



ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL

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29 November 2005

Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

The West Papua Advocacy Team at the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights deeply regrets your decision to renew full military ties between the U.S. and Indonesian militaries, notwithstanding the clear Congressional consensus against such action. Your resort to the "national security waiver" provision contained in recent Congressional State Appropriations Legislation transparently disingenuous, as there is no pressing national security concern that would warrant use of this waiver to evade long-standing Congressional restrictions on this assistance.

As Senator Leahy, author of those restrictions, noted: "This is an abuse of discretion and an affront to the Congress. . . . To waive on national security grounds a law that seeks justice for crimes against humanity -- without even obtaining the Indonesian government's assurance that it will address these concerns -- makes a mockery of the process and sends a terrible message. The Indonesians will see it as a clean bill of health."

Timing of this decision is particularly counterproductive.

In West Papua, the Indonesian military is engaged in a major buildup of forces absent any security justification. Indonesian military operations that have led to significant civilian death and hardship over the past year continue. Also in West Papua, the murder of two U.S. citizens and one Indonesian citizen in August 2002 remains unsolved with police and NGO reports indicating a central military role in the killings.

In Aceh, a fragile peace remains hostage to the Indonesian military's compliance with ceasefire terms that require it to draw down its forces in that war-torn province. In East Timor, crimes against humanity committed by the Indonesian military and its militias remain unpunished. Military "businesses" including drug and people trafficking, illegal logging, and extortion of legitimate domestic and foreign companies continue to operate without constraint.

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

-Robert F. Kennedy, South Africa, 1966

The U.S. government's decision to restore full military relations with Indonesia, including provision of FMF and sale of lethal weapons, results in the US relinquishing any leverage for genuine Indonesian military reform, accountability, or compliance with terms of the Aceh peace agreement. It undermines efforts to build a democracy in Indonesia by rewarding a rogue military that continues to constitute the principal threat to human rights and democracy in Indonesia.

The West Papua Advocacy Team at the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights will continue to monitor this process and would welcome the opportunity to discuss our concerns with you and/or your staff should your schedules permit.

Sincerely,



Emily S. Goldman
Senior Program Officer

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