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Author

Schirmer, Daniel Boone

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US BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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By Daniel B. Schirmer

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**Intervention:
U.S. Bases in the Philippines**
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1

Clark Air Field and Subic Naval Base, the two major U.S. military installations in the Philippines, are nothing less than the form the U.S. military presence in the Philippine takes today. These bases were established in 1947, but the U.S. military presence came before this, as did U.S. intervention in the Philippines.

The first decisive intervention of the United States in the Philippine affairs was the dispatch to that country of an army of conquest and colonization at the turn of the century. From its very beginning, then, the U.S. military presence in the Philippines has been correlated with U.S. intervention in Philippine affairs.

The U.S. army of occupation arrived in the Philippines early in the summer of 1898. But prior to this Admiral George Dewey had defeated the Spanish Navy in Manila Bay, a decisive engagement of the Spanish-American war. Dewey's victory coupled with that of the U.S. forces in Cuba meant that Spain was defeated and its colonies, including the Philippines, were at the disposal of the United States.

While there was a general consensus amongst the U.S. political and business elite at this time commercial expansion abroad would benefit the U.S. economy, which in the 1890s was in a slump, it was a group of Republican Senators who wanted to make U.S. policy conform to expansionist goals. Two of the leaders of this Senate faction, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and Senator Cushman Davis, help us understand why the United States sent an army of colonization and conquest to the Philippines at the turn of the century in the administration of William McKinley.

On May 23, 1898 Senator Lodge visited the President and told him that the U.S. must colonize the Philippines because the home market was no longer sufficient to meet the productive capacities of U.S. industry. Foreign markets must be secured such as the Philippines would provide. Annex these islands and their ten million inhabitants would have to buy U.S. goods, and U.S. manufacturers would have so much additional trade.¹ In January 1899, as the U.S. Senate was discussing the treaty to annex the Philippines, Cushman Davis declared that "he with others, was looking forward to the prompt partition of the vast Chinese market among European nations, and he foresaw that if the United States did not secure a footing in the Orient such as they would now have through the terms of the treaty, they would be most effectively and forever shut off from this vast market."²

The expansionists faced two problems. Many of the people of the United States opposed this policy of expansion which they saw as imperialism; and the Filipinos did not want to become a U.S. colony, having only recently declared their independence from Spain as a result of an armed revolt. The expansionists resolved the first problem by defeating their domestic opponents in two important contests: the Senate battle to annex the Philippines in 1899, and the election of November 1900 when the Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan tried unsuccessfully to challenge imperial policies.

The Philippine problem was more difficult. Beginning in 1899, Filipinos fought bitterly against U.S. colonization, armed resistance to U.S. rule not ending until 1906. It took a total of 250,000 U.S. troops to conquer the Filipinos, and, according to one U.S. military figure over a half a million Filipinos died in the war or from war-related causes.

As a result of this initial U.S. military intervention in the Philippines, that country became a U.S. colony and was soon one of the best markets for U.S. manufactured goods in Asia. In 1900 Washington was able to send U.S. troops stationed in the Philippines to China where they joined other

imperialist powers in suppressing the rebellion of the nationalist Boxers who wanted to close China to foreign economic penetration. The US had intervened in Philippine affairs in order to secure a strongpoint from which to intervene in China and other countries — and a pattern for the future had been established.

Today it is important to remember that growing numbers of Filipinos regard these bases as a hangover of the U.S. military intervention at the turn of the century that destroyed their country's independence and turned it back to colonial status. They are seen as a relic of colonialism.

II

It was after World War II that the U.S. military presence in the Philippines took its present form, in the bases agreement and other post war military arrangements.

In 1946 the United States declared the Philippines to be independent, but one of the conditions the U.S. placed upon this independence was the right to maintain U.S. military and naval bases on Philippine soil.

