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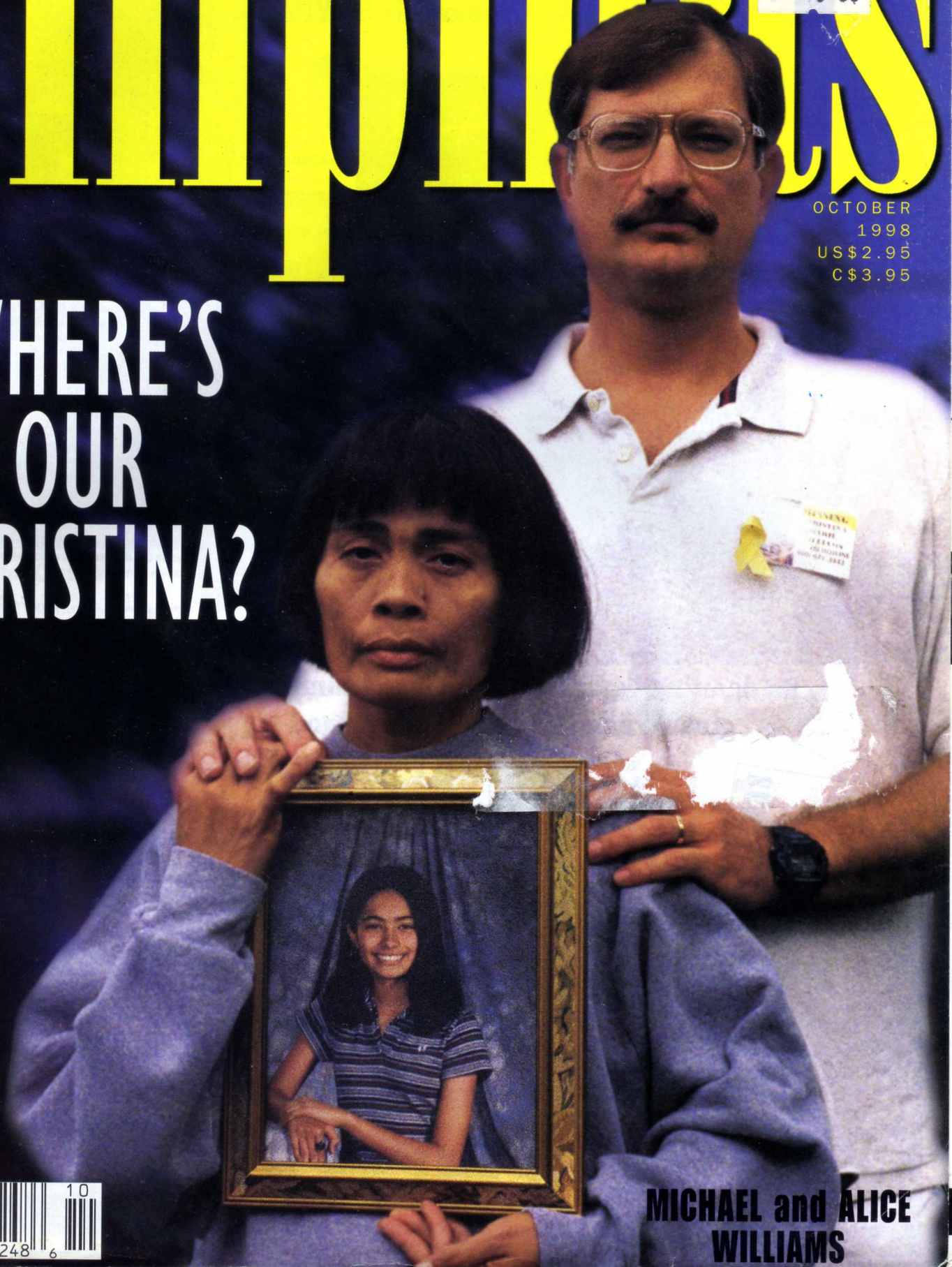
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# Filipinas

