

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

27 June 1984

Papua New Guinea - Indonesia: Uneasy Neighbors [redacted]

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Summary

Recent activities along the Papua New Guinea-Indonesia border have heightened the mutual suspicions that dominate bilateral relations. Tensions rose as a result of incursions by Indonesian military aircraft into Papua New Guinean airspace in March. More recently, Indonesian military actions against rebels in the province of Irian Jaya have produced an unprecedented 8,000 refugees fleeing into Papua New Guinea. [redacted]

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Both parties want repatriation. This will be a massive and politically complex undertaking that will further arouse public sympathy in Papua New Guinea for the indigenous Melanesian Irianese, who are of the same ethnic stock as the Papua New Guineans. The problem could broaden to involve Australia--where there is intense public distrust of Indonesia--and the United Nations--which Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, at Indonesian insistence, thus far have shut out of the repatriation process. [redacted]

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Although both Papua New Guinea and Indonesia say they want a congenial relations, Indonesia's patronizing of Papua New Guinea makes cooperation difficult. The bitterness from the latest series of

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Islands Branch, Southeast Asia Division, Office of East Asian Analysis of the Directorate of Intelligence. It was coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence. Information available as of 15 June 1984 was used in its preparation. Comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Southeast Asia Division, [redacted]

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incidents will probably endure and set the stage for sharper reactions in the future. [redacted]

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### An Ethnic Problem

Ethnic tensions along the Papua New Guinea - Indonesia border are a key to the irritants that are never far below the surface in bilateral relations. The indigenous Melanesian inhabitants of the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya, which constitutes the western half of the island of New Guinea, have been concerned over their future since Indonesia absorbed the area in 1963 (see map). At the same time, Papua New Guineans see their ethnic kin across the border as suppressed by "outsiders." [redacted]

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Fears have been heightened in the last several years by Jakarta's transmigration program, the government-subsidized resettlement of Indonesians from Java and other overpopulated Indonesian islands into relatively empty Irian Jaya, which-- although slightly larger than California, has only 1.2 million people. Jakarta plans to move 680,000 Javanese into Irian Jaya in the five-year period beginning this year, although there are doubts about its ability to entice this many to relocate. Nevertheless, the program could in time result in the indigenous Irianese being overwhelmed by Javanese settlers, a development the Irianese fear will destroy their way of life. Although Indonesian officials insist that local customs will be respected, Foreign Minister Mochtar's recent remark that local "nomads who run around naked" can benefit by learning from Javanese settlers typifies a prevailing Javanese contempt for the Irianese. [redacted]

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A separatist Irianese organization, the Free Papua Movement (OPM) has pressed for international support for independence from Jakarta since Indonesia absorbed Irian Jaya. Although its armed core is only about 150 members, the OPM has harassed the Indonesian military in Irian Jaya and has considerable sympathy among ethnic Melanesians on both sides of the border. Despite the OPM's limited capabilities, the Indonesian Government tends to blame it for any security disturbances. [redacted]

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To maintain good relations with Jakarta, Port Moresby is at pains to deny any support for the OPM or permit it to operate from Papua New Guinean territory. It also prohibits political activity by Irianese who have been granted legal residence in Papua New Guinea and has returned illegal border crossers to Indonesian control. Papua New Guinea is unable, however, to adequately patrol the jungled and incompletely demarcated border or to prevent OPM use of its territory. The Indonesian military is convinced, probably with reason, that the OPM receives material support and protection as a result of the collusion of local Papua New Guinean officials in the border area. [redacted]

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Current Developments

The latest round of difficulties began in late March with the alleged buzzing of a settlement ten miles inside Papua New Guinea by two Indonesian jet fighters searching for a missing civilian aircraft. Jakarta was aroused when the OPM killed two and abducted two other Indonesian occupants of the missing aircraft after it landed at a remote Irian Jaya airstrip -- further evidence to Jakarta of Port Moresby's inability to control the OPM. The OPM's subsequent release of the two prisoners probably headed off an Indonesian rescue operation into Papua New Guinea, as had occurred in earlier years. [redacted]

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When the Indonesian military refused to admit the incursion of its search planes, Papua New Guinea expelled the Indonesian military attache, who had been suspected of conducting intelligence activities against the OPM. The Indonesian military's denial, typical of its cavalier attitude toward Papua New Guinea, undercut a growing disposition by the Foreign Ministry to deal with Papua New Guinean officials as equals. Foreign Minister Mochtar recently showed his frustration over being upstaged by telling a reporter to "ask the military" about the incident and has privately deplored to a US diplomat the military's "provocative and unnecessary maneuvers." [redacted]

