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## Indonesia: U.S. Relations With the Indonesian Military

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## ABSTRACT

This CRS Report describes the history and the issues involved in the longstanding differences between Congress and the executive branch over U.S. policy toward the Indonesian military (ABRI). The report describes two past episodes when these differences broke out: the period of Indonesian radicalism under President Sukarno in the early 1960s and the initial years of the Indonesian military occupation of East Timor in the late 1970s. It outlines the different views of the Indonesian military between its congressional critics and executive branch officials who have promoted close U.S. relations with it. The issues between Congress and the Bush and Clinton Administrations in the 1990s are discussed within this framework, culminating in American policy toward the ABRI in 1998 as Indonesia's economic-political crisis led to the downfall of President Suharto. Specific issues of the 1990s discussed in the report, including U.S. training of Indonesian military personnel and U.S. arms sales to Indonesia, likely will come to new legislative attention in the near future. This report will not be updated. For more from CRS, see the Guide to CRS Products under "East Asia."

# Indonesia: U.S. Relations With the Indonesian Military

## Summary

Differences between the U.S. executive branch and Congress over U.S. policies toward the Indonesian military have persisted since the early 1960s. In the early 1960s, Indonesian policies under President Sukarno, including aggression against neighboring countries and a political alliance with the Indonesian Communist Party, led Congress to cut military and economic aid to Indonesia. The Kennedy Administration opposed this action. In the late 1970s, the policies of the Indonesian military in East Timor drew criticism from U.S. human rights groups and Members of Congress, who accused the military of violating the human rights of the people of East Timor. The Carter Administration, on the other hand, sought to deal with the issues of East Timor and political prisoners through dialogue with the Indonesian government and military.

From these episodes until the present, the executive branch has believed that good relations with the Indonesian military are necessary to promote U.S. strategic interests, especially U.S. naval access to the Indonesian straits connecting the Pacific and Indian oceans. Executive branch officials also argue that the United States needs close contacts with the military in order to influence Indonesia's political evolution. Critics in Congress, conversely, argue that the United States should deal with the Indonesian military on the basis of the day to day actions of the military and should penalize the military when its actions violate human rights or jeopardize U.S. interests in other ways. In the 1990s, new differences arose between Congress and the Bush and Clinton Administration over the Indonesian military's massacre of civilians in East Timor in November 1991. Congress pushed for terminating U.S. military training of Indonesian military personnel and greater limits on arms sales to Indonesia. The Clinton Administration took an initial cautious approach to the role of the military in Indonesia's economic-political crisis of 1998, but reports of new human rights violations led it take several actions to pressure the military, including suspension of training exercises. Some Members of Congress had criticized the Administration for continuing the training.

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# Indonesia: U.S. Relations With the Indonesian Military

## Background of Congressional-Executive Policy Differences over the Indonesian Military

The current policy differences between the Clinton Administration and the Department of Defense, on the one hand, and some Members of Congress and human rights groups over U.S. relations with Indonesia's military are the latest in a pattern of such disputes since the early 1960s. Two earlier periods stand out:

(1) The early 1960s: Indonesia under the Sukarno regime adopted a foreign policy of quasi-alliance with China and waged military aggression against Dutch New Guinea (the western half of the island of New Guinea) and the newly formed Federation of Malaysia (defended by U.S. allies, Great Britain and Australia). President Sukarno also built a political alliance with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). By 1965, the PKI was the largest communist party outside of communist countries, with three million members and 20 million in front organizations.<sup>1</sup> The Indonesian military (known by its Indonesian acronym, ABRI) acted as Sukarno's instrument in his aggressive actions, but its relations with the PKI appeared to be cool.

The Kennedy Administration and Congress disagreed over whether to continue military aid to Indonesia. Congress cut military aid and economic aid to Indonesia in 1963, citing Sukarno's growing radicalism and aggressive acts. The Kennedy Administration opposed this action.<sup>2</sup> After the military took power from Sukarno after September 1965, the United States gradually normalized relations with the "New Order" government under General Suharto, who became President in 1967.

