



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Baguio City

EN BANC

COBALT RESOURCES, INC.,
Complainant,

A.C. No. 10781
[Formerly CBD Case No. 10-2764]

SERENO, C.J.,
CARPIO,
VELASCO, JR.,
LEONARDO-DE CASTRO,
BRION,
PERALTA,*
BERSAMIN,
DEL CASTILLO,
PEREZ,
MENDOZA,
REYES,
PERLAS-BERNABE,
LEONEN,
JARDELEZA, and
CAGUIOA, JJ.

- versus -

ATTY. RONALD AGUADO,
Respondent.

Promulgated:

April 12, 2016

X -----X

DECISION

Per Curiam:

This is an administrative complaint for disbarment filed by Cobalt Resources, Inc. (CRI) against respondent Atty. Ronald C. Aguado (Atty. Aguado) before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) for violation of Rules 1.01 and 1.02 of the Code of Professional Responsibility and the lawyer's oath.

* On leave.

The Antecedents

In its Complaint,¹ CRI alleged that on March 5, 2010, a group of armed men, clad in vests bearing the mark “PASG” and pretending to be agents of the Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group (*PASG*), hi-jacked its delivery van which was then loaded with cellular phones worth ₱1.3 million; that Dennis Balmaceda (*Balmaceda*), the driver of the delivery van, and his companions were all forcibly taken away at gun point and were dropped at the Country Hill and Golf Club; that Balmaceda called Antonio Angeles (*Angeles*), the Security Director of CRI, who immediately reported the incident to the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation Detection Unit (*PNP-CIDU*); that with the use of Global Positioning Satellite (*GPS*) Tracking Device installed in the cellular phones, Angeles and the PNP-CIDU tracked down the location of the cellular phones to be in front of Pegasus Bar along Quezon Avenue, Quezon City; that the PNP-CIDU, together with Angeles proceeded to Pegasus Bar and found three (3) vehicles parked in front of the bar: (1) Toyota Fortuner with Plate No. UNO-68 owned by Atty. Aguado, (2) Chevrolet Optra with Plate No. ZDW-764 and (3) a motorcycle with Plate No. NK-1180; that when the PNP-CIDU approached the vehicles, Anthony Palmes (*Palmes*) ran but he was chased by the police officers and was arrested; that Atty. Aguado who was then standing in the reception area of Pegasus Bar was not arrested as none of the police officers knew, at that time, of his participation in the crime; that the PNP-CIDU searched the vehicles and found the cellular phones, the Identification Card (*ID*) showing Atty. Aguado as Legal Consultant of the PASG, the Mission Order identifying Atty. Aguado as the Assistant Team Leader, and a vest bearing the mark PASG.

CRI further averred that the men who hijacked its delivery van used the fake mission order when it flagged down the delivery van; that the mission order identified Atty. Aguado as the assistant team leader and authorized the armed men to seize CRI’s cellular phones; that the PASG issued a certification stating that the mission order was fake; that Atty. Aguado carried an ID bearing his picture and name which showed that he was a PASG legal consultant; and that this ID was likewise fake as evidenced by a certification issued by the PASG.

Based on the *Sinumpaang Salaysay*,² dated September 8, 2010, executed by Palmes, CRI concluded that it was Atty. Aguado who prepared the fake mission order and masterminded the crime as he was the one who

¹ *Rollo*, pp. 28-32.

² *Id.* at 39-42.

conceived it and laid down the nitty-gritty details of its execution; and that it was he who recruited the armed men who actually executed the hijacking.

Eventually, two separate Informations for Robbery³ and Carnapping⁴ were filed against Atty. Aguado and several others.

The IBP directed Atty. Aguado to submit his answer but, despite several extensions, he failed to do so.

The IBP then set the case for mandatory conference.

In his Conference Brief,⁵ Atty. Aguado denied the allegations. He averred that “on March 5, 2010, at about 11:00 to 12:00 in the afternoon,”⁶ his Toyota Fortuner with Plate No. UNO-68 was carnapped along Scout Mandarin while in the custody of his driver; that he reported the incident to the police authorities; that on March 7, 2010, he was awakened by relatives informing him that his name was on the front page of several tabloids in a story connecting him to the alleged hijacking; and that he was indicted in the case because of the ID found hanging in his carnapped vehicle.

