‘Fight goes on’

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Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales waits to be called to the witness stand during Day 38 of the impeachment trial of Chief Justice Renato Corona on Tuesday. POOL PHOTO CHIEF Justice Renato Corona on Tuesday vowed to continue his fight for truth until the end and said he would not resign over allegations made by the Ombudsman that he maintained 82 dollar accounts in several banks.
After a mass and octave novena organized by Supreme Court employees and Marian devotees at noon yesterday, Corona said that the testimony of Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales will not make him quit his post.

“Tuloy ang laban! [The fight goes on!]” the Chief Justice said.
Hours after Morales made a Powerpoint presentation at the Senate detailing the alleged dollar deposits and transactions made by the chief magistrate, Corona issued a statement branding the Ombudsman’s testimony a “lantern of lies.”

Corona described Carpio-Morales’ testimony as “unfortunate, if not very malicious.”

“I don’t know how she came up with her own mathematical equation. She made a hodgepodge out of the accounts, making her numbers chaotic.”

The Chief Justice said that the number of dollar accounts alone was “at best ridiculous.”

The Chief Justice also vowed to debunk the bloated numbers presented by the Ombudsman when he testifies in his own impeachment trial.

Corona said that Morales, an appointee of President Benigno Aquino 3rd, should resign “for allowing herself to be used by this administration and making a laughingstock of ‘government auditing.’”

Morales is a cousin of Corona’s mortal enemy at the Supreme Court, Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio.

Tranquil Salvador, one of Corona’s lawyers, also laughed off reports that Corona is resigning.

Karen Jimeno, another defense counsel and spokesman, said that Corona will fight to the end.

“Sa dami ng issue na lumutang ay walang dahilan para ngayon pa siya umatras sa laban [After all the issues that have come out, there is no reason why he should give up the fight now],” she said.

SC spokesman Jose Midas Marquez said that he was not sure if the dollar accounts covered by the temporary restraining order (TRO) issued by the Supreme Court were among the deposits enumerated by the Ombudsman in her Senate testimony.

“The TRO is directed to PSBank. If there’s a violation, let that be brought to the attention of the court,” Marquez said.

“Di ko alam kung may paglabag [I don’t know if there has been a violation.] I don’t think I should venture an opinion in that issue. It should be the defense who should raise that. Or if there are other parties, it should be raised before the court and let the court decide on that.”

AMLC should explain
Sen. Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel 3rd on Tuesday asked the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) to explain its report on the purported dollar accounts of the Chief Justice that was the basis of the Ombudsman’s testimony.

Pimentel said that there is a need for the AMLC to explain its report since the material is relevant to the impeachment case against the chief Justice.

Yesterday, Morales testified that the 17-page report on the dollar accounts of Corona was delivered to her office by AMLC Executive Director Vic Aquino.

She earlier told the court that she acquired information from AMLC indicating that Corona had at least $10 million in transactional balances and $12 million in fresh deposits in 82 accounts in five banks.

AMLC is composed of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) governor, the Insurance commissioner, and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) chairman.

According to defense spokesman Rico Quicho, Aquino had denied that AMLC conducted a separate investigation

against Corona.

Meanwhile, Sen. Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. questioned the way Morales acquired information about Corona’s purported dollar accounts and why she was allowed to release it.

He said that based on the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA), there should be a predicate crime before an investigation can be conducted against a public official and that a court order is necessary before its publication.

“These are questions that we need to ask . . . if you look very strictly at the procedure that is laid out in the law, this is not what was followed,” he added.

But Sen. Franklin Drilon said that the manner the Ombudsman acquired the information does not matter since her office has the power to open the records of any government official.

He also stressed that Corona’s SALN has a waiver which authorizes the Ombudsman to look into all government records to check whether he declared all his assets in his SALN properly.