

February 1992

SECURITY
ASSISTANCE

Shooting Incident in
East Timor, Indonesia



**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-247475

February 18, 1992

The Honorable Alan Cranston
The Honorable Richard Lugar
The Honorable Daniel Patrick Moynihan
The Honorable Brock Adams
The Honorable Thomas A. Daschle
United States Senate

As requested, we obtained information on a shooting incident that occurred on November 12, 1991, in East Timor, Indonesia, in which elements of the Indonesian Armed Forces shot and killed from about 50 to over 100 civilians. This report provides information on the (1) events surrounding the shooting incident; (2) actions taken by the government of Indonesia after the incident; (3) positions of International Military Education and Training (IMET)-trained Indonesian Army personnel in the East Timor command structure and on Indonesian commissions charged with investigating the incident; and (4) recent proposals for additional IMET training of Indonesians.

This fact sheet responds to part of a request that we review U.S. security assistance programs, including IMET, in a changing world environment. We will issue a report on these programs, based on reviews in several countries, at a future date.

Background

On November 12, 1991, elements of the Indonesian Armed Forces fired on a crowd of at least 2,000 people in the city of Dili, East Timor, killing from 50 to over 100 people, based on various estimates. U.S. and other Western journalists reported on the shooting, resulting in strong international pressure on Indonesia to investigate the incident. In November 1991, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed a concurrent resolution condemning the shooting incident and, among other things, asking for a reassessment of IMET funds to Indonesia.

Under the IMET Program, the United States provides funds for the training of foreign military personnel in such areas as professional military education, management, and, through observer training, U.S. military techniques and procedures. In fiscal year 1991, Congress expanded IMET to train foreign civilian and military officials in defense resource management and the development of judicial systems and military codes of conduct, including observance of internationally recognized human

rights. The administration requested \$2.3 million to train 180 IMET students from Indonesia in fiscal year 1992. At least \$150,000 of these funds will go towards expanded IMET training.

Results in Brief

All versions of the incident generally agree that a crowd of East Timorese staged a memorial mass and political demonstration in the city of Dili, a demonstrator stabbed an Indonesian Army officer along the demonstration route, and Indonesian Army and National Police units¹ opened fire on the demonstrators some time after the stabbing of the Indonesian Army officer. It is unknown who, if anyone, ordered the units to fire on the crowd. The Indonesian Army and National Police forces used semiautomatic weapons, including M-16 rifles, and shotguns of unknown source and manufacture. (See app. I for a chronology of events.)

After the incident, the government of Indonesia created national and military commissions to investigate the shooting and relieved from command two general officers who held positions of command responsibility for East Timor operations.

No IMET-trained Indonesian Army officers held senior-level positions in the East Timor command structure on the day of the shooting incident. Since the incident, at least seven IMET-trained officials have been placed in positions of responsibility for East Timor military operations and on commissions established by the President of Indonesia to investigate the incident.

In light of the shooting incident, U.S. and Indonesian embassy officials suggested expanded IMET training in military justice and human rights for Indonesian civilian leaders and military personnel, as well as U.S. training in crowd control and riot procedures for Indonesian National Police forces.

Events Surrounding the Shooting Incident

Following an early morning memorial mass at a church in Dili on November 12, 1991, some people who attended the mass marched down the street carrying pro-independence banners and flags and shouting anti-Indonesian slogans. About halfway to the Santa Cruz cemetery, a scuffle took place between a small group of demonstrators and Indonesian Army personnel, resulting in the stabbing of an intelligence officer and the

¹The Indonesian Army and National Police are military services under the command of the Indonesian Armed Forces.

wounding of a soldier. At the cemetery the demonstrators joined a group of people who had arrived earlier. At least 50 riot-equipped police were stationed at the cemetery and at various points along the demonstration route.

