

# Democratic Republic Of East Timor

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## THE MILITARY SITUATION

IN

EAST TIMOR, JUNE 1976

Richard Tanter.



On December 7, 1975 ten thousand elite Indonesian troops invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, which ten days earlier had been unilaterally proclaimed the Democratic Republic of East Timor by the popular nationalist de facto administration of the FRETILIN party. Operation Komodo, as it was named by the Indonesians, envisioned victory in a matter of days; six months later, after an enormous death toll, the Indonesian invasion of East Timor has bogged down. This paper attempts to evaluate the conflicting reports about the military situation in East Timor at this stage of the conflict.

The truth of the military situation in East Timor, while it is not easy to ascertain, is very different to the reports emanating from Jakarta, and reporters writing from Jakarta (1). Regular reports from FRETILIN's Radio Maubere are received in Australia and transmitted to the United States (2). A careful analysis of these reports corroborates evidence from other sources that FRETILIN forces still control the greater part of the countryside and that Indonesian occupation forces remain limited to coastal areas and to a few depopulated town centres. The map attached gives an approximate depiction of the position of DRET and Indonesian forces, based on considerations discussed below. However, after Vietnam, such maps are difficult to interpret. In this case, it seems that Indonesian control in the areas attributed to it may be limited.

#### D.R.E.T. forces

The military wing of the Democratic Republic of East Timor FALANTIL, the East Timor Liberation Army, is based on the former Portuguese army in the territory. From the beginnings of the Indonesian incursions in September, 1975, the D.R.E.T. forces were mobilised and demonstrating their ability to resist the invasion. An Australian journalist, Michael Richardson, described the make-up of the 30,000 man army:

"At the time of the UDT's short-lived putsch in August there were about 2,500 full-time Timorese regulars in the army led by about 150 Timorese sergeants, some of whom were veterans of the Portuguese colonial wars in Africa, and a handful of lieutenants. Behind this first-line army there were 7,000 part-time militia men and 20,000 reservists, each with up to 36 months of military training". (4)

Richardson and other commentators agree that at the time of the coup, the great majority of the Portuguese army in Timor swung behind FRETILIN and forced the UDT leaders out of the country. (5) The morale and military competence of FALANTIL appears to have been high, and its successful and continuing resistance to Indonesian elite units is proof of this.

FALANTIL weapons come mainly from the very large Portuguese arsenal which fell into FRETILIN hands, as well as reportedly large numbers of captured Indonesian arms. Richardson describes a FALANTIL border unit in December 1975 as being

"very well armed with standard equipment from Portuguese military stocks, including G-3 automatic rifles, German-made Mausers, 60 and 81-mm mortars, various makes of light machine-gun, hand grenades, bazooka rocket launchers, mines and some 75 mm mountain guns."

D.R.E.T. Defence Minister, Rogerio Lobato, told Richardson that ammunition and fuel stocks adequate for 12 months had been cached all over the country in preparation for the expected Indonesian invasion.

### Indonesian invasion forces

A variety of sources place the number of Indonesian troops in East Timor at between 32,000 and 40,000. The Australian M.P., Ken Fry, claimed that Australian intelligence sources estimated that in April there were 42,000 in Timor as a whole; 32,000 in East Timor and 10,000 in West Timor.(6) This figure was confirmed in conversation by the Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr Kanazawa, as being similar to the Japanese intelligence estimate. In a letter dated April 7, an Indonesian politician opposed to the war states that in Jakarta it is believed that there were then 35,000 Indonesian troops in Timor. (7)

There have been very limited Indonesian troop withdrawals from East Timor. Indonesian reports give figures of several hundred withdrawals and usually refuse to specify the numbers remaining.(8) Ken Fry was quoted in the United Nations as saying Australian intelligence sources believed that on one occasion in March when 350 troops were withdrawn, another 2,000 replacements were brought in.

The Indonesian military forces are apparently well-armed. In the early stages of the border attacks, efforts were made to use only old Soviet-supplied weapons and equipment left over from the Sukarno period.(9) However, by the time of the December 7 invasion proper, this policy had been abandoned, and since that time American-supplied weapons appear to have been regularly used.(10)

Most of the Indonesian units brought in on December 7 and December 25 were elite troops. The Indonesian letter mentioned above confirms FRETILIN reports that most of the troops involved in these invasions were Javanese and from the following elite and commandoregiments which are better paid and better trained than other members of the Indonesian army.

- red berets (RPKAD)
- orange berets (kopsagat)
- violet berets (marines)
- Siliwangi division (West Java)
- Brawijaya division (East Java)

Reports from both Australian sources and FRETILIN sources indicated that troops from the Brawijaya division had been exceptionally brutal during the invasion and that officers had difficulty maintaining discipline; as a consequence, many were removed in January. (11)

FRETILIN radio claims that in the most recent troop movements, many of these elite Javanese soldiers have been replaced by less well trained troops from Flores, an island close to Timor. This change, if correct, is significant in terms of the cultural and ethnic conflict between the dominant Javanese and the many other groups in Indonesia.

The importance of the naval support is indicated by the map and the FRETILIN reports mentioned above. To a large extent, the range of the naval guns determines the penetration of the Indonesian forces. It is not known how many warships are operating in the area. However, Indonesia has a total of 86 sea-going warships of all types. The May 21 Radio Maubere broadcast mentions six ships being used in one north coast bombardment alone. At the same time, the blockade of the entire island is being maintained.