(2) The late 1970s: President Suharto ordered the military to invade East Timor in 1975 after Portugal, East Timor's colonial master, withdrew and civil war broke out. Indonesia formally annexed East Timor in 1976. A guerrilla resistance to Indonesian rule, led by the Fretilin party, soon broke out. The Indonesian government committed large numbers of troops to East Timor and repressed civil liberties. Famine developed in East Timor in 1978 and 1979; at least 100,000 out of

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<sup>1</sup> Gardner, Paul F. *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears: Fifty Years of U.S.-Indonesian Relations*. Boulder, Westview Press, 1997. P. 173; American University, Foreign Area Studies. *Area Handbook for Indonesia*. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975. P. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, Paul, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fear: Fifty Years of U.S.-Indonesian Relations*, p. 172-202; Stebbins, Richard. *The United States in World Affairs, 1963*. New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1964. P. 206.

an estimated population of 650,000 reportedly died.<sup>3</sup> Another controversial issue arose regarding nearly 35,000 political prisoners whom the military had incarcerated in the 1965-1967 period and were still in custody ten years later.

U.S. human rights groups and critics in Congress accused the ABRI of violating the rights of the East Timorese people through suppression of civil rights and physical abuse of political prisoners. They asserted that the U.S. government gave tacit support to the ABRI's policies through the extension of military assistance programs to Indonesia. The Carter Administration responded to the criticism by initiating discussions with the Indonesian government and the ABRI, seeking measures to open up East Timor to outside aid and monitoring and a program to release the 35,000 Indonesian political prisoners.<sup>4</sup>

## Executive Branch View of Military Relations

In these episodes and in the 1990s, the executive branch has argued that U.S. policy toward the Indonesian military should be based on two considerations:

(1) Strategic: The maritime passages between the Pacific and Indian oceans are solely or partly Indonesian waters. Thus, the U.S. Seventh Fleet requires Indonesian cooperation to move ships between the two oceans in times of crisis.<sup>5</sup> Indonesia has asserted a legal right to control passage through the straits connecting the two oceans. The ABRI exercises operational control of the straits. The Pentagon and the ABRI reportedly negotiated arrangements in the early 1970s for the passage of U.S. surface warships and submarines through the Indonesian straits.<sup>6</sup> The contents of the arrangements have never been disclosed. However, in 1986, President Reagan and Suharto exchanged letters in which the United States acknowledged Indonesian sovereignty over the straits and Indonesia pledged to uphold the right of innocent

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<sup>3</sup> Jenkins, David. A New Ordeal for East Timor. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 16, 1979. P. 25; Kamm, Henry. War-ravaged Timor Struggles Back from Abyss. *New York Times*, January 28, 1980. P. A1.

<sup>4</sup> For a description of these issues, see the following congressional hearings: U.S. Congress. House. Subcommittees on International Organizations and Asian and Pacific Affairs. Human Rights in East Timor and the Question on the Use of U.S. Equipment by the Indonesian Armed Forces. Hearings. 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977; and U.S. Congress. House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. Famine Relief for East Timor. Hearings. 96<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979. See also: Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears: Fifty Years of U.S.-Indonesian Relations*, p. 284.

<sup>5</sup> Bateman, Sam. Indonesia's Archipelagic Sea lanes--pros and cons. *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, July-August 1996. P. 15-18; McBeth, John. Water of Strife. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 29, 1996. P. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Safeguarding the Strategic Straits. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 20, 1977. P. 71; Awanohara, Susuma and Tasker, Rodney. Indonesia's Golden Pond. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 6, 1983. P. 12-15.

passage through the straits under the Law of the Sea.<sup>7</sup> Another round of high level U.S.-Indonesian military negotiations reportedly occurred in 1995 and 1996 over proposed Indonesian rules regarding foreign naval passage.<sup>8</sup>

