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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AIRGRAM

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 NO.
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 HANDLING INDICATOR
 TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 INFO : CANBERRA, MEDAN, SURABAYA, USUN, CINCPAC FOR POLAD
 FROM : Amembassy DJAKARTA
 SUBJECT : Consular Trip to West Irian, in Official S. 501
 REF :
 Action assigned to
 Action Taken
 Date of Action
 Name of Officer
 DATE: May 10, 1968
 January 6 to February 2, 1968

SUMMARY

After several months of dealing with the Indonesian Government, permission was finally granted for a Consular officer and his wife to make a visit to West Irian. This trip began on January 2, 1968 and took them to the Island of Biak, the Sentani-Sukarnapura area, the interior highlands and the southern coast. The reporting officer spent three weeks in West Irian, visiting American missionaries and businessmen in fourteen locations. During this period, the reporting officer also had the opportunity to visit government and missionary installations and meet Indonesian and United Nations officials. On the return leg of the trip, the reporting officer also met with the Australian Administrator in Port Moresby and with officials at the American Consulate General in Sydney.

The reporting officer found that, while the general economic condition of the island has improved since previous reports, nonetheless the economy is stagnant and, with the exceptions of new United Nations projects and some interest shown by Japanese and American businessmen, no effort is being made to improve the situation. The Indonesian Government directs its main efforts toward maintaining existing facilities and suppressing political unrest. This unrest is a product of the widespread separatist movements which seek independence from Indonesia either through the 1969 "plebiscite" or through insurrection. These movements are presently dormant in most areas, but they may step up guerrilla activities before, during or after

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Drafted by: CONS:TRReynders
 Clearances: CONS:AFLaPorta:POL:EEMasters:ECON:PFMcCusker
 Contents and Classification Approved by: EGM:PFMcCusker:MIN:JWLydman

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the actual plebiscite. It is the opinion of most observers in the area that Indonesia will not accept independence for West Irian and will not permit a plebiscite which would reach such an outcome.

The following is a report of the principal highlights of this trip to West Irian, together with the impressions gained of the political and economic conditions there.

I. Preparations for Trip

Planning for this consular trip began in late October 1967 when the reporting officer initially received instructions on how to apply for permission to visit West Irian. The Embassy complied with these instructions, and on November 16 the Chief of the Consular Section was notified that an officer of the Army General Staff, Intelligence Section, had refused to approve the trip and therefore permission was denied. Written notification of this decision was requested and received.

The apparent reason for the refusal was suspicion of the motives of all foreigners seeking entry to West Irian. Consular files indicated that more than 250 American missionaries and their families and about 10 Americans employed by Freeport Indonesia, Inc. were in West Irian, all of whom potentially require consular services. Because of the number of persons involved and their basic right to free access to a consular officer, the Ambassador raised the issue first with Foreign Minister Malik, and then, at Mr. Malik's suggestion, with Interior Minister Lieutenant General Basoeki Rachmat who consented to the trip. The official purposes of the visit were to meet with Americans, perform any consular services which they might require, and to observe general conditions in West Irian. Additionally, a stop at the Freeport site and a ceremonial book presentation for USIS to Universitas Negeri Tjenderawsih were planned. By exiting through Australia, consultations with the Australian Administrator at Port Moresby and with the American Consulate General in Sydney, which has handled most consular work for West Irian, were included in the trip.

II. Physical Characteristics of West Irian

Flying from Djakarta via Makassar to Biak, one crosses first the Bird's Head (Vogelkop) of West Irian. The southern portion of this peninsula is dense jungle and swamp, while the northern portion is hilly and heavily forested. Other than the east coast, where scattered small villages are visible, there are virtually no signs of life.

Biak is a coral island offering little in the way of natural beauty. While there are some small, comfortable concrete-brick houses left by the Dutch, the town of Biak is basically one main street and perhaps 20 side streets,

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V. Political Situation

A. The Indonesian Administration

The Indonesian government's presence in West Irian is expressed primarily in the form of the Army. The reporting officer met with the Regional Governing Council (Musjawarah Pimpinan Daerah or MUSPIDA), composed of Governor Kaisiepo, the Army Commander, Brig. Gen. Bintoro, representatives of the Navy and Police Commanders and the Chief Prosecutor. The Governor, who resembles a sun-dazed frog, made no effort to exert his theoretical leadership. On the other hand, General Bintoro made it obvious that he is, in fact, the government of West Irian. The police are second in importance, with the others distinctly less influential. At this meeting, conducted in Indonesian in deference to the Governor, the principal subject was the purpose of the reporting officer's visit; neither of the two government cables advising of this visit had arrived in Sukarnapura and consequently the local government was taken somewhat by surprise. The USIS book presentation for Tjenderawasih University also took place at this meeting, because Gen. Bintoro is also Rector and evidently did not wish to have a formal ceremony.

