

**AQUINO VOWS TO DEFEND BESIEGED PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY.**By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

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MANILA, Sept 4, Reuter - President Corazon Aquino said on Friday democracy had taken one step forward and two steps back since she took power in the Philippines but vowed to continue fighting for her ideals.

Ringed by tight security, the embattled leader visited military headquarters in Manila a week after the camp was overrun by rebel soldiers in the worst uprising she has faced.

Hours before Aquino arrived at Camp Aguinaldo, scene of several hours of pitched battles between government and rebel troops during the coup attempt, army explosives teams set off bombs and live projectiles abandoned by the mutineers.

Government television showed soldiers detonating bombs found among banana and coconut trees inside the camp, which was pounded by artillery, helicopter gunships and fighter planes.

Aquino, who visited the camp to dedicate 280 houses for soldiers, said victory in the battle did not come cheaply.

"In this camp whose buildings are pockmarked by bullets, whose General Headquarters is a burnt ruin ... we must rededicate ourselves to democracy and to the ideals of military professionalism that were here violated," she said.

She said the August 28 coup attempt had severely set back economic recovery.

"It has seemed like one step forward, two steps back since democracy was restored in the Philippines," she said. "But we cannot give up."

Aquino, 54, faces growing criticism over her handling of an unruly military as well as of Communist insurgents, who have threatened to take advantage of rifts in the armed forces to attack military targets in Manila.

"The government is not perfect," she said. "But democracy and the constitution cannot be compromised."

In apparent response to criticism of corruption in her government by powerful church leader Cardinal Jaime Sin, Aquino said:

"There can be no greater enemy of the state than the enemy within ... the bribe-taker and influence-peddler who puts self above country, the public official who follows any agenda but duty to country."

Another festering problem confronting Aquino surfaced again when about 1,000 left-wing demonstrators massed in the capital, renewing protests over oil price increases which brought Manila and other cities to a standstill just days before the coup bid.

The protesters, carrying banners which read "Resist the Threat of Military Rule," also condemned the attempted coup.

"It was a drastic move by the extreme right to bring back brazen fascist rule and intensify its repression of the masses," a statement by the coalition New Patriotic Alliance said.

Earlier, Don Honasan, a brother of the colonel, was arrested after police raided his Manila home and found unlicensed guns.

Also on Friday, security forces raided a luxury apartment elsewhere and seized an arsenal of assault rifles and submachine-guns, land mines and hand grenades, a police spokesman said.

He said markings on the crates indicated they had been spirited out of Camp Aguinaldo by the mutineers.

The Manila Chronicle newspaper quoted a communist spokesman as saying "sparrow unit" assassination teams





would hit individual military and police officials and increase propaganda among Manila's eight million people.

The "sparrow units" have been blamed for the deaths of more than 50 lawmen in Manila so far this year.

The spokesman said the offensive aimed to "take advantage of the split in the military." Earlier this week, the Communist-led National Democratic Front said continuing problems in the military created "an excellent opportunity (for the insurgency) to flourish."

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