

NAMFREL Terminal Report:

Padded election returns, falsified figures and statistical impossibilities¹

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This is an update of my 2004 study on the extent of cheating in the Philippine presidential elections.² This update is based on new NAMFREL data which I obtained after the original study was published: 1) a breakdown by region of precincts tallied as of NAMFREL Report #81 issued June 4, 2004 (source: COMELEC); and 2) a breakdown by region and province of precincts tallied as of NAMFREL Report #83, also known as the Terminal Report, issued June 30, 2004 (source: NAMFREL)³.

With the new data above, it can now be said with certainty. An "invisible hand" within the NAMFREL national tabulation center manipulated the results of its tally in three different ways:

- **Delaying the canvassing of FPJ areas vis-à-vis GMA areas and then aborting its count.** It paced the regional and provincial tallies selectively, leaving four million votes in FPJ areas uncanvassed and only one million votes in GMA areas. Extensively explained in my earlier study as "atras-abante", this method created an apparently big GMA lead. The new data exposed the next two methods.
- **Doctoring precinct totals and tally completion percentages.** It falsified precinct totals and percentages in its Terminal Report, in a futile effort to mask its pro-GMA pacing above.
- **Canvassing tampered election returns.** It added obviously padded election returns into the NAMFREL database to increase GMA's apparent lead and make it look more consistent with the official canvass results.

In doing all the above, the invisible hand also exposed itself by leaving unmistakable marks of manipulation.

This new development affects the conclusions of my original study, which had relied heavily on the integrity of NAMFREL's election returns database, even if the national results were skewed by the uneven pace of the regional and provincial tallies. It suggests that the extent of the cheating in the 2004 presidential election was *even larger* than the one million or more votes that my earlier study indicated.

With the breakdown of precincts for Report #81 known, it is now possible to compute the average votes per precinct⁴ in every region for Reports #1-81, and the same average for Reports #82-83.⁵ We can then check for statistical impossibilities and suspicious increases in the average vote per precinct, which indicate last-minute vote-padding. The average number of registered voters for each region are in parenthesis. See for yourself.

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² "The True Results of the 2004 Philippine Presidential Election Based on the NAMFREL Tally", *Kasarinlan*, Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines, Vol. 19 No. 2, 2004, pp. 92-118.

³ NAMFREL chairman Jose Concepcion Jr. distributed copies of this report at the July 8, 2005 general assembly of the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference in Makati, which I happened to attend as observer.

⁴ Average votes per precinct = Total votes tallied (GMA+FPJ+Lacson+Roco+Villanueva) divided by the number of precincts tallied

⁵ The separate averages for Reports #82 and #83 can be computed if NAMFREL releases the precinct breakdown for Report #82, which it hasn't done so, more than a year after it issued its final report.

Note how most averages for the first 81 reports lie in the plausible 100-150 range, while the averages for the final two reports (#82-83) show statistical impossibilities and incredible figures:

- Negative votes per precinct are of course physically impossible. The averages for Bicol (-5,341), ARMM (-3,771) and Central Visayas (-177) became negative because the Terminal Report gives a *lower* number of precincts tallied than the earlier Report #81. This tended to bring down the completion rates in these regions but led to negative precinct counts. The extremely high Bicol and ARMM figures indicate huge increases in votes counted with no additional precincts tallied, a giveaway indicator of massive vote padding.
- All figures that exceed the number of registered voters per precinct are obviously statistical impossibilities: the 1,073 average vote per precinct for Metro Manila indicates massive vote-padding. The figures 232 for Ilocos and 203.7 for Eastern Visayas also indicate significant vote-padding.
- The statistically impossible national average of 208 votes per precinct for the final two reports suggests a last-minute effort by the "invisible hand" within NAMFREL to pad the Terminal Report with non-existent GMA votes, throwing caution to the winds to make the final NAMFREL tally appear more consistent with the official tally.