OCTOBER  
1998  
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T H E M A G A Z I N E F O R A L L F I L I P I N O S

## WHERE'S OUR CHRISTINA?



**MICHAEL and ALICE  
WILLIAMS**



# LOOKING FOR

## KIDNAPPED

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The  
Polly  
Klaas  
Foundation

IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT CHRISTINA:

CALL THE FBI HOTLINE (800) 671-3343

OR THE POLLY KLAAS FOUNDATION (800) 587-4357

#### CHRISTINA MARIE WILLIAMS

Missing from Presidio of Monterey Annex, CA

Date Missing: 6/12/98 Date of Birth: 5/1/85

Age: 13 yrs. Height: 5' 3" Wt: 80 lbs.

Eyes: Brown Sex: Female Build: Thin

Race: Caucasian/Filipino

Hair: Brown, shoulder length, parted in middle

Christina was last seen wearing blue jeans, striped blouse, blue Adidas sport sandals, and a black jacket with "Raiders" printed on the back. Christina left her home to walk her dog on Nijmegen Road in Presidio of Monterey Annex, near Seaside, California, at around 7:30 PM on June 12, 1998.



#### WANTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH CHRISTINA'S ABDUCTION



**Driver:** Age, early to mid 20's, dark brown hair, short cropped at sides, pudgy faced jowls, shiny sheen to skin, reddish skin tone.



Late 70's or early 80's Grey Ford Granada or Mercury Monarch with gray primer spots, red interior



**Passenger:** Age between late teens and early 20's, very thin build, olive skin, red blemishes in lower cheek area, prominent cheek bones, very narrow lower half of face, slight moustache, hair worn gelled and unkempt.

Revised July 1998  
A service of the Polly Klaas Search Center

A \$100,000 reward has been offered for information leading to the recovery of Christina or the arrest or conviction of person(s) responsible for Christina's disappearance.

# CHRISTINA

By Rachelle Q. Ayuyang

COVER STORY

*"Her disappearance  
has taken the light  
from the little house  
on Nijmegen Street.*

*It is the kind of light  
you feel, not see."*

-July 12, 1998,

*San Jose Mercury News*

The sad parents of Christina Williams, the 13-year-old Filipina American abducted last June reportedly by two men, are now used to the media's glare. Out of necessity, they make time for reporters. One of their biggest worries is that the media may forget about Christina as the days wear on. They need the publicity to generate clues, tip-offs, anything that may lead FBI investigators and law enforcement authorities to their daughter.

Christina's father, Michael, stands in the small yard of his family's modest home in Fort Ord, the former U.S. Army base in Monterey, California. He's making one of countless appearances before the camera, once again answering reporters' questions about what he knows and what he feels about his daughter's disappearance.

He invites members of the press into the house. "Pasok na," he says. "Tuloy po kayo." But Williams admits, "Hindi ko alam ang Tagalog."

Alice, Christina's Filipina mother, who recently returned to work at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Monterey, won't be home until after 4 p.m.

Once inside, Greg, the dog Christina was walking at the time of her kidnapping, greets the reporters with a tiny growl at the door. Williams is a meteorologist with a 22-year career in the U.S. Navy. He has also returned to work at the Fleet Numerical Meteorological and Oceanography Center. His command has given him two months' leave and any time off when he needs to help in the search. In August, Williams flew to Greensboro, North Carolina, where witnesses reported seeing a girl resembling his daughter at a discount supermarket and a restaurant. Williams has learned to check his emotions, which used to soar at hopeful news only to plummet when leads didn't pan out. Although law enforcement authorities and the FBI continue to investigate, they're still not sure what really happened on the evening of last June 12.

**Worried Father: Michael Williams constantly talks to reporters about his missing daughter.**



Photos by John Deyto

Alice, Christina's mother, sits in the family's neat living room. The furnishings recall the various places the Williamses have lived. The Philippine bamboo furniture, a Japanese lacquered divider, dolls in glass cases and sports trophies are all mementos of her husband's postings in Okinawa and Yokosuka (Japan), Hawaii and Subic. On a shelf with some of the mementos are scores of sympathy cards from well-wishers.