Since the total Indonesian naval fleet consists of 86 ships, it appears that between one-sixth and one-fifth of Indonesia's naval capacity is being deployed. Similarly, assuming that 32,000-40,000 Indonesian ground troops are involved, plus air and naval personnel, about one sixth of Indonesia's total military forces of 266,000 are committed to the Timor campaign. (12)

The naval blockade is the greatest advantage Indonesia has, because it can maintain the relative communications isolation and full material isolation of the D.R.E.T. from the rest of the world. But it would appear to be doing so at very great cost. The author of the Jakarta letter comments:

"According to military sources, this 'Operasi Komodo' is the biggest military operation after independence. I'm wondering who actually pays for this big military adventure, because if it is really paid from our national funds it would be a very big burden for the national economy, already suffering from the \$10 billion Pertamina/Ibnu Sutowo debts."

Both Jose Martins of KOTA party and the author of the Jakarta letter describe a very limited but senior group of Indonesian officers as being in charge of the planning of the operation. The three most senior officers are

-General Ali Moertopo, Special Advisor to the President,

- General Yoga Sugama, head of BAKIN, (Intelligence)

- General Benny Murdani, who was senior field officer in Kalimantan during the Ganjang Malaysia (Crush Malaysia) campaign.

The Jakarta letter, after remarking on the financing of the war, says

"Maybe the CIA is playing here also, because it is actually not a HANKAM (Ministry of Defence) project, but only of a limited number of KOSTRAD generals (13) are responsible for it, headed by General Benny Murdani and supported by General Soeharto himself. The political operation, especially through APODETI, is commanded by Ali Moertopo. So this trio is actually responsible for Timor." (14)

#### American involvement

Apart from the probable widespread use of American weapons in Timor, the United States has a very great indirect involvement in the East Timor invasion. After the victories of revolutionary governments in Indochina, the U.S. has placed great emphasis on strengthening the incumbent governments in the Philippines and Indonesia. However, it appears that the purpose of such U.S. aid is to strengthen the Indonesian internal security capacity. "In fact", the Indonesian news magazine Tempo recently complained, "there is the explicit condition that Australian and American military aid may be used only to maintain domestic order and may not be used against foreign countries". (15) ~~Timor has been defined~~ by the Indonesian military leadership as an internal security issue. Certainly, neither the American nor the Australian governments have questioned this definition.

Siegel documents the large increase in US military aid to Indonesia from 1970 onwards. In the past year, Indonesia has pursued an active policy of seeking further aid increases:

"Playing upon American fears of a domino-type collapse of pro-American governments in Southeast Asia, the Indonesians are pushing for more aid. Suharto requested more aid in July when he visited the US, and a team led by Presidential Assistant Ali Moertopo followed up with a lobbying tour in October. The State Department has requested \$21.4 million in military grant and training aid for Indonesia in fiscal 1976 and \$23.1 million in military sales credits. Though the Pentagon had previously assured Congress that it planned to phase out grant aid, the administration has apparently determined that Indonesia's finances have deteriorated to the point that grants should be increased." (1

	(number)	
Armored Cars		13
Trucks		209
Carbines and Rifles		1,148
Machine Guns and		44
Submachine Guns		
Recoilless Rifles		12

5.

American involvement in the actual invasion appears to be in the role of anxious indirect supporter. Undoubtedly Defence Department planners knew of the existence of Operation Komodo. President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger left Jakarta just twelve hours before the invasion on December 7: It is very difficult to believe that the US was not consulted on such a large operation. Neither Ford nor Kissinger expressed any embarrassment about the conjunction of their visit and the invasion.

On the other hand, it is doubtful that prior to the failure of the invasion Washington had any particular interest in the fate of Timor. It quite probably accepted the official Indonesian and Australian assumption that FRETILIN would crumble.

In December, in the early days of the invasion, a State Department spokesman gave the official US position:

"In terms of the bilateral relations between the US and Indonesia, we are more or less condoning the incursion into East Timor." (17)

Now the matter has become very much more serious for the US as relations between Australia and Indonesia deteriorate, and the regional fears of Indonesian expansion rise again in Southeast Asia.

**POST-COUP U.S. MILITARY AID TO INDONESIA**  
(\$ THOUSANDS)

Fiscal Year	Grants <sup>a</sup>	Sales Orders	Commercial		Excess Deliveries <sup>b</sup>
			Sales Credits	Sales Deliveries	
1966		1		116	
1967	2508	1		23	1
1968	4594	24		2730	98
1969	4908			760	201
1970	5405	c		233	1333
1971	16164	18		412	2347
1972	16982	c		51	1925
1973	18666	148		68	8380
1974	14010	148	3500	859	5541
1975	15850	48514	5000		1221
1976 <sup>d</sup>	19400		23100		

a) Does not include ship loans and other miscellaneous programs

b) original acquisition cost

c) less than \$500

d) proposed

Source: "Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts," November, 1975, Defense Security Assistance Agency.