As in 1900 Washington saw a military presence in the Philippines — this time in the form of base installations — as a necessary buttress to U.S. economic expansion. The United States emerged from World War II as the foremost economic and military power, and Washington saw the opportunity for the growth of U.S. trade and investment abroad, especially in the Pacific region. In February 1946 the U.S. Deputy Chief of Naval Operations testified before Congress that 33 naval bases and airfields in 22 separate localities would be needed "to maintain strategic control of the Pacific Ocean area."³ This was why the U.S. insisted on the Philippine bases.

Other military arrangements reached specified that the Philippine armed forces would be guided and directed by a permanent advisory group of U.S. military officers called

the Joint Military Advisory Group, or JUSMAG, and that the U.S. should supply the Philippine armed forces with their weapons and military supplies.

The U.S. government also insisted that the new Philippine government give U.S. investors equal rights with Philippine investors to exploit the country's natural resources, while all other foreign investors operated under the restrictions imposed by the new constitution. To accede to this request the Philippine Congress had to adopt what was called the parity amendment to this Constitution.

Washington made clear that U.S. aid and relief to the war-torn Philippines depended on acceptance of these conditions. Acceptance was made easier because the newly independent Philippine government represented the landed elite who had been won to collaboration early in the colonial period when the U.S. government offered them access to political office in the Philippines for their own self-advancement and to the markets of the United States for the products of their landed estates. So the concessions were granted.

Philippine nationalists opposed the bases agreement and the parity amendments as infringements on Philippine sovereignty. The most militant of this opposition was an armed group led by Philippine Communists called the Hukbaldap or Huks who had made guerrilla war against the Japanese military when it took over the Philippines during World War II. They undertook an armed struggle to overthrow the Philippine government as a landlord government of national betrayal. A leader of the Huks, Luis Taruc, later recalled that it was the bases agreement and the parity amendment that turned the Huks, essentially a peasant movement or agrarian reform, towards nationalist opposition to what they saw as the overweighing influence of the United States in their country after its independence.⁴

In the early '50s the United States undertook a second military intervention against the armed Philippine nationalists known as the Huks. This time U.S. military intervention was indirect. The fighting against the Huks was done by the military of the Philippine government, by Filipinos armed, trained, and directed by the U.S. government and its JUSMAG. Also prominent in the suppression of the Huks was the CIA in the person of Colonel Edward Lansdale, who served as chief adviser to Ramon Magasaysay, Philippine Minister of Defense. The Huks were defeated.

The victory over the Communist-led Huks was seen as a highly successful episode in the development of the Cold War policies that came to dominate the U.S. government after the defeat of the Axis powers. These policies took a particularly sharp edge in Asia after the victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949. Now Philippine bases became the springboard for efforts to "contain" Communism in China. Under this rubric the bases served as logistical supports for U.S. military intervention on the Korean peninsula, and even more especially for such intervention in Vietnam. U.S. intervention — indirect and covert — succeeded in defeating the Huks and preserving the bases in the Philippines, but U.S. interventionist efforts were less successful in Korea and Vietnam, resulting only in stalemate and defeat.

III

During the 1969 Symington hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Fulbright observed that as a result of U.S. interest in the Philippine bases, "We will always resist any serious change in political and social structure of the Philippine government, which is very likely to be, in the long run, a detriment to the people of the Philippines."⁵ U.S. obsession with the preservation of the status quo and the bases was clearly to be seen in the U.S. as intervention to defeat the Huks and was to assume per-

haps even sharper definition in the U.S. support for the Marcos dictatorship from 1972 to 1986.

After the defeat of the Hukos the poverty of the Filipinos, especially of those who lived in the countryside, grew worse. The result was that in the '60s and '70s the Philippines was the scene of peasant and labor organization and strikes that affected Philippine landlords and businessmen as well as U.S. multinational corporations. Nationalists in the Philippine Congress were discussing legislative restrictions against foreign corporations doing business in the Philippines. The streets were filled with demonstrations against the Vietnam War and the U.S. use of the Philippine bases to supply that war.

