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INTERNATIONAL**Marcos aide almost as influential as ever****General Ver, though officially on leave, continues to wield power**

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Officially, Gen. Fabian Ver — Philippine armed forces chief of staff, and President Ferdinand Marcos's relative, bodyguard, and alter ego — is on leave while he stands trial for complicity in the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr.

In reality, informed military sources say, he is almost as active and influential as ever.

General Ver still controls the country's largest intelligence organization (one of his sons controls another); he still plays an active role in assuring the President's personal security; and his protégés still obtain the lion's share of top-level military promotions.

In October 1984, a fact-finding board investigating the assassination of Mr. Aquino, who was shot on arrival at Manila International Airport in August 1983, accused Ver and the country's intelligence community of complicity in the murder.

Ver took leave, reportedly at the President's instructions though officially of his own volition, from his chief of staff position. He was succeeded by Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos, another relative of the President but a rival of Ver.

Nonetheless Ver continues to live in the grounds of Malacañang, the presidential palace, and still has virtually unlimited access to the President, military sources say. The sources add that he works almost daily in the office of the National Intelligence and Security Authority (NISA), the country's largest intelligence outfit.

Theoretically Ver relinquished the director-generalship of NISA after the publication of the fact-finding board's report; in fact, military sources say, he still runs the agency. One of NISA's lesser functions is to act as the "intelligence arm" of the Tanodbayan, the civilian body prosecuting Ver and 25 others for the Aquino assassination.

Ver's most enduring service to the President is as his bodyguard. He still performs this function, sources close to the palace say.

While Ver still reportedly controls NISA, two of his sons are in charge of what many observers say is the Philippines' most powerful security and intelligence agency, the Presidential Security Command, which is entrusted with protecting the President and his family.

Since General Ramos took over as acting chief of staff, he has been trying to replace generals loyal to Ver with his own appointees, sources say. He has until recently been totally unsuccessful in this.

Ramos finally obtained advancement for some of his protégés a few weeks ago. But the success of Ramos's nominees are not viewed by his supporters as a sign of

growing power.

"The promotions are a concession by the President to pacify Ramos," the officer said. "And they are based on the assumption that Ver will soon be returning to office."

Ver has made no effort to hide his desire to return to his post of chief of staff. He expects to do so within the next few months, when, as many expect, charges against him as an accomplice in the Aquino case will be dismissed.

"Acquittal is not enough for Ver," says his defense lawyer, Antonio Coronel. "He will only feel fully vindicated when he is reinstated."

The expectation — or hope — among many military officers, Filipino opposition figures, and in the United States, is that Ver will retire gracefully soon after reinstatement.

However, sources close to Ver apparently feel that he is not particularly enamored with this idea. President Marcos is reportedly committed to the reinstatement of his old friend, but probably would change his mind if he felt that the political cost was too high.

But, attorney Coronel says, "the President may need Ver in another role — a ministerial position, perhaps." Other rumors have suggested that Ver would eventually be given an ambassadorship.

Sources close to presidential palace make little effort to hide their dislike for Ver's rival, General Ramos.

"Ramos has lost a lot of yardage with the President recently," said one palace source. "He's let his ambitions show."

There has been some speculation that Ramos would make a satisfactory successor to Marcos: some US officials, among others, are thought to favor this solution.

If and when Ver retires, most observers feel that Ramos will be retired at the same time. Ver's favorite as successor is thought to be Philippine Army commander Gen. Josephus Ramas, a long time Ver associate.

General Ramas is said to have been consolidating his power during Ver's leave. Many Ver loyalists reportedly look to him as their leader. Ramas would, however, not be acceptable to many military officers, including those who are seeking major reforms in the way the armed forces are organized and run.

The reformers say that one Ver loyalist would be an acceptable compromise: Gen. Roland Pattugalan. He is viewed by reform minded officers as a "professional soldier."

"He is loyal to Ver," said one reform leader, "but his staff are all tested combat officers. We could work with him."