**FY 1976 SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO INDONESIA**  
(thousands of dollars)

Categories	FMS Credits	MAP Grants	Total
Aircraft (incl. spares)	12,560	4,758	17,318
Ships (incl. spares)	6,000	2,840	8,840
Communications Equip. (incl. spares)	4,540	2,994	7,534
Technical Assistance & Special Services		3,684	3,684
Supply Operations		2,400	2,400
Vehicles & Weapons (incl. spares)		1,376	1,376
Repair & Rehabilitation of Equipment		450	450
Ammunition		80	80
Other Equipment & Supplies		818	818
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,100</b>	<b>19,400</b>	<b>42,500</b>

**TRAINING PROGRAM**

	thousands of dollars	number of students
Actual FY 1974	1,700	234
Actual FY 1975	2,800	250
Proposed FY 1976	2,000	238

A. From Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram, Nov.-Dec. 1975

B. From Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram, Jan.-Feb. 1976

The current positions

Fierce fighting continues in all parts of East Timor at the present. FRETILIN battle reports range from the border areas (such as Atabae) north coast areast (the stretch between Dili and Atabae), the Baucau area on the northeast coast, the mountain area south of Dili and to Dili's southwest (Ermera), the eastern end of the island (Lospalos and Tutuala). Indonesian naval bombardment is reported to be continuing on both the north and the south coast, indicating that FRETILIN forces still retain control of some coastal areas as well as the central mountains area. (18)

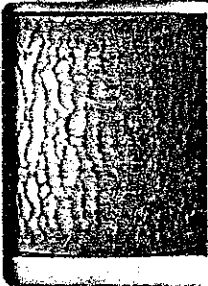
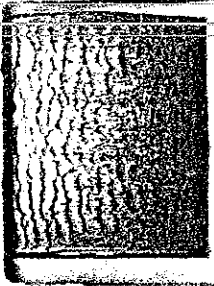
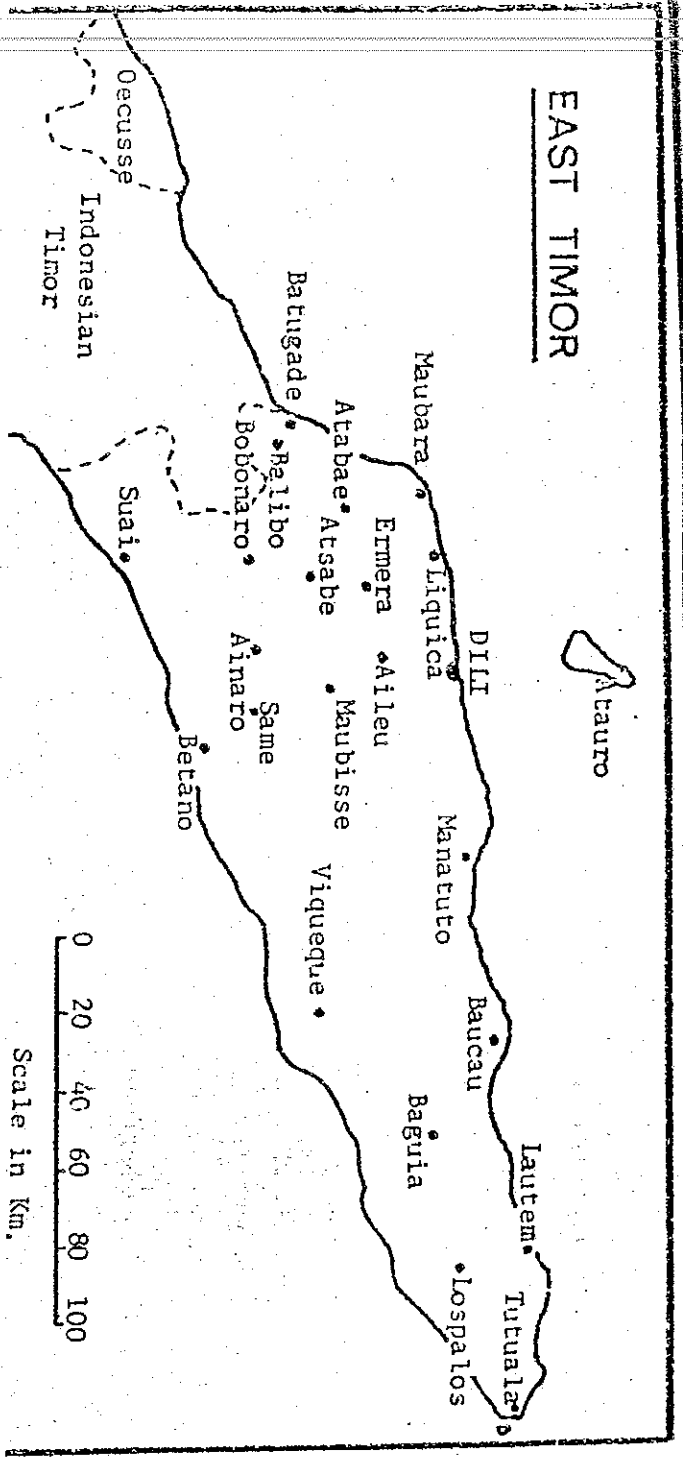
FRETILIN claims that the Indonesians hold the main towns securely only in the town centres. This is confirmed by conversations between representatives of the Provisional Government and the D.R.E.T. Foreign Minister Ramos-Horta in New York during the time of the Security Council meetings. According to P.G.E.T. delegate, Mario Carrascalao, it is not safe to leave Dili after dark and P.G.E.T. officials are quite unable to move safely outside Dili even during the day. Carrascalao also told Horta that D.R.E.T. forces had mounted serious attacks on Indonesian troops in the streets of Dili on the day preceding and the day following the visit to Dili by the United Nations Special Representative Winspeare Gucciardi. When Horta asked Carrascalao why FRETILIN had not attacked on the day of the Representative's visit, the latter said it could only be because FRETILIN had bad information about the actual time of the visit. (19)

The emerging pattern makes sense after the experience of Vietnam; the invading forces can move in some areas by day, but lose the territory by night. Indonesian forces occupy territory but do not control it. If Dunn's conservative estimate in map 2 is matched against the most recent Radio Maubere reports then it is reasonable to assume that the dry season offensive has not taken the Indonesians very much further.