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Ministerial talks in Jakarta in April resulted in little more than agreement for further discussions. The Indonesians took offense at Papua New Guinean Foreign Minister Namaliu's airport arrival statement offering to educate the Indonesians on Melanesian culture. The Indonesians rejected his request for prior notification of military operations near the border and canceled appointments with the Indonesian Defense Ministry and Armed Forces Commander Murdani. For its part, Papua New Guinea rejected an Indonesian request for joint border patrols, for which it does not have sufficient personnel and equipment. [redacted]

The Refugee Problem

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The key issue is the disposition of some 8,000 Irianese who have crossed into Papua New Guinea since February, claiming they were fleeing OPM-Indonesian military confrontations. There has long been a trickle of Irianese refugees, but the recent influx is particularly dramatic in view of the low number of border crossers over the past two years. [redacted]

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Although Port Moresby is anxious to be relieved of the refugee burden, it is bracing itself against mounting criticism from the political opposition, students, and church workers against its "pitiless and ruthless" disregard for fellow Melanesians. Domestic opposition is unlikely to reach a level

that would threaten the Somare government, however, and Port Moresby is determined to push ahead with the repatriation. [redacted]

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Both Jakarta and Port Moresby want to carry out the repatriation program as quietly as possible -- Jakarta from a desire to avoid international attention to its policies toward its Melanesian minority. Believing that any successor to the Somare government would almost certainly be less accommodating on border issues, Jakarta also recognizes that it is in Indonesia's interest to help Port Moresby minimize the domestic outcry. Jakarta has provided Port Moresby with a modest amount of money to care for the refugees, pending their return. [redacted]

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Despite its preference for monitoring by the UN of the refugee return, Port Moresby is acceding to Jakarta's insistence that there be no UN involvement. Jakarta's attitude is based partly on its experience with what it believes was intrusive UN monitoring of its handling of Vietnamese boat refugees. This sidestepping of the UN has annoyed the UN refugee representative stationed in Port Moresby, who is upset over the lack of screening for refugees who fear Indonesian retribution. In addition, he considers Port Moresby's assertion that Jakarta has promised humane treatment for returnees inadequate. [redacted]

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#### Australia: An Uncomfortable Observer

Tensions between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia present a special problem to Australia, which wants amicable ties with its populous neighbor, Indonesia, yet feels an obligation toward its former UN trusteeship, Papua New Guinea. Canberra finds it difficult to offer its good offices because both Papua New Guinea and Indonesia are quick to view third-party suggestions as interference. For example, Port Moresby recently delivered an official protest over a recommendation in a leaked Australian security document that Papua New Guinea be encouraged to suppress OPM activities in order to reduce a potential threat to Papua New Guinea from Indonesia. [redacted]

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Port Moresby also complained of violations of its sovereignty when a recent Australian press interview with an OPM leader in the border area was shown on Australian television despite Papua New Guinea's disapproval. Port Moresby was further angered by a suggestion by the head of the quasigovernment Australian Broadcasting Corporation that the interview was permissible because Papua New Guinea's form of democracy does not meet Australia's standards. [redacted]

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Although it has tried to avoid the refugee issue as a bilateral problem between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, the Australian Government is finding it increasingly difficult to do so in the face of intense public interest and sympathy for Papua

New Guinea. Besides the immediate refugee issue, the Australians are concerned over the ultimate impact of the transmigration program on the Melanesians of Irian Jaya. Mindful of the strong anti-Indonesian constituency in the Labor Party, and under pressure from the press to persuade Jakarta to abandon the transmigration program in Irian Jaya, the Hawke government is searching for an opening to broach the subject informally with Jakarta. [redacted]

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Outlook: Border Problems Intractable

