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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
13 January 1955

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Intelligence)
SUBJECT: South Moluccan Dissidence

The Indonesian government's 5 January declaration of a state of emergency in the South Moluccas climaxed Indonesian claims during the preceding month of increased Dutch-supported dissidence in the area. Both army and government sources, however, now minimize the situation, and the approximately 2,600 troops and police in the South Moluccas are believed capable of containing the dissidence.

The "South Moluccan Republic" is a separatist movement generally supported by the 100,000 Ambonese who inhabit several of the Moluccan islands. They are extremely anti-Javanese and are pro-Dutch. Following an unsuccessful military effort in 1950 and 1951, remnants of the South Moluccan army fled to the island of Ceram where they have engaged in intermittent dissident activity ever since. Since 1951, the movement on Ambon has been largely restricted to political subversion.

It appears that active dissidence has re-emerged on Ambon but on a small scale. The total number of armed rebels is believed to be less than 200 despite claims of an army of 4,000 by a spokesman for the "South Moluccan Republic" in the Netherlands.

American service attachés have suggested that the entire story of Dutch-supported landings on 9 December, their control by the Indonesians, and the present need for a state of emergency is largely a fabrication. By claiming Dutch interference in an area not far from New Guinea, Indonesia may hope to demonstrate the necessity for transferring Netherlands New Guinea to Indonesian sovereignty. The first reports of Dutch-supported landings in Ambon from a Dutch submarine were released on 9 December, the day before the UN resolution on New Guinea came to a vote in the General Assembly.

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On 12 December the army chief of staff corroborated a statement by the defense minister that the "Ambon incident" was "insignificant." He said such incidents were customary, however, in view of the Moluccas' proximity to "Dutch-occupied West Irian."

On 24 December the Indonesian government denied Australian and Netherlands press reports--which spoke of "heavy fighting" in Ambon. The Indonesian government called them a "Dutch propaganda stunt intended to discredit Indonesia in the eyes of the world," but admitted that small-scale fighting was going on.

The government may feel that the reimposition of a state of emergency in the South Moluccas serves the double purpose of aiding the military authorities to restore security and reminding the world of the threat to Indonesian sovereignty which proceeds from continued Dutch control in West New Guinea.

HUNTINGTON D. SHELDON
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