



SOURCE: https://archive.org/details/unset0000unse_h4o8

At the very moment Byroade was writing, however, martial law was only a few hours away. There are several possible explanations for Marcos's having misled the ambassador. Marcos, as cagey and careful as a guerrilla warrior, knew the value of surprise; he wanted no leaks. And Marcos the deceitful politician also knew the value of "deniability." By not informing the ambassador of the details and even more, by misleading him, Marcos permitted the ambassador and Washington to say, as they did—but only by speaking very narrowly and technically—that martial law was a surprise. The only surprise, if any, was the day and hour of the issuance of the decree.

As Byroade, in his office overlooking Manila Bay, finished the final paragraphs of his cable, on the other side of the city, at Camp Aguinaldo, Defense Minister Enrile was placing a call to Marcos, telling the president that it was time to act: now or never. All the troops were in position, and their commanders were ready. Journalists were asking him about reports that martial law was imminent. It was too risky to wait. Enrile had been the principal martial law architect, and many diplomats and CIA officers who worked closely with Enrile thought that he wanted martial law for his own purposes, that the defense minister believed that after a few years Marcos would turn power over to him. He was wrong.

Within an hour after Enrile spoke with Marcos, a colonel arrived at Enrile's office bearing sealed envelopes. Inside were the presidential orders. After notifying the general staff, Enrile headed home. As the defense secretary's blue Ford with tinted windows, accompanied by a heavily armed security detail, rounded the back of the Wack Wack Golf Course, gunmen opened fire. Bullets riddled the right front and back doors of the Ford and shattered the windshield. Enrile, however, wasn't in the Ford, having decided, miraculously it seemed, to ride in his security car. "God saved him," Enrile's wife, Christina, told an American official at the time. But God had had nothing to do with it. Marcos and Enrile had staged the "ambush," as the final justification for martial law. At 9:00 P.M. the order implementing martial law was signed.*

* The long document spelling out the justifications for martial law, Proclamation 1081, was dated September 21, a Thursday, the day before Marcos gave the orders to implement it, giving rise to a long-unsolved puzzle: Had Marcos signed