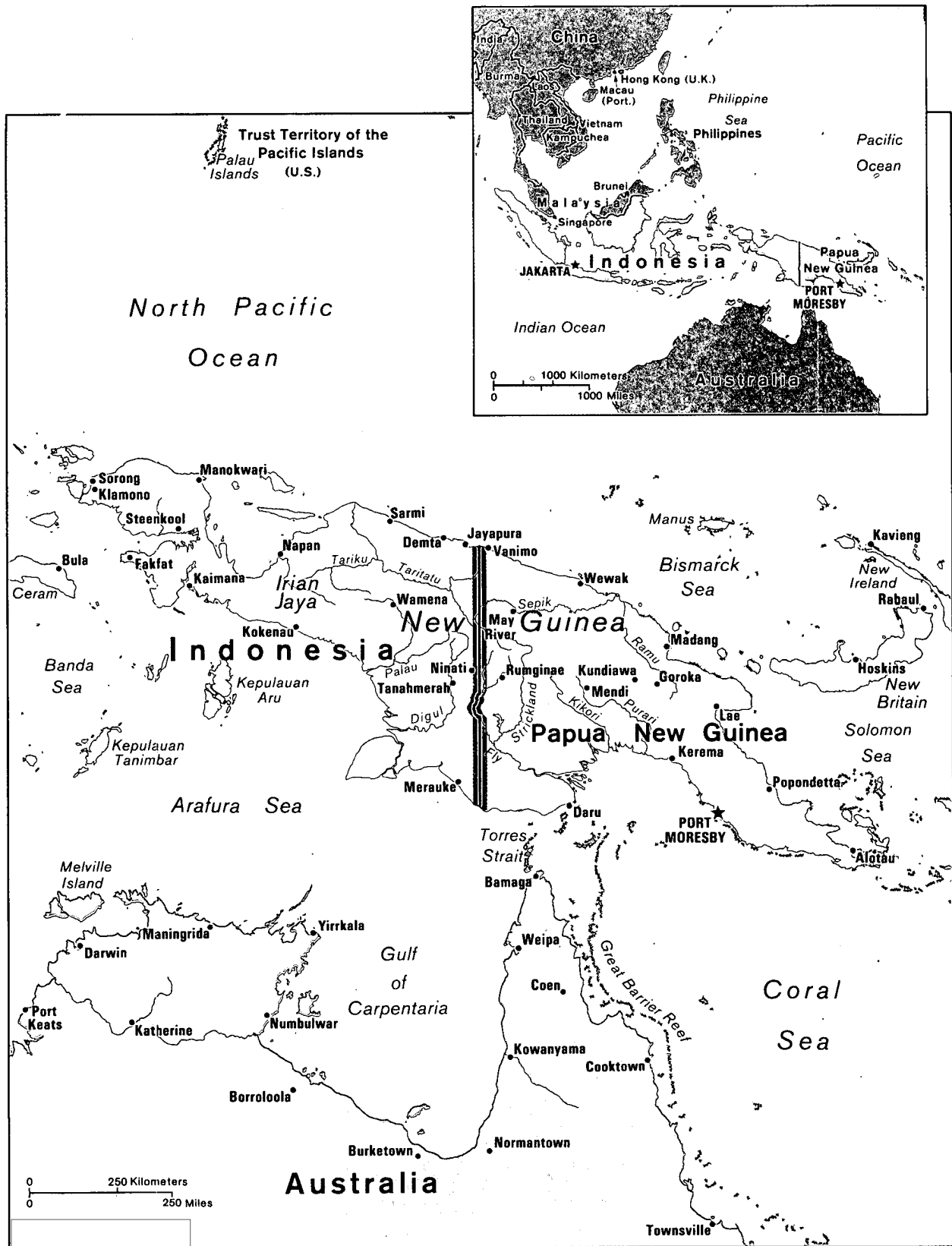
However disposed either side professes to be to resolve border problems, conflicting perceptions ensure sporadic tensions. Jakarta's policy of assimilating the Irianese will intensify concerns in Papua New Guinea over Melanesian brethren in Irian Jaya. This, plus the Indonesian military's penchant for armed repression of any dissidence, seems destined to rule out any early settlement of differences. Both national governments will try to project an image of cooperation, but this will have limited effect in the absence of cooperation among local officials along the border. [redacted]

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At the same time, a recurrence of mass movements of refugees across the border appears inevitable, given Jakarta's heavyhandedness in Irian Jaya. In view of concern already shown in Australia and within the UN over the current refugee situation, succeeding episodes will probably focus greater international attention to Jakarta's policies in Irian Jaya. [redacted]

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Outside:

**Defense:**

- 1--James Riordan
- 1--Bill Mayo
- 1--John Greenwood
- 1--Don Berlin
- 1--Stewart Ring
- 1--Capt. Craig Perkins
- 1--Rob Huddleston
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- 1--Douglas Mulholland

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- 1--Gene Lawson

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- 1--Paul Wolfowitz
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- 1--John Dorrance
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- 1--RADM Jonathan Howe
- 1--Joseph Winder
- 1--Paula Causey

**NSC:**

- 1--Richard Childress
- 1--Gaston Sigur
- 1--David Laux

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**Embassies:**

- 1--Suva
- 1--Port Moresby

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