Other than the meeting with the MUSPIDA, the government in Sukarnapura paid very little attention to the visit and contacts with officials were minimal. They did provide reasonable accommodations in the new housing complex, a houseboy from the hotel, and a car and driver borrowed from the UN. Also, the central council for all womens' groups in Sukarnapura held a party in honor of the reporting officer's wife. In the interior and on the south coast, the government was far more concerned with the reporting officer's presence. In the larger areas, the governmental head, either police or army, was found to be Indonesian while most subordinates other than army personnel were recruited from the sophisticated native tribes along the north and west coast of West Irian. At smaller posts, the sole government official was usually an Irianese.

No guard was provided to the reporting officer and no personnel appeared to be following or monitoring his activities. While in Sukarnapura, a minimum of attention was paid to him, and elsewhere he was received as a visiting dignitary. This experience is contrary to those of previous diplomatic visitors and UN personnel when they are outside of Sukarnapura, whose activities were closely monitored. In Biak, a native visiting the missionary at whose home the reporting officer stayed informed him that no native had been allowed near any UN official and that the natives had been sent home prior to a visit by a UN employee to the harbor there.

The government or the army run separate schools in Sukarnapura and elsewhere for their own employees, that is, for the Indonesians as distinct from the

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local Irianese. They also have basic Indonesian literary programs throughout the island, the success of which varies; at least in Sukarnapura and the town of Biak, Indonesian is the spoken language of almost all persons. In the interior and on the south coast only the young children who have attended the three-grade schools can speak the language. Students at the one University, Tjenderawasih, are mostly children of government employees. The university is also a political indoctrination center for its West Irian students and, since Gen. Bintoro recently made himself Rector, the government must think it a potential source of difficulty for the regime.

In the cultural field, there is a government effort to set up a museum in Sukarnapura devoted to displaying artifacts of the Papuan cultures. This endeavor presently consists of collecting souvenirs, without compensation, from missionaries and other visitors who must go through customs.

The activities of the government, except the schools in the interior and the general effort to spread the Indonesian language, are largely directed toward preserving the status quo and preventing civil unrest. Electrification, communication and transportation are virtually ignored except to maintain what few facilities already exist. Cables from Djakarta usually arrive three weeks late, delivered by plane. Telephone service, local and to Djakarta, is fair, but the only telephone book available was printed in 1963. Mail service is impossible. Electricity is available for only two-thirds of Sukarnapura at any given time. Without MAF radios and planes, no government communications or transport would be possible to most parts of the island.

There is a large army post in Sentani and a huge military police camp in Sukarnapura, but the only civic action efforts seen were related to maintaining roads. Army engineers were very efficient in erecting an improvised bridge after the original washed out in a flash flood. This efficiency was probably due to the fact that when the bridge washed out, a caravan of cars going to Sentani was cut in half; in that caravan were the highest officials in Sukarnapura plus Indonesia's Police Inspector General Hugeng, who had been there to install a new police chief for West Irian.

The military is relatively invisible in Sukarnapura, usually staying at their camps. The missionaries say that in other towns, particularly Merauke, they are very visible but exceedingly idle. In Merauke, it was said, the military's only activity is holding ceremonies, which are held on all of the national holidays and on the 17th of every month.

The military establishments observed consisted of the military police detachment in Sukarnapura, a navy base outside of Sukarnapura and the army camp

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at Sentani. The MP detachment is comprised of at least 1,000 officers and men, plus their families and has a large hospital. The Navy installation is apparently a left-over from World War II, is almost unoccupied and is in an advanced state of dilapidation. The Army camp is located at the site of Gen. MacArthur's World War II headquarters. By its size, it appears to house between two brigades and a division of infantry troops (5,000 or more men).

The only military equipment seen, other than small arms and light trucks, were an Air Force DC-3 bringing supplies into Wamena, some road-grading equipment in the Sukarnapura/Sentani and Biak areas, an Army troop transport in Sukarnapura harbor, and a submarine chaser in Sukarnapura. The troop transport had brought in 300 persons, army personnel and their families, for whom there was no billeting available upon arrival. They first slept on the dock and were later moved into cramped bachelor quarters. The sub-chaser was purported to have been built in Surabaya, and was armed with a 40-mm deck gun forward and two depth-charge droppers aft. It was probably brought in to prevent smuggling, but is used frequently as a pleasure yacht.

Other military and police installations are scattered throughout the interior and south. The police are mainly West Irians, and the Army is there to keep the police in line and to protect other Indonesians from the police in the event of trouble. The missionaries find that Indonesians fear both the local natives and the police recruited in West Irian. According to the missionaries, the pressures from such fears, together with the isolation and unusual living conditions, have resulted in a high suicide rate among the Indonesians assigned to West Irian.

