

****Title:**** Nestor Guelos, Rodrigo Guelos, Gil Carandang, and SPO2 Alfredo Carandang y Prescilla v. People of the Philippines

****Facts:****

On June 4, 1995, at around 5:00 PM, at Barangay Boot, Municipality of Tanauan, Batangas, Police Chief Inspector Rolando M. Camacho (P/C Insp. Camacho), SPO2 Estelito Andaya (SPO2 Andaya), PO2 Edgardo Carandang (PO2 Carandang), and SPO1 Anacleto Garcia (SPO1 Garcia) were conducting a routine patrol when they heard gunshots from the vicinity of Silveria Guelos' (Silveria's) home. Acting on this, P/C Insp. Camacho and his team decided to investigate. They arrived at Silveria's house where they found around 15 men drinking and discovered empty shells of an Armalite rifle on the ground.

While PO2 Carandang began collecting the empty shells, he was assaulted and his firearm was taken. During this incident, Alfredo was seen restraining P/C Insp. Camacho from behind while Rodrigo grabbed his firearm. Subsequently, Nestor shot P/C Insp. Camacho in the face, leading to his death, while Gil held SPO2 Andaya by the neck, and Nestor also shot him. PO2 Carandang tried to escape but was shot at by Nestor.

The accused, Nestor, Rodrigo, Gil, and Alfredo, were charged with Direct Assault Upon an Agent of a Person in Authority with Homicide under Articles 148 and 249, in relation to Article 48 of the Revised Penal Code (RPC). They pleaded not guilty. The Regional Trial Court (RTC) found the petitioners guilty, sentencing them to 11 to 18 years in prison and ordering them to pay damages. The petitioners appealed to the Court of Appeals (CA), which affirmed the RTC's decision. They then filed for a review on certiorari with the Supreme Court.

****Issues:****

1. Whether the testimony of PO2 Carandang was sufficient to convict the petitioners beyond reasonable doubt.
2. Whether the CA erred in affirming the trial court's findings despite alleged insufficiency of evidence.
3. Whether conspiracy among the petitioners was established by the prosecution.
4. Whether the Information was sufficient to charge the petitioners with the complex crime of Direct Assault with Homicide.

****Court's Decision:****

1. ****Sufficiency of Testimony:**** The Supreme Court held that the testimony of PO2

Carandang was credible and sufficient for conviction. The Supreme Court emphasized the trial court's advantage in observing witness demeanor and found no compelling reason to disturb its findings given PO2 Carandang's clear and direct testimony.

2. **Insufficiency of Evidence:** The Court rejected the claims of insufficient evidence, reaffirming the RTC's and CA's conclusions based on the testimonies and circumstantial evidence presented.

3. **Conspiracy:** The Court found that conspiracy was adequately demonstrated by the coordinated actions of the petitioners during the assault and killing of P/C Insp. Camacho and SPO2 Andaya, which collectively pointed to a preconceived plan and complicity in the crime.

4. **Sufficiency of Information:** The Court determined that the Information filed was defective because it failed to allege that the petitioners were aware that the victims were persons in authority engaged in the performance of their duties. Consequently, the petitioners could only be convicted of Homicide and not the complex crime combining Direct Assault and Homicide.

Doctrine:

- **Requirement for Detailed Information in Charge:** The Information must fully allege all elements constituting the crime, including any necessary qualifying or aggravating circumstances to satisfy the constitutional requirement of informing the accused of the nature and cause of the accusation against them.
- **Credibility of Witness Testimony:** When the trial judge's assessments of witness credibility are affirmed by the appellate court, such findings are given great weight and respect.

Class Notes:

- **Homicide (Article 249, RPC):** Essential elements include the fact of death, that the death was caused by another person, and that the killing was not attended by any qualifying circumstances like treachery or premeditation.
- **Direct Assault (Article 148, RPC):** Key elements include an attack or use of force against a person in authority or their agent, with the knowledge that the person is in authority, during or as a result of performing official duties.
- **Complex Crime (Article 48, RPC):** When a single act constitutes two or more grave or less grave felonies or when an offense is a necessary means to commit another.

****Historical Background:****

This case occurs within the broader context of firearm-related violence and enforcement of public order in the Philippines, emphasizing the judiciary's role in maintaining the rule of law and the rights of accused persons. The reinforcement of the constitutional requirement for clear and specific Informations demonstrates the ongoing evolution of legal protections in criminal procedure. This decision underscores the importance of procedural details in the prosecution's charges and findings, dating back to procedural reforms established in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.