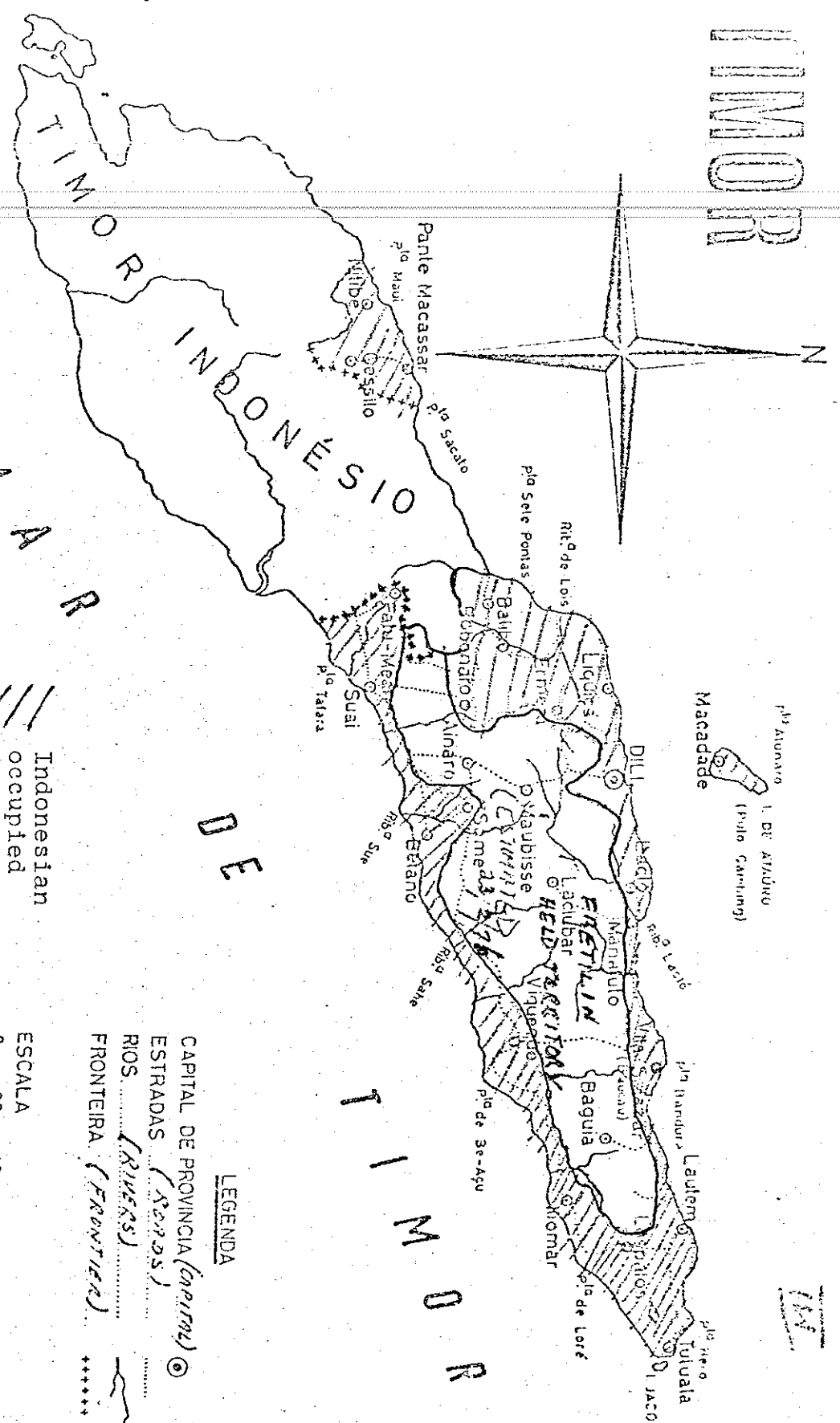
The May 21 Radio Maubere report refers to clashes in the following areas:

- Tocoluli on the road between Ermera and Aileu;
- The Ermera region itself;
- the Atsabe region (artillery bombardment);
- Baucau;
- Cailaco, north of Maliana, close to the Indonesian border (shelling)
- Mount Kablakil, on the road between Same and Maubisse (shelling).

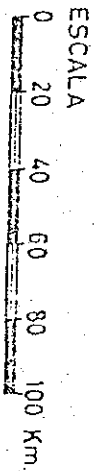
Such reports cannot be expected to broadcast FRETILIN losses regularly, but it is possible to be reasonable certain of where the main fighting is taking place, and to get an overall picture of the progress of the war. The dry season offensive is not yet over, but after six weeks it seems only to have resulted in the capture of possibly Atsabe and Ermera.