In its Report and Recommendation,⁷ dated May 3, 2011, the IBP-Commission on Bar Discipline (*CBD*) found Atty. Aguado liable for unlawful, dishonest, immoral, and deceitful conduct in falsifying the ID and mission order showing him as the Legal Consultant and the Assistant Team Leader, respectively, of the PASG. The IBP-CBD recommended that he be suspended for two (2) years. It, however, deferred the issue of Atty. Aguado’s purported participation in the alleged hijacking incident as the issue pertained to a judicial function.

On March 20, 2013, the IBP Board of Governors adopted and approved the report of the CBD, as follows:

RESOLVED to ADOPT and APPROVE, as it is hereby unanimously ADOPTED and APPROVED, the Report and Recommendation of the Investigating Commissioner in the above-entitled case, herein made part of this Resolution as Annex “A”, and finding the recommendation fully supported by the evidence on record and the applicable laws and rules and considering that

³ Id. at 435-436.

⁴ Id. at 437-438.

⁵ Id. at 70-72.

⁶ Id. at 70.

⁷ Id. at 315-318.

Respondent committed unlawful, dishonest, immoral and deceitful conduct by falsifying the ID and Mission Order, Atty. Ronaldo Aguado is hereby **SUSPENDED from the practice of law for two (2) years.**⁸

Not satisfied, CRI filed a motion for reconsideration⁹ praying that the May 3, 2011 report of the IBP-CBD be set aside and that a new resolution ordering the disbarment of Atty. Aguado be issued. CRI claimed that Atty. Aguado deserved the ultimate penalty of disbarment as the falsification of public documents was sufficiently established and, as the CBD knew, he masterminded the hijacking using his profession to commit the crime.

On July 25, 2013, Atty. Aguado also filed a motion for reconsideration¹⁰ of the March 20, 2013 Resolution praying that it be set aside and a new one be issued dismissing the complaint. He averred that the charges of usurpation of authority and falsification filed against him had been dismissed by the Office of the City Prosecutor of Quezon City; that he could not be presumed to be the author of the falsification because he was never in possession of the falsified ID and mission order; and that he never used, took advantage or profit therefrom. Atty. Aguado asserted that this case should, at the very least, be suspended pending the resolution of the robbery and carnapping charges against him.

In a Resolution,¹¹ dated September 27, 2014, the IBP Board of Governors denied both motions and affirmed its March 20, 2013 Resolution.

Pursuant to Section 12(c), Rule 139-B of the Rules of Court, CRI filed a petition for review¹² before the Court. CRI was firm in its stand that Atty. Aguado be meted out the penalty of disbarment for his falsification of a PASG mission order and ID and for his involvement in the hijacking of the CIR delivery van and its cargo.

Similarly, Atty. Aguado filed a petition for review insisting on his innocence and praying for the dismissal of the complaint.

The Court's Ruling

The Court finds merit in the petition of CRI.

⁸ Id. at 314.

⁹ Id. at 211-216.

¹⁰ Id. at 218-223.

¹¹ Id. at 363.

¹² Id. at 291-304.

It must be emphasized that a disbarment proceeding, being administrative in nature, is separate and distinct from a criminal action filed against a lawyer and they may proceed independently of each other.¹³ A finding of guilt in the criminal case does not necessarily mean a finding of liability in the administrative case.¹⁴ In the same way, the dismissal of a criminal case on the ground of insufficiency of evidence against an accused, who is also a respondent in an administrative case, does not necessarily exculpate him administratively because the quantum of evidence required is different. In criminal cases, proof beyond reasonable doubt is required.¹⁵ “In administrative cases for disbarment or suspension against lawyers, the quantum of proof required is clearly preponderant evidence and the burden of proof rests upon the complainant.”¹⁶ Preponderance of evidence means “evidence which is more convincing to the court as worthy of belief than that which is offered in opposition thereto.”¹⁷