The importance to the Pentagon of U.S. naval passage through the Indonesian straits grew after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Islamic revolution in Iran at the end of the 1970s. As a result, the Pentagon formulated a strategy to enable the United States to fight two wars simultaneously in the Persian Gulf and the Western Pacific, predicated on the ability to shift U.S. forces between the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific.<sup>9</sup> These events also created a new factor influencing Indonesian attitudes toward U.S. naval access: the willingness of Indonesia, as a predominantly Muslim state, to tolerate U.S. security policy in the Persian Gulf region. In the 1988 oil tanker flagging crisis in the Persian Gulf and during the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf conflict, a majority of the U.S. warships deployed to the Gulf traversed the Indonesian straits into the Indian Ocean.<sup>10</sup> In March 1996, one of the two U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups that the Seventh Fleet deployed near Taiwan during the Chinese-instigated military tensions passed through the straits from the Indian Ocean into the South China Sea. When tensions with Iraq rose in early 1998, the Navy deployed the aircraft carrier, the USS Independence, from Japan through Indonesian waters to the Persian Gulf.<sup>11</sup>

(2) The political role of the ABRI: Executive branch officials and many academic experts on Indonesia have argued that the Indonesian military is the arbiter of Indonesia's political system. Only the ABRI, it is argued, can either affect political change or can thwart change. Thus, this argument goes, the United States needs close contacts with the military leadership in order to influence Indonesia's political evolution and ensure that any significant political change does not affect U.S. interests adversely. The Kennedy and Johnson Administrations argued these points during the tumultuous 1962-1965 period in defending continued U.S. military aid to Indonesia. They viewed the ABRI as the best defense against the PKI and Sukarno's radicalism.<sup>12</sup> Officials of the Carter Administration and the State Department preferred a strategy of negotiation with the ABRI over the issues of

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<sup>7</sup> Chanda, Nayan and Holloway, Nigel. *Troubled Waters*. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 10, 1988. P. 18.

<sup>8</sup> McBeth, *Water of Strife*, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service. *Naval Forward Deployments and the Size of the Navy*. CRS Report 92-803F. By Ron O'Rourke. November 13, 1992. P. 8, 15; Sustained Strategy. *Washington Times*, March 9, 1998. P. A7.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*. April 1992. P. 45; Brand, Robert A. *Maritime Imperatives in a Changing Scene*. *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, March 1991. P. 16-17; U.S. Congressional Research Service. *Philippines Under Aquino*. CRS Issue Brief 86104. By (name redacted). June 24, 1992. P. 4.

<sup>11</sup> USS Independence Departs Persian Gulf. *Washington Post*, May 25, 1998. P. A19; Priest, Dana and Havemann, Judith. *Second Group of U.S. Ships Sent to Taiwan*. *Washington Post*, March 11, 1996. P. A4.

<sup>12</sup> Gardner, Paul. F., *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears: Fifty Years of U.S.-Indonesian Relations*, p. 172-202.

access to East Timor and the release of political prisoners.<sup>13</sup> In more recent years, U.S. officials have viewed the Indonesian military as a counterweight to the emergence of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia.<sup>14</sup>

## **Views of the Military Relationship by Executive Branch Critics**

The critics of a cooperative U.S. relationship with the ABRI include human rights organizations, some academics, and some Members of Congress. They do not dispute the executive branch's view of the political power of the Indonesian military. Their criticism stresses the power and authority of the ABRI in East Timor, Aceh province, and other situations where violations of human rights occur or reportedly occur. The Executive Director of Asia Watch referred to "the unchecked power of the military" in East Timor.<sup>15</sup> The critics argue that the United States should base its policy toward the ABRI on the day to day actions and conduct of the military rather than on future scenarios of the ABRI's role in a political crisis. They also contend that the executive branch gives too much weight to strategic considerations and inadequate priority to the ABRI's treatment of East Timorese and Indonesian civilians.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the critics of U.S. military aid in the early 1960s viewed the ABRI as an instrument of Sukarno's radicalism and aggression against Indonesia's neighbors. Congress cut military and economic aid to Indonesia in 1963.<sup>17</sup> After Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975, the critics accused the Ford and Carter Administrations of allowing the ABRI to use U.S. weapons in East Timor, which Indonesia had received under U.S. military aid programs. In the 1990s, critics extended these accusations to the ABRI's actions toward Indonesian political and labor dissidents and the killing of civilians.<sup>18</sup> Such accusations have been documented in the State Department's annual human rights reports.