Then, in September 1972, Ferdinand Marcos, having first consulted with President Nixon, declared martial law.⁶ Peasant and labor organizers, Congressional nationalists, demonstrators against U.S. bases were all thrown in jail. (Marcos dictatorship threw some 70,000 Filipinos in jail for political reasons and used torture and assassination against its political opponents.) With martial law, Marcos rule in office, so profitable to himself, was unconstitutionally prolonged. Following the declaration of martial law the U.S. government increased its military and economic aid to the Philippines and kept increasing such aid for 14 years, even as the popular opposition to the dictatorship grew and became more intense.

Washington's support for the Marcos dictatorship was a glaring example of U.S. intervention in Philippine affairs. Why did the U.S. government give this support?

Testimony from U.S. officials in Manila at that time throws some light on this question. In 1973 the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee sent two staff members to investigate conditions in the Philippines. They came back to Washington to report that "... U.S. officials appeared pre-

pared to accept that ... military bases and a familiar government are more important than the preservation of democratic institutions which were imperfect at best."⁷ A year later Charles F. Thompson, a reporter from the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, interviewed a U.S. diplomat in Manila who told him that when it came to negotiating a new bases agreement, "he preferred to deal with Marcos alone rather than to have the approval of the old nationalistic Congressmen, as would have been necessary before martial law."⁸ Later in 1974 Joseph Lelyveld wrote the *New York Times* from Manila that U.S. officials there cited the bases as the chief reason for U.S. support of martial law, for outweighing U.S. investment in their opinion.⁹

Providing background to these opinions was the fact that in the late '60s and early '70s the U.S. government was using Philippine bases as the chief source of supply for the war in Vietnam, while at the same time Philippine demonstrations against the war and the bases role in that war were growing. In these circumstances a compliant and repressive Philippine government suited the needs of the Pentagon, and Washington made no mistake in its reliance on Marcos.

One of his first moves after declaring martial law was to send a military aide to the U.S. Embassy with the message that he would not use his martial law powers to interfere with the bases.¹⁰ To the contrary. For a decade nationalists had opposed the presence of nuclear weapons in the Philippines, claiming this tended to make their country a target for nuclear reprisal. But Marcos allowed the U.S. to bring nuclear armed ships and planes into the Philippines and to store nuclear weapons there, without telling the Philippine people. In 1971 according to a top secret National Security Council document the authorized ceiling on nuclear weapons deployment in the Philippines was 201, including 115 tactical bombs on Navy ships. In 1973, two years after the declaration of martial law, the authorized number of nuclear weapons at Clark and Subic was up to 260.¹¹ In 1980 after the fall of the Shah and the increase of instability in the Middle East,

Marcos publicly gave the Pentagon the right to use the Philippine bases for military intervention in that part of the world.¹² In 1983 Marcos attitude was summed up when he guaranteed the U.S. "unhindered" use of the bases in the U.S.-Philippine Bases Agreement of that year.

Under Marcos the bases prospered, but not the people of the Philippines. "By the mid-1970s seven out of every ten Filipinos were worse off economically as a result of martial law. . . . Two out of every three Filipinos were living . . . below the poverty line . . . a substantially greater percentage of persons . . . than when Marcos had become president."¹³ As a result, opposition to the dictatorship increased, especially among the rural and urban poor. In the first years of martial law this opposition tended to be led by the left. After the assassination of Benigno Aquino in August 1983, however, the center forces in the Philippine political life moved into active opposition to the dictator and he became virtually isolated. At the same time both the legal left and a Communist-led guerrilla organization, the New People's Army, were growing, nationalist moods and anti-nuclear and anti-bases movements were on the increase.

Washington had supported the dictator Marcos for all these years because he had seemed capable of protecting the status quo in the Philippines. As it became evident, after the Aquino assassination, that this was no longer the case, important segments of the Reagan Administration began to make connections with the elite opposition in Philippine politics and the military, leaving the President and the White House to hang on to the Philippine dictator to the very last minute.