Clearly, Atty. Aguado committed the act complained of as it was established that he was in possession of a falsified ID showing him as a legal consultant of the PASG and mission order identifying him as the Assistant Team Leader of the anti-smuggling operation. Although Atty. Aguado claimed in his Conference Brief that he was indicted merely on the basis of an ID found hanging in his carnapped Toyota Fortuner,¹⁸ his counsel, Atty. Letecia Amon (*Atty. Amon*), during the mandatory conference held on February 25, 2011, acknowledged that the ID and *mission order* were found in the Toyota Fortuner owned by Atty. Aguado, thus:

ATTY. HARON:

Is she willing to admit that respondent is the same person referred to in the document called mission order marked as Annex “F” issued by the PASG.

ATTY. AMON:

I have no exact knowledge on that, Your Honor.

ATTY. HARON:

I’m showing counsel for respondent with a copy of a mission order marked as Annex “F”

¹³ *Yu v. Palaña*, 580 Phil. 19, 26 (2008).

¹⁴ *Bengco v. Bernardo*, 687 Phil. 7, 17 (2012).

¹⁵ *Jimenez v. Jimenez*, 517 Phil. 68 (2006).

¹⁶ *Spouses Amatorio v. Yap*, A.C. No. 5914, March 11, 2015, quoting *Cruz v. Centron*, 484 Phil. 671, 675 (2004)

¹⁷ *Aba v. De Guzman, Jr.*, 678 Phil. 588, 601 (2011).

¹⁸ Conference Brief, *rollo*, p. 71.

COMM. CACHAPERO:

Machine copy.

ATTY. HARON:

This is the copy.

COMM. CACHAPERO:

Take a look, is that a machine copy?

ATTY. HARON:

Yes, Your Honor. Annex "F" states that Atty. Ronald C. Aguado is the assistant team leader of the team by mission order.

COMM. CACHAPERO:

He is only asking, the respondent is the one who owns that document. He is not yet asking whether that document is authentic or not.

ATTY. AMON:

Yes, Your Honor, as written here.

COMM. CACHAPERO:

Yes, he is the one.

ATTY. HARON:

Would the respondent also like to admit that the identification card and the mission order were found inside his Toyota Fortuner, Plate No. UNO-68.

ATTY. AMON:

Of which he is the owner, yes.

ATTY. HARON:

Admitted also, Your Honor.

ATTY. HARON:

Would the respondent also like to admit the certifications Annexes "G" and "H" issued by the PASG are genuine and duly executed. I'm showing counsel copies of the certifications, Your Honor, marked as Annexes "G" and "H" which bears the seal of that office, Your Honor.

COMM. CACHAPERO:

What is your proposal Atty. Haron?

x x x.¹⁹ [Emphasis supplied]

Moreover, the *Sinumpaang Salaysay*²⁰ of Palmes explicitly described Atty. Aguado's participation in the crime as follows:

xxx

2. Alam ko kung sinu-sino ang mga taong kasama sa pagplano at pagsasagawa ng nasabing 'hijacking'. Bagamat may partisipasyon ako sa krimen, hindi ko alam na ang gagawing paghuli sa mga nasabing cellphone ay labag sa batas dahil ako ay pinaniwala na ang gagawin naming paghuli sa mga cellphone ng Cobalt ay isang lehitimong operasyon ng PASG.

3. Bago pa man naganap ang nasabing hijacking ay dati akong empleyado ng Cobalt na nakatalaga sa Delivery Section/Pull Out Service. Ngunit hindi nagtagal ay nag-resign ako.

4. Noong ikalawang lingo ng Pebrero, nilapitan ako ni Jaime "James" Abedes at sinabi sa akin ng kung pwede ay i-monitor ko daw ang ruta ng delivery van ng Cobalt at ako ay bibgyan niya ng "budget" upang ang kanyang grupo ay makapagsagawa ng 'seizure operations.'

