

News and Notes

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International Developments

US Military Aid for RP

US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Gaston Sigur, a recent visitor to the Philippines, said he will appear before the US Congress to request for additional military aid to the Philippines. In an audience with President Corazon C. Aquino, the Assistant Secretary also said that the US government "will do everything it possibly can" to provide the Philippines support in quelling the 18-year communist rebellion. While in the Philippines, Sigur also met with Defense Secretary Rafael Iletto and AFP Chief of Staff Fidel V. Ramos.

In a related development outgoing US Ambassador to the Philippines Stephen Bosworth said that the US will leave its military installations in the Philippines if the (Philippine) government decides that it does not wish the US to continue to have access to those facilities.

Asean Summit

Elaborate preparations for the Asean Summit were finalized to insure the security of the six heads of state who will attend the meeting from December 14-16, 1987. Agenda for the meeting includes economic and other political issues. The framing of agreement regarding a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality (ZOPFAN) is expected to be discussed during the meeting. Those who have signified their intention to attend are Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohammed, Singapore PM Lee Kuan Yew, Indonesian President Suharto, Thai PM Prem Tinsulanonda, and Brunei PM Prince Bolkiah.

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Local Developments

Another Coup Attempt

About 400 soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines staged yet another coup attempt on January 27, 1987. The abortive coup resulted in the death of one trooper and injury to some 60 others. The apparent military objective of said coup was the take-over of the Sangley Air Station in Cavite City, the Villamor Airbase in Pasay City and the GMA-7 TV Station in Quezon City.

Responding to President Corazon C. Aquino's directives, AFP Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos effected the arrest of most of the military men involved in the attempt.

While the attacks on the Sangley Air Station and the Villamor Airbase were contained with relative ease, a full complement of rebel troops were able to occupy GMA-7 for about 56 hours. Led by a certain Col. Oscar Canlas, this complement finally agreed to surrender after a series of negotiations with Gen. Ramos and RAM (Reform the Armed Forces Movement) Col. Gregorio Honasan.

Consequent court martial proceedings were initiated on all military personnel with overt or suspected involvement in this latest coup attempt, notably Brig. Gen. Jose Ma. Zumel, Col. Rolando Abadilla and a certain Maj. Baquiran.

The Ministry of Justice was likewise ordered to prepare the filing of rebellion charges against civilians involved in this incident.

Rafael Salas Passes Away

Noted public administrator Rafael Salas died in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 1987 at the age of 59. The Filipino diplomat served as Executive Secretary of President Ferdinand Marcos from 1966 to 1969. He left the country at odds with the President's government policies to assume his first UN post as senior consultant to the administrator of the UN Development Program. At the time of his demise, he was UN Undersecretary General and Executive Director of the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the highest executive post currently held by a Filipino. Salas received his A.B. (magna cum laude) and his LL.B. (cum laude) from the University of the Philippines. He has served the government in various agencies, e.g., the National Economic Council, the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Office of the President. He was also a Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) awardee.

1987 Charter Ratified

The proposed Constitution for the Republic of the Philippines was ratified last February 7, 1987 by an overwhelming yes-vote. Over 76% voted to ratify the Constitution as against 23% no votes. This Constitution is the Philippines' fourth since the Malolos Constitution of the revolutionary government in 1898.

The new Constitution returns the country into a republican/presidential type of government, creates a bicameral legislature, recognizes the autonomy of certain regions, strengthens the bill of rights, and abolishes capital punishment. Analysts say that the recent coup attempt only helped to make the undecided silent majority of the electorate decide in favor of its approval. With the Constitution's ratification, the members of the Armed Forces held a mandatory swearing of allegiance to the new constitution to reaffirm their loyalty to the President as Commander-in-Chief and to the Philippine Republic as well.

Here are the official tally of canvass for the plebiscite:

GRAND TOTAL	Yes	No
	16,605,425 (76.29%)	4,949,901 (22.74%)
REGIONAL BREAKDOWN		
Metro-Manila	2,917,104	849,407
Region 1 (Ilocos)	779,237	848,237
Region 2 (Cagayan)	421,486	481,781
Region 3 (Central Luzon)	1,870,452	429,570
Region 4 (Southern Tagalog)	2,390,096	492,271

	Yes	No
Region 5 (Bicol)	1,116,122	177,861
Region 6 (Western Visayas)	1,611,547	253,019
Region 7 (Central Visayas)	1,473,958	281,598
Region 8 (Eastern Visayas)	732,250	270,571
Region 9 (Western Mindanao)	496,330	79,075
Region 10 (Northern Mindanao)	970,971	280,028
Region 11 (Southern Mindanao)	1,161,509	298,926
Region 12 (Central Mindanao)	664,363	207,557

(Source: Phil. Daily Inquirer, Feb. 8, 1987, p. 1)

Update on the Congressional Elections

Malacanang Palace and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) approved the campaign period for senatorial bets to 60 days from March 9 to May 9, and House of Representatives candidates to 45 days from March 23 to May 9. The executive order issued in connection with the holding of elections also called for an expanded role to watchers of political parties and the retention of the National Movement For Free Elections (NAMFREL) as citizens arm of the COMELEC.

Meantime the Aquino administration announced its official 24-man ticket for the senatorial elections. The President categorized her ruling coalition's ticket into five sectors: women, former senators, former assemblymen, cause-oriented groups and businesses.

Other parties participating in the elections are the (1) Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL), the old party of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos; (2) the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD), an alliance of former Marcos men led by former Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile; and (3) the left-leaning Partido ng Bayan (PnB). The PnB is the first major left-leaning party to take part in open election in 40 years. It is however fielding an incomplete slate.

People Power Celebration

"People Power" was celebrated last February 25 at EDSA with dancing, singing and revelry by throngs of people led by President Aquino and His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin. Nearly two million participated in the celebrations, approximating the number of those who actually participated in the February revolution. Tanks, combat helicopters and other military hardware used during the 1986 political revolution were displayed to the public. There were also thanksgiving masses offered and variety programs held in the early evening. Highlighting the event was a magnificent fireworks display to signify the departure of Ferdinand Marcos from Malacanang. There was night long dancing in the streets while prominent local as well as foreign artists provided the musical background.