

WORLD AND NATION

Military leader charged in Aquino assassination

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A government prosecutor on Wednesday charged the country's most powerful military commander and 25 other men in connection with the murders of opposition leader Benigno Aquino and the man once called his assassin.

Prosecutors said the charges against Armed Forces Chief Gen. Fabian C. Ver and two other top generals close to President Ferdinand E. Marcos would lead to a "free and open" trial to show there is no cover-up in the killing of Marcos' chief rival on Aug. 21, 1983.

Most of the accused were part of the airport security operation assigned to protect Aquino, who was shot as he stepped off the airliner that brought him back to the Philippines after three years in self-exile.

Seventeen officers and soldiers led by Aviation Security Chief Brig. Gen. Luther Custodio were accused of directly conspiring to kill Aquino

and Rolando Galman — the man previously alleged to be his killer. The charges carry a possible death penalty.

Ver and seven others were accused of being accessories in cover-up attempts. Among them is Maj. Gen. Prospero Olivas who conducted a military investigation that concluded Galman was the killer. Each count carries a possible 20-year sentence.

Businessman Hermilo Gosuico was accused as an accomplice, which carries a possible life term. Galman's children testified Gosuico was among the men who took their father away three days before the assassination.

Technically, all 26 suspects were charged with double murder. But death penalties are only possible in the charges against Custodio and the 16 others accused of being principals in the murder.

Marcos initially indicated he supported the military's claim that Aquino was killed by Galman, but later appointed a five-member fact-finding board whose 10-month investigation led to the charges against the military men.

Ombudsman Justice Bernardo Fernandez, who filed the charges, said he was aware that many people would have liked to see Marcos himself accused.

"I don't care whether or not the decision is popular as long as I am right," he said.

Aquino's brother, Agapito, who has accused Marcos of plotting the assassination, said "what is missing is the mastermind."

The prosecutors said the most likely triggerman was either Sgt. Rogelio Moreno or Filomeno Miranda, both of whom have been charged as conspirators.

USAF still searching for plane

Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — Searchers scanning Caribbean waters where a U.S. Air Force plane carrying 21 Americans went down said they made sonar contact Wednesday with what may be the C-130A's wreckage.

Search parties on a beach north of Puerto Castillo found a sleeping bag, aircrew helmet bags, helmets and an unused life raft with the serial number of the missing aircraft, the U.S. Defense Department said in a statement released in Washington.

The C-130A went down in stormy weather off Honduras' east coast Tuesday. Robert Callahan, press attache at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, said the 21 aboard were five crew members and 16 passengers.

The USS McCloy, a U.S. Navy frigate, made a sonar contact which will be investigated to determine if it is the missing aircraft," the Pentagon said. A Defense Department spokesman, Lt. Col. Gene Sands, said it was unclear whether the plane crashed or ditched deliberately.

The embassy spokesman said the plane was assigned to the 440th Tactical Airlift Wing, an Air Force reserve unit based at Billy Mitchell Field in Milwaukee.

The U.S. military officials said the aircraft was on a "routine airlift mission" from Howard AFB, Panama, headquarters of the U.S. Southern Command.

Legislator: keep farm programs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Agriculture Chairman Kika de la Garza said Wednesday he will fight the Reagan administration to keep current farm programs intact.

Secretary of Agriculture John Block has said the administration

hoped to move toward more "market-oriented" programs in an attempt to begin weaning the industry from government-backed support prices and loan programs.

"I would put a hold on for a year or 18 months and see where we are," said de la Garza, D-Texas, in an interview. "This is not the time for a

radical philosophical changeover."

De la Garza said farm programs have already been cut \$20 billion in four years, but probably face additional cuts this year because the public, and consequently the Congress, doesn't recognize the serious plight of the farmer.

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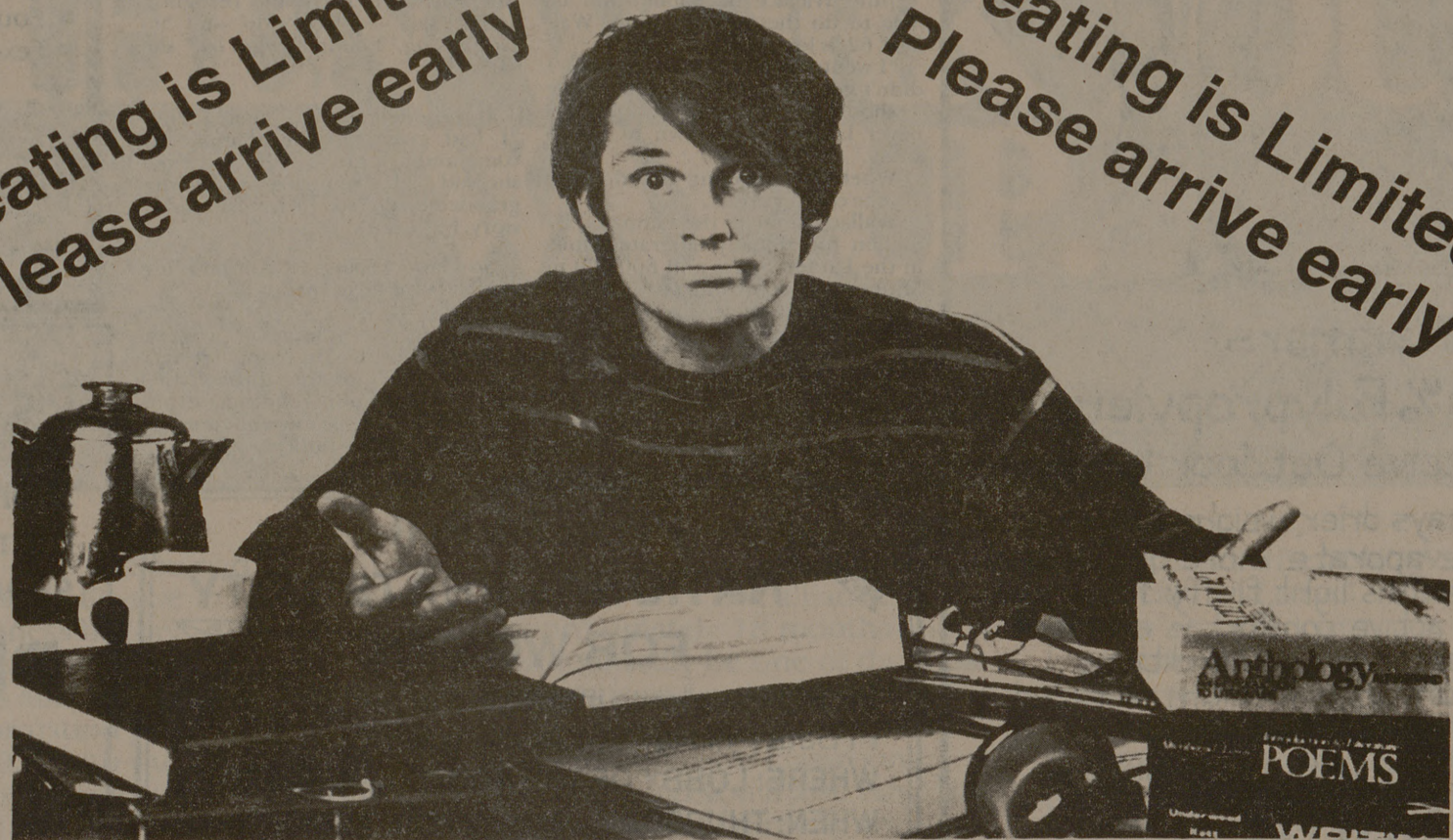
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