5. Noong una ay nag-alangan akong sumangayon sa mungkahi ni James ngunit ako ay pinapanatag niya na lahat ng dokumento at papeles ay kumpleto. Sabi pa ni James, "Si Atty. Aguado ang magbibigay ng complete documents at Mission Order dahil naka-direkta siya sa PASG Malacañang para ma-flag down ang delivery van".

6. Ako ay naniwala sa kanyang sinabi dahil sa pagbanggit niya na may kasama kaming abogado. Dahil dito ay pumayag ako sa mungkahi ni James.

7. Kinabukasan ay nagkita kami ni James sa Caltex Pioneer corner Shaw Boulevard. Nalaman ko kay James na may hawak siyang Security Guard doon. Pinakilala niya ako kay Eliseo De Rosas alias Nonoy na isa ring tauhan ni James. Siya ay may gamit na Honda na motorsiklo na kulay berde na may plakang 1180 NK. Noong araw din na iyon ay nagtungo kami sa Brixton Street upang i-monitor ang warehouse ng Cobalt dahil may warehouse ang Cobalt sa Brixton Street.

¹⁹ Transcript of Stenographic Notes, dated February 25, 2011. *Rollo*, pp. 162-164.

²⁰ *Id.* at 39-42.

8. Pagkatapos naming pumunta sa Brixton Street ay nagtungo naman kami sa P. Tuazon Street kung saan may mga clients ang Cobalt, at doon naming nakita ang delivery van na Mitsubishi L-300 ng Cobalt.

9. Sinimulan namin ni Nonoy ang pagmonitor ng ruta ng delivery van ng Cobalt. Sa aming ginawang pag-monitor ay napansin naming madalas magpakarga ng gas ang nasabing delivery van sa Petron Station sa Ortigas Avenue corner B. Serrano Street. Isang lingo kaming nag-monitor ni Nonoy sa ruta ng Cobalt.

Ipinaalam naming kay James ang nakakalap naming impormasyon. Noong natiyak naming ang ruta ng delivery van ay nagpaschedule si James ng 'meeting' kay Atty. Aguado.

10. Ika-22 ng Pebrero 2010 alas-6 ng gabi sa McDonald's Quezon Avenue ay nag meeting kami. Ang mga kasama sa meeting ay si James, Atty. Aguado, Joe Almonte, at Nonoy. Noong kami ay nandoon ay lumipat ng lamesa si Atty. Aguado, James at Joe Almonte at sila ay nagusap.

11. Pagkatapos ng usapan nila ay pumunta sa amin si James at sinabi sa amin kung ano ang kanilang napagusapan. Sinabi sa amin ni James na mag-iisue daw ng Mission Order si Atty. Aguado. Si Atty. Aguado na rin daw ang magbubuo ng grupo ng mga lalake upang i-flag down ang delivery van ng Cobalt.

12. Noong ika-25 ng Pebrero 2010 alas 7 ng gabi, ay muli kaming nagkita nila James, Nonoy at Joe Almonte sa McDonald's Quezon Avenue. Pagsapit ng alas-8 ng gabi ay tumawag si Atty. Aguado na nasa Starbucks Cafe sa Tomas Morato Avenue daw siya naka-puwesto. Kaya't kaming apat ay sumunod sa Starbucks. Pagdating naming sa Starbucks ay nandoon nga si Atty. Aguado at may kasama siyang isang pulis.

13. Hindi nagtagal ay umalis sila Atty. Aguado at James sakay ng Toyota Fortuner na may plakang UNO-68. Sinabi sa amin ni James na sila ay magsasagawa ng "ocular" ng lugar kung saan gagawin ang pag-flag down ng delivery van. Nang sila ay magbalik, kami ay sinabihan na gagawin namin ang operasyon sa umaga ng kinabukasan (ika-26 ng Pebrero, Biernes).

Ayon pa sa kanila, ako raw ay pupuwesto sa Petron Station sa may Boni Serrano corner Ortigas Avenue ng alas-8 ng umaga upang doon abangan ang pagdaan ng delivery van. Samantalang, ang mga taong magsasagawa ng pag flag down (pawang mga tao ni Atty. Aguado) ay pupuwesto na rin sa may Benitez Street. Kapag nakita ko na raw ang delivery van ay agad akong tumawag kay James upang ipagbigay alam ang pagdaan nito at i-alert ang mga nasabing mga lalake, pagkatapos ay tumungo raw ako sa Benitez Street upang siguraduhin na tama ang delivery van na ipa-flag-down.

