

News Digest

By The Associated Press

Philippines: A time to forget hurt; rebuild

Cease-fire sought, but not extradition

MANILA, Philippines — President Corazon Aquino said Wednesday she will seek a cease-fire with communist guerrillas but not the extradition of Ferdinand Marcos, who was driven into exile by her "people power" revolt.

Salvador H. Laurel, the new vice president, announced plans for a general political amnesty and said the insurgents are not truly communists, but people Marcos forced into fighting.

Government television announced that a military committee was preparing a list of anti-Marcos political prisoners to be freed Thursday, which it said might include about 50 percent of those held.

Aquino, who blames Marcos for the assassination of her husband, Benigno, in 1983, said at a news conference: "I have said I can be magnanimous in victory. I would like to show by example that the sooner we forget our hurt, then the easier it will be for our country to start rebuilding from the ruins left us."

She also announced her Cabinet appointments at the news conference, and said Laurel will serve as prime minister and foreign minister.

American helicopters took Marcos, who had ruled this 7,100-island archipelago for two decades, to Clark Air Base on Tuesday night. He and his party were flown to Hawaii by the U.S. Air Force after a stop in Guam.

Aquino met with 11 members of the Marcos government Wednesday, including Prime Minister Cesar Virata, and asked them to stay on until her appointees received National Assembly approval. She also included some Marcos men in her new government.

"Let's forget the past," she said.

Marcos, 68, was brought down by a fraud-tainted presidential election which Aquino refused to concede, combined with U.S. pressure and a military-civil revolt.

Aquino said she would not ask the United States to extradite Marcos, whom she has called an "old dictator."

Her husband, Marcos' chief political rival, was shot dead at the Manila airport in 1983 as he returned from three years of voluntary exile in the United States.

Gen. Fabian C. Ver, Marcos' armed forces commander, and 25 others were acquitted of conspiracy in the slaying. Ver fled the country with Marcos.

Aquino, 53, said a new Commission on Good Government would investigate alleged illegal transfers of wealth from the country by Marcos and his associates.

The commission also will study how to resolve the assassination of her husband, while another special commission will study constitutional reform, she said.

She said charges of wrongdoing by military officers would be investigated and members of the military would be removed in areas where "people will be in danger by the continued presence of certain officers and men."

Loud applause greeted her announcement that, although the riverside presidential palace will remain the seat of government, she will not live there because "it is not fitting for the leader of an impoverished nation to live in extravagance."

Military bomb disposal experts Wednesday searched the palace grounds for possible booby-traps planted by fleeing Marcos guards. Sgt. Enrique Lescano of the Philippine Constabulary told The Associated Press he found a plastic charge hidden inside a book in the palace and that the grounds were littered with hand grenades and other ammunition apparently left behind in Tuesday night's hasty evacuation.

Laurel, interviewed on CBS News, announced plans for "a general amnesty to all political offenders."

Speakes summarizes: 'She's done a good job'

WASHINGTON — Encouraged by Corazon Aquino's actions during her first 24 hours as president of the Philippines, congressional and administration officials Wednesday predicted increased American aid to help her shore up the sagging economy and fight a communist-backed insurgency.

Aquino faces enormous problems, but she appears to have taken office Tuesday with less turmoil and violence than the administration thought possible.

The relative ease of the transition, particularly the quick switch in allegiance of the military, will be advantageous in helping combat the communist insurgency, both Pentagon and State Department officials said.

"I think she established both through the election and in the events of the last week a very powerful position, and people underestimated that," said Michael Armacost, undersecretary of state.

The administration wants Aquino to determine her aid needs before any is offered. But there is no doubt she will get significantly more than Ferdinand Marcos would have received if he had managed to hang on as president.

Just before the Feb. 7 election, President Reagan promised to consider a significant increase in American aid if the election was fair and was followed by military, economic and political reforms.

That offer was put "in abeyance" after Marcos declared himself the winner in a fraud-marred election. But the offer is back on the table for Aquino's government, several officials indicated.

Rep. Robert G. Torricelli, D-N.J., who last week won approval in a House subcommittee of a cut-off in all direct aid to the Marcos government, said in an interview that bill is now dead and he would favor more aid for Aquino, although it's too early to say how much.

An early visit by Aquino is unlikely, but it is considered quite possible that her running mate, Vice President Salvador Laurel, who also is the new prime minister, will come to Washington for talks.

Congress approved \$245 million in aid for the Marcos government for fiscal 1986, and the administration is committed to requesting at least \$220 million a year in combined military and economic aid under a five-year arrangement for use of the military bases at Clark Field and Subic Bay.

Philip Habib, President Reagan's special emissary, arrived in Manila Wednesday saying he wanted to determine "how the United States can help in addressing the problems of economic revival and national security."

Administration officials liked Aquino's early appointments and her quick move to consolidate her authority. White House spokesman Larry Speakes said, "So far she's done a good job."

Among appointments receiving praise were Gen. Fidel V. Ramos as chief of staff, replacing Gen. Fabian Ver, new military service chiefs and her appointments to the economic ministry and Central Bank.

Although Torricelli said there were some "lingering questions" about Aquino's attitude toward the future of the American bases, the administration regarded them as secure. Pentagon officials had felt all along that they could work out an arrangement to continue the bases beyond the scheduled lease expiration in 1991 with any government, short of a communist one.

Concern over the communists has been the single greatest worry. In testimony last week before a House panel, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage said the number of armed insurgents had increased to more than 20,000, up 50 percent from a year ago.

