

Philippine unrest reveals dissatisfaction with Aquino

By JENNIFER BLACKWELL
Staff Writer

The failed coup attempt against Philippine president Corazon Aquino has caused speculation about the future of the Philippines and U.S. involvement.

The coup began when rebels seized the Villamor Air Force Base, two broadcast stations and the international airport early last Friday. The mutineers bombed the presidential compound of Malacanang later that day.

Pro-government troops returned fire in an attempt to rescue the military facilities and protect the presidential compound.

Before President Bush left for Malta, he authorized American assistance in the use of fighter-bombers for combat air patrol when Philippine government troops appeared to be losing ground. Plans were also made for the evacuation of Aquino by helicopters to American warships offshore if necessary.

By Saturday, the rebels had abandoned the military facilities, including Villamor Air Force Base, Fort Bonifacio and the government television station. The government declared the coup had failed, and Aquino demanded that the rebels "surrender or die."

On Sunday, however, the rebels

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blasted through the military headquarters of Camp Aguinaldo. The rebels occupied the logistics command for a few hours, but pro-government troops retook the camp late Sunday morning after air bombing the rebel positions.

Later that day, Aquino declared that her forces had successfully defeated the coup attempt, although a force of about 200 rebels still controlled the center of Makati, Manila's affluent residential and financial district. One hundred people were killed and 300 were wounded. About 500 rebels were captured, including 53 officers.

Except for the commercial district, most of the city has returned to normal, said Mary Yates, a State Department spokeswoman. "Democracy has triumphed," although they are still advising the 20,000 U.S. military and civilian dependents that the situation is dangerous, she said.

Controversy still exists over exactly what type of assistance Aquino requested. Some reports state that Bush offered a generalized statement of assistance to Aquino after the start of the coup. Yates, however, stated that the White House responded to a request by

the Filipino government.

Officials agreed that the most feasible means of aid was to use combat air patrol to provide a cap over two Philippine bases held by the rebels. The fighter-bombers did not use any firepower or kill any Filipinos, Yates said. The United States resupplied the government with existing stocks at American bases and authorized an additional \$25,000 in medical supplies at the request of the Philippines' ambassador.

Aquino has accused her political opposition of supporting the coup. Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, an ex-cabinet member of Aquino's, denied in a press conference that he knew about the attempt but condemned the Aquino administration. There are also reports that Vice President Laurel, who is out of the country, knew about the coup.

The goals of the rebels are still unclear, said Rick Fisher, a policy analyst at the Asian Studies Center of the Heritage Foundation in Washington. It is not clear what type of government the rebels would have set up if they had succeeded, although their ultimate goal was to overthrow Aquino, he said.

This coup attempt, the bloodiest of the six attempts since Aquino's rise to power in February 1986, "should be taken with grave seriousness" since it showed how rapidly support for Aquino

has declined in the last two years, Fisher said. On Friday, when the religious leader Cardinal Sin called for a show of support for Aquino by the flooding of the streets, very few people responded, unlike similar requests during previous coup attempts where hundreds of people showed support for Aquino, Fisher said.

There has been a deep crisis in confidence in the Aquino government because it has not fulfilled the reform agenda everyone thought it would achieve after Aquino was brought to power by the People's Power revolt, he said. Some key problems involve corruption in government including some of her family, an economic growth which has ignored 30 percent to 40 percent of the population and an unwillingness by the Aquino government to mount a substantial campaign against the Communist New People's Army.

To build confidence in the government, Aquino needs to crack down on corruption, show a commitment to have civilians fight against the Communist Party, start a broad range of reforms on the economic front and crack down on the rebels, he stated. "(They) must not be coddled like after previous coups."

The military group leading the coup attempt sees itself as patriots, loyal to the Philippines and its interests, said Thomas Robinson, director of the Asian

Studies program at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington. Their goals were to try to force the government to reform or abolish the government so they could reform, he said.

The rebels' objection with the present government is that the members in the Aquino administration and the senate come from the landed aristocracy, and they continue to run the country for their own purposes, he said. They are also angry with Aquino's lenient treatment of the communist movement and seek to crack down

harder on them since they are gaining more support as Aquino's support is declining, he said.