Current information indicates that the commander of the Dili military sector command, an Indonesian Army colonel, ordered three Army units to reinforce the riot-equipped police, as called for in certain circumstances under Indonesian crowd control procedures. It is unknown what specific orders the commander gave the unit leaders, all lieutenants, when he ordered them to reinforce the police. The shooting began after some or all of the Indonesian Army units arrived at the cemetery.

The United States supplied Indonesia with about 28,500 M-16 rifles from 1971 to 1978, and sold M-16 parts and ammunition to Indonesia during the 1980s. However, we could not determine whether U.S.-supplied rifles were used during the incident or whether M-16 rifles had been supplied to Indonesia by other countries. Further, we could not determine the source or country of manufacture for other weapons used by the Indonesian Armed Forces.

Actions of the Indonesian Government After the Shooting Incident

On November 17, 1991, the President of Indonesia announced the establishment of a National Commission of Inquiry to investigate the shooting incident. The commission released its preliminary report on December 26, 1991, which found, among other things, that Indonesian Armed Forces personnel did not follow proper crowd control procedures, opened fire without orders from their superiors, and reacted with excessive force in shooting protestors. The report also attributed the demonstration to the poor state of the economy in the undeveloped province of East Timor and to insurgency groups there. (See app. II for a summary of the preliminary report.)

After the release of the preliminary report, the Indonesian President publicly apologized to families of innocent victims; relieved at least six Indonesian Army officers, including two general officers, from their positions in the East Timor command structure; and ordered the

Indonesian Armed Forces to continue emphasizing its economic development mission in East Timor.²

The Indonesian President also ordered specific military and civilian government officials to

- create a military commission, the Honorary Council, to investigate East Timor command structures and procedures and gather information for use in future courts-martial of military personnel involved in the incident;
- account for the 90 people reported missing by the National Commission of Inquiry;
- take legal steps against the people who planned or took part in the demonstration; and
- create a civilian commission to assess the role of the East Timor civilian government in the shooting incident and its functioning in terms of economic development activities.

As of February 6, 1992, the military and civilian commissions had not reported on the results of their investigations.

According to an Indonesian embassy official, the government of Indonesia will host a visit from a personal envoy of the United Nations Secretary General, who will obtain clarification on the shooting incident. The personal envoy is scheduled to begin his mission on February 8, 1992. While in Indonesia, this envoy will meet with officials from the Indonesian government and the National Commission of Inquiry and will visit East Timor.

IMET-trained Personnel

We found no IMET graduates among the 14 Indonesian Army officers whom we identified in the East Timor command structure on the day of the shooting incident. These officers held ranks from major general to lieutenant. We have not identified the number or names of other lower-ranking officers who commanded units that were involved in the shooting incident.

²In December 1989 the Indonesian Armed Forces changed its military strategy in East Timor from one emphasizing combat operations to one emphasizing its economic development mission, which includes the building of roads, bridges, and water systems for the civilian population. According to Western sources, this shift in strategy resulted in a general improvement in East Timor human rights conditions until about August 1991, when the government of Portugal announced plans for a visit of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to East Timor (see app. I for a detailed description of events leading up to the shooting incident).

After the incident, IMET-trained personnel were named to two investigatory commissions and a position of command responsibility over East Timor military operations. According to IMET program records, these personnel include (1) the chairman of the National Commission of Inquiry, a former general officer who attended an IMET professional military education course in 1972, and one commission member, an active duty rear admiral who attended IMET professional military education and management courses during the 1970s; (2) the chairman and three members of the Honorary Council, all major generals, three of whom attended IMET management courses and one who attended IMET observer training during the 1980s; and (3) the new commander of the military area command that includes East Timor, a major general who attended an IMET management course in 1978.

Proposed U.S. Training

During our review, U.S. and Indonesian officials suggested additional IMET training aimed at preventing the recurrence of incidents such as the shooting in Indonesia. For example, Indonesia's Ambassador to the United States suggested that the East Timor leadership team, including police commanders, civilian leaders, and military officials, receive expanded IMET training to broaden their outlook on how to solve East Timor's problems. Further, U.S. and Indonesian embassy officials suggested that the U.S. government consider training for Indonesian police in crowd control and riot procedures.

