

Philippine Senator Marcoleta Arrested in Plunder Case



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Philippine Senator Rodante Marcoleta was arrested on Monday morning after a court issued a warrant in a plunder case, according to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

The warrant was issued the same day by the Third Division of the Sandiganbayan, the country's anti-graft court. The Office of the Ombudsman filed the case on Friday, alleging Marcoleta received about 75 million pesos (over 1.2 million U.S. dollars) in undeclared campaign donations while serving as a congressman. The funds were not declared in required election and government disclosures.

In the days before the arrest, thousands of supporters gathered in Manila after the Ombudsman announced it would pursue the case. Police estimated the crowd reached around 15,000 at its peak during demonstrations from Tuesday to Thursday.

Local media reported Marcoleta is an ally of Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte. He has claimed the case is politically motivated and aimed at preventing his participation in Duterte's impeachment proceedings in the Senate, set to begin Monday afternoon.

The Senate has 24 members. Senator Jinggoy Estrada recently surrendered in a separate graft case and was suspended by the Sandiganbayan. Senator Ronald Dela Rosa is a fugitive wanted by the International Criminal Court, with his whereabouts unknown.