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<sup>13</sup> As an example, see the testimony by U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia, Edward Masters, in: U.S. Congress. House. Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, *Famine Relief for East Timor*, Hearings, 96<sup>th</sup> Congress, p. 20-27.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. *Crisis in East Timor and U.S. Policy Toward Indonesia*. Hearings. 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, second session. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992. P. 83. Testimony of Kenneth Quinn, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2-51.

<sup>17</sup> Gardner, *Shared Hopes, Separate Fears: Fifty Years of U.S.-Indonesian Relations*, p. 181, 198; Stebbins, Richard. *The United States in World Affairs, 1963*. New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1964. P. 206.

<sup>18</sup> Shorrock, Tim. East Timor Groups Slams US Policy, Not Party Funds. *Journal of Commerce*, November 27, 1996. P.A4; Zunes, Stephen. Reassessing America's Policy Toward Indonesia. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 17, 1996. P. 19; Goozner, Merrill. Indonesia's Big Crime: Oppressing Workers. *Chicago Tribune*, November 3, 1996. P. 7.



Critics of the ABRI have argued that, because of its unique political role, the United States must exert direct pressure on it in order to bring about a change in its behavior. Indirect influence through cooperative programs will not work, they insist, and may send the wrong message. Over the years, critics of the executive branch have proposed penalties on the ABRI. These proposals have included reductions and/or suspensions in cooperative programs with the Indonesian military. They have targeted Foreign Military Sales (FMS) financing of U.S. weapons sales to Indonesia and U.S. military training of Indonesian military personnel. They also have proposed restrictions on commercial sales of weapons to Indonesia.

## **The Tumultuous Military Relationship of the 1990s**

The differences between the executive branch and Congress over policy toward Indonesia reached new heights in the 1990s. In the wake of the Persian Gulf War and the expulsion of the United States from military bases in the Philippines in 1992, the Pentagon sought closer relations with Indonesia. The Navy negotiated with the Indonesian government in 1992 to gain access to ship repair facilities at Surabaya, a port city on Java.<sup>19</sup> This initiative collided with the congressional reaction to the Indonesian military's massacre of civilian demonstrators in Dili, the capital of East Timor, in November 1991.<sup>20</sup> Representatives of the U.S. human rights community called for the United States to terminate the ABRI's participation in the U.S. International Military Education Training program (IMET). Under the IMET program, the U.S. executive branch had allocated over \$2 million annually for Indonesian officers to attend U.S. military training schools. Representatives of Asia Watch argued that a termination of the program for Indonesia would put pressure on the Indonesian government and military to provide a full accounting of the Dili killings and punish military personnel responsible.<sup>21</sup> Congress legislated a termination of funding for Indonesian participation in the IMET program in 1992 (P.L. 102-391, foreign operations appropriations for fiscal year 1993, approved in October 1992).

The Bush Administration opposed the ban on IMET funding for Indonesia. The Administration criticized the killings. The Administration called for the Indonesian government to investigate and inflict "appropriate punishments" on individuals responsible for the massacre and "to ensure that no such incident recurs."<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, U.S. officials stressed that the killings were not part of a deliberate policy of the Suharto administration. (This assertion constituted a significant difference in views between the Administration and its critics; the critics argued that the Dili

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<sup>19</sup> Richardson, Michael. Indonesia Opens Commercial Door to US. *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, October-November 1992. P. 35.

<sup>20</sup> For background on what has been called the Santa Cruz massacre, see: Indonesian-U.S. Relations and the Impact of the East Timor Issue. CRS Report 92-983F. By Larry Nicksch. December 1992.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations, Crisis in East Timor and U.S. Policy Toward Indonesia, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80-81.

massacre was part of a pattern of human rights abuses by the ABRI in a number of regions of Indonesia.) These officials argued that the IMET program was a means of influencing the Indonesian military and exposing it to U.S. views of human rights. They warned that a termination would undercut moves by President Suharto and the Indonesian government to investigate the killings.<sup>23</sup> The Administration stressed the broad range of U.S. interests in Indonesia, arguing that "our engagement with Indonesia needs to be sustained, not hindered."<sup>24</sup>

