

# Court orders forfeiture of Bugarin properties

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The Sandiganbayan Third Division has ordered the confiscation by the government of eight real estate properties owned by the former head of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) during the administration of the late president Ferdinand Marcos. The court issued a writ of execution on Thursday directing court Sheriff Edgardo Urieta to effect the forfeiture of the properties of former NBI chief Jolly Bugarin.

The court's decision was based on a 2002 Supreme Court verdict that declared Bugarin's assets ill-gotten. The graft court also directed Urieta to coordinate with the Register of Deeds to immediately transfer the titles of the ill-gotten assets in favor of the government. Covered by the confiscation order were nine residential lots in Tagaytay City, two house and lots in Greenhills, San Juan, a residential lot in Capitol District, Quezon City, two residential lots in Valle Verde, Pasig City, the Orchard and Cocoland in Puerto Calera, Oriental Mindoro, and a residential lot in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro. Also to be forfeited in favor of the State were Bugarin's shares in the Makati Sports Club and the Manila Polo Club, which he acquired in 1975 and 1978, respectively.

The graft court noted that several of the properties have been transferred to the names of Bugarin's relatives after his death. It, however, insisted that the right of the State to recover ill gotten assets should be given primacy because it is a higher right. In 1991, the government almost lost the Bugarin case when the Sandiganbayan dismissed the lawsuit against the former NBI chief after the latter presented several documents proving his sources of income. The Presidential Commission on Good Government elevated the case to the Supreme Court en banc which overturned the Sandiganbayan decision, voting 8-2 with five abstentions. The SC noted

that among the sources of income submitted by Bugarin were rentals from his houses in Makati, Pasig and San Juan but these were for the years 1981 to 1986.

The forfeited properties were acquired between 1968 and 1980, the court said, and pointed out that the house rentals could not have been part of the funds used in the purchase. In fact, it said that Bugarin's disposable funds between 1968 and 1980 only amounted to P766,548 but he acquired real estate properties and made investments with a total worth of P2.170 million.

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