Ray Bonner's book, *Walzing with the Dictator*, details U.S. secret funding of NAMFREL, the clean elections organization that helped Aquino win the 1986 election against Marcos, and for RAM, the organization of opposition military personnel that led to the military revolt.¹⁴ But it was

the Philippine people, with their long tradition of resistance, that had the final say. It was their presence, by the millions, in the streets of Manila in February 1986 that foiled the military of the dictator and delivered the death blow to Marcos' rule.

IV

In the post-Marcos era, the attitude of the United States government to U.S. bases in the Philippines remains the same. In his testimony before a Congressional hearing in April 1986, Gaston J. Sigur, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, made this very plain: ". . . no one should underestimate our resolve . . . to preserve our access to the facilities at Clark and Subic through 1991 and beyond — with the continued cooperation and support of the Filipino people"¹⁵

Whatever the attitude of the Filipino people, it appears that the United States will get the cooperation of President Aquino. In 1984, as nationalist sentiment in the Philippines grew in the last years of the Marcos dictatorship, Corason Aquino, with nine other outstanding leaders of the anti-Marcos opposition, signed what was known as the Convenors' Statement calling for the removal of U.S. bases from the Philippines. In the election campaign of 1986 she retreated from this stand, however, saying that the bases could remain until 1991 (the date of their expiration according to the agreement now in force), and that after that she would "keep her options open." Although this is still her position, Peter Bacho, a U.S. scholar and writer on Philippine affairs, says that "it is now almost assured that some form of accommodation will be reached."¹⁶

There are today, however, certain new features that bring to the fore and give added weight to the question of U.S. bases and intervention in the Philippines.

In the first place, the Reagan Administration, in pursuit of a policy of military intervention in the Middle East that

began with Carter and the fall of the Shah, has brought the United States to the verge of war with Iran. Since Clark and Subic are an important source of supply for the U.S., forces in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, this situation can only bring added intensity to Washington's preoccupation with the bases.¹⁷

Second, there are two provisions of the new Philippine constitution that can be seen as concessions to the nationalist sentiment that grew as the Marcos regime came to an end. One declares the Philippines to be nuclear weapons-free, "consistent with the national interest." The other mandates that any new bases agreement must be achieved by a treaty requiring passage by a two-thirds vote in the Philippine Senate and the U.S. Senate, thus opening the door to public discussion. Previous basing agreements have been reached by executive agreement between the two heads of state, obviating such discussion. When these provisions were announced in September 1986, Senate Republican leader, Robert J. Dole, spoke sharply against them, saying they endangered U.S. bases in the Philippines.¹⁸ In June of this year Secretary of State Shultz expressed opposition in an indirect manner, when, after meeting with President Aquino and new legislators, he spoke out against a nuclear-free ASEAN region (which includes the Philippines).¹⁹

Finally, last March, President Reagan signed a "funding" appropriating a multi-million dollar grant for increased CIA activity in the Philippines and adding a dozen agents to the Manila CIA staff of 115. Washington intelligence sources interpreted this to mean "helping the Philippine military with its intelligence gathering, providing them with computers, computer training, detailed maps ... overflights ... the implementation of political dirty tricks." Richard Kessler, an Asian expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace stressed the serious nature of this step as the "first symbol of direct U.S. involvement in the counter-insurgency campaign."²⁰

It is against this background that a vigorous public discussion of U.S. intervention, especially of the covert variety, in Philippine affairs has occurred, in which this intervention has been linked to the question of the U.S. bases. Government officials, the press, leaders of public opinion (including those in the movement against U.S. bases and nuclear weapons) have all expressed concern about this matter. As a result the Philippine House of Representatives has established a committee to investigate such intervention, and the Senate appears likely to do the same.²¹

Although it was Colonel Gregorio Honasan's attempted coup of August 28 that triggered proposals for Congressional investigation, it was around the figure of retired General John Singlaub that the public discussion first centered. Singlaub was the confederate of Colonel Oliver North in sending aid to the Nicaraguan contras and is a leader of the World Anti-Communist League (the Philippine chapter of which was filled with cronies of Ferdinand Marcos).²²