Marcos' room like refuge of 'sick man'

MANILA, Philippines — Ferdinand Marcos always scoffed at reports that he was ill, but his bedroom at the presidential palace is like a hospital. It appeared Wednesday to be the refuge of a very sick man.

There was a pervasive smell of medicine. A hospital bed was against one wall, unmade and cranked up slightly to ease the back. A man's pajama top was thrown over the footboard.

A box on a bedside table held disposable syringes, with plastic coverings in green, blue and pink.

A booklet titled "Renal Transplant Outpatients Book" lay on another table just outside the bedroom. People who had visited the palace before said they saw what they thought were machines used for treating kidney ailments.

Marcos, 68, has laughed off rumors that he suffers from lupus erythematosus, an incurable disease that attacks the kidneys and other organs in its late stages.

During his years in Malacanang Palace, the man whose two decades as president ended in flight Tuesday night often boasted about his health.

"I am not sick of anything that is malignant or incurable," he said in a television interview Monday, but his health had appeared to decline progressively over the past several months.

At an election campaign rally in January, a bandage on his hand came off and blood trickled down. The hand was swathed in bandages the next day, and he said an ardent supporter had scratched him while trying to shake his hand.

Skin lesions are characteristic of lupus erythematosus.

Marcos apparently stopped playing golf, which was one of his favorite pastimes, and walks with an increasingly noticeable limp. He said the limp was caused by a shrapnel wound suffered during World War II.

Rumors of kidney problems were first heard in 1982, and there were reports of a transplant in 1983.

He dropped out of public view for weeks the next year. A former aide said his body had rejected the first kidney, making another transplant necessary.

In Washington, the Reagan administration said Wednesday it does not plan to seize or freeze Marcos' vast holdings in the United States, and was silent on whether it would resist legal efforts by Corazon Aquino's government to claim his assets.

The deposed president flew to Hawaii and there were indications his odyssey from the Philippines might end there.

Discussions already have been conducted with Marcos or members of his entourage "as to what his wishes are and the possibility of him staying in Hawaii," said presidential spokesman Larry Speakes. No decision has been made, he said.

Reagan's envoy, Philip Habib, was due to arrive in Manila during the day for talks "on how the U.S. can help in addressing the problems of economic revival, national security," Speakes said.

Marcos is reputed to have extensive real estate holdings in the United States, including four commercial buildings in Manhattan and a 14-acre estate on Long Island that a House subcommittee estimates have a combined value of \$350 million.

A recent U.S. intelligence report estimated the wealth of Marcos and his family at \$3 billion, the Wall Street Journal reported. It quoted an adviser to Aquino, Heberon Alvarez, as saying her government will use any legal means available to recover assets Marcos and his family allegedly sent overseas.

Reagan: Military cut not cheap or safe

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, trying to reverse dwindling support for his defense buildup, said Wednesday it would be "reckless, dangerous and wrong" for Congress to reduce his \$320 billion military budget request.

Congress already has "undercut our negotiators" at the Geneva arms talks by banning tests of anti-satellite weapons and unilaterally giving the Soviets "a concession they could not win at the bargaining table," the president said.

In a bluntly worded address nationally broadcast from the Oval Office, Reagan said to cut defense now is "not cheap (and) it's not safe."

He said it would be "backsliding of the most irresponsible kind."

"Just as we are sitting down at the bargaining table with the Soviet Union, let's not throw America's trump card away," Reagan said.

In a brief reference to the ouster of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos and his replacement by Corazon Aquino — his first public statement on the switch — Reagan applauded the "remarkable restraint shown by both

sides to prevent bloodshed during these last tense days."

"Our hearts and hands are with President Aquino and her new government as they set out to meet the challenges ahead," he said. "Today, the Filipino people celebrate the triumph of democracy, and the world celebrates with them."

House Democratic leader Jim Wright, giving his party's response to Reagan's address, said the president's defense budget must be cut to protect the nation from another danger — huge deficits.

"We think the deficits themselves pose a danger to our national security," Wright said in remarks prepared for broadcast after the president's speech.

Wright said if Congress approves the 11.9 percent boost in authorized military spending that Reagan seeks for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, "we'd be spending almost four times as much on the military by the end of this decade as the nation spent during the height of the Vietnam War."

Wright criticized "glaring waste," such as \$400 hammers and \$7,600 cof-

fee pots, and said "even the Pentagon should be held to strict standards of accountability in spending taxpayers' money."

Reagan, defending his administration against charges of wasteful and sometimes fraudulent defense spending, said Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger "should be praised, not pilloried, for cleaning the skeletons out of the closet."

"Those few who have cheated taxpayers or have swindled our armed forces with faulty equipment are thieves stealing from the arsenal of democracy," he said, promising to prosecute them "to the fullest extent of the law."

But even one of the president's most loyal supporters on Capitol Hill remained skeptical that Reagan could achieve the Pentagon budget he is seeking.

"I'm going to do my best to support the president's request, but I recognize full well he is not going to get everything he is asking for," House Republican leader Robert Michel said as he left a White House meeting several hours before the speech.

'85 'Statistical Abstract' full of 'just the facts'

WASHINGTON — What is America's most popular leisure activity? Do more men or women wear seat belts? What share of Americans have no health insurance?

The answers — flower gardening, women and 15 percent — are among millions of facts jammed into the 985 pages of the government's compendium of essential and esoteric detail, the Statistical Abstract of the United States.

The 106th edition of the volume, subtitled "National Data Book and Guide to Sources", went on sale in government bookstores Wednesday at \$27 a copy, or \$22 for the paperback version.

Neither the price nor the lack of plot prevents the volume from being a hit among those folks who love numbers and details about most any subject.

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