Steve Shalom, coordinator of the Campaign Against U.S. Military Bases in the Philippines, said, "They have to slay the American father image." The United States should stop providing military aid, withdraw military bases and stop intervening in military affairs so the Philippine government can base their support less on the United States and the military and more on the people's needs, he said.

Coup attempt traps Americans in Manila

From Associated Press reports

MANILA, Philippines (AP) - Rebel soldiers Monday offered to allow hundreds of foreigners to leave hotels in the financial district, seized last weekend by mutineers seeking to topple President Corazon Aquino.

Late Monday, two bombs exploded in the capital, wounding two people. It was unclear if the bombs were related to the coup attempt, which began Friday and has killed at least 70 people.

Hundreds of Americans and other foreigners were pinned in homes and hotels in the posh Makati district, where forces loyal to Aquino contained the mutineers to 22 buildings.

About 400 rebels continued to occupy Mactan Air Base in Cebu, 350 miles south of Manila. Their leader refused to surrender and threatened to blow up the base's planes.

The United States provided fresh military supplies to the Aquino government and promised \$25,000 in assistance for civilian hospitals, said Richard Boucher, a State Department spokesman in Washington.

In Manila, a statement from a rebel spokesman, Capt. Albert Yen, telephoned to news organizations, said the insurgents would release the foreigners to dispel suspicions they were being held hostage.

The statement said the foreigners would be free to leave the hotels at 10 a.m. Tuesday (9 p.m. EST Monday) and would be taken to Manila's airport aboard shuttle buses. There was no word if foreign embassies had been informed of the offer.

Yen said the move did not indicate the rebels were about to end their four-day bid to oust Aquino.

"That's the farthest thing that we could do," he said. "We pledged our lives to this cause. We will hold the line to the last drop of our blood."

U.S. Embassy spokesman Jerry Huchel said 215 Americans were believed trapped in three hotels in Makati. More than 300 Japanese also were believed to be in the Makati hotels.

"Literally, we're in the middle," said Barbara Julich, a New York businesswoman trapped in the Intercontinental Hotel. "(We're) now low on food. There are babies in the building, and there is no baby food, and the mothers are hysterical."

"We saw a group of nuns trying to walk where the tanks are. They were eventually shot at and took cover."

At least three people were killed in Makati on Monday and 15 wounded, including one American, by rebel snipers and in fighting between rebel and loyalist forces.

Earlier, spokesmen for the Makati Medical Center said 10 people were killed. They said the discrepancy was due to an error in records.

Hospital sources identified the wounded American as Jerome Weissburg. They said he was hit in the arm by glass when a bullet shattered the window of his room at the Peninsula Hotel. They did not know his hometown.

At least 70 people have been killed and more than 500 wounded since mutineers seized several military installations and bombed the presidential palace Friday, according to the Red Cross.

The city's international airport reopened Monday, but domestic air service was indefinitely postponed. Schools were closed but government employees were ordered to return to work except in the Makati area.

Officials reported shortages of food and fuel from interruptions caused by the fighting.

An explosion rocked the compound of the Central Bank, the equivalent of the Federal Reserve. There were no injuries. A second bomb went off in the Ermita entertainment district, damaging an unoccupied minibus and shattering windows. Two women were injured by flying glass.

In the morning, the estimated 390 rebel holdouts in Makati — members of the army's First Scout Ranger Regiment — refused appeals to surrender and fired at soldiers and civilians who approached their strongholds.

A rebel leader, Lt. Col. Rafael Galvez, told a reporter late Sunday: "We will continue to fight until we get our political objective — the resignation of Mrs. Aquino."