In addition, officials from the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA) and Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command (USCINCPAC), proposed expanded IMET courses to the Indonesian Armed Forces and Ministry of Defense, which would cover human rights, including humanitarian law, military justice, and defense resource management. Further, to discourage and prevent human rights abuses during law enforcement actions, USCINCPAC officials also proposed that senior law enforcement leaders be allowed to attend IMET training. As part of this proposal, they recommended changes in the Foreign Assistance Act³ to allow training of foreign police forces, including the Indonesian National Police, which are currently excluded from U.S.-provided training.

Scope and Methodology

We obtained information on events surrounding the shooting incident from a variety of Western and Indonesian sources, including human rights groups. Although we corroborated their information where possible, we

³Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), as amended.

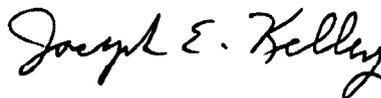
did not verify it through our own independent investigation. Investigations into the incident are ongoing; when complete, they may reveal additional information about the shooting incident.

We conducted our review from November 1991 through February 1992. In the United States, we interviewed officials and obtained documentation at USCINCPAC in Honolulu, Hawaii, and the DSAA, Department of State, Indonesian Embassy, and other organizations in Washington, D.C. In Indonesia, we conducted audit work at the Indonesian Ministry of Defense, Indonesian Armed Forces headquarters, U.S. Embassy, and the East Timor military operations command. We also met with the Governor of the East Timor Province, IMET graduates, and various military officials and civilian leaders in and around Dili.

We did not obtain written comments from U.S. agencies involved in this review. However, we discussed a draft of this fact sheet with responsible U.S. officials and have included their comments as appropriate.

We will send copies of this fact sheet to interested parties upon request.

Please contact me on (202) 275-4128 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this fact sheet. Major contributors to the fact sheet are listed in appendix III.



Joseph E. Kelley
Director, Security and International
Relations Issues

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Abbreviations

DSAA	Defense Security Assistance Agency
IMET	International Military Education and Training
USCINCPAC	Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command

A Chronology of Events Surrounding the Shooting Incident in East Timor

History of East Timor

The island of Timor was first colonized by the Portuguese in the late 16th century and was later divided into Dutch West Timor and Portuguese East Timor in 1904. Although Indonesia's 13,000 islands, including Dutch West Timor, declared their independence from the Dutch in 1945, the Portuguese did not relinquish control over East Timor until 1975. Fearing that East Timor would fall to communism, Indonesia invaded it in 1975 and annexed it as a province in 1976. The United States has accepted Indonesia's annexation of East Timor, although the United Nations does not recognize the annexation.

Tens of thousands of East Timorese died in the years following Indonesia's invasion, mostly due to starvation or disease. Many more are estimated to have died as a result of a protracted, low level insurgency arising from a separatist movement led by the leftist, pro-independence Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin).

In December 1989, the Indonesian Armed Forces shifted its strategy in East Timor from combat operations to territorial operations, which focus on winning the hearts and minds of the East Timorese people. The Indonesian Armed Forces began to allocate more resources to civic action projects that were designed to improve East Timor's infrastructure, assist in the overall economic development of the province, and decrease the level of instability in the province.

Western sources and representatives of a human rights group agreed that human rights conditions had generally been improving in East Timor as a result of the strategy shift. However, despite the change in military strategy, some people, referred to as anti-integrationists, continued to oppose East Timor's integration with Indonesia.

Events Leading Up to the Shooting Incident

Tensions in Dili, the capital of East Timor, began to increase in the months prior to the shooting incident, according to Western and Indonesian sources.

- As part of the military's new strategy, which included opening the formerly closed East Timor to outside visitors, Indonesia agreed in August 1991 to allow a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to visit East Timor in early November 1991. This agreement resulted from discussions between Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary General.

