



APPENDIX 2.7

CONFIDENTIAL CABLE FROM THE US EMBASSY IN MANILA, “CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ CALLS ON PRESIDENT MARCOS,” 26 NOVEMBER 1976

Here, Marcos is reported as saying that there is “some truth” to the Amnesty International Report detailing human right abuses—including torture—by the military under martial law. However, he insisted that such abuses were not government policy.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified
Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 May 2006

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Action EA-09

Info Oct-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SAJ-01

DHA-02 /094 W

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R 260846Z NOV 76

FM AMembassy Manila

To SecState WashDC 3296

Info AMEmbassy Taipei

AMEmbassy Singapore

AMEmbassy Kuala Lumpur

AMEmbassy Bangkok

AMEmbassy Jakarta

AMEmbassy Tripoli

AMEmbassy Moscow

Uslo Oeking

Cincpac

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INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
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AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 18522

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, RP, CH, TW, UR

SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ CALI ON PRESIDENT MARCOS

1. SUMMARY. DURING A LONG DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT MARCOS, CONGRESSMAN STEPHEN SOLARZ EXPLORED SEVERAL ISSUES. ON THE PROSPECTS OF LIFTING MARTIAL LAW, MARCOS ENUMERATED A NUMBER OF THREATS, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY, FACING THE COUNTRY. HE INDICATED THAT WHILE THE OUTLINES OF THE FUTURE POLITICAL SYSTEM ARE VAGUE, IT WILL BE A STRONG AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEM. ON MINDANAO, MARCOS SAID THAT MRS. MARCOS' TRIP TO LIBYA HAD BEEN HELPFUL, BUT UNTIL LIBYAN SUPPORT ENDS, "I WOULD BE HESITANT TO SAY WE HAVE SOLVED THE PROBLEM." HE ALSO
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Figure 1. A copy of the declassified cable.

Source: US Department of State. 1976 November 26. "Congressman Solarz Call on President Marcos." Document number 1976MANILA18522, film number D760440-0166.

<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=280604&dt=2082&dl=1345>.

C o n f i d e n t i a l Section 1 of 2 Manila 18522

Cincpac for Polad

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Subject: Congressman Solarz cali [sic] on president Marcos

1. Summary. During a long discussion with president Marcos, congressman Stephen Solarz explored several issues. On the prospects of lifting martial law, Marcos enumerated a number of threats, economic and security, facing the country. He indicated that while the outlines of the future political system are vague, it will be a strong authoritarian system. On Mindanao, Marcos said that Mrs. Marcos' trip to Libya had been helpful, but [sic] until Libyan support ends, "I would be hesitant to say we have solved the problem." He also discussed the security threat from Vietnam, which he termed a "surrogate" of the USSR, and from the possibility of a USSR/PRC rapprochement. In this regard, he indicated that he would be untroubled by establishment of US/PRC relations and the attendant abrogation of the ROC/US defense treaty (unless it resulted in occupation of Taiwan [sic] by the PRC), and that U.S. bases in the RP furnish a necessary balance in the Western Pacific. Continued economic aid in the [sic] area is, in Marcos' opinion, an important factor in promoting stable, strong economies, capable of resisting "predator nations." On human rights, Marcos said that there was some truth to the recent Amnesty International (AI) report, but that GOP investigation indicated that "many of the allegations are false." End summary.

2. Congressman Stephen J. Solarz, accompanied by DCM, called on president Marcos on November 25. A report on other activities of Solarz during Philippine visit is being sent Septel.

3. Opening a discussion which ran to one hour and twenty minutes, Solarz explained his position on the international relations committee and his interest in the development process, and asked for Marcos' comments on the relevance of martial law to development. This occasioned a by-now familiar recitation by Marcos of the rationale for martial law: the history of disorder, the necessity to create conditions for development, the need to establish peace and order and a climate of governance, the measure of coercion which is necessary to any effective government.

4. Asked about the prospects of terminating martial law, Marcos stated there are many factors in deciding whether to move from a "crisis government to a more diffused sharing of power." "Ontop [sic] of it

all," he said, "there is the economic situation," and went on to cite the prospect of a rise in oil prices as a contributing factor to economic instability [sic]. Marcos described his plans to organize a national assembly, "in spite of the wish expressed by the people in referenda," and then launched into a lengthy (and familiar) discussion of the legal justification for establishing martial law in the first place. He said that the people have reiterated (in the Oct 16-17 referendum) their wish to maintain martial law - "I interpret the results to mean that they have left the matter to me." Barangays, he said, were now meeting and studying the matter. Ased [sic] again about prospects for terminating martial law, Marcos said that his objective is to establish a strong authoritarian (not totalitarian) system on a free enterprise but egalitarian base. He acknowledged that he sees only the outlines of the future system; the final shape is unclear.

