

ANTI-STRIKE FORCE PLANNED, LABOUR MINISTER SAYS.By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

406 words

14 October 1987

Reuters News

English

(c) 1987 Reuters Limited

MANILA, Oct 14, Reuter - The Philippine government is considering setting up a special police force to enforce return-to-work orders at strike-hit companies, Secretary of Labour Franklin Drilon said.

Labour unrest had declined this year but was still simmering because workers were testing their new-found freedom, he said.

Drilon said in an interview employers and potential investors had nothing to fear as long as they ensured minimum standards for their workforce and labour unrest was not as bad as critics of the government made out.

"We are going through a period where the labour sector feels that this is a time for it to really test to what extent it can utilise the freedoms it has gained"

In many cases strikes erupted not on wage demands but on issues such as the right to organise and unionise.

Drilon said it was inevitable there should be industrial tension in a country where about two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line.

Labour Department figures show there were 358 strikes between January and September this year compared to 505 in the same 1986 period.

A total of 67,624 workers were involved in strikes, compared with 152,564 a year earlier, and 1.4 million working days were lost in the nine-month period compared to 3.1 million in January-September 1986.

Drilon said the idea of a strike police force came after violence erupted in several recent cases when police enforced return-to-work orders by breaking up picket lines.

"Public indignation blows up whenever we are perceived to be using a mailed-fist policy.

"Among the ideas floated is to train a corps of peacekeeping officers who would be able to enforce these orders with the least violence."

He said the government was pleased that a general strike called on Monday by the country's four largest trade unions passed off without violence. Labour leaders have said the protests will continue through this week.

Union leaders have demanded an across-the-board increase of 10 pesos (48 cents) in the minimum daily wage of 54 pesos (2.60 dollars). The Employers' Confederation has said it can afford only a 5.40 peso (26-cent) increase.

President Corazon Aquino said on Tuesday she had urged Congress to speed up consideration of a bill recommending an increase of eight pesos (39 cents).

Document lba0000020011204djae01fdp

