

PHILIPPINES SAYS IT WOULD WELCOME U.S. AID PLAN.By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

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MANILA, May 9, Reuter - The Philippine government said on Monday it was awaiting information about a reported U.S. move to unveil a Marshall Plan-like aid package for this cash-strapped country.

The Washington Post reported on Sunday the multinational plan involved aid of up to 10 billion dollars over the next five years. The newspaper said Japan and West Germany were expected to contribute the bulk of the money.

The United States currently provides 400 million dollars in aid a year to President Corazon Aquino's government, which is struggling with a 30 billion dollar foreign debt.

The Marshall Plan was the American aid scheme that helped Europe recover after World War Two.

"In general, the Foreign Office always welcomes untied aid from friends. But we still have to receive particulars about this," Acting Foreign Secretary Jose Ingles told Reuters.

The aid package was immediately attacked by leftwing groups that want the United States to pull out its two major military bases in the country.

Bayan, a leftwing coalition, said the Reagan administration's moves signalled an intensification of its campaign to keep the bases in the Philippines beyond 1991, when a treaty governing them expires.

"This development cannot but be interpreted as a U.S. attempt to grease its way through to the extension" of the bases agreement, a Bayan statement said.

It noted that the five-year plan would substantially step up U.S. aid from its current level.

"This is a far too tempting an offer to ignore," Bayan said. "It is only a matter of time now before the regime sheds off its nationalist pretensions and grabs at such a hefty chunk of largesse."

Talks on deciding compensation for the bases until 1991 opened last month and Philippine officials have taken a tough stand on the issue.

The U.S. State Department has expressed concern over an anti-nuclear bill pending in the Philippine Senate. The bill aims to ban port calls by nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed warships, overflights or landing by aircraft carrying nuclear warheads and the storage of nuclear weapons.

The State Department said the bill would be incompatible with the U.S. policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons or nuclear power-plants.

Several Philippine congressmen said on Monday that the aid package was welcomed while warning it must come with no strings attached.

"We will be very grateful if the plan is motivated by plain and simple efforts to help us," House of Representatives majority floorleader Francisco Sumulong said.

Senator Wigberto Tanada, author of the anti-nuclear bill, said Aquino told a group of senators that any U.S. aid package would not be linked with the bases agreement.

"I think the Americans would want to dangle this (aid) before us so those of us who are undecided may perhaps be persuaded by this," he said.

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