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- Anti-integrationists, including supporters of the separatist Fretilin movement, began planning anti-integration demonstrations for the benefit of Western observers and the Portuguese delegation.
- Elements of the Indonesian Armed Forces and East Timorese pro-integrationists began to intimidate East Timorese people to discourage them from talking to the Portuguese parliamentary delegation. Despite this, according to Western sources, the commander of the East Timor military operations command issued a statement saying he would allow East Timorese to hold demonstrations as long as they remained peaceful.
- On October 26, 1991, Portugal canceled the visit of its parliamentary delegation because Indonesia would not allow a journalist, who the government of Indonesia claimed was a Fretilin supporter, to accompany the delegation. According to Western and Indonesian sources, the cancellation of this visit increased the level of frustration and emotions of people planning the demonstrations for the Portuguese parliamentary delegation.
- On October 28, 1991, an anti-integrationist and a pro-integrationist were killed during a clash at the Motael Catholic Church in Dili. The circumstances surrounding the killings are not clear, except that anti-integrationists sought refuge on the church grounds and pro-integrationists were outside of the grounds when the clash occurred.
- On October 29, 1991, according to two eyewitnesses, a crowd of about 1,000 took part in a funeral procession for the dead anti-integrationist, which included a few people carrying pro-independence banners and intermittently yelling anti-Indonesian slogans. Western sources told us that this demonstration was unusual because of its size and lack of violence, despite the presence of Indonesian Army and National Police personnel along the demonstration route.

Events on the Day of the Shooting Incident

Although various Western and Indonesian sources agreed on the basic chronology of events that occurred on November 12, 1991, they provided differing details of some events. The following sections provide a synthesis of these accounts.

Events Early in the Day of the Shooting Incident

- At about 6 a.m. a memorial mass began at Motael Catholic Church for the anti-integrationist killed in October 1991. According to some reports, about 2 days before the mass, Indonesian military radio invited East Timorese citizens to attend the mass.

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- After the mass, one part of the congregation departed to the Santa Cruz cemetery to continue the memorial service at the burial site of the anti-integrationist. At the same time, another part of the congregation, numbering several hundred people, began a demonstration march. Anti-integrationists planned this political demonstration to coincide with the memorial mass. Western and Indonesian sources believe that the demonstration was intended to coincide with the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture because the visit of the Portuguese parliamentary delegation had been canceled.
- The march was an anti-Indonesian, political demonstration and reflected elements of the separatist Fretilin group. It was larger and more vociferous than the demonstration on October 29, 1991. Demonstrators carried anti-Indonesian and pro-independence banners and flags and shouted anti-Indonesian slogans. Two eyewitnesses reported seeing a few Indonesian Army and National Police personnel stationed at various points along the route.
- When the demonstrators passed the military district command building, a demonstrator stabbed an Indonesian Army major who was the intelligence officer for the Dili military sector command. As it turned out, the officer was not severely wounded. An enlisted Indonesian Army soldier from the military district command was also wounded during the demonstration.
- New participants joined the demonstration as the marchers proceeded toward the cemetery, with some people, including schoolchildren joining the march as it passed them on the street. Along the way, some demonstrators threw rocks at buildings.
- The estimated number of demonstrators at the cemetery ranged from 2,000 to 3,500, after the marchers joined the other group already at the cemetery. The demonstration continued at the cemetery, with most people gathering outside the cemetery walls. According to the commander of the East Timor Operations Command, at least 50 riot-equipped police were stationed at the Santa Cruz cemetery before the demonstrators arrived.

Deployment of Indonesian
Army Units

Current information indicates that a local military commander ordered Indonesian Army units to reinforce the police forces, but it does not clarify who, if anyone, gave the order to open fire or which Indonesian Army units first arrived at the cemetery or started shooting.

- The commander of the Dili military sector command, an Indonesian Army colonel, ordered units to reinforce the riot-equipped police, as called for in certain circumstances under Indonesian crowd control procedures. These

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reinforcements consisted of elements of quick reaction companies from two battalions and the military district command. It is unknown what orders the commander gave the unit leaders, all lieutenants, when he ordered them to reinforce the police.