B. The 1969 "Plebiscite" and Prospects for Violence

The primary political factor in West Irian is the promised "plebiscite" to determine whether West Irian will become an integral part of Indonesia or independent. In this connection, the United Nations recently appointed a political observer and his team should be in West Irian by mid-1968. One of the first questions asked by the missionaries was what Indonesia plans to do, or more precisely, how they plan to conduct the election; a similar interest was expressed by the Australian territorial administrator, Mr. David O. Hay.

The probable plans of the Indonesian government for 1969, as reported by Mr. Roed of FUNDWI, are as follows: the government will divide West Irian into a number of areas and select a slate of three to five persons from each area; a minority of each area's group may be chosen on the basis of local preference, but the majority will be Indonesian or Indonesian controlled; the groups thus constituted will convene as a whole and endorse union with Indonesia.

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A missionary in Jawsikor gave a similar sketch of Indonesian plans and indicated that the selection process there has already begun.

All but one Westerner contacted were persistent in the belief that Indonesia could not win an open election. The lone exception pointed out that in the interior and on the south coast the natives are apolitical and primitive in outlook, with no idea of what an election is, and could easily be induced to opt for union with Indonesia. Behind either view is an acceptance of the antipathy or outright hatred believed to be harbored toward Indonesia and Indonesians by West Irians in the relatively developed and sophisticated areas. The open separatist factions are centered in and around the major coastal towns, such as Sukarnapura, Biak and Manokwari on the North, Sorong and Fakfak on the West, and Merauke on the South. It is generally believed that the separatists will not accept permanent union without a struggle.

The missionaries, UN employees and apparently some of the indigenous separatists assume that Indonesia will not give up West Irian willingly, and will arrange a form of plebiscite which will ensure a "vote" for union. The separatists and the Indonesian Government therefore find themselves on a collision course which makes it immaterial whether Indonesia rigs the outcome of a plebiscite or wins a popular election by seducing the most backward element of West Irian's populace. Violence is inevitable, if this assessment is correct. The questions are when, where and how much violence will occur, and what its outcome will be.

To some extent, the first two questions have already been answered. The long-standing Arfak rebellion in the hills surrounding Manokwari has been reported previously, as have Indonesia's counter-measures, which early last year featured B-26 bombing forays and mortar attacks. While the situation is still tense, this rebellion apparently has subsided and some of the guerrillas are reported to be drifting back to their villages. Missionaries estimate that there are between 300 and 1,000 active rebels in the Manokwari area.

Political arrests of suspected rebels in Biak are an almost daily occurrence, according to the American missionary there. Mr. Roeed visited Biak during the week of January 20 and reported a number of arrests were made the previous week. At least one suspected rebel, a prominent citizen named Mr. B. Mofu, was convicted of unknown crimes and given a five-year prison sentence. There are also stories of a raid on a naval armory in Biak last August in which small arms and machine guns were allegedly captured. This story was repeated by missionaries in Sukarnapura and by Mr. Roeed, but the missionary in Biak said that the raid was small and disorganized and consequently was thwarted and all participants captured. That missionary also told of an

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unsuccessful attempt to poison the Biak water supply with the result that the pumping station is now guarded. It was also in Biak that the reporting officer personally heard the only derogatory comments made against the Indonesian government by a West Irianese. The District Chief, a Mr. Jappo, complained that the local government lacked funds for needed equipment. He attributed this to the large expenditures being made on an impressive new mosque in Biak. Mr. Jappo apparently mentioned the New York activities of the Papuan Freedom Movement after the reporting officer absented himself from the room.

Rumors of arrests in other major coastal towns are common among the missionaries, though the accuracy of the information is doubtful. One missionary in the interior reported that several hundred West Irians had been arrested in Sukarnapura in late November 1967 for planning a coup d'etat scheduled for 1968. Purportedly, the plotters theorized that, by acting this year, the government would be caught unprepared. The missionary understood that a number of DPRD members (representatives to the regional parliament) were amongst those arrested. Mr. Roed denied this and indicated that, although there had been some arrests in December, few of them could have been DPRD members because he attended its last session in December and no more than eight seats were unoccupied. The army is said to be holding an unknown number of political prisoners at their Sentani camp.

With the exception of the Manokwari area, there is no open warfare at present, but some prophylactic arrests are certainly being made. The size of the military establishment in West Irian (reportedly 10,000 troops) is probably a deterrent to the separatists and indicates that the government expects trouble in the future. Such trouble might come prior to the plebiscite, in a preemptive effort to expel the Indonesians. It will certainly come when the plebiscite is over.

The number of separatists is unknown. According to most missionaries, virtually the entire population of the developed areas should be counted as anti-Indonesian, but it is hard to imagine active opposition from more than 25,000 persons; the actual number would probably be much smaller. The separatists have no central leadership and no unifying principle other than independence. While each area has its local leaders and heroes, the tribes of each area are divided among themselves and hold deep animosities toward those of other areas. As a result, concerted, large-scale warfare seems unlikely.

The lack of central direction, coupled with the difficult terrain, the lack of communications and transportation, and a shortage of firearms mean that