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CDSN = CFS783 MCN = 99071/34467 TOR = 990712328

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FROM

FM DIA WASHINGTON DC/ (b)(3):10 USC 424

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424,(b)(3):50
USC 403-1(i)

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SERIAL: MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIGEST {MID} 048-6A

SECTION 1 OF 3

/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

SUBJ: EAST TIMOR: TRANSITIONING TO INDEPENDENCE (U)

DOI: JAN 99 {AS OF 1000 EST}

TEXT: 1. (U) AFTER 23 TURBULENT YEARS OF INDONESIAN RULE, EAST TIMOR IS NOW SET ON A COURSE LIKELY TO RESULT IN SEPARATION FROM INDONESIA EARLY NEXT YEAR. ALTHOUGH JAKARTA'S FOLLOW-ON ACTIONS WILL BE CRITICAL, THE UNITED NATIONS WILL PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE COMING MONTHS, ASSESSING TIMORESE WISHES AND OVERSEEING THE PEACE PROCESS AND INDONESIAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL. TO FILL THE VOID, A MODEST INTERNATIONAL POLICE CONTINGENT IS UNDER CONSIDERATION, BUT THE SCOPE OF FOREIGN SECURITY INVOLVEMENT WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON CONTINUED PROGRESS IN THE RECONCILIATION EFFORTS AMONG THE WARRING TIMORESE FACTIONS.

2. (U) SEPARATING