Singlaub has been in the Philippines several times. (A well-placed Philippine military source says, "Singlaub comes in and out of the country. He can even land at Clark without our knowing it.")²³ But interest in Singlaub picked up in November 1986 when his presence in the Philippines became widely known. From November on, Singlaub is reported to have been in the Philippines for four months. He declared himself to be in the Philippines to hunt for buried Japanese treasure, a claim discounted by many Philippine observers as a cover. Be that as it may, U.S. Ambassador Bosworth interceded with the Philippine government in behalf of Singlaub and his treasure-hunting venture.²⁴

While in the Philippines, several Philippine sources say, Singlaub met with various right-wing and business groups, giving them the impression that he represented the U.S. government. In November he met with Aquino's Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, shortly before Enrile was dis-

missed from the cabinet for alleged participation in planning a military coup against Aquino. Indeed the right-wing U.S. magazine *Insight* reported that Singlaub was "joining forces" with Enrile. He was reported to have been encouraging the formation of "anti-Communist" death squads, as a leader of such squads in Enrile's home province testified. During the Vietnam war Singlaub was one of the on-site commanders of Operation Phoenix, the U.S.-directed assassination and counter-terror program. He is said to have brought veterans of this program to the Philippines to train Filipinos in such work.²⁵

Singlaub's role in the Philippines is said to have aroused discussion in the Congress of the United States, where there has been interest in what part, if any, Singlaub played in the August 28 coup.²⁶

There is evidence that a central purpose of Singlaub's activities has been to promote support for U.S. bases in the Philippines and to organize opposition to those who want their removal. In May 1987 former Attorney General Ramsey Clark led a "Fact Finding Mission" to the Philippines. The report of this mission credits Singlaub with having initiated businessmen's associations at Olongapo and Angeles cities adjacent to Subic Base and Clark Air Field, the avowed purpose of which is to combat public demonstrations against the bases in the coming period. It further reports "Those organizers whom we interviewed in Angeles near the site of the base were fearful that they would be targeted with dire consequences as a result of their opposition to the bases." Philippine activists in Cebu also told the Clark Mission that the effect of terrorist squads such as those promoted by Singlaub "has been to label as 'red' any form of dissent such as questioning the presence of the U.S. bases or the practices of the transnational corporation."²⁷

A top Philippine security official gave this explanation of Singlaub's role in the Philippines, "I think the American

covert activities here are aimed at a future national campaign to keep the U.S. military bases."²⁸ If this opinion has any truth, it throws a certain light on the boost President Reagan gave to the CIA activity in the Philippines last spring.

The role of Singlaub suggests that U.S. covert activities have been connected with an effort to preserve U.S. bases in the Philippines. Leaders of the Philippine anti-nuclear weapons and anti-bases movement believe the same purpose inspired the Honasan coup attempt. That is why they have been especially vocal in charging the U.S. covert complicity in that coup attempt.

Events in the Philippines that preceded the August 28 coup tend to lend some credibility to their belief. On August 10 a nationalist bloc of seven members of the House of Representatives started working on a bill calling for the dismantling of U.S. bases in their country to end what they called "the continued subservience of the Philippines to U.S. interests." They also announced that they would push for a national referendum on the bases as provided for by the new constitution.²⁹

Emphasis was given to the Congressional discussion a few days later when the USS *Missouri* visited Subic Base on its way to the Persian Gulf to protect Kuwaiti tankers bearing the U.S. flag. The ship's visit brought forward the concerns of the Philippine anti-bases movement. Frank Arcellana and Reverend Elmo Manapat, leaders of the No-Nukes Movement and the Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition, respectively, claimed that the *Missouri* was equipped with nuclear cruise missiles and so should be banned from Philippine ports under the anti-nuclear provision of the new constitution. Noting that the *Missouri* was on its way to the Persian Gulf, Manapat protested, "By allowing the USS *Missouri* to dock in the Philippines we are allowing ourselves to be dragged into a conflict we have no business to be part of."³⁰