- According to Western sources, eyewitnesses reported that one to three military trucks carrying uniformed Indonesian Army or National Police personnel followed the demonstration towards the cemetery. Two eyewitnesses told us that uniformed Indonesian Army soldiers approached the cemetery on foot and in formation. Further, Western and Indonesian sources also reported that another group of Indonesian Army soldiers ran to the cemetery out of uniform and in a state of agitation. Eyewitness accounts differ on whether the soldiers in the trucks arrived at the cemetery before or after the group of soldiers who arrived on foot.

**Accounts of the Shooting
Incident**

The shooting began after some or all of the Indonesian Army units arrived at the cemetery. Although current information indicates that these units fired upon the demonstrators in a methodical, deliberate manner, eyewitness accounts vary as to whether the troops that fired were in formation or were disorganized. The preliminary report of the National Commission of Inquiry, which was created by the President of Indonesia to investigate the shooting incident, described these differing eyewitness accounts as follows:

- Indonesian Army soldiers arrived at the cemetery in formation and, without hesitation, fired shots aimed directly at the demonstrators.
- An uncontrollable group of Indonesian Armed Forces personnel, who were not in proper uniform and were in a highly charged emotional state, opened fire on the demonstrators.
- Demonstrators threatened Indonesian Armed Forces personnel, threw a grenade, and attempted to seize their weapons, resulting in the shooting of demonstrators.

The commission also reported eyewitness accounts of Indonesian Armed Forces personnel stabbing demonstrators with sharp instruments, kicking them, and beating them with their hands and blunt instruments. One other Indonesian source indicates that civilians were seen beating and stoning demonstrators.

Reports of the Number of People Killed and Wounded

The National Commission of Inquiry estimated that about 50 people were killed during the shooting incident and acknowledged hearing reports that from 50 to over 100 people were killed. Western sources estimated the number of people killed from 75 to over 100. The commission and Western sources indicated that the number of dead may have increased after the shooting incident, because severely wounded people may have died later. The Indonesian Armed Forces has not argued with the commission's findings, even though it had initially claimed that only 19 persons died as a result of the shooting incident.

All of our sources agreed that 91 wounded people were treated at the military hospital in Dili. According to the National Commission of Inquiry, 42 of these people suffered from gunshot wounds, 14 from stabbing wounds, and 35 from wounds caused by blunt instruments. Fifty of the wounded were released to their families as of December 14, 1991. In addition, Western sources and the commission stated that some wounded demonstrators did not seek medical attention at local hospitals for fear of military retribution.

Events Following the Shooting Incident

Western and Indonesian sources reported that the following events took place after the shooting incident:

- According to the National Commission of Inquiry, the local police questioned 308 demonstrators after the shooting incident, at least 32 of whom were arrested. According to a U.S.-based human rights group, 14 of these people will be charged under Indonesia's antiriot law, which carries a maximum penalty of death.
- One source indicated that some prisoners were beaten or tortured during their initial hours of detention, but that the beatings and tortures have since ceased.
- The commission reported that about 90 demonstrators were still missing (as of Dec. 26, 1991). The commission acknowledged that the missing may include people who died as a result of the shooting incident, people who were wounded, and people in good health who escaped to the forest or took refuge somewhere.
- Western sources could find no evidence to substantiate rumors of other shootings and killings.

Preliminary Report of the Indonesian National Commission of Inquiry and Selected Responses

The President of Indonesia created the National Commission of Inquiry to conduct an investigation into the shooting of demonstrators on November 12, 1991, in the city of Dili, East Timor. The Commission released its preliminary report on December 26, 1991. We have summarized the conclusions of this report and responses to the report by the U.S. State Department and a U.S.-based human rights group.