TIMOR



Indonesian  
occupied  
territory.  
(est. 23.2.76)



LEGENDA

CAPITAL DE PROVINCIA (capital) ●

ESTRADAS (roads) ———

RIOS (Rivers) ~~~~~

FRONTEIRA (Frontier) \*\*\*\*\*

From: J.S. Dunn, "The Timor Affair - From Civil War to Invasion By Indonesia"  
 (Australian Parliamentary Library: Legislative Research Service, Canberra,  
 February 27, 1976).

The Jakarta letter indicates that one of the columns attacking Dili on December 7 was commanded to proceed on the mountain route from Bobanaro to Atsabe to Aileu and from there to Dili. This contingent of the invaders lacked coastal naval bombardment support and completely failed, even though it was very close to the supply bases in the border areas.

Indonesian reports are infrequent and not detailed. Government spokesmen continue to claim control of the entire island and maintain that only a few hundred FRETILIN soldiers remain. (20) On the other hand, the high level of troop deployment, the various reports of high casualty rates as reflected in the hospital populations in Denpasar, Surabaya and Jakarta, the continuous naval blockade and, most importantly, the refusal of the Indonesian Government to allow foreign observers any kind of free access to the territory belie this claim. Hamish McDonald (Washington Post, June 1, 1976) states that witnesses to the May 31 "Peoples' Assembly" were flown into Dili for three hours only and were not allowed "to test the authenticity" of the proceedings. The Indonesian Government threatened to sink relief ships carrying only humanitarian food supplies and medical aid attempting to reach FRETILIN areas when two such proposals were mounted by the Australian Catholic Bishops and the Australian Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union. (21) At the time of writing the Indonesian Government has not offered the United Nations Special Representative, Mr Winspeare Gucciardi, any greater assistance in reaching FRETILIN controlled areas than it did in January 1976, when Indonesian planes and artillery and naval forces actively impeded his attempts to reach FRETILIN lines. The author of the Jakarta letter says that the Indonesian military administrative division of East Timor in itself admits the continuation of serious FRETILIN resistance, and that soldiers posted to East Timor dread being assigned to infantry units.

#### How long can the Indonesians last?

There is no doubt that the Indonesian invasion has failed to come close to its military objective. Commenting on what it called Indonesian and Australian "miscalculation", the Institute for Strategic Studies (London) in its latest survey said that

"if FRETILIN can find the psychological resources, the military skills and popular support to sustain guerilla warfare, Indonesian forces may find themselves engaged in a lengthy and difficult campaign." (22)

FRETILIN certainly has the popular support required; many observers of the last half of 1975 agree that FRETILIN held the allegiance of the great majority of the East Timorese people. To date, it has demonstrated a military capacity adequate to resist the largest army in Southeast Asia outside Vietnam, and one receiving large amounts of US military aid.

The physical terrain of East Timor is very well suited to protracted guerilla warfare. During the Second World War, 400 Australian commandos carried on a guerilla campaign against vastly greater Japanese forces for four years. The D.R.E.T. government foresaw the invasion, and made plans to decentralise resources, and to abandon the town centers of Dili and Baucau in favour of the mountain command post of Aileu, forty kilometres south of Dili.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of FRETILIN is the relatively poor food supply in the mountain areas which FRETILIN controls and which according to FRETILIN now hold the bulk of the East Timorese population. Dunn states that the food base here is not good; FRETILIN has reported that the corn and rice harvests were being sacked by Indonesian troops and shipped out of Timor. It is not clear how extensive this policy has been.

On the other hand, FRETILIN reports of continuing successful resistance against the Indonesian offensive is confirmed from a variety of sources. Clearly, the overall level of Indonesian forces involved has not decreased significantly. The campaign to withhold the truth about Timor - both politically and militarily - from the Indonesian political public seems to have failed.(23) A series of articles appeared in the Jakarta daily Merdeka by a former Minister of Information, B.N. Diah- questioning the wisdom of the Timorese annexation. Though he subsequently retracted his views under pressure Diah's remarks seem to indicate a broader sentiment when considered together with the descriptions of the Jakarta letter:

"Actually it is no secret any more in Indonesia. Especially in Jakarta, where the Army hospital (Rumah sakit Gatot Subroto) and the Airforce hospital at Halim airbase is overflooded with war victims. And what makes it more tragic is that the families - even their wives - are not allowed to visit their husbands in hospital. At the same time, news that many Indonesian soldiers were killed by the Timorese is just trickling down in Jakarta and whole (sic) Java. So knowing that your husband, son or father has to go to Timor is nearly as shocking as death/trial penalty."

FRETILIN reports have stressed the loss of morale amongst Indonesian troops, and have claimed that some have become so under-supplied and starved as to eat leaves.(24) The most difficult problem is to evaluate the number of casualties. Adam Malik admitted that more than 350 Indonesian troops had been killed some time ago. FRETILIN radio claimed that 845 Indonesian troops were killed in the area south of Dili alone between January 20 and April 3. Broadcasts mention groups of ten to thirty Indonesian troops dying in different clashes regularly. Malik's figure of 450 is probably an underestimate the actual figure is likely to be eight or ten times higher, with large numbers of wounded.

On the FRETILIN side, estimation is more difficult still. However, the ruinous and horrifying consequences of the war on the general Timorese population cannot be underestimated. Even before the main invasion, observers believed that the suffering in the coming war would be enormous. The President of the Provisional Government, Francisco Lopez da Cruz said on February 13 that 60,000 East Timorese had been killed in six months of fighting; this figure included the dead on both sides, and was mainly composed of women and children.(25) There is no way of knowing how many more have died since then, and how many will do so more slowly both in the fighting and as a consequence of the economic and ecological devastation wrought by the invasion.

Internationally, Indonesia's position has deteriorated a great deal, and this will begin to affect its capacity to prosecute the war. Relations between Australia and Indonesia have turned from close cooperation to estrangement, and almost antagonism. FRETILIN supporters in Australia hold the former Labor Prime Minister personally culpable for the invasion because of his acquiescence to President Suharto's proposal to annex the territory, allegedly by peaceful means.(26). The Indonesian invasion was executed in the midst of the chaos of the downfall of the Whitlam government. The Liberal (conservative) government headed by Malcolm Fraser has taken an increasingly cool approach to Indonesia to the point where Australia has voted to condemn Indonesia at the United Nations, and declined to send any diplomatic observers to the "Peoples' Assembly" in Dili on May 31 which called for integration with Indonesia.

The Fraser government's increasingly anti-Indonesian stand has contradictory motivations. There is a longstanding racist fear of Asia which the Indonesian invasion has probably revived amongst part of the Australian population. (Similarly, conservative claims that FRETILIN is communist have revived the Vietnam combination of anti-communism and racism). The Fraser Government seems also to have been motivated by straightforward defence concerns: particularly in relation to Papua-New Guinea, which shares a border with Indonesia.

The most powerful influence on the Fraser Government is probably the articulate and well organised opposition to the Indonesian invasion, whose support has swelled rather than diminished since the invasion. Maritime, stevedoring and postal workers' unions have placed black bans on Indonesia; the powerful Australian Council of Trade Unions sent a high level delegation headed by its President, Bob Hawke, to Jakarta to protest the invasion; unions, aid organisations and church groups have plans to send relief ships to Timor; nation-wide demonstrations have been held; and the press keeps up a constant criticism of government inaction on the Indonesian killings of five Australian, British and New Zealand television journalists in October, 197

Obviously, the increasing bitterness between Indonesia and Australia is of concern to the United States Government. American post-Vietnam strategy has placed great weight on Indonesia as shown above. Indonesia and the Philippines are the new bulwarks of American policy in Southeast Asia. A major article in the Washington Post commented:

"With the State Department and the Pentagon watching closely, American diplomats in the area have worked overtime since early April to contain the dispute. Indonesian and Australian officials have gone out of their way to avoid any reference to the American interest in their dispute." (27)

American defence planners are said to regard the military performance of their Indonesian allies on December 7 as woeful. Presumably little reliance could be placed on a country that can't even successfully invade another that has only one percent of its population. But the Indonesian military failure is even more serious to Washington when combined with the spectacular failure of the state oil company, Pertamina. Oil is the heart of the Suharto regime, and the Pertamina failure - big on any scale - must cause doubts in Washington as to the viability of the Suharto regime. (28)

During the December 1975 and April 1976 Security Council debates on East Timor, the US delegates said little, but made their support for Indonesian evident. Public support for Indonesia was led in the Security Council by Japan. Both Japan and the US abstained from voting in the Security Council resolution calling for Indonesian withdrawal. The resolution was passed 12-0 leaving the US, Japan and Indonesia extremely isolated. (29)

Now the US faces a major rift between two of its principal Asian allies. The slowly increasing US displeasure with the invasion may be noted in the absence of any US representation in Dili at the "Peoples' Assembly" on May 31. This attitude now goes well beyond the US.

"Of the 23 embassies in Jakarta invited to send observers, only seven - New Zealand, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria - accepted. The seats reserved for the United States, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore and Papua-New Guinea were embarrassingly empty." (30)

The collapse of Pertamina has placed great pressure on the Suharto regime's ability to continue to raise international loans. (31) Pressure on the regime to rectify its appalling record of violations of basic human rights is increasing, both in the US (at Congressional level) and in the meetings over the past two years at the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia meetings.

The economic strains, the doubts about the funding of the war add to the serious political strains inside Indonesia at the moment. Endemic regional revolts continue in Kalimantan and West Irian, where Indonesian troops continue to battle West Irianese guerillas. The invasion of East Timor, rather than crushing what was seen as an incitement to irredentist claims, may well have produced the condition for even greater internal conflict within Indonesia itself.

FRETILIN has performed very well on the diplomatic front, mainly due to the efforts of the three D.R.E.T. ministers sent out for this purpose from Timor on the eve of the invasion: Minister of State for Political Affairs, Mari Alkatiri; Minister for External Relations and Information, Jose Ramos-Horta and Defence Minister Rogerio Lobato. About a dozen countries have recognised the Democratic Republic of East Timor; more are reported to be about to do so.

At the United Nations, Horta and Alkatiri have won on three consecutive occasions, and each time have shown greater political sophistication. The United Nations, of course, is a secondary arena; resolutions will not shift Indonesia. However, the efforts of Indonesia to win have been very substantial, and each session has seen them more isolated. A victory for Indonesia at the United Nations would be extremely costly for D.R.E.T. At present there is no possibility of either the Security Council or the Decolonisation Committee ratifying any part of the attempted Indonesian integration in the wake of the military aggression.

Recently it has been suggested that Indonesia may not attend the forthcoming Non-aligned Congress in Sri Lanka.

Contrary to conventional suggestions, the time count seems to be against Indonesia rather than FRETILIN. The protracted guerilla war conceivably could go on for many years; the price paid by the East Timorese for their freedom is already enormous. It is difficult to see them relenting in their struggle for liberation now. So often Jakarta-based observers have reported the Indonesian claim that FRETILIN is dead; this particular Phoenix arises from the ashes so regularly that it would seem to be more a case of wishful thinking on the part of the rueful Indonesians.

Notes

1. The New York Times declared on December 14, 1975: "Indonesia Ends Timor Fighting". The intermittent Times reports since then have claimed that only FRETILIN remnants survive. The New York Times article from Jakarta reporting the May 31 "People's Assembly" in Dili was factually incorrect in a corresponding manner. The Times implied that what took place was Indonesian annexation. The Washington Post article from Dili of the same day (1 June 1976) by Hamish McDonald makes it clear that the "People's Assembly" petitioned Indonesia for integration, which is expected to take place on August 17, Indonesian Independence Day.

The McDonald article, written from Dili after a three hour guided tour, casts considerable doubt on the spontaneity of the petition. Only five of the twenty seven members were elected; observers were not able to interview any or to otherwise test the authenticity of the affair. New York Times articles to date have either been written from Jakarta or have reproduced Indonesian Government statements uncritically; thus giving them, in the absence of any other information which is available to the Times, a specious air of authenticity.

2. This paper utilizes reports emanating from FRETILIN sources. Their value varies according to the particular case. But it is my belief that over the past year FRETILIN reports have been shown to be generally accurate; in a number of cases this has been borne out by independent sources after the event, including Indonesian and Australian sources. I do not believe that the same can be said for most Indonesian Government statements concerning East Timor.

The Age (Melbourne) reported on May 28 of this year that FRETILIN radio has resumed normal thrice-weekly short-wave transmission. These broadcasts are easily heard in Northern Australia, and usually last for about an hour and a half in Portuguese, English and Tetum the most common local language. (Bahasa Indonesia is almost non-existent as a significant language in East Timor). Democratic Republic President Francisco Xavier Do Amaral spoke at length in a recent broadcast.

The article remarks that "the fact that FRETILIN has been able to to put a radio station in operation nearly six months after the Indonesian led invasion of Portuguese Timor indicates that opposition to incorporation in East Timor is better organized and more deeply rooted than Jakarta realised."

3. An important independent account of the Indonesian involvement prior to December 1975 is available in an internal KOTA Party document dated March 23, 1976, entitled "Intervention of the Republic of Indonesia in the life of Portuguese Timor: Report for study of the situation of the ex-colony". This document was released in New York by Jose Martins, the President of the KOTA Party, when he wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations indicating that as a member of the Provisional Government of East Timor he no longer supported a policy of integration with Indonesia. Martins also stated that he and other P.G.E.T. delegates to the U.N. were acting under duress. The Martins document is very detailed on the Indonesian planning of the invasion from September 1975 onwards, and the means of coercion and deception used by the Indonesian Government. The document independently corroborates a number of FRETILIN assertions about the early Indonesian incursions.

4. Michael Richardson, "FRETILIN ready for a long war of resistance", The Age, December 2, 1975.
5. Richardson's assertions are confirmed by J.S.Dunn, a former Australian consul in Dili, who returned to Dili and other parts of Timor in October 1975 as a member an Australian Council for Overseas Aid Task Force. See the Report on Visit to East Timor (Canberra: ACFOA, October 1975) and Dunn's earlier paper "Portuguese Timor - the Independence Movement from Coalition to Conflict" (Australian Parliamentary Library: Legislative Research Service, 8 October 1975) and his "The Timor Affair - From Civil War to Invasion by Indonesia" (Australian Parliamentary Library: Legislative Research Service, 27 February 1976).
6. Fry addressed the Security Council as an independent witness on behalf of the Democratic Republic on April 14, 1976. His speech was based on two parliamentary visits to East Timor in March and September 1975. See the relevant Security Council proceedings and also Senator Arthur Gietzelt and Ken Fry M.H.R. Report on Visit to East Timor (Canberra, September 1975)
7. This letter is published in the Timor Information Service, No. 9/10. The author is described there as a reliable Indonesian source; a D.R.E.T. press release described the author as a prominent Indonesian politician opposed to the invasion, who cannot be named for obvious [reasons.
8. For example, the New York Times reported (March 20, 1976) a military spokesman as saying that 350 troops had left Timor for Java. Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik was reported (New York Times, April 18) as claiming that "three hundred Indonesian soldiers have been withdrawn from Eastern Timor because peace has been restored there." The claims of the Indonesian Government on this point did not convince a majority of members of the Security Council; on April 22 1976, a Japanese amendment implicitly acknowledging this claim failed to pass.
9. See Jose Martins, op.cit.
10. To date there is no detailed analysis of the use of American arms by the Indonesian forces in East Timor, although D.R.E.T. representatives have made this claim. David Andelman (New York Times, December 8, 1975) states that U.S. built warships were used in the invasion. Martins supports the FRETILIN claim that an attempt was made to use only old, Soviet-supplied equipment in the early stages; the conflict has become too large for this policy to be sustained. Martins notes that much civilian equipment was used in the invasion, e.g. Pertamina helicopters. Given the large levels of U.S. military aid discussed below, it is to be expected that predominantly U.S. equipment is being used. Information on the naval forces being employed would be particularly useful, given the U.S. interest in this (see Pauker, in note 12 below).
11. The Age (February 14, 1976) reported from Jakarta: "Most of the 'excesses' are thought to have occurred close to the initial attack when Indonesian troops were ordered to brook no resistance. The Indonesian military