The Bush Administration's arguments were partially undercut by the actions of Indonesian courts and military tribunals that investigated the massacre. President Suharto established an investigating commission, which issued an interim report in late December 1991. The commission disputed the ABRI's claim of 19 killed, saying that the death toll was at least 50. It concluded that military units, though provoked, had used excessive force. The commission called for the prosecution of people who violated the law. President Suharto subsequently replaced the two senior commanders with responsibility for East Timor and ordered the creation of tribunals to try military personnel. However, the tribunals handed out more severe sentences to Timorese demonstrators than to military personnel. According to figures provided by the State Department, sentences given to 13 civilians involved in the Dili demonstrations of November 12, 1991, ranged from six years to life imprisonment. Sentences of eight military personnel ranged from eight months to 18 months. The Senate Appropriations Committee stated in its report on foreign aid for fiscal year 1993 that it was "shocked by the gross disparity" in the sentences.<sup>25</sup>

The Clinton Administration initially did not oppose the IMET ban. It also imposed two East Timor-related sanctions against the Indonesian military: a July 1993 veto of a Jordanian sale of U.S.-made F-5 fighters to Indonesia and a prohibition of U.S. sales of lethal crowd control equipment to Indonesia. However, the Administration took a more sympathetic position toward military training and arms sales. The Administration allowed the Indonesian government to finance Indonesian officers' participation in the IMET program.<sup>26</sup> The Administration supported the Pentagon's resort to another program to train the Indonesian military. Using a Joint Combined Exchange and Training program (J-Cet), specialized U.S. military units trained Indonesian counterparts like the Kopassus (special forces), Kostrad (the Indonesian military command for Jakarta, Indonesia's capital), and President Suharto's presidential guard unit.<sup>27</sup> The Administration and the Defense

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<sup>23</sup> Congressional Record, June 25, 1992. P. H5247-H5259.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83, 86-87.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Appropriations. Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Program Appropriation Bill, 1993. Report. 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, second session. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992. P. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Wu, Irene. House vs. White House: Clinton Clashes with Congress on Indonesian Policy. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 30, 1994. P. 18.

<sup>27</sup> Weiner, Tim. U.S. Training of Indonesian Troops Goes On Despite Ban. *New York Times*, March 17, 1998. P. A3; Mann, Jim. U.S. Risking Ties to Indonesian Military. *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1998. P. A5.

Department reportedly also encouraged Australia to enlarge its training programs for the Indonesian military.<sup>28</sup>

The Administration also decided to oppose congressional attempts to restrict U.S. arms sales to Indonesia. In 1993, the Administration successfully worked against a proposed amendment in the Senate to the foreign operations appropriations bill that would have made all U.S. arms sales to Indonesia conditional on a reduction of the Indonesian military presence in East Timor.<sup>29</sup> In 1994, the Administration opposed attempts in the Senate to bar U.S. military equipment purchased by Indonesia from being used in East Timor.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, in August 1994, the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress passed H.R. 4426, the Fiscal year 1995 foreign operations appropriations bill (P.L. 103-306). The legislation banned the export to Indonesia of light arms and crowd control equipment until the Secretary of State reports to Congress "significant progress" on human rights in East Timor and elsewhere in Indonesia. When the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress convened in 1995, the Administration acted to prevent a re-enactment of similar legislation. It assured congressional committees that the Administration would continue to ban such weapons sales.

