to the police as their four companions failed to coordinate with them anymore," a police investigator told The STAR.

The police witnessed the payoff push through yesterday but waited until Murillo was released before going after the remaining kidnapers.

The STAR source said two other suspects were arrested in their safehouse in Blumentritt, Manila. PACER agents were dispatched to a number of safehouses of the Ilonggo group in Metro Manila and the provinces to get other gang members.

The STAR source refused to release the names of the six arrested suspects as they are scheduled to be presented before the media by Philippine National Police chief Director General Avelino Razon Jr., either today or on Monday.

Murillo's kidnapping was the hot topic in coffee shops at the Chinatown district in Manila yesterday.