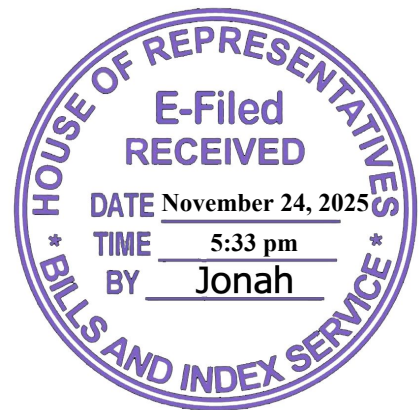




Republic of the Philippines  
**House of Representatives**  
Quezon City

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 6344**



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*Introduced by: Rep. Esmael G. Mangudadatu*

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### **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The PNP Forensic Group's scene of the crime operation (SOCO) teams are a critical part of any criminal investigation process in the Philippines. They respond to crime scenes upon the request of the local chief of police or investigator-on-case for specific functions such as but not limited to crime scene preservation, documentation, evidence collection, sketching, and forensic liaison. Presently, SOCO teams is organized in the regional and provincial levels with some highly urbanized cities having a dedicated SOCO team.

Among the challenges confronting forensic investigations in the Philippines, hurdles such as the lack of resources, understaffing, evidence or crime scene contamination due to poor crime scene management, bureaucratic issues, and technical gaps are the most recurring; thus hindering effective evidence processing that lead to case delays and the undermining of justice. This challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that the Philippines lies in the tropics wherein the weather condition can compromise the preservation of crime scene evidences aside from other factors such as crime scene contamination due to the carelessness of first responders or the curious public.

Given that SOCO teams are organized in the regional and provincial levels, it takes hours if not days before a responding SOCO team arrives in a crime scene, especially in sprawling provinces or non-contiguous regions such as BARMM and those of the Visayas. As such, the preserving the integrity of the crime scene and evidences gathered therein is such a challenge that many cases get dismissed not because of innocence but due to technicalities.

To make this reality more complicated, families of Muslim victims of violent crimes cannot wait for SOCO teams to arrive and take evidences before taking their deceased kin for body preparation and burial in Muslim rites as it is their practice in accordance to their faith to immediately bury their deceased kin. It is therefore of little wonder as to why most violent crimes involving a Muslim victim takes long years before finding justice and/or resolution, if not remaining unsolved and being forgotten with time.

It is for the above-mentioned reasons that this representation files this bill that seeks for the establishment of SOCO teams in all cities and municipalities as a SOCO team for every city or municipality can translate to a much quicker response to crime scenes, which can further result to a more efficient and effective dispensation of justice to aggrieved families. Just as efficient and effective law enforcement and administration of justice are bane to the proliferation of crimes and impunity, so, too, are they the boon for safe spaces and well-thriving communities that we hope to have for the coming generations.

  
**ESMAEL G. MANGUDADATU**



Republic of the Philippines  
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TWENTIETH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6344

AN ACT

EXPANDING THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE FORENSICS GROUP THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CRIME LABORATORIES IN ALL PROVINCES AND SCENE OF THE CRIME OPERATIONS (SOCO) TEAMS IN ALL CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREOF, AND AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE SECTION 35(a)(1) OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1990"

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*Introduced by: Rep. Esmael G. Mangudadatu*

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*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled, THAT:*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.** This Act shall be known and hereinafter be referred to as the "Expanded PNP Forensics Group Act."

**SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY.** It is hereby declared the policy of the State to maintain peace and order, ensure public safety, and be the citizen's trusted pillar in the delivery of justice through the establishment of a highly efficient, effective, competent, and expanded law enforcement and administration of justice. It also reaffirms its commitment to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the promotion of the highest standards of fairness, humanity, and professional conduct.

**SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 35 (a) (1) of R.A. No. 6975 is hereby amended to read as follows:

*(a) Administrative Support Units. – (1) Crime Laboratory. There shall be established a central Crime Laboratory to be headed by a Director with the rank of chief superintendent, which shall provide scientific and technical investigative aid and support to the PNP and other government investigative agencies.*

*It shall also provide crime laboratory examination, evaluation and identification of physical evidences involved in crimes with primary emphasis on their medical, chemical, biological and physical nature.*

*There shall be likewise be established regional, city, and provincial crime laboratories as may be necessary in all regions, cities, and provinces of the country.*

*A scene of the crime operations (SOCO) team shall be established in all cities and municipalities of the country.*

**SECTION 4. CRIME LABORATORIES.** Provinces posting high crime indices shall be given priority in the establishment of provincial crime laboratories.

Staffing and staffing pattern as well as the operational standards, procedures, protocols, rules and regulations shall be governed by the National Police Commission's issuances and memoranda as well as by existing civil service laws and regulations, when applicable.

**SECTION 5. SCENE OF THE CRIME OPERATIONS (SOCO) TEAMS.** Municipal or city SOCO teams shall be composed of at least four (4) personnel that are trained in the functions that they are assigned to in the documentation and collection of evidences in crime scenes.

Cities and municipalities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao as well as other cities and municipalities that are posting high crime indices or delicate peace and order situation shall be prioritized in the establishment of city or municipal SOCO teams.

Staffing and staffing pattern as well as the operational standards, procedures, protocols, rules and regulations shall be governed by the National Police Commission's issuances and memoranda as well as by existing civil service laws and regulations, when applicable.

**SECTION 6. TRANSITORY PROVISION.** In case of insufficiency of qualified personnel to form municipal or city SOCO teams, existing municipal and city investigators and other municipal or city police personnel who have gained at least three years of experiences in evidence collection, documentation, and handling shall be tapped in the formation of SOCO teams in their respective area of assignment. However, they must still undergo the prescribed training and other requirements for SOCO operatives.

**SECTION 7. FUNDING.** The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act is to be appropriated in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

**SECTION 8. IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS.** Within sixty (60) calendar days from its approval, the the Department of Interior and Local Government and National Police Commission, in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management in terms of pecuniary matters, shall promulgate rules and regulation for the effective implementation of this Act.

**SECTION 9. REPEALING CLAUSE.** All laws, rules, and regulations contrary to the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

**SECTION 10. EFFECTIVITY.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

*APPROVED.*