Pagkatapos ng meeting ng gabi na iyon ay isa-isa na kaming nagsi-uwian.

14. Kaya't kinabukasan, ika-26 ng Pebrero, alas-8 ng umaga ay nagtungo ako sa nasabing Petron Station. Ngunit tumawag si James na hindi raw matutuloy ang operation dahil kulang sa tao si Atty. Aguado.

15. Kami (ako, Joe Almonte at Nonoy) ay muling pinulong ni James sa McDonald's Quezon Avenue noong ika-1 ng Marso alas-7 ng gabi. Bandang alas-8 ng gabi ay dumating na rin si Atty. Aguado. Sila Atty. Aguado, James at Joe Almonte [ay] nag-usap sa labas ng Smoking Area samantalang kami ni Nonoy ay nanatili sa loob.

16. Nang matapos ang usapan ay sinabi sa amin ni James na nag-set ulit ng operation si Atty. Aguado kinabukasan, ika-2 ng Marso, Martes, ngunit hintayin daw naming ang feedback mula kay Atty. Aguado dahil kelangan daw ng gamit ang mga tao ni Atty. Aguado.

17. Muli akong nagtungo kinabukasan, ika-2 ng Marso, alas-8 ng umaga, ngunit maya-maya lamang ay tumawag sa akin si James at sinabi niya sa akin na hindi na naman daw tuloy ang operation dahil hindi nakakuha ng gamit ang mga tao ni Atty. Aguado.

Sa puntong ito ay sinabi ko na kay James na sana sigurado ang mga papeles ni Atty. Aguado dahil ayaw ko ng illegal na trabaho. Sinabi naman sa akin ni James na kumpleto naman daw ang mga papeles at legal ang gagawing operation.

18. Ika-4 ng Marso 2010, ay tumawag sa akin si James at sinabi niya sa akin na tuloy na daw ang operation kinabukasan (ika-5 ng Marso). Sinabi rin niya sa akin na alas-8 ng umaga ay kailangan daw na naka-puwesto na ako sa Petron Station.

19. Kaya noong ika-5 ng Marso 2010, alas-8 ng umaga, ako ay pumuwesto na sa Petron Gasoline Station sa Boni Serrano corner Ortigas Avenue sakay ng isang motorsiklo. Bandang alas-8:30 ng umaga ay dumating naman si James sakay ng isang Chevrolet na may plakang ZDW 764 at may kasama pa siya na pinakilala sa aking "Larry."

Bandang alas-9 ng umaga ay dumating ang Toyota Fortuner ni Atty. Aguado. Nakita ko na sakay ng nasabing Toyota Fortuner si Atty. Aguado at Joe Almonte. Hindi sila bumaba bagkus ay nagpakarga lamang ito ng gasolina sa nasabing Petron Station. Hindi nagtagal ay umalis na rin sila. Sumunod namang umalis si James at Larry sakay ng Chevrolet.

20. Bandang alas-9:30 ng umaga, nakita ko na dumating ang delivery van ng Cobalt sa Petron upang ito ay magpakarga ng gasolina. Tumawag ako kay James gamit ang aking cellphone at sinabi ko, "*Nandito na ang delivery van na white, may plakang NKQ 734.*" Sumagot si James, "*ok nakapuwesto na kami. Andito na kami sa area.*"

21. Agad akong umalis patungo sa Benitez Street upang abangan ang pagdaan ng delivery van upang ma-flag down ito. Gamit ang aking motorsiklo, ako ay dali-daling nagtungo sa Benitez Street.

Pagdating ko doon ay nakita ko ang nasabing Chevrolet ni James at isang L-300 van na kulay blue-green na may plakang DFN-733. Nadatnan ko rin ang tatlong lalake na pawang armado at nakasuot ng tsalekong may tatak na PASG at nag-aabang sa gilid ng daan. Mayroon din akong napansin na nakasakay sa loob ng nasabing blue-green na L-300 van ngunit hindi ko na nabilang ang dami nila.