Alice, a native of Lavezares in Samar, met and married Michael in Subic, Olongapo in 1979. Their oldest daughter, Jennifer, 18, who's now living in Missouri, was born in the Philippines. Their son, Michael Jr., now a 16-year-old student at Seaside High School, was born in Hawaii two years later. Christina was born in Okinawa in 1985.

Still wearing her gray uniform as a housekeeping staff member at the Hyatt Regency, Alice is thin, her pleasant face shadowed by sadness. "I don't dream about Christina anymore," she says. "I used to dream many things, but now I don't dream. Maybe because I can only sleep two hours every night. I'm always thinking about Christina. My friends from Japan E-mail and say they dreamt of Christina. I tell them, 'You're better off than me because I don't dream about her.' I don't know why."

Filipino or Pacific Islander, but later authorities modified their descriptions. One witness claimed she saw a scared-looking Christina in a car with the suspects. The car has been described as an '80s four-door Granada or a light-gray Mercury Monarch. The public should be on the lookout for anyone who fits the profiles. In the leaflets, the FBI and police describe one suspect as "skinny" and the other, "fatty." Essentially, the suspects could be anyone.

Meanwhile, Alice waited for her husband who was still at work. "I couldn't call the police because I didn't know what to say," she explains. When Michael came home around 8:30 p.m., Alice told him that Christina was missing, and her dog had come home without her. He called the police.

"The cops came and told us not to worry because the neighborhood is safe, and most likely she ran away," Alice recalls. "But we know Christina wouldn't run away. The police said we should wait 24 hours. The next day we were so worried that we couldn't do anything."

At the suggestion of a friend, the Williamses called Child Quest International, Inc., a nonprofit organization that helps locate missing children. "They came over," Alice says. "That's when the police started moving seriously, and the media came."

## 'We also considered staying here because it's so beautiful. But we don't talk about those plans anymore,' says Alice.

She recalls the events on that Friday night. Alice came home on the bus at 4:45 p.m. and had dinner with Christina and Michael Jr. Christina also helped her mother make her favorite snack, *palitaw* (a boiled rice patty with coconut and sesame seeds). After dinner, Greg, which her parents had given Christina as a birthday present in May, was itching to go outside. "So she took the dog for a walk," Alice says. "She was wearing a black Oakland Raider's jacket, blue jeans, a striped shirt and blue Adidas slippers and left around 7:30 p.m. We got engrossed watching the TV. Then Michael noticed that she wasn't back after her usual 15- to 20-minute walk with the dog. We immediately looked outside. I then asked Michael to drive around, but he couldn't find her. I found the dog not far from here. I knew something was wrong because the dog wouldn't come home without her."

According to her mother, Christina usually makes a loop around the neighborhood and ends up on the road behind the family's backyard at Parker Flat's Cut-Off, an area of brush and hillocks where, police believe, she was taken by two male suspects. At first, they were described by witnesses as

"We've never had a kidnapping here," says Alex Kerekes, chief of the Presidio of Monterey Police, "but when I got the call, I thought it was a child abduction. I immediately said to call a search dog and put Christina in the computer as a missing person, not a runaway. I wasn't going to wait the next morning."

But the police, who wound up the search-and-rescue canine search and inquiries around the neighborhood at midnight, returned to the assumption that Christina was a runaway, based on an eyewitness account by a 7-Eleven clerk in Marina, who told a patrolman that he saw a girl matching Christina's description with two other girls and a boy in the store at 10:30 p.m.

"We don't think the 7-Eleven clerk made anything up," Kerekes says. "But what I personally believe is he mistook somebody else that looked like Christina. One of the strange things, though, is that he described some of the things that she was wearing. He described her clothing—the jeans, the black jacket—and the way she looked."