## **IMET Restoration and F-16 Sale Initiatives**

The start of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress triggered two Clinton Administration initiatives to strengthen relations with the Indonesian. The Administration announced in March 1995 that it would seek a restoration of U.S. funding for Indonesia's participation in the IMET program in fiscal year 1996 foreign operations appropriations legislation; it requested \$600,000 for Indonesian military participation. The Defense Department, especially the Navy, promoted the Administration's request. Admiral Richard Macke, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, and Admiral William Owens, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with American and Indonesian journalists in Washington and Jakarta and testified before congressional committees in order to advocate a resumption of IMET funding. Both of the Admirals voiced the need for "personal and professional contacts" with Indonesian officers to enhance future cooperation and U.S. influence. Civilian Administration officials said that the views of Owens and Macke "reflect the overwhelming view in the U.S. military" and that the U.S. Military had pressed the Administration to propose the IMET renewal.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Clark, Bruce. Pentagon Strategists Cultivate Defence Ties with Indonesia. *Financial Times*, March 23, 1998. P. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Borsuk, Richard. Proposed Amendment to Link U.S. Arms Sales to Human Rights Could Hurt Ties With Jakarta. *Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly*, September 13, 1993. P. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Wu, Irene. House vs. White House. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 30, 1994. P. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, R. Jeffrey. U.S. Officials Exhibit Dichotomy in Policy on Indonesia and (continued...)

The 104<sup>th</sup> Congress restored IMET funding but with conditions. Congress stipulated in H.R. 1868 (P.L. 104-107, the FY 1996 foreign aid appropriations measure) that Indonesia would receive an Expanded-IMET (E-IMET) that should address human rights concerns, military justice, and civilian control of the military and that courses should include individuals from the Indonesian parliament and non-government groups. On June 11, 1996, the House of Representatives rejected by a vote of 272 to 149 an amendment to the fiscal year 1997 foreign operations appropriations bill (H.R. 3540) that would have prohibited IMET funds for Indonesia.

The second Administrative initiative was a proposal to sell F-16 aircraft to Indonesia. Indonesia made several military purchases from the 1970s into 1990-1991. The major purchases were 60 kAIM 9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles in 1980; 16 A-4 fighters in 1981; 12 F-16 fighters in 1986; and 13 shipboard Harpoon missile systems in 1990. However, after 1991, the Indonesian government shifted purchases away from the United States to Great Britain, Australia, and Western Europe, reportedly in reaction to congressional criticisms of U.S. arms sales.<sup>32</sup> Purchases from the United States since then have been spare parts or servicing contracts for the previously acquired F-16 fighters: technical assistance for F-16s and structural modifications of the F-16s. Indonesia reportedly is interested in future purchases of U.S. parts for its C-130 transport aircraft, F-5 fighters, Boeing maritime patrol aircraft, Bell helicopters, and armored fighting vehicles.<sup>33</sup>

The origin of the Clinton Administration's initiative to sell new F-16s to Indonesia lay in the aborted sale of 28 F-16 aircraft to Pakistan. The collapse of the deal with Pakistan led the Administration to seek other countries to purchase the aircraft. Presidents Clinton and Suharto reportedly discussed an F-16 sale at their October 1995 White House meeting. The United States and Indonesia reached an agreement by the summer of 1996 for Indonesia to buy nine of the fighters. However, in late July 1996, an anti-government riot took place in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, following a government-orchestrated ouster of the leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), one of Indonesia's two non-government political parties. ABRI officials played a role in the government manipulations. Indonesian authorities responded to the riot by arresting a number of PDI officials and leaders of dissident organizations.<sup>34</sup> The Clinton Administration protested the arrests and began a review of the F-16 sale, reportedly amidst divided opinions over whether to proceed with the

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<sup>31</sup>(...continued)

Human Rights. *Washington Post*, March 18, 1995. P. A23; Bertha, Annie. With or Without the IMET Program. *Suara Pembaruan* (Jakarta), April 5, 1995. P.1; The Deputy Chief of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Optimistic over Resumption of IMET Assistance. *Suara Pembaruan*, September 20, 1995. P. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Indonesia: Market Overview. *Foreign Military Markets: Asia and Pacific Rim*. November 1997. P. 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> For background on the Jakarta riot and the government's response, see McBeth, John and Cohen, Margot. Streets of Fire. *Far Eastern Economic*, August 8, 1996; p. 14-15; and McBeth, John. Hunting Season. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 15, 1996. P. 14-15.

sale.<sup>35</sup> The Administration announced in September 1996 a postponement of the sale, citing congressional objections because of the Indonesian government's crackdown on dissenters. Administration officials indicated that they would proceed with the deal, including notification of Congress, in early 1997. However, by June 1997 no action had been taken.

