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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Philippines: Prospects for Violent Opposition []

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SUMMARY

Members of the non-Communist opposition, frustrated over their inability to influence the political situation, are becoming more vocal about using violent tactics against President Marcos' regime. Prominent Marcos opponent former Senator Aquino recently suggested for the first time that he too is giving up nonviolent means. Aquino's assertion may be designed to prevent further erosion of his influence within opposition circles and to put pressure on Marcos to seek an accommodation with him. []

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The Non-Communist Opposition

Most leaders of the non-Communist opposition are politicians from pre-martial-law days. They have little popularity as an alternative to Marcos because the public believes the primary difference between them and Marcos is that they are out of power while he is in. The non-Communists are also handicapped by their inability to agree on common goals, leadership, or organization for countering Marcos. []

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In recent months, various prominent opposition members have talked more freely about the need for a coalition with leftists and the use of violent tactics. Thus far, we have no reports that this has gone beyond the discussion stage. The use of violence as a political tool was common in the Philippines prior to martial law, and it would not be out of character for Marcos' opponents to resort to this tactic if they concluded nonviolent methods were ineffective. []

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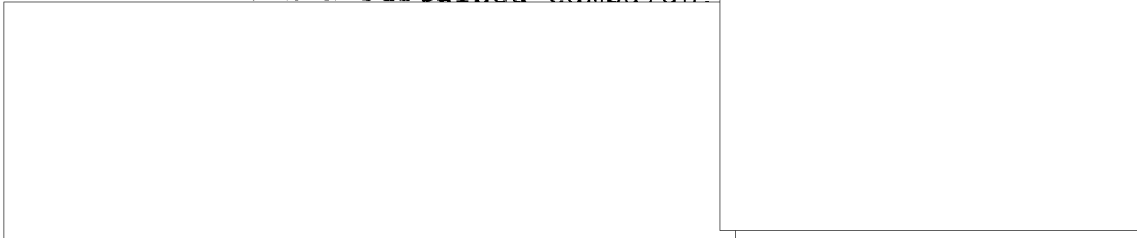
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Urban terrorism, which requires neither sophisticated organization nor materials, would be well within the capability of the opposition, but random terrorist acts alone would not topple Marcos. Only a sustained campaign that could elicit other acts of antigovernment activity by a wide variety of groups would cause Marcos serious problems. It is not clear that enough members of the non-Communist opposition have either the will or the desire to conduct such a sustained campaign.



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The Role of Senator Aquino

Aquino, the most popular opposition figure, in the past argued in favor of nonviolent opposition. In early 1980, reports circulated in Manila that he was trying to negotiate an accommodation with Marcos. This tarnished his image among his opposition colleagues, who believed he was preparing to sell out to Marcos. Aquino's departure in May for medical treatment in the United States further undercut his influence with the opposition.

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Aquino may have several motives for implying that he too has concluded violence now is necessary. If, as reported, his moderate colleagues are increasingly attracted to terrorism as a tactic, he probably would not want to foreclose this option and risk further undercutting his position as a leader. Aquino also may believe that Marcos will be more inclined to accommodate his opponents if he concludes that widespread urban terrorism is likely. Moreover, He probably hopes that the US will be sufficiently concerned about threats of widespread violence to put pressure on Marcos to relax martial law regulations and to permit greater political participation. Like most Filipinos, Aquino tends to regard the United States as responsible for both the cause and the solution of whatever problem arises in the Philippines.



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