5. Marcos discussed the Mindanao situation. 26,000 rebels, he said, have surrendered, but there are one to three thousand "hard core" who receive [sic] "minimum" support from outside. Although Tun Mustapha had been instrumental in organizing the most recent phase of the [sic] rebellion in the early 1970's. "Malaysia is now interested in helping" solve the problem. Marcos said that Mrs. Marcos' visit to Libya has been helpful in bringing Khaddafi around to a more accurate appreciation of the Moro situation: "she told me he actually believed we were committing genocide." Marcos hoped that Khaddafi would take up the invitation to visit. The RP, where he would see for himself that "Muslims actually receive more in funds and services than the Christians." Asked about prospects for resolution of the Mindanao problem, Marcos said that funds from abroad had made it very difficult, and necessitated the "process of demagoguery" by which he brought surrendered rebels to Manila for public ceremonies. "Until Libya stops support," he said, "I would be hesitant [sic] to say we have solved the problem."

6. Mindanao, said Marcos, is just one aspect of the security picture. He stated that the GOP is being careful in their relations with the SRV, because of its feeling that Vietnam is a "surrogate" for the USSR. He said that they will proceed to establish relations, but "we are not naive," and it is expected that Vietnam will not settle down for 5-7 [sic] years. He said the GOP is watching the movement of the huge arms stocks left in VN, and claimed there is evidence of their appearance in Malaysia. Marcos concluded that notwithstanding the mutual defense treaty, "the U.S. would be unable to help us," if trouble developed.

7. Where, asked Solarz, did Marcos see that U.S./1 3 [sic])*-interest lay in extending economic development aid? Marcos' unhesitating [sic] response was "security." Weak economies will be vulnerable to designs of other nations [sic], and he specified the USSR and "perhaps in the future, China." [sic] digressing, he thought the U.S. must maintain a presence in the Western Pacific. Marcos said that other ASEAN leaders at the Bali summit had criticized the presence of U.S. bases; he had asked in response how else to balance the growing influence of the USSR. It is important, however, that RP sovereignty be recognized and that the RP not appear weak. This, he thought, could be accomplished while retaining integrity of control for the U.S. military commander. Returning to economics, Marcos said that economic development is the most effective way of dealing with the threat of "massive infiltration and subversion." Any slowing of development creates grievances which can be exploited by "predator nations." Economic aid and a "just" international trade are perhaps more important than military aid.

8. Congressman Solarz asked for Marcos' opinion on the future. Of the PRC-US relationship and its relevance to the RP. Marcos responded that the greatest fear in Asia is that the USSR and PRC will get together, that "all thinking leaders have voiced this fear." He thought that "anything which can prevent this partnership is to the good." Solarz asked if establishment of relations, and the necessary abrogation of the ROC/US mutual defense treaty, would result in a loss of U.S. credibility. Marcos thought that was less important than the understandings between the USSR and U.S. if Taiwan were occupied by the PRC, the RP would be that much closer to the "communist giant." Marcos said that the "problem of insurgency will always be there," and that if the PRC were to support the insurgency in the RP, "we would [sic] be in trouble."

9 Congressman Solarz stated that speaking as an advocate of economic aid, he was troubled by the Amnesty International (AI) report on denial of human rights in the Philippines, and asked for Marcos' comments. Marcos said that there was some truth to the report; there have been instances of torture, but but [sic] they have been punished. But is "absolutely false," he claimed, to say that it is a matter of policy. Arrest, he said, is preceded by accumulation of "overwhelming" evidence. He stated that in cases where torture had occurred, officers were motivated by personal experiences [sic] or reacting to the heat of the situation. Solarz asked if there had been an investigation. Yes, responded

Marcos, and the results indicated that “many allegations are false.” Solarz asked [sic] if there might be an official response. Marcos responded obliquely, and with some agitation, by asking how they could respond when they did not receive a copy of the report in time to react prior to release. He said that they had cooperated completely with AI—they could go anywhere and interview anyone. He suggested that the people interviewed may have been done for punishment and were desperate to gain popular support. Marcos said the GOP is fighting communists, leftists and subversives, and the allegations in the AI report are “standard agitprop” -using people involved in the arrests to divert attention.

10. Congressman Solarz requested that any report on his meeting be provided to him in Washington. This message was not cleared with him prior to his departure.

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