Preliminary Report of the National Commission of Inquiry

The National Commission of Inquiry reached the following conclusions in its preliminary report:

- The shooting incident in Dili resulted from a culmination of the following factors: (1) a series of earlier demonstrations and incidents occurred, including one on October 28, 1991, during which two people—an anti-integrationist and a pro-integrationist—were killed; (2) large numbers of young, unemployed people were susceptible to propaganda from anti-integration groups; and (3) anti-integration groups changed their mode of operations from a rural to an urban guerrilla strategy to obtain international attention through the foreign press in Dili.
- Anti-integrationists planned the demonstration, and non-Indonesians participated in it. The demonstration, commemorating the death of an anti-integrationist, was neither orderly nor peaceful.
- Neither the government of Indonesia nor the Indonesian Armed Forces ordered the shooting of East Timorese citizens.
- The tensions surrounding the demonstration in Dili increased after Indonesian Armed Forces personnel were wounded and the crowd assumed an aggressive attitude, which was perceived as a threat by the Indonesian Armed Forces. These forces reacted spontaneously to defend themselves, without command, resulting in excessive shooting at the demonstrators. At the same time, another group of unorganized Indonesian Armed Forces personnel, acting outside any control or command, fired shots and beat people.
- Proper riot-control procedures were not optimally implemented, despite the presence of riot control units. The actions of a number of Indonesian Armed Forces personnel exceeded acceptable norms and led to the casualties—deaths, gunshot wounds, stabbing wounds, and wounds by blunt instruments.
- About 50 people were killed. This figure was higher than the official figure of 19 initially reported by the Indonesian Armed Forces. More than 91 people were wounded, and about 90 people were missing as of December 26, 1991.

- The deceased were not properly identified, and little opportunity was given to families and friends of victims to identify the bodies.
- Action must be taken against all who are suspected of violating the law during the shooting incident.

The report recognized that many East Timorese civilian eyewitnesses would not talk to the commission because of concern that they would be directly incriminated in the incident or because of fear that they would be regarded as belonging to the anti-integration group.

Response of the U.S. Department of State

According to U.S. State Department officials, the Department holds the following positions on the preliminary report of the National Commission of Inquiry:

- The preliminary report reflects a serious and responsible approach to investigating the shooting incident. By acknowledging significantly higher casualties than the previous official count, concluding that the acts of some Armed Forces members were excessive and "out of control," and calling for legal measures against all those suspected of violating the law, the commission appears to have addressed the toughest questions appropriately.
- The preliminary report is the beginning of a lengthy process to deal fully with what happened in East Timor. The key remaining issue is how the legal process will operate against those who used or condoned excessive force. The State Department will continue to closely monitor that issue and the human rights issue in general in East Timor.

Response of a U.S.-based Human Rights Group

In a January 1992 report, a U.S.-based human rights group¹ responded to the preliminary report of the National Commission of Inquiry. Although the human rights group acknowledged some positive aspects of the commission and its findings, the group criticized the commission's methodology and preliminary report for the following reasons:

- The preliminary report is flawed because the members have ties to the government and lack experience in investigating a mass killing.
- The commission exhumed only 1 of the 18 bodies of victims buried at a cemetery, and did not attempt to identify the exhumed body or the other 17 bodies. Further, the commission did not attempt to explain what

¹Asia Watch Criticizes Commission Report on East Timor, Asia Watch, January 3, 1992.

**Appendix II
Preliminary Report of the Indonesian
National Commission of Inquiry and
Selected Responses**

happened to the remaining 31 victims it reported as killed, nor did it account for the 91 persons it reported as missing.

- The commission did not use any of the several modern techniques available to locate buried bodies.
- Most eyewitnesses interviewed by the commission were either linked to the Indonesian Armed Forces or were interviewed in intimidating environments, sometimes with Indonesian Armed Forces personnel present.
- The report lacks some important information; for example, it does not address troop movements during the shooting and does not mention the prosecution of military officials.

The human rights group concluded that the need for an impartial, timely international investigation into the shooting incident is essential because the commission report is flawed.

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