Then, shortly after this on August 19, Senators Wiggberto Tañada and Aquilino Pimentel introduced two separate but similar pieces of legislation setting off what the New York Times described as a "nationwide debate"³¹ over the presence of the bases. These bills, if enacted, would effectively ban nuclear weapons from Philippine territory (land, water, and air-space) and so would put teeth in the anti-nuclear provision of the new constitution. Almost immediately half the Philippine Senate (12 of the 24 members) voiced support for these bills, "casting doubt," wrote the *Boston Globe* correspondent from Manila, "on the future" of the U.S. bases in the Philippines.³²

Juan Ponce Enrile, Singlaub's ally, who openly espouses the retention of the Philippine bases, was quick to comment on this proposed legislation and its Senatorial support. He said the ban on nuclear weapons would render the bases "useless" to the United States, adding further, "Under the present composition of the Senate I doubt whether you can get 16 Senators to ratify the treaty."³³ While Enrile's doubts about the possibility of a 2/3 Senatorial vote to ratify the treaty may have been exaggerated, these remarks of his, considering their source, could have been taken both as a threat to the Philippine Senate "in its present composition" and an appeal to the U.S. for support.

On August 24 what appeared to be Malacañang's response to the anti-nuclear bills (and possibly to Enrile's press comments) was carried by *Malaya* over the by-line of Robert Reid, AP:

Some Presidential staff sources, speaking on condition that they not be identified by name, maintain that the constitutional provision is not a clear-cut ban because the government may deem the presence of such weapons "consistent with the national interest."

Political sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, say the President could lobby quietly for the bill to take a backseat or, if it is approved, use her veto.

The remarks from Malacañang may have been intended to reassure those in the Philippines and the United States who support the presence of nuclear weapons in the Philippines. They evidently had little effect on Enrile's former chief of security, Colonel Gregorio Honasan; he went ahead with his attempt to topple the Aquino government on August 28. If there was an implicit threat in Enrile's statement about the "present composition" of the Senate, this was certainly its concrete manifestation.

In the weeks that followed, Frank Arcellana and Reverend Elmo Manapat, speaking for the Philippine anti-nuclear movement, charged that the coup attempt repeated a pattern observed in the Asia-Pacific region. Citing the Senate bills to ban nuclear weapons and their support by half the Senators, they compared the situation in the Philippines to that in Fiji, where, they claimed, the US had covertly encouraged a coup against a newly elected Labor-Coalition government that had taken a stand against nuclear weapons in that country. Reverend Manapat later enlarged on this by pointing out that Honasan, the leader of the failed coup, had proclaimed one of his aims to be to junk the new constitution and return to the constitution of 1935 which had no anti-nuclear provision in it.³⁴

Support for this point of view came from another quite different quarter: the Financial Post of October 22, 1987, carried an interview with Brig. Gen. Rodolfo Biazon, former Superintendent of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) and concurrently Philippine Marine Commander. He explained possible U.S. involvement in August 28 coup in the following way: "Certain sectors in the U.S. government are

obviously unhappy over the anti-nuclear arms provision of the Constitution and are worried over the fate of the U.S. military facilities in the Philippines under the Aquino government."

There were other interpretations (not necessarily mutually exclusive) of the coup's motivations: punishment of the President for "neglect of the armed forces" — and her concessions to labor in a recent transport workers' strike,³⁵ military ambition and desire for outright rule, etc. Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus, when still a member of the Senate, made an unusual contribution to the discussion, suggesting as a motive force in the Honasan rebellion the obsessive anti-Communism that is a feature of US policy in the Philippines (promoted especially as political justification for the bases). Manglapus said that, even if US denials of specific complicity in the coup were valid, US right-wingers should acknowledge their "ideological paternity" of the rebel military officers, "the home-grown Ramboos who saw Malacañang as a bed of communist-coddlers who ought to be exterminated."³⁶

But there was evidently widespread agreement in the Philippines as to the possibility of US covert intervention in the Honasan coup, as reflected in a report from Manila published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:

In a meeting Friday with several US embassy officials, a high-level Philippine government official described his own suspicion that a "lost command" of the CIA, maneuvering outside the normal channel of operations, played a role in events surrounding the August 28 military revolt.