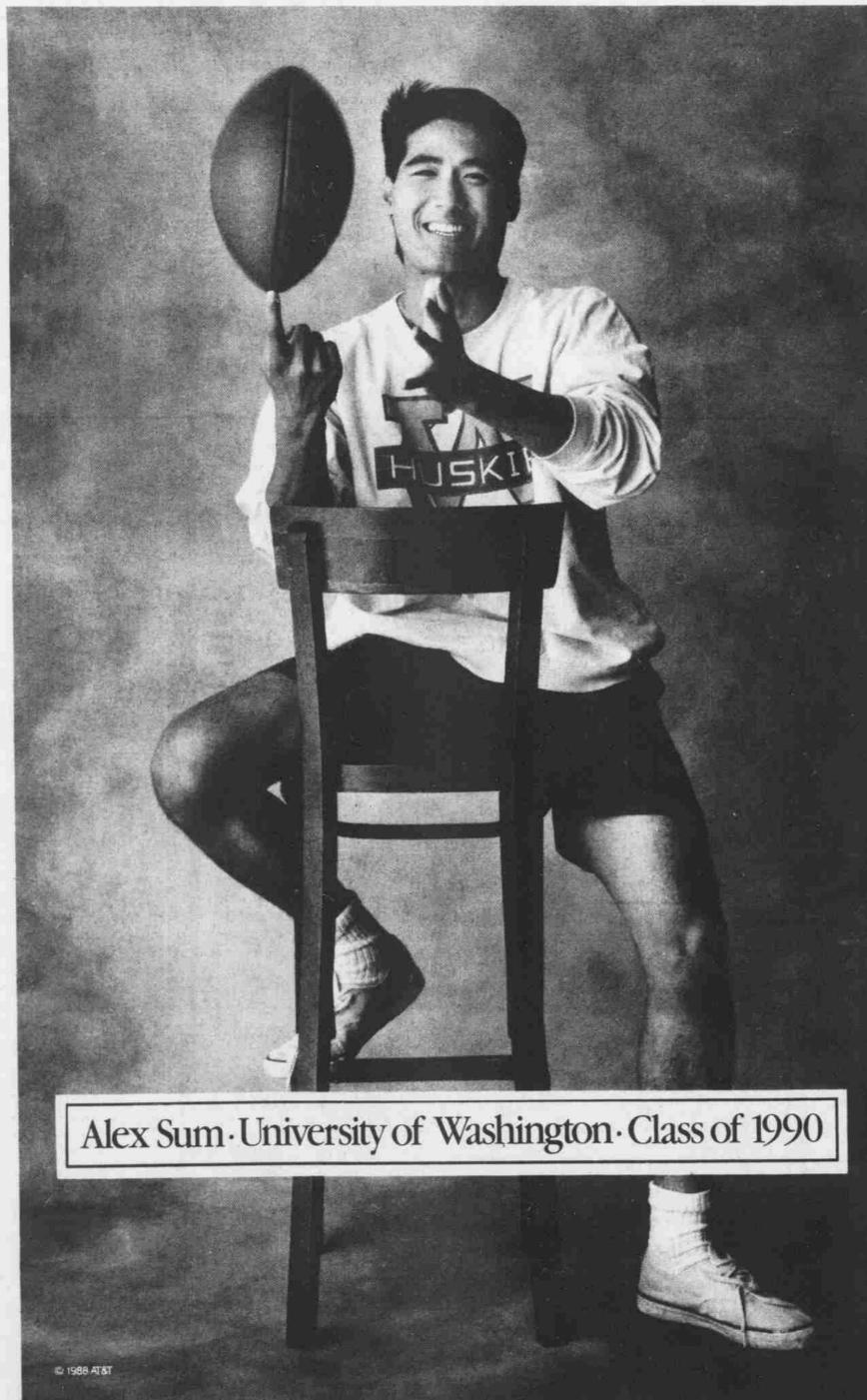
The mutinous soldiers claim Aquino,

swept to power in a 1986 military-civilian uprising that toppled President Ferdinand Marcos, has failed to deal effectively with the country's Communist insurgency and economic problems. This is the sixth and most serious

attempt to overthrow her.

One of the coup leaders was Gregorio Honasan, a cashiered lieutenant colonel who once supported Aquino but later led an August 1987 attempt to overthrow her. He remained at large.

"I wasn't rubbing it in—I just wanted Eddie to know the score of last night's game."



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