On June 6, 1997, the Indonesian government announced that it was canceling the F-16 purchase and that the Indonesian military would cease participation in the IMET program. President Suharto stated in a letter to President Clinton that his decision was based on the "wholly unjustified criticisms in the United States Congress against Indonesia. . . ."<sup>36</sup>

## **U.S.-ABRI Relations in the Fall of the Suharto Government**

The Indonesian financial crisis of 1997-1998, which led to President Suharto's resignation on May 21, 1998, brought U.S. attention to the ABRI in two respects. The first was the traditional human rights issue of how the military would deal with critics of the government and protestors. The second was how the ABRI would respond to mounting pressure for political reforms that emerged from economic hardships. The Clinton Administration took a cautious approach at first. It concentrated decision making in a special White House task force.<sup>37</sup> It stressed economic reform issues in its dealings with the Suharto government. U.S. missions to Indonesia in early 1998 avoided raising the political reform issue. Secretary of Defense William Cohen visited Indonesia in January 1998. He reportedly emphasized the need to strengthen security cooperation with the Indonesian government and expand U.S. military ties with the ABRI, including a resumption of Indonesian participation in the IMET program. He apparently did not raise the political reform issue or the ABRI's role in dealing with the emerging social discontent.<sup>38</sup>

By April 1998, the ABRI's treatment of civilian dissenters prompted the Administration to broaden its strategy. Reports of disappearances of dissenters and the reports of involvement in the disappearances by Indonesia's Special Forces (Kopassus) drew U.S. attention. Kopassus, commanded by Suharto's son-in-law, Lt. General Prabowo Subianto, had participated in several of the U.S. C Jet training exercises. Moreover, ABRI units in Jakarta and other cities were confronting a

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<sup>35</sup> Erlanger, Steven. U.S. May Halt Sale of Jets to Indonesia. *New York Times*, August 21, 1996. P. A7

<sup>36</sup> Richburg, Keith B. Indonesia Drops Plans to Buy U.S.-F-16s. *Washington Post*, June 6, 1997. P. A1.

<sup>37</sup> Mann, Jim. U.S. Backs Suharto Despite Calls for Reform. *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1998. P. A1.

<sup>38</sup> Myers, Steven Lee. As Asia's Economic Turmoil Deepens, Pentagon Chief Reassures Indonesia. *New York Times*, January 15, 1998. P. D8; Radio Jakarta, January 14, 1998.

mounting campaign of student protests, which demanded President Suharto's resignation. Megawati Sukarnoputri, one of Indonesia's opposition leaders, complained of U.S. military training in a letter to President Clinton.<sup>39</sup> Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth pressed the Indonesian government on the disappearances when he visited Jakarta in April 1998; he urged the government to deal with student demonstrations "with restraint." State Department officials in Washington and U.S. Embassy officials in Jakarta reportedly made similar representations to Indonesian counterparts and to General Wiranto, the ABRI Commander-in-Chief.<sup>40</sup> U.S. officials said their overtures resulted in the release in late April of some of those who had disappeared.<sup>41</sup> However, key Members of Congress criticized the Administration for the continuing training of ABRI units. In early May 1998 canceled a scheduled joint training exercise with Indonesian military units.

Until May 12, 1998, the ABRI had avoided the use of violence against mounting anti-Suharto protests led by college students. General Wiranto had endorsed proposals for political reforms. On that day, however, security forces fired at students at Trisakti University, killing six. The Clinton Administration's immediate response was to organize a high level military delegation to Jakarta to appeal to the ABRI not to use violence against civilians. Administration officials said the planned mission had "no political agenda" related to the status of President Suharto.<sup>42</sup> The mission was canceled on May 14, however, after massive rioting erupted in Jakarta, creating dangerous conditions for foreigners.

Department of Defense officials continued to stress the need for contacts with the ABRI, and Administration officials generally voiced this theme after President Suharto resigned on May 21. The *New York Times* (May 22, 1998) quoted a "senior Administration official" as indicating little confidence in Indonesia's new President, B.J. Habibie, and asserting that the Administration now would have a political agenda with the ABRI: "We want to encourage the military commanders to move toward democracy, toward new elections as soon as feasible. At this point we don't know these guys well and we don't know if they'll listen. But they are our best hope."

