

Philippines seizes £17.6m from Marcos accounts

More money seized from former dictator's secret overseas holdings, authorities announce, but vast amount still outstanding

Associated Press in Manila

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The Philippine government has recovered more than US\$29m from the Swiss accounts of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the search for more of his hidden wealth continues 28 years after he was toppled, an official has said.

The money, recovered over the last week, was part of the more than \$712m from Marcos's secret Swiss accounts now in government hands, said Andres Bautista, chairman of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, the agency in charge of recovering Marcos' allegedly ill-gotten wealth.

The government won ownership of the funds after several years of litigation in Singapore courts over claims by victims of human rights violations under Marcos's rule and private foundations representing the Marcoses, Bautista said at a news conference.

Authorities had already recovered more than \$4bn from an estimated \$5-10bn amassed by the Marcoses during the dictator's 20-year rule, he said.

Bautista said last month that the government was targeting at least 50bn pesos (\$1.1bn) more.

"There is still a lot of work that can be done in respect to pursuing ill-gotten wealth," he said on Wednesday.

"We should not allow ill-gotten wealth, the taking of ill-gotten wealth, to go unpunished."

The Philippines' supreme court ruled in 2003 that the Marcoses wealth in excess of their total legal income of around \$304,000 from 1965 to 1986 was presumed to be ill-gotten.

Marcos died in exile in Hawaii in 1989 without admitting any wrongdoing during his presidency.

Bautista said the government had filed more than 200 civil cases for recovery and forfeiture of ill-gotten assets, including real estate, amounting to about 30-40bn pesos (\$667-\$890m) from the Marcos family, their cronies and associates.

It is seeking more than 150 paintings of “prominent masters and artists” collected by the Marcos family that went missing after the Marcoses fled the presidential palace during the February 1986 “people power” uprising.

Bautista declined to comment when asked whether he believes Marcos’s widow, Imelda, and their three children were still living off their hidden wealth.

Imelda Marcos is a member of the house of representatives. Her eldest child, daughter Imee, is governor of their northern home province of Ilocos Norte, while her son, Ferdinand Jr, is a senator. Her other daughter, Irene, remains low key and has kept away from politics.