22. Ako ay pumunta sa Chevrolet (driver side), at binuksan naman ni James ang bintana nito. Sinabi ko ulit sa kanya na parating na ang delivery van. Sumagot siya, "*Sige. Timbrehan mo lang sila pag malapit na. Hintayin mo relay kung saan ka susunod.*" Pagkatapos noon ay umalis na sila.

23. Pagkaalis nila, kami at nang tatlong nasabing lalake ay nag-abang sa pagdaan ng delivery van. Nang makita ko itong paparating, agad kong sinabi "*approaching na. yang puti, yang puti.*" Pagkatapos noon ay agad pinara ng isa sa mga nasabing lalakeng nakasumbrero ang delivery van. Sumenyas ito sa driver ng delivery van na itabi ito sa gilid. Pilit binuksan ng tatlong lalake ang magkabilang pintuan ng delivery van at nang mabuksan ang mga nasabing pintuan ay agad hinila palabas ang tatlo nitong pahinante at agad silang pinosasan.

x x x x

From the foregoing, it can be clearly deduced that Atty. Aguado had participation in the crime as charged in the complaint, from the planning stage up to its execution. These falsified documents found in his possession, as certified found in his possession, as certified as evidenced by the PASG, were used to facilitate the commission of the crime. The well-settled rule is that "in the absence of satisfactory explanation, one found in possession of and who used a forged document is the forger and therefore guilty of falsification."²¹ Atty. Aguado failed to rebut the allegations. Other than the police blotter showing that he reported the carnapping of his vehicle, Atty. Aguado presented no other convincing evidence to support his denial of the crime. He also failed to show any ill motive on the part of Palmes in testifying against him whom he claimed to have met only in February 2010.

²¹ *Rural Bank of Silay, Inc. v. Pilla*, 403 Phil. 1, 9 (2001).

Moreover, his story of the carnapping of his Fortuner cannot be given credence considering his inconsistent statements on the matter. In this regard, the Court quotes a portion of the Report and Recommendation of Commissioner Oliver Cachapero. Thus:

He, too, blabbered about the supposed carnapping of his Fortuner car on the same day the hijacking was staged by supposed PASG personnel suggesting that he was a victim and not a perpetrator. However, his allegations in this regard is put in serious doubt. In the QC PD alarm sheet, Respondent reported that the carnapping took place at 2:30 of March 5, 2010 while in his sworn statement, he claimed that his car was carnapped at 4:31 p.m. the precise time the supposed carnapping was staged is too vital that Respondent could not have overlooked the same in his narration of facts in his counter-affidavit or in his statement before the police authorities especially because he supposedly reported the incident on the very same day it happened. But as correctly observed by the Complainant, even if the report on the time of the carnapping incident would have been properly made, the hijacking took place much earlier and therefore the same does not negate the commission of the crime by the Respondent. Also, the reporting did not prove the fact of carnapping especially where, as in this case, no eyewitness account was presented, no suspect apprehended, and no criminal case was filed.²²

The Canon 1 of the Code of Professional Responsibility (CPR) explicitly mandates:

Rule 1.01 - A lawyer shall not engage in unlawful, dishonest, immoral or deceitful conduct.

Rule 1.02 - A lawyer shall not counsel or abet activities aimed at defiance of the law or at lessening confidence in the legal system.

It must be emphasized that a membership in the Bar is a privilege laden with conditions,²³ and granted only to those who possess the strict intellectual and moral qualifications required of lawyers as instruments in the effective and efficient administration of justice.²⁴ As officers of the courts and keepers of the public's faith, lawyers are burdened with the highest degree of social responsibility and so mandated to behave at all times in a manner consistent with truth and honor.²⁵ They are expected to

²² *Rollo*, pp. 7-8.

²³ *Sebastian v. Atty. Calis*, 372 Phil. 673, 680 (1999).