In interviews after Suharto's resignation, Lt General Susito Bambang Yudhoyono, the ABRI's chief of socio-political affairs, outlined the military command's thinking on political change. Yudhoyono, who received U.S. training during his career, advocated early elections after a change in elections laws and said

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<sup>39</sup> Mann, U.S. Risking Ties to Indonesian Military, p. A5.

<sup>40</sup> Robinson, Gwen. Student Protests Gain Momentum in Indonesia. *Financial Times*, April 18-19, 1998. P. 3; Robinson, Gwen. Beijing Offers Jakarta \$200m Aid. *Financial Times*, April 14, 1998. P. 3; Cohen, Margot. The Vanishings. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 7, 1998. P. 24.

<sup>41</sup> Blustein, Paul. U.S. Urges Suharto to Show Restraint. *Washington Post*, May 2, 1998. P. A15.

<sup>42</sup> Shenon, Philip. U.S. to Appeal to Indonesia to Stop Crackdown. *New York Times*, May 14, 1998. P. A6.

that the ABRI would be willing to reduce its overt political role (but apparently not give it up entirely). He cautioned against a proliferation of political parties, which he said, had produced in the past religious and ethnic "passions and hostilities." He said that "the government, the parliament, and the armed forces" would "reach a new consensus on how many parties are acceptable in the near term." General Yudhoyono asserted that "we can talk about a new status for East Timor. . .based on history, based on culture, based on the actual needs of the East Timorese people."<sup>43</sup>

However, prospects for future U.S.-Indonesian military relations have been affected negatively by the demands in Indonesia for investigations of human rights abuses allegedly committed by the ABRI in the weeks leading up to Suharto's resignation. The demands, from the press and elements of the public, focus on three incidents. The kidnappings of over 20 political dissidents, mainly in March and April 1998; the killings of four students at Trisakti University on May 12, 1998; and the rioting of May 14-15, 1998 in Jakarta and other cities, during which scores of women were raped and property were destroyed by organized gangs of men. Another complication arose in July 1998 when mass graves were uncovered in Aceh province in northern Sumatra, raising another issue of possible abuses by the military. General Wiranto has said that the ABRI high command did not order military units to commit human rights abuses in the cases of the kidnappings, the Trisakti killings, and the riots. However, public suspicions have focused on units commanded by Lt. General Prabowo Subianto, Suharto's son-in-law. Wiranto removed Prabowo from his command of security units covering Jakarta following Suharto's resignation. In July 1998, the ABRI high command announced a finding that members of Kopassus, the Special Forces (also commanded by Prabowo), were involved in the kidnappings. Seven Kopassus members were arrested. On August 3, 1998, the ABRI command announced that an Officers' Honorary Council would investigate General Prabowo's role in the incidents. President Habibie has created a task force to investigate the rapes, many of which were committed against ethnic Chinese women.<sup>44</sup>

Secretary of Defense Cohen alluded to these allegations when he visited Jakarta in early August 1998. Cohen stated that the Defense Department wanted to resume cooperative programs with the ABRI "in the coming months," and he praised the Indonesian withdrawal of 1,000 troops from East Timor. However, he also stressed the need for a credible Indonesian government investigation of the alleged human rights abuses.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Richburg, Keith B. Indonesian Army in Political Retreat. *Washington Post*, June 18, 1998. P. A27; Barr, Cameron. How Indonesia's Army Fills a Power Vacuum. *Christian Science Monitor*, May 28, 1998. P. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Mydans, Seth. New Threats Reported as Rapes in Indonesia Are Investigated. *New York Times*, July 20, 1998. P. A9; McBeth, John. Shadow Plan. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 23, 1998. P. 23-27.

<sup>45</sup> Shiner, Cindy. Cohen "Encouraged" by Indonesia but Pressed Human Rights Issue. *Washington Post*, August 2, 1998. P. A32; Shenon, Philip. U.S. Officials, in Indonesia, Warn Rulers to Respect Rights. *New York Times*, August 2, 1998. P. 3.

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