

PHILIPPINE MILITARY DETAILS FOREIGN AID FOR COMMUNIST REBELS.By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

460 words

24 November 1987

Reuters News

English

(c) 1987 Reuters Limited

MANILA, Nov 24, Reuter - Private groups in Australia and West Europe are supplying Philippine communist guerrillas with aid, a military intelligence report said on Tuesday.

The report said 14 private groups in Australia, Ireland, Switzerland, West Germany and Belgium were sending aid to the 23,000-strong communist New People's Army.

"The governments of those countries are not supporting the local communist movement and may be ignorant about the activities of the groups involved," said the report, which was made available to journalists.

The Australian Embassy in Manila said it had received no communication from the Philippine government about assistance from Australian groups to the rebels. Comment from embassies of the other named countries was not immediately available.

Defence Secretary Rafael Ilete said on Sunday that foreign aid this year to the outlawed Communist Party was estimated at eight million dollars compared with 2.5 million dollars last year. The NPA is the Communist Party's military wing.

The communists have been waging guerrilla war in the Philippines for 18 years. They stepped up attacks after a military coup attempt on August 28 nearly toppled President Corazon Aquino.

Saturnino Ocampo, spokesman of the communist-led National Democratic Front, told the British Broadcasting Corporation in an interview that the front had good ties with several foreign "liberation groups".

"There are NDF support networks in more than 25 countries, 15 of them in Western Europe," Ocampo said.

"Early next year we hope to gain greater international recognition for the NDF or for the provisional revolutionary government we are building... This recognition would enhance our status of belligerence against the Aquino government," he said.

He described most of the foreign aid as "political", but added: "Some material support has been coming from people's organisations and solidarity groups."

Ocampo did not say what kind of material support had been received.

Armed forces spokesman Colonel Oscar Florendo told reporters the military was helpless in trying to stem outside aid for the guerrillas.

He said the NDF's sophisticated network used apparently legal fronts to channel so-called humanitarian aid to the Philippines.

"It's quite hard to prove that certain NDF organisations abroad are working for the overthrow of the government here," Florendo added.

The military documents said foreign aid to the rebels was sent through local church-based organisations.

The report said the NDF had set up liaison offices to solicit aid. It added that assistance for the rebels had risen after a tour of several countries by Jose Maria Sison, a former Communist Party chief who was freed by Aquino when she took power in February, 1986.

Philippine newspapers have reported that Sison was last seen in Australia in June.

Document Iba0000020011204djbo01ro3