²⁴ *Re: Petition of Al Argosino To Take The Lawyer's Oath*, 336 Phil. 766, 769 (1997).

²⁵ *Agno v. Atty. Cagatan*, 580 Phil. 1, 17 (2008).

maintain not only legal proficiency but also this high standard of morality, honesty, integrity and fair dealing.²⁶

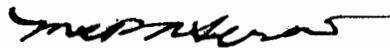
Atty. Aguado has committed acts that showed he was unfit and unable to faithfully discharge his bounden duties as a member of the legal profession. Because he failed to live up to the exacting standards demanded of him, he proved himself unworthy of the privilege to practice law. As vanguards of our legal system, lawyers, are expected at all times to uphold the integrity and dignity of the legal profession and to refrain from any act or omission which might diminish the trust and confidence reposed by the public in the integrity of the legal profession.²⁷

In several cases, the Court, after finding the lawyer guilty of gross dishonesty, imposed the supreme penalty of disbarment for engaging in unlawful, dishonest, and deceitful acts by falsifying documents. In *Brennisen v. Atty. Contawi*,²⁸ the Court disbarred the lawyer when he falsified a special power of attorney so he could mortgage and sell his client's property. In *Embido v. Atty. Pe, Jr.*,²⁹ the penalty of disbarment was meted out against the lawyer who authored the falsification of an inexistent court decision.

WHEREFORE, Atty. Ronald C. Aguado is **DISBARRED** for gross misconduct and violation of Rules 1.01 and 1.02 of the Code of Professional Responsibility, and his name is ordered **STRICKEN OFF** the roll of attorneys.

Let copies of this decision be furnished the Office of the Bar Confidant to be made part of his personal records; the Integrated Bar of the Philippines; and the Office of the Court Administrator for circulation to all courts.

SO ORDERED.



MARIA LOURDES P. A. SERENO
Chief Justice

²⁶ *Yu v. Atty. Palaña*, supra note 13, at 24.

²⁷ *Heirs of Alilano v. Examen*, A.C. No. 10132, March 24, 2015.

²⁸ 686 Phil. 342 (2012).

²⁹ A.C. No. 6732, October 22, 2013, 708 SCRA 1.



ANTONIO T. CARPIO
Associate Justice



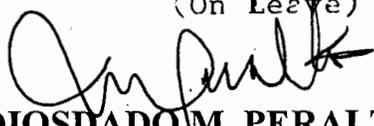
PRESBITERO J. VELASCO, JR.
Associate Justice

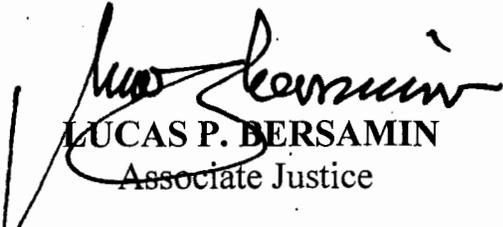


TERESITA J. LEONARDO-DE CASTRO
Associate Justice



ARTURO D. BRION
Associate Justice

(On Leave)

DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
Associate Justice



LUCAS P. BERSAMIN
Associate Justice



MARIANO C. DEL CASTILLO
Associate Justice



JOSE PORTUGAL PEREZ
Associate Justice



JOSE CATRAL MENDOZA
Associate Justice



BIENVENIDO L. REYES
Associate Justice



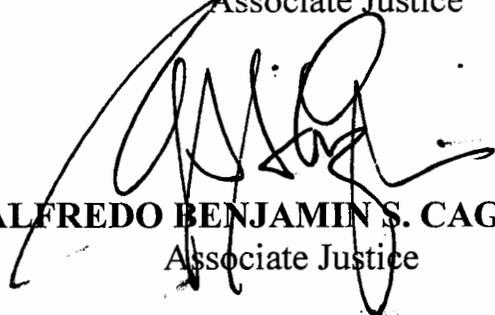
ESTELA M. BERLAS-BERNABE
Associate Justice



MARVIC M.V. F. LEONEN
Associate Justice



FRANCIS H. JARDELEZA
Associate Justice



ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice