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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

27 September 1983

Indonesia: Military Developments in East Timor

Summary

Jakarta has launched a major operation to eliminate all resistance by Fretilin guerrillas in East Timor following the breakdown of a three-month ceasefire. As many as 18,000 Indonesian troops may be involved against an estimated 600 armed guerrillas in the largest campaign since 1981. Despite the personal commitment of Indonesian Armed Forces Commander Murdani to the operation's success, in our judgment it is unlikely to enjoy better fortune than its predecessors before the onset of the rainy season in December. Moreover, as news of the operation becomes widespread in the foreign press, increased international criticism of Indonesia's East Timor policy is likely. A side effect of the renewed fighting is the prospect of a cooling in Australian-Indonesian relations should the Hawke government accede to the demands of the Labor Party's left-wing for a tougher stand over the East Timor issue.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of East Asian Analysis. Information as of 21 September 1983 was used in its preparation.

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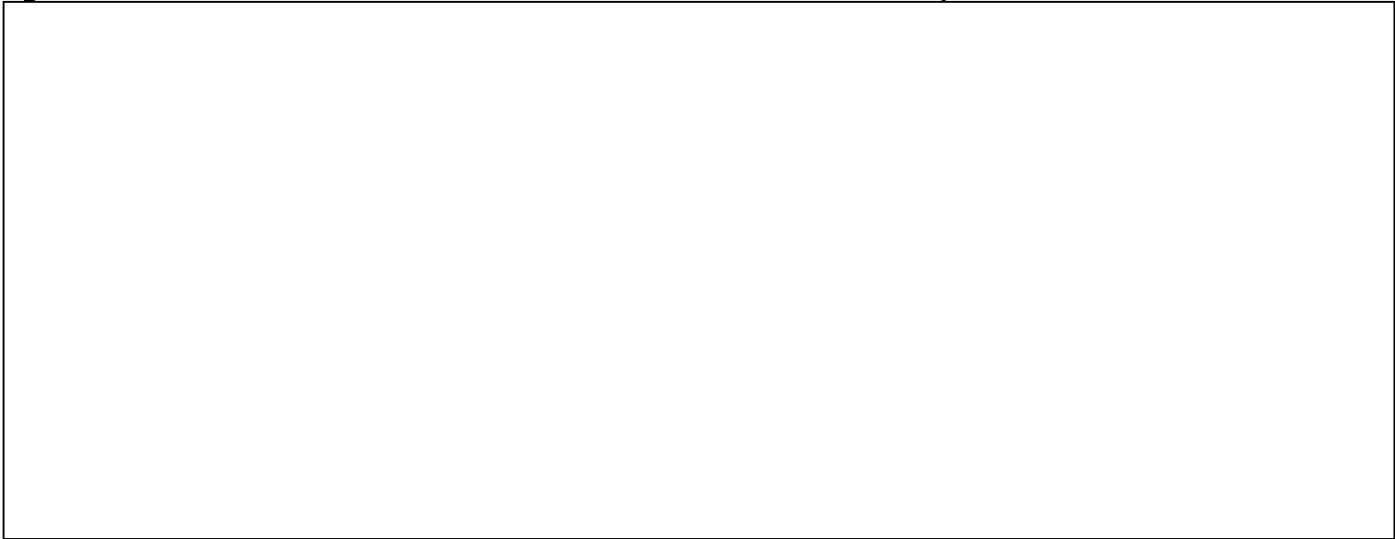
Recent Developments

The current fighting follows the breakdown of a three-month old de facto ceasefire that began in May when talks were held between the Fretilin leadership and government representatives. The talks, however, quickly reached a stalemate when Fretilin presented the Indonesians with four unacceptable demands:

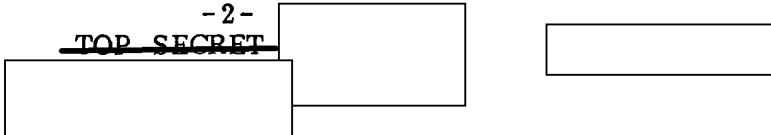
- Removal of all Indonesian troops from the province.
- Appointment of East Timorese to leading provincial administrative positions.
- A popular referendum.
- International supervision of the referendum.

Although lower level meetings were subsequently held between local authorities and guerrilla bands, discussions remained deadlocked. [redacted]

Against this backdrop ABRI Commander Murdani in mid-July called for Fretilin to surrender or face military action.



Initially Jakarta believed the attack was made by about 100 renegade guerrillas and ordered the provincial commander to bring them to justice by the end of the month. Ensuing clashes, coupled with further defections of armed civilians, disclosed a more widespread insurgency. Small-scale engagements between guerrillas and government forces, usually in the form of attacks on military outposts, villages, or clashes between patrols, marked the level of fighting for the remainder of the month. [redacted]



[redacted] Murdani was said to be outraged by the surprise Fretilin attacks and ordered that they be answered with the strongest military force. [redacted]

Fretilin Strength and Operations

Fretilin sympathizers in the villages not only provide information and supplies to the guerrillas but, [redacted] enable the guerrillas to cover preparations for attack. The guerrillas also carry out propaganda activities among the villagers, reminding local officials of their Timorese heritage, and calling upon them to join in the struggle to liberate their country. Native civil defense personnel are also encouraged to defect. [redacted]

Fretilin combat operations are conducted in typical guerrilla fashion. Forces operate in small groups to provide greater freedom of action, concentrating when the opportunity presents itself to attack Indonesian outposts, preferably at night or early morning. Ambushes are established along critical government supply routes. Civil defense posts are a particular target for raids and sabotage, [redacted]

The Current Picture

Current military operations in East Timor involve over 18,000 Indonesian troops*, a threefold increase from the July figure of 6,000 personnel. (An additional 2,000 men are scheduled to be brought in soon.) [redacted]

[redacted]

Five Task

Forces have been established under the Provincial Military Command to conduct this operation. Their primary tasks are: destroy the armed guerrillas, restore security and order, support local authorities, and continue development efforts in the area. [redacted]

In addition to the participating ground forces, elements of the Indonesian Air Force were being readied for possible support operations as of 14 September. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

International Implications

The outbreak of hostilities will deal a serious setback to Indonesian efforts to remove the issue of East Timor from international debate, coming as it does on the heels of an Australian parliamentary delegation's recent visit (28 July to 1 August) to the province, and shortly before the annual UN deliberations on the issue. Prior to the renewal of fighting, Jakarta had conducted a major lobbying campaign to gain sufficient support to defeat this year's resolution on East Timor in the UN General Assembly, and thereby eliminate it from future agendas. As recently as mid-September, prospects for success were promising. [redacted]

[redacted] However, Jakarta now appears to have reversed its position and has joined Portugal in supporting a

[redacted] *See Appendix [redacted]

move in the General Assembly to postpone consideration of the resolution until the next session. We believe Jakarta is probably loath to take any chances on an assembly vote at the moment, and postponement will save Indonesia the embarrassment of a vote amidst accounts of increased fighting. [redacted]

[redacted] Jakarta has suffered a series of setbacks for its East Timor policy since the beginning of September, including the adoption of a resolution critical of Indonesia in a subcommission of the UN Human Rights Commission. [redacted]

Jakarta is keeping a lid on domestic coverage of the fighting and Foreign Minister Mochtar has denounced foreign wire service reports of a large military operation as unfounded allegations. Nonetheless, the international press continues to carry reports of the fighting with varying degrees of accuracy. As the scope of the present military operations in the province becomes more fully known, we expect increased debate in international arenas, more criticism, and further political reversals for the Indonesians [redacted]

Reports of fighting on the island have already undermined the moderate conclusions reached by the Australian parliamentary delegation in its recently released report. [redacted]

[redacted]

Foreign Minister Hayden has expressed the government's concern over reports of a military buildup on the island and said that any resumption of hostilities would represent a step backwards from a lasting peaceful settlement. [redacted]

Domestic Implications

General Murdani has an important stake in the outcome of the campaign not only as ABRI Commander ultimately responsible for the military's performance, but also because he is the principal

authority for East Timor policy. [redacted]

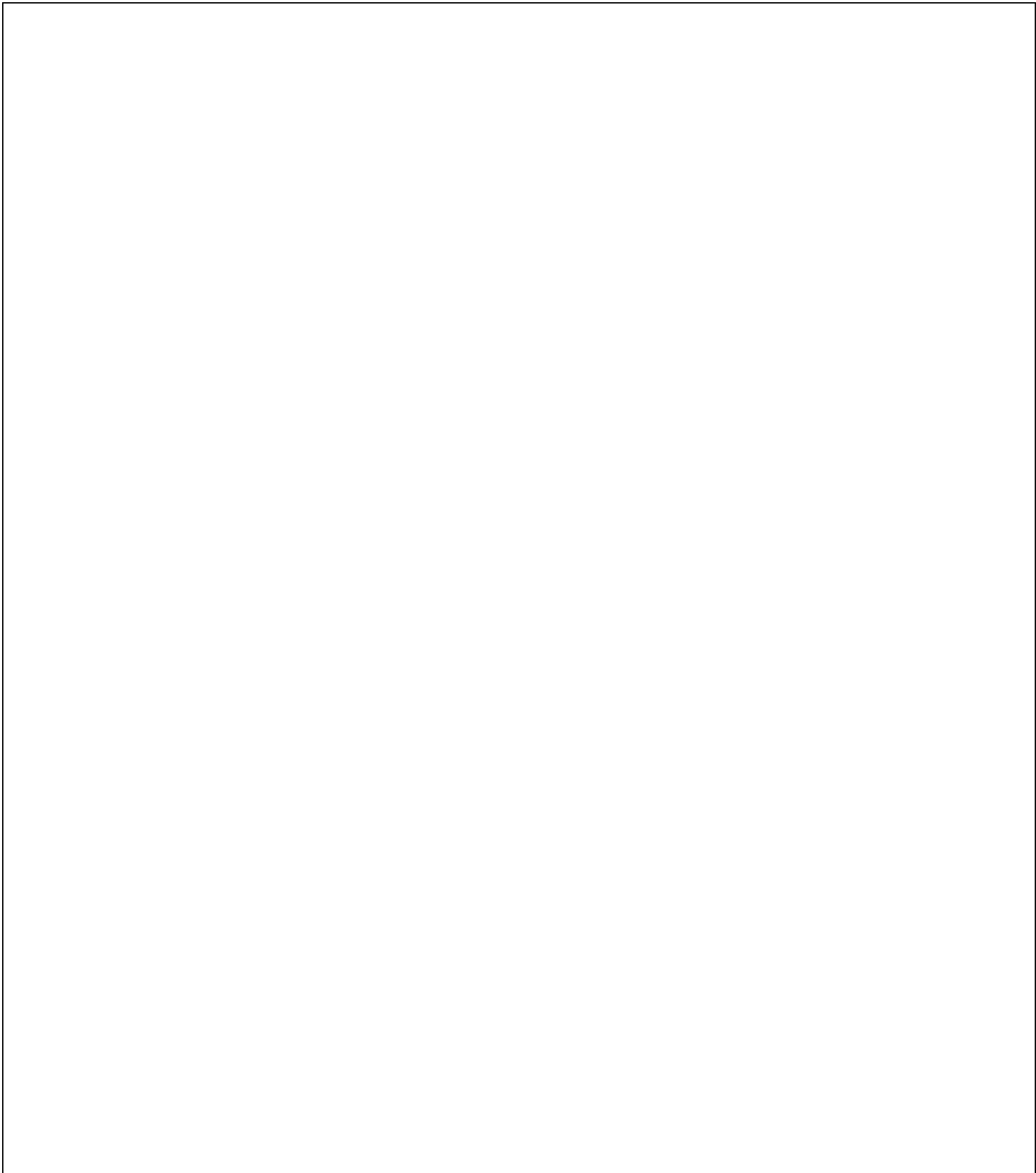
[redacted] the fighting in East Timor may be providing additional ammunition to Murdani's critics in the government who have been privately criticizing his role in the "mysterious shooting" campaign against suspected criminals. [redacted]

Short Term Prospects

[redacted]

Barring the unlikely possibility of large-scale Fretilin defections to the government or a major coup such as the capture of Fretilin leadership or the destruction of sizeable groups of guerrillas, we believe that the current operation, after an initial flurry of activity, will gradually wind down by the beginning of the rainy season in December. However, unlike past operations, Murdani's commitment to the destruction of Fretilin, leads us to expect a more vigorous effort than in the past, which could put considerable pressure on Fretilin to resume negotiations, if only to gain a respite. Nonetheless, both sides appear as uncompromising as ever. Although an embarrassment to Murdani, we do not believe the renewal of fighting, in itself, seriously threatens his position in the government. [redacted]

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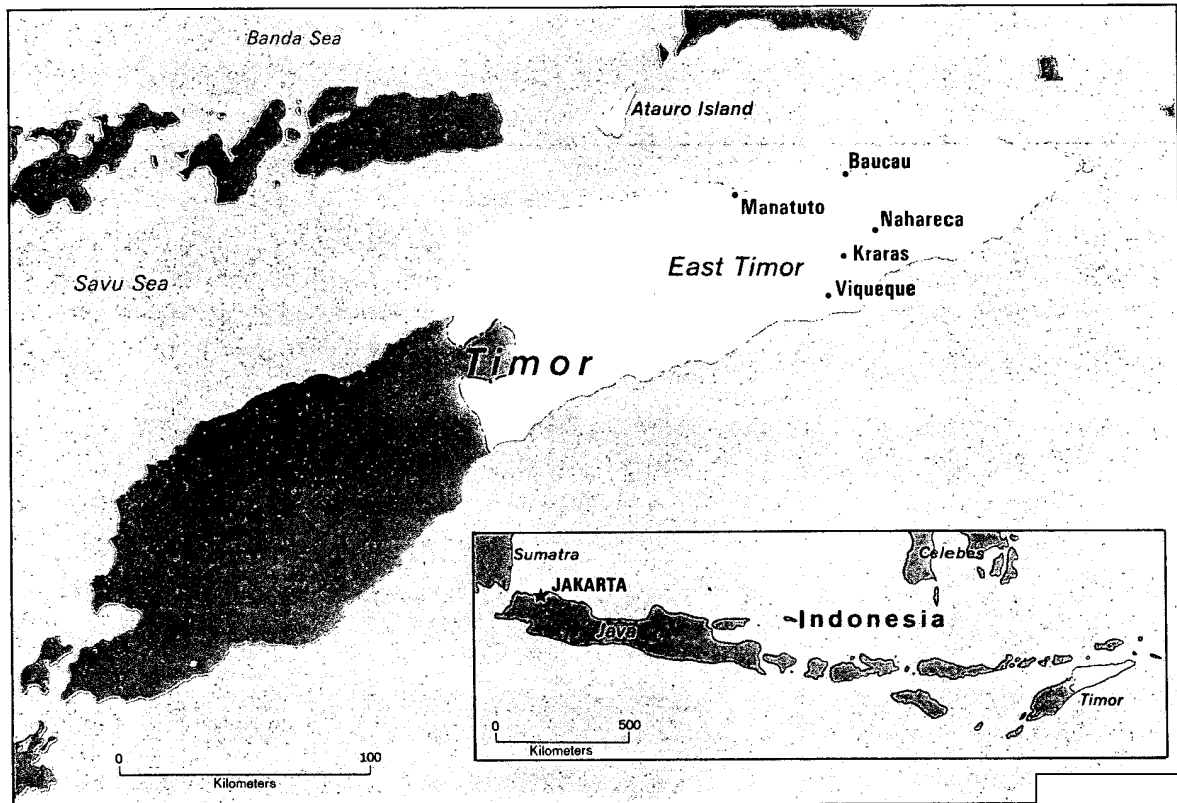


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