leadership is understood to be shocked at the behaviour of some units whose discipline broke down seriously and who went far beyond the 'get tough' order. Late last month certain units, understood to be mainly from the East Java Brawijaya division were pulled out of East Timor because of their acts."

- ~~On January 29, 1976 the Northern Territory Times (Australia published details of two letters received by East Timorese in Darwin from relatives in Dili. The letters claimed indiscriminate killings by Indonesian soldiers. One letter said "more people were killed and more devastation caused in Dili itself than was done by the Japanese in the second world war."~~
12. See D.R.E.T. Information Office Press Release, June 1 1976 (New York) for details of May 21 Radio Maubere report. For details of Indonesia's military capacity see Guy Pauker, "Prospects for Regional Hegemony in South East Asia": Statement presented to the Subcommittee on Future Foreign Policy Research and Development of the House International Relations Committee (April 7, 1976), table 3 (source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1975-76, pp. 53-60).
  13. KOSTRAD is the Indonesian Strategic Army Reserve Command controlling elite units
  14. Martins states several times that civilian equipment and personnel were regularly used by the invading forces (particularly Pertamina helicopters) and a number of civilian and private organisations were closely involved in the planning and execution of Operation Komodo including Pertamina (for transport equipment) and Antara (the official Indonesian news agency for 'fabrication of news' and propaganda.
  15. Lenny Siegel, "Arming Indonesia", Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram, Nov-Dec. 1975, citing Tempo, October 25, 1975, in U.S. Embassy Translation Unit Press Review (Jakarta). Siegel's excellent article is the principal source for this section. See also Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram, Jan-Feb. 1976, "Arming Indonesia: Details".
  16. Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram, November-December, 1975, p.5. U.S. economic and agricultural aid to Indonesia has continued at a high level since the fall of Sukarno. The New York Times, April 20, 1976, reports a signing of a loan agreement between the U.S. and Indonesia for the sale of \$35.2 million for rice and wheat purchases.
  17. The Australian, January 22, 1976.
  18. For FRETILIN battle reports see Timor Information Service, particularly no. 9/10, and the D.R.E.T. Press Release (New York) of June 1, 1976.
  19. Horta is the source of this remark. In the circumstances in which it was communicated to me, there was no reason to doubt its authenticity.
  20. See for example, the New York Times, March 21, 1976, March 22, 1976, and April 19, 1976.

21. The two main relief ships pending are discussed extensively in the Australian press throughout April and May 1976. It seems that both projects are stalled because of the absolute opposition of the Australian Government to allow the ships to leave without assurance of safe conduct from the Indonesian Government and its allies.
22. The Australian, May 4, 1976.
23. Jose Martins (op. cit.) details the well-planned operation to deceive the Indonesian public about the political and military realities of the war. See also B.N.Diah, Merdeka, January 14 and 15, 1976.
24. Timor Information Service, no. 9/10, p.16. An early indication of very substantial Indonesian casualties was a Washington Post, (January 9, 1976) report that Australian intelligence sources estimated that more than 450 Indonesian troops had been killed up to that date in East Timor.
25. New York Times, February 15, 1976; The Age, February 14, 1976 for a fuller account, (see note 11 above).
26. Whitlam's acquiescence in the proposal is clear. What is not clear, and which is causing great bitterness in the Australian Labor Party, is whether or not Whitlam knew of the invasion proposal when he met with Suharto in Townsville in 1975. Gregory Clarke, a former diplomat and advisor to Whitlam at the time of the Townsville talks, said (National Times, March 22-27, 1976) that a copy of the plans of Operation Komodo was circulating in Canberra well before the invasion. In a later seminar, Clarke stated that Whitlam did know of the invasion plans at Townsville. Whitlam's opposition to an independent Timor was based on his opposition to "unviable" states.
- For a full description of the background of the Labor Government policy, see Helen Hill, "Australian Foreign Policy and East Timor: from principles to pragmatism", Australian Political Science Association Conference, August 1975.
27. Washington Post, May 2, 1976.
28. Siegel (op. cit.) and Pauker (op. cit.) both cite or express U.S. intentions and hopes for Indonesia as a regional stabilizing force.
29. The Australian delegates present as observers largely accepted the Indonesian presentation of the facts of the matter, and were visibly surprised at the outcome of the vote.
30. Washington Post, June 1, 1976.
31. One politically ominous consequence of the Pertamina debacle for the regime is a greatly increased foreign dependence. One political reaction to this registered by B.N.Diah in his Merdeka articles. Diah links the Timor affair with the undesirable increase in dependence.