In an interview later, the official said he met with the US Embassy representatives at their own request. They wanted to know, he said, "About perceptions of US involvement in the events of the last two weeks."

The palace official said he responded that there was a general feeling that the US was involved.

He said the US officials did not answer that question directly but instead responded that Reagan "made this very strong statement" in support of the Aquino government.

"They never tell you what they are up to," he said.

"These CIA guys who are in town, we perceive them as part of the lost command."³⁷

The press carried many reports suggesting U.S. complicity in the coup. Three such reports involved Clark Air Field: that Honasan had been seen at Clark in the days before the coup conferring with the U.S. military; that Honasan had been rescued when the coup failed by a helicopter from Clark Air Field; and that following the coup another rebel military man, a Marcos loyalist named Reynaldo Cabauatan, had held a press conference at a location inside the base at Clark Air Field.³⁸ Two involved the U.S. Embassy in Manila: the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported an interview with an aide to Cardinal Sin who claimed to have been phoned by someone he knew at the U.S. Embassy and asked to persuade Cardinal Sin to urge President Aquino to join a military junta, "the only solution." The U.S. government in another report is alleged to have called Malacañang at the height of the crisis and offered President Aquino "safe conduct" from the presidential palace.³⁹

The discussion has intensified. Two months after the Honasan attempt the press carried the names of two U.S. military attaches at the Embassy who were reported to have been with the rebels at the time of uprising: Lt. Col. Victor Raphael at Honasan's headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo, and Major Dennis Lawler at Villamor Air Base. In the Raphael case, several accounts quoted a confidential report by General

Fidel Ramos, Aquino's chief of staff, alleging that at one point during the August coup attempt Raphael urged Aquino's loyalist forces not to attack the coup leaders, with whom Raphael had spent much of his time during the past 20 months. Ambassador Nicholas Platt acknowledged that Raphael had been at Honsan's headquarters, "to keep track of fast moving developments." The next day, October 28, the U.S. Embassy announced the recall to the United States of Lt. Col. Raphael. Ambassador Platt stressed that the charges against him were unwarranted. Raphael's recall "underscored growing anti-American sentiment within the Aquino government," according to Mark Fineman, Manila correspondent of the *Los Angeles Times*.⁴⁰

Hours after the Embassy announced Raphael's recall, two U.S. airmen, in uniform, a retired Air Force sergeant who may or may not have been a U.S. citizen, and a Filipino businessman were shot and killed near Clark Air Field. U.S. officials said they did not know who was responsible, but a Philippine security commander at Clark Air Field and the Mayor of Angeles City said they suspected Communist guerrillas. Local residents also expressed suspicion that right wing forces, who had sought to destabilize the Government in recent weeks, might be responsible.⁴¹ The U.S. response to the killings was immediate, however. 500 Marines were flown in to Clark Air Field, and U.S. servicemen in full battle-gear and with live ammunition were sent to patrol outside the bases in a five mile radius around their circumference. The U.S. authorities announced these measures were taken to provide more security for the bases. Figures as diverse as Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus and Senator Juan Ponce Enrile protested the off-base patrols as infringements on Philippine sovereignty. Warning of a "new Vietnam," Philippine Senator Nepali Gonzales in the *Malaya* of November 5, 1987, said that the "idleblessonofhistory" was that protection of U.S. lives and property in other countries has served as justification for U.S. intervention. "It will only take one encounter between members of the New People's Army and U.S. soldiers to justify an escalation of American military involvement here," he cautioned.

Although Raphael has been recalled, in general the U.S. Embassy has denied all reports of U.S. complicity in the August coup, declared full support for President Aquino, and warned that all U.S. military and economic aid to the Philippines would be cut off should Aquino be overthrown. Washington has done the same.

