

# Marcoses sued in case of the Golden Buddha

By Lee Catterall  
Star-Bulletin writer

A Honolulu lawyer has filed a lawsuit against deposed Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Imelda, seeking \$80 billion on behalf of a Philippines resident for the alleged theft of a one-ton Buddha statue and other treasures.

The Circuit Court suit was filed yesterday by attorney Ward D. Jones on behalf of Roger Roxas of the Philippines and Roxas' The Golden Buddha Corp.

Los Angeles attorney Daniel C. Cathcart was reported by the Los Angeles Times earlier this week as saying

death threats made against a Honolulu lawyer representing Roxas had stopped the suit from being filed.

Jones said the case was transferred to him this week from another Honolulu law firm. Jones said he did know the reason for the lawyer change, but he said he knew of no death threats.

"To my knowledge, there have been no threats," Jones said.

Cathcart was quoted by the Times on Tuesday as saying, "I had one of the most prominent lawyers in the state of Hawaii (to file the suit), and they unanimously decided they'd be jeopardizing their personal safety if they took on Mr. Marcos. The term assassination

was used. They talked it over with their partners and decided they didn't want to be involved."

THE STAR-BULLETIN published an Associated Press version of the Times story, along with denials by a Marcos spokesman of any death threats.

Jones said Cathcart has told him since the articles appeared that his remarks were "blown out of proportion."

The suit says Roxas found the treasure in the Philippines in January 1971 and that it had been hidden by the Japanese occupation forces since 1945. It consists of the golden Buddha, gold bullion, gems, precious stones, jewel-

ry, art works, coins and other valuables worth \$60 billion, according to the suit.

It accuses the Marcoses of seizing the treasure from Roxas in April 1971 and says they have sold, hidden and invested some of the proceeds.

In May 1971, the suit says, Marcos imprisoned Roxas. During the next two years, it says, Roxas was subjected to "physical beatings, underwater submersion and the administration of electrical current" to his body.

Marcos spokesman Gemmo Trinidad has dismissed the Roxas claims as "an outright fantasy — a mere publicity stunt."

# Oahu jury says Marcos estate owes \$22 billion

By Kim Murakawa  
Advertiser Staff Writer

An Oahu Circuit Court jury yesterday awarded more than \$22 billion against the estate of former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos — the largest court judgment ever awarded in the United States.

The staggering award in the "Golden Buddha" trial is equivalent to one-third of the gold in Fort Knox, or enough money to keep Honolulu's city government running for 22 years.

The jury delivered the verdict after an afternoon and one day of deliberations. Lawyers for the defense said it is unlikely any of the money would be

paid. The jury found that Marcos falsely imprisoned and abused Rogelio Roxas, a Philippine man who, in 1971, allegedly recovered a treasure hidden during World War II in a tunnel outside Baguio City in the Philippines.

Jurors in the civil trial also found that Marcos went beyond his powers

as president in taking the treasure, which included a 3-foot-high golden Buddha, gold bars, a coin collection, three handfuls of diamonds and a storage area of gold bullion — valued at slightly more than \$22 billion.

The treasure was never recovered after it was taken by Marcos, who died in exile in Hawaii in 1989.

Jurors left the courtroom without talking to reporters. Their verdict is more than twice the previous largest award in U.S. history — a \$10 billion judgment against Texaco in 1985. And it is more than 11 times the \$2 billion verdict that a federal judge on Oahu

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## Marcos: 'Golden Buddha' trial jury awards treasure's finder \$22 billion

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awarded last year for human rights abuses by the Marcos regime.

Attorneys for the Golden Buddha Corp. believe the \$22 billion verdict is the world's largest judgment ever delivered in a civil trial. But attorneys for the Marcos estate said it is just an amount on paper.

"It's ridiculous," said Marcos attorney James Paul Linn. "Nobody's got that much money. There's not a chance they can get a dollar out of this."

Linn said much of the estate is tied up by the Philippine government, which has claims against it. He said he occasionally is paid by Imelda Marcos, the late dictator's wife, when she can. Otherwise, he said, he represents the estate on an "involuntary pro bono" basis.

Attorney Daniel Cathcart, representing the corporation set up by Roxas before his death in 1993, said he is aware of at least \$22 billion in the estate's holdings around the world and intends to begin claiming it. Cathcart said he also believes the corporation may be able to claim 10 percent interest on the award retroactively from 1974.

"This is Round 1 of a long fight," Cathcart said yesterday.

The money, if it is ever

### Court awards

Some of the largest court awards:

■ 1985: A Texas state court jury orders Texaco to pay Pennzoil \$10.53 billion plus interest after it said Texaco illegally interfered with Pennzoil's plan to acquire Los Angeles-based Getty Oil Co.

■ 1994: Exxon is ordered to pay \$5.29 billion in damages to 30,000 fishermen, Native Americans and others whose livelihoods were damaged when the tanker Exxon Valdez spilled more than 11 million gallons of oil off the coast of Alaska in 1989.

■ 1994-95: The Marcos estate is ordered to pay nearly \$2 billion in damages to the victims and families of nearly 10,000 people tortured and killed during the Marcos regime.

### Marcos jury award

■ Gold bullion (one storage area) — \$22 billion.  
■ Damages to Rogelio Roxas estate for his false imprisonment and for battery — \$8 million.  
■ Golden Buddha — \$1.3 million.  
■ 87 gold bars — \$100,000.  
■ One coin collection — \$5,000.  
■ Diamonds (three handfuls) — value was never settled.

would not stop the corporation from claiming the money. He also said the award was based on the value of the treasure in 1971 as estimated by a gold expert, something never contested in court.

But throughout the trial, estate attorneys questioned the very existence of the treasure, with the former president's son, Ferdinand "Bong Bong" Marcos Jr., testifying that the treasure's tale is considered a "joke" in the Philippines.

The verdict also cleared Imelda Marcos of any wrongdoing, a victory for the estate, Linn said. He believes an appellate court will reverse the verdict based on errors in the admission of evidence and possibly because of the large sum.

The Marcoses fled Manila in 1986 and lived in Honolulu.

received, will go to help the Philippine people, he said. Cathcart, who said his firm spent nine years tracking Ferdinand Marcos' assets, would not specify where he believes the money is hidden, fearing attempts would be made to move it.

Although an appellate court has the power to reverse the verdict or reduce the amount, Cathcart said an appeal request

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