Vote-padding in NAMFREL Reports #82-83		
Region (registered voters per precinct)	Votes per pct (#1-81)	Votes per pct (#82-83)
Ilocos (203.8)	147.0	232.0
C.Valley (204.8)	156.8	187.1
C.Luzon (202.2)	154.5	165.1
S.Tagalog (203.2)	149.8	147.2
Bicol (197.8)	147.3	-5,341.0
W.Visayas (204.5)	153.4	134.8
C.Visayas (199.1)	136.7	-177.4
E.Visayas (197.0)	138.2	203.7
W.Minda (198.2)	135.5	150.4
N.Minda (198.4)	143.4	132.1
S.Minda (204.0)	144.4	132.3
C.Minda (205.7)	132.9	131.8
ARMM (184.4)	99.8	-3,771.0
CARAGA (196.1)	146.0	141.2
CAR (197.4)	148.5	142.9
NCR (201.7)	134.2	1,073.0
Philippines (202.7)	145.2	208.1

The Terminal Report breakdown also contains internal inconsistencies which reveal obvious manual alterations and attempts at cover up. Examples:

- The National Capital Region lists the percentage of precincts tallied as 75%, but computing the directly from the report's own provincial data gives only 68%. This suggests a cover up of the scandalously low NAMFREL completion rate for NCR, FPJ's second highest source of votes.
- The completion rate for Bicol is listed as 91%. But computing directly from the report's own provincial data gives 97%, an unusually high completion rate which the manual alteration tried to hide. How can NAMFREL tally 97% of Bicol returns, and only 68% of NCR returns?
- Still in the Bicol entries, the Camarines Sur and Catanduanes completion rates are both listed as 99%, although correct rounding gives 100%, an attention-getting completion rate which the alteration tried to hide. Masbate showed 60% instead of the correct 95%.
- Other provinces where a 100% completion rate (if automatically rounded by computer) was manually changed to 99%: Nueva Vizcaya, Pampanga, Palawan, and Siquijor.
- The document lists completion rates of 95% for W.Visayas and 93% for E.Visayas. The computed results are only 84% and 90%, respectively.
- Other inconsistencies: Lanao del Sur shows 68%, Davao del Sur 90%, and Cotabato City 39%; but the computed results are 74%, 94% and 95% respectively.
- The presence of internal inconsistencies among generally correct totals and percentages indicate that this breakdown was originally a computer-generated spreadsheet output. It was then

manually altered to change certain attention-getting numbers.

The "invisible hand", however, had become careless. Wrong precinct totals were inserted in the presidential report, but the vice-presidential report, which should contain an identical precinct breakdown, still had many of the correct figures!

If one wanted a smoking-gun evidence of manipulation of NAMFREL numbers, this is it.⁶ It confirms public suspicions that the administration's cheating machinery extended far and wide. It extended 1) not only within COMELEC, where corrupt canvassers and commissioners doctored the official results, and 2) not only into Congress, where the majority party railroaded the canvassing of provincial certificates of canvass, but also 3) into the national tabulation center of the citizens' electoral watchdog, where an "invisible hand" a) biased the pace of the NAMFREL tally in favor of pro-GMA areas, b) added tampered election returns into the NAMFREL database, and c) manually altered the NAMFREL final report.

Truly, this is a betrayal of the trust of well-intentioned NAMFREL volunteers and officials who gave their time and effort and even risked their safety and their lives in the belief that they were contributing to a clean and honest citizens' count.

Who could be this "invisible hand" in the NAMFREL national tabulation center? Based on my own interactions with the NAMFREL leadership, its "systems group", and lower-level technical people, I think two persons are in the best position to shed light on this question: NAMFREL secretary-general Bill Luz and NAMFREL information technology head Gus Lagman. These two, who have reportedly now taken an anti-GMA position, are most familiar with the details of NAMFREL operations. They should come forward and explain how the NAMFREL Terminal Report ended up with internal inconsistencies, statistical impossibilities and other incredible entries.

The NAMFREL leadership should immediately create an independent fact-finding body that will thoroughly investigate its involvement in the cheating. I am willing to present my case before such a body or even in a NAMFREL general meeting.

If it executes a thorough revamp and institutes internal reforms, NAMFREL might still regain its credibility and recover its functions of helping to determine the true results of elections and to identify the cheats in the electoral and canvassing process.

But only if the good men and women within NAMFREL act now.

⁶ A NAMFREL official might claim they were simply tallying election returns from the precincts; it is not their fault if these returns had total votes exceeding the number of registered voters. Yes, some of the tampering might have occurred at the precinct and not the NAMFREL level. However, the decision to tally these obviously tampered returns was made within NAMFREL's national tabulation center. Also, the Terminal Report breakdown distributed at the BBC general assembly which contained manual alterations in the breakdown of precincts tallied definitely came from NAMFREL.