The denials of the Embassy and Washington evidently have not settled matters for many in the Philippines. For them the appearance of ambivalence in Washington's policy remained. Two Manila papers wrestled with what seemed to be the contradictory aspects of U.S. policy in the Philippines -- support for President Aquino and support for her opponents in the right wing military -- and they came up with different answers. The *Inquirer* (a paper of centrist policy) of October 5 saw a split in the U.S. government between the "liberals" in the State Department who support "the renaissance of democracy" in the Philippines, and the "apostles of geo-politics at the Pentagon who want to hold on to the bases even if it means encouraging right-wing lunatics." While this analysis may be true in suggesting the origins of the different tendencies in U.S. policy, it described them as if they were completely dichotomous and in no way complementary. The left of center *Malaya* of September 2 on the other hand, taking note to the alleged offer of the Embassy to give President Aquino safe conduct from Malacatang, wrote that this "could only be interpreted as one more instance of the U.S. trying to straddle both sides of the fence in the hope of being in the good graces of whoever wins in the end." *Malaya* indicated the substratum of conservative policy that connects U.S. support for Aquino with support for her right-wing military opponents, but seemed to underplay the active intervention of the United States government in events and what appeared to be its dominant preference for Aquino.

Ellen Tordesillas, writing under her byline in the *Maldya* of October 12 offered what was a more subtle and comprehensive explanation of the contradictions of U.S. policy. Writing about the new U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Platt, she said, "Platt is here to carry out the U.S. strategy of sustaining the enemies of the Aquino government, not necessarily to topple her, but just enough to unsettle her and make her abandon whatever influence her nationalist advisers have on her."

It is plausible to suggest that the policy ascribed to the U.S. by Tordesillas has been that of the U.S. government towards the Aquino government ever since its inception. Tordesillas' explanation is one that makes sense out of the series of 5 military "revolts" that have, from the beginning, pre-occupied Aquino, pushing her farther and farther to the right: as, over this period, she has broken off negotiations and declared war on the NPA, purged her cabinet of "leftists," ditched any effort at effective social reform, endorsed vigilantes, and cracked down on labor. The ultimate effect of such a U.S. policy, it seems, would be to turn the Aquino government into a militant defender of a conservative status quo in the Philippines, at the center of which, of course, would stand the U.S. bases. All indications are that this is the role Washington has wished the Aquino government to assume, ever since that of Ferdinand Marcos proved incapable of fulfilling it any more.

The views of Rodney Tasker, Manila correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, show a similarity to those of Tordesillas in suggesting that there is no hard and fast line between Washington's support for Aquino and its support for her right wing opponents. He approaches the matter from the standpoint of a successful military coup against Aquino and says, "After initial protests, Washington might also have to accept a fait accompli, as long as any new leadership in Manila was not hostile, and posed no immediate threat to the future of U.S. military bases."⁴²

However they differed otherwise, both the *Inquirer* and *Maldya* were unanimous in their assertion (with Rodney Tasker) of the main point: it is the bases that are the touchstone and primary source of U.S. intervention in the Philippines. *Maldya* says, "The U.S. will throw anybody to the wolves as long as that is necessary to protect its interests. And such interests in the Philippines are primarily the military bases that many in the Aquino government would rather see dismantled."⁴³ The *Inquirer*: "The bottom line is evidently the bases. For as long as they are here, there will always be factions within the U.S. government which, for one reason or another, will feel obliged to resort to interventionism in the Philippines."⁴⁴

What of the future? Representative Gregorio Andalana of the left-wing Partido ng Bayan of North Cotabato has this to say, "First it will be the executive (that will be controlled by the military), then this Congress and the people along the way."⁴⁵ There is historical precedent for such an outlook. Today the Philippine bases are essential to U.S. military intervention in the Mideast, and there is a growing opposition to the bases in the Philippine Congress and in the public at large. It was just such a conjunction of circumstances — U.S. military intervention in Vietnam supplied by Philippine bases and a growing Philippine opposition to the bases — that was an element in the U.S. support for martial law in 1972. Will this be the case today, with or without Aquino?

Footnotes

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