The following day, a Saturday, Kerekes called radio and television stations and later local newspapers about the abduction of the Fort Ord teenager. "We then developed witnesses who saw the suspects in the area," Kerekes declares. "The problem is no one actually saw what happened. But because of the witnesses who came forward and described these two people and how they were acting, we were able to narrow down that they were in the area at the time she disappeared."

Kerekes is optimistic about finding Christina. "Within three days, we had a drawing of the suspects and the car. We had pictures of Christina everywhere. From the investigation around the house, we had a lot of information to go on. In some cases, someone just disappears, and we have nothing." After three months, however, possible leads have turned into dead ends.

Most people know Christina from television reports and flyers—her face framed by a thick head of black, shoulder-length hair and lit by sparkling eyes and a 100-watt smile. She has most of Alice's facial features and personal attributes. "Christina is more like her mother, quiet and shy," says her father, Michael. "She also has the perfect personality. You couldn't ask for a better child. She's very helpful and hardworking. She's never distressed."

When Christina is anxious or afraid, according to her mother, she will look scared and start to cry. "She's still a baby," Alice says. "She's not like other teenagers who act like teenagers."

**From the Heart: Volunteers (from left) Tammi Dennis and Bobbie DeFranco sit by the phone daily; (opposite page) Alice Williams and Greg the dog in their living room.**



Christina also enjoys singing and participated in the school chorus. She's a fan of the Spice Girls, Janet Jackson and Leonardo DiCaprio. A favorite movie is "My Best Friend's Wedding." She loves chicken *adobo* and *palitaw*, which she learned to prepare the day before she disappeared. Christina is a beanie babies buff and a lover of animals. Tacked to a wall of her room are two posters—one of a bronco whose front legs are joyously raised to an orange sky with an inscription, "Only Through Freedom Can We Become Who We Really Are," and another of a puppy with a crunched up face conveying the expression, "When I do good, no one remembers. When I do bad, no one forgets."

"I swear I've seen that fat guy around here," says a hot-line volunteer, nodding at the picture of the round-faced suspect. According to her, a person resembling him was one of the partygoers at one of her neighbor's rowdy bashes. "But I didn't get his name," she sighs, shaking her head.

Located above a neighborhood of boarded-up military housing units, the Warren Stilwell Hall community service center, a former Soldier's Club, hosts the volunteer center in the search for Christina Williams. A phone is set up in the lobby to take calls. According to local residents Tami Dennis



### 'Nothing is normal. Everything is put on hold.'

and Bobbie DeFranco, who have been answering the phone eight hours a day since July, people sometimes prefer talking to volunteers rather than the FBI when giving information. While Dennis and DeFranco have returned to their jobs, they continue to help, driven by their concern for lost children and anger at the lack of protection against what they consider a nationwide "epidemic." They plan to travel to Washington, D.C. in October to urge Congress to approve a task force on missing children.

Dennis says she heard that Christina was seen in August with the skinny suspect in South Carolina. In hopes that the teenager and her captors would take refuge at Red Cross shelters servicing victims of Hurricane Bonnie, she faxed fliers to radio stations there. The thirtyish mother believes the suspects may be locals, who know their way around the back roads of the recently decommissioned base.

Since Christina's kidnapping, the sense of security at Fort Ord has evidently declined. A girl walking alone from Fitch Middle School, where Christina was a student, shot a suspicious glance at a carload of reporters driving by.

Fort Ord is bounded by the cities of Seaside, Marina, Sand City, Monterey and Del Rey Oaks. Scenic vistas are commonplace. The home of the 7th Infantry Division from 1917 to 1947 and in 1975, Fort Ord closed down in 1994 in a national campaign to curb government costs. With 28,051 acres of land, two-thirds of which is undeveloped open space, and a four-mile stretch of beaches and sand dunes, the base is now the picture of desolation. It's also undergoing an earnest, at times difficult, transition, which involves parceling off some of its property to neighboring cities and the state and turning over facilities for redevelopment.

"I really didn't want to come here to the United States because of all I heard about crime," confesses Alice Williams. "But we didn't have much choice because of my husband's job."

Her daughter's kidnapping occurred seven months after the Williamses moved to Fort Ord from Okinawa. As the new family on the block, it took time to get settled into a new home. It also takes time to establish friendships, which Alice says is one of setbacks of working in the military. "Christina had a lot of friends in Japan," she says. "And then we have to start making new friends here."

While Alice doesn't have any relatives in Monterey, she has an aunt in Hawaii and friends from her native barrio who are now living in Modesto, California. Alice has found a new friend in Fely Batungbakal Garden, a Filipina community leader in nearby Salinas. When Garden saw Christina

in the news, she knew the teenager was half-Filipina. "I wished I could help the family," she recalls, "but I didn't know how because I didn't know them. I prayed, and it led me to do something."

She got a call on June 23, a week after Christina's abduction, from a Filipina who asked Garden to reach out to the family. So Garden and two Filipino women set out to the Williams home on June 25. The Williamses, however, weren't there because they had flown to Los Angeles to plead for Christina's return on CNN's "Larry King Live." The following morning, Garden came back with one of her companions to the family's house. When Alice opened the door, according to Garden, she was elated. "You can see in Alice's face," she recalls, "that I, as a fellow Filipino, was someone she can talk to in her dialect. She felt at home."

Garden got approval from the family to hold a prayer service for Christina. She also arranged to have them appear live on the evening news at KSPW-TV, where Garden's husband works. The July 1 rosary prayer service at the Madonna Del Sasso Church in Salinas drew some 500 people and media coverage. "We only had two days to put it together," Garden says. "It was wonderful. People from Santa Cruz, Watsonville and Marina came. I couldn't believe the TV coverage. I didn't invite the media. They learned about it and came forward."

On August 9, "Step Out and Speak Out—A Benefit Concert to Bring Christina Home" attracted 800 people and raised almost \$7,000, which went toward the Christina Williams trust fund for badges, flyers, ribbons and some of the family's expenses. "But Alice—a typical Filipino—she doesn't want to touch that money," Garden says. "She says, 'That's for Christina.'"

The reward for information leading to the missing teenager is currently \$100,000. Local restaurants gave donations, but the biggest sum of \$35,000 came from the toney AT&T Pebble Beach Company Golf Charities.

In her busy office at the Pebble Beach Co., Megan Ignacio puts all calls on hold to talk about community efforts to find Christina Williams. "If it were my daughter," she says, "I would want the entire world to look for her." Ignacio visited the family frequently, particularly when oldest daughter Jennifer was home. She now sees the Williamses every week. "As soon as you meet them," says Ignacio, "you can't help but want to reach out to them and do other things to create awareness and bring some hope in their lives. They're such beautiful people. When I first met them, I said, 'I want to wake you up from this bad dream. I really wish I could, but all I could offer you is my help and support. What can I do?'"

Using connections with local food vendors, Ignacio organized the reception at the prayer service, which raised \$600 for the fund. Ignacio wants to get the youth involved, and she believes the benefit concert dominated by young Fil-Am musical acts helped. "That is the age group we want to target," she says, "because these abductors are of that age and they're up to no good."

Ignacio had moved from San Jose to the Monterey Peninsula. "It's a great place to raise children," she declares. "That's why the (kidnapping) is such a shock."

**W**hen the Williams family were transferred to Seaside, California, it was supposed to be smooth sailing like most of their previous postings. The only drama, it seems, was having to evacuate from Subic in 1992 when Mt. Pinatubo erupted. Michael is one-and-a-half years shy of retirement and had planned to move his family to Florida and buy a house there.

"We also considered staying here because it's so beautiful. But we don't talk about those plans anymore," says Alice. "Nothing is normal. Everything is put on hold."

