



Executive Memorandum

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MILITARY ENGAGEMENT WITH INDONESIA IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

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The Bush Administration is asking Congress for \$16 million in assistance for Indonesia: \$8 million for “humanitarian and peacekeeping” operations and \$8 million to train a “counterterrorism unit” there. This would be added to a \$17.9 million program under the Defense Department Appropriations Act (P.L. 107–117) that allows Indonesian military officers to “attend U.S. military educational institutions and selected regional centers for non-lethal training.”

Such initiatives, which do not compromise an existing ban on U.S. military-to-military engagement with the Indonesian military (the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, or TNI), can improve Indonesia’s assistance in the war on terrorism and provide an incentive for military reform. Though the exact details of the exchanges are not yet final, the funded activities should include intelligence sharing, enhanced military participation in the war on terrorism, and joint training exercises between U.S. and Indonesian civilian police.

Restrictions on Military Engagement with Indonesia. Since 1992, Congress has imposed a variety of restrictions on U.S. military cooperation with Indonesia because of the TNI’s history of disregard for human rights. All military ties were severed in September 1999 after the TNI had orchestrated several massacres in an attempt to influence East Timor’s vote on independence.

In the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act of 2002 (P.L. 105–115), Congress linked the restoration of normal military relations to, among other things, Indonesia’s ability “to bring to justice members of the armed forces and militia groups against whom there is credible evidence of human rights violations in East Timor.” Although some suspects have been tried, even most supporters of renewed ties with Indonesia’s military concede that the high-ranking officers who were responsible for ordering the atrocities have yet to be arrested, let alone charged with a criminal offense. Indonesia also has failed to demonstrate a “commitment to civilian control of the armed forces”; the TNI remains largely accountable only to itself.

For these reasons, the existing bans on military-to-military relations in the form of international military education training (IMET) and foreign military financing (FMF) are valid. Depriving Indonesia of normal military relations provides an incentive for much-needed reform.

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Nevertheless, as Southeast Asia's largest country and the world's most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia plays a key role in the war on terrorism. It is home to several radical Muslim groups, like the Laskar Jihad and Jemaah Islamiah, known for using terror to achieve their goal of a fundamentalist Muslim state. Indonesia may therefore be a prime destination for al-Qaeda members fleeing Afghanistan.

Furthermore, without the cooperation of Indonesia and its security forces, antiterrorist operations in Southeast Asia would be severely disadvantaged. As one of 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the most influential multi-lateral grouping in the region, Indonesia can veto any measure the group proposes. To engage in any meaningful regional security cooperation, the United States must gain Indonesia's collaboration.

Areas of Targeted Engagement with Indonesia. Indonesia's contribution to the war on terrorism has been disappointing, given the terrorist infrastructure that exists there. Renewed training of Indonesia's military and police forces would allow U.S. personnel to reinforce the case for Indonesia's assistance in the war on terrorism.

The Administration's proposal would provide assistance equally to Indonesia's police force and to the TNI. Programs to strengthen the civilian-controlled police force will eventually permit the police to assume full responsibility for domestic security, gradually moving the TNI out of its assumed role of internal defense toward a preferred role of external defense.

Many ASEAN members feel that Indonesia's status as a pariah at international security conferences damages ASEAN's ability to lead regional events and proscribes Indonesia's participation in security activities. A renewal of U.S. military cooperation would, to some degree, help to restore Indonesia's image and give ASEAN a new purpose.

For Jakarta, good relations with the United States is far more important to long-term national interests than the illusory benefit of courting Islamic extremists. Indonesia's political elite and security forces need that relationship with the United States and will eventually conform to international norms to get it. Limited U.S. military cooperation would keep the door to normalization open. The Bush Administration can work with Jakarta with some

optimism that Indonesia will take the high road toward security in order to rejoin the world community.

What to Do. To comply with the current ban on military-to-military cooperation with Indonesia, the Bush proposals are very specific or contain precise restrictions on the nature of activities to be undertaken. The Administration should continue to exercise caution in crafting joint training exercises to enhance Indonesia's participation in the war on terrorism. To secure Indonesia's cooperation, the Administration should:

- **Encourage civilian leadership of the military.** The principal difference between the TNI and the armed forces in stable Southeast Asian countries is civilian control. All Washington-funded projects should include oversight and management by the civilian officials in Jakarta.
- **Ensure that all participants in joint exercises have not participated in TNI human rights abuses.** U.S. and Australian intelligence services should ensure that American money is not being used to train the wrong people, which would tarnish the training program.
- **Direct the Pentagon to consult regularly with Congress.** After Congress suspended military relations with Indonesia in 1992, the Department of Defense continued to maintain cooperation with Indonesia's special forces. When Congress learned of it, many felt the Pentagon had violated the spirit if not the letter of congressional restrictions. Consulting closely with Congress will help to obviate lingering suspicions among some Members.

Conclusion. The Bush Administration's proposal to provide \$8 million to train a "counterterrorism unit" in Indonesia is appropriately modest and contains sufficient safeguards to protect the integrity of the congressional ban on military-to-military cooperation. At the same time, it would help a new, more responsible relationship to develop within this strategically critical country in the war on terrorism.

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