Christina's room is at the end of the hallway from the living room. Her dainty, soft slippers remain on the carpeted floor beside her twin bed. Above her neat desk is a bulletin board with a collage of photos, some of herself, sister Jennifer and a prom date, and the rest, of her family. Her room seems untouched since the day she was abducted.

There are also pictures of pop star Mariah Carey, who, upon learning that Christina is a fan, appeared in two public service announcements in July. Actor/director and area resident Clint Eastwood and baseball star Reggie Jackson followed suit with their own pleas for information about the young Filipina's whereabouts.

"I don't feel as bad as I used to," says Alice. "But I still find myself crying and thinking of Christina. It's very hard when everyone is here but not Christina. It's very hard."

**P**olice Chief Kerekes believes the case of Christina Williams won't be solved solely by fancy police work. "Something like this will be solved by the public. And the big question is, how are you going to get the information to the public? In this case, the media was extremely helpful." In the Greensboro, North Carolina lead, a supermarket clerk claimed to have recognized Christina and the thinner of the two suspects from a profile shown on the TV program "America's Most Wanted."

"We're asking the public to be our eyes and ears," Kerekes

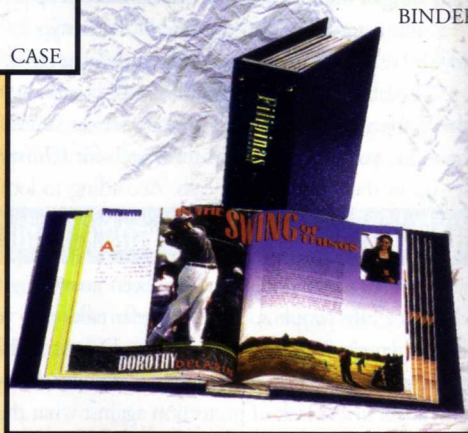
*Continued on page 89*



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## VFA, *continued from page 27*

became, in the Pentagon's imagination, a very plausible scenario.

Behind the seemingly harmless VFA lies the consideration that the Philippines might have to serve as a potential staging area for U.S. operations to neutralize the Islamic fundamentalist threat or respond to a possible disintegration of Indonesia.

Undoubtedly, Pentagon officials remember the 1950s when the CIA flew support missions for renegade Indonesian military units operating against President Sukarno out of Davao City.

If military exercises will be held with the Philippine military, it is likely that Mindanao will be a choice location for these reasons.

It is against this backdrop of the U.S. strategic game in Asia that Filipinos must evaluate the VFA.

### Conflict of Interest

The proposed agreement is riddled with flaws on the issues of national sovereignty, criminal jurisdiction, and compliance with our nuclear-free constitution and the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

More alarming is the VFA's operative assumption that the national interests of the Philippines and the United States are identical.

Without our full knowledge and certainly without our consent, it enmeshes us in America's grand strategy of containing China and Islamic revivalism, making Washington's enemies our enemies as well.

It would bring us back to the Cold War days when we were dragged into wars, hot or cold, that were hardly in our national interest.

It would reaffirm the primacy of unilateral military force as the main arbiter of conflicts and contribute to subverting ASEAN's effort to erect the ASEAN Regional Forum as an alternative mechanism to resolve conflict through multilateral diplomacy.

Is the Estrada administration really serious about embracing this treaty? Because of its historic and strategic implications, the VFA may yet emerge as the biggest blunder of a blundering government. ■

## Williams, *continued from page 22*

says. "The police are looking for them, but it's not enough eyes, not enough ears. The public will become our eyes and ears and hopefully they will be the ones who will draw us to them." ■

*For any information or leads on Christina Williams, call the tip line at (800) 671-3343; the volunteer hot line at (831) 242-6179, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; the 24-hour volunteer and information lines at (408) 644-2128 or (408) 644-2129; web sites at [www.christinawilliams.com](http://www.christinawilliams.com) and [www.pollyklaas.org/smwilliams.htm](http://www.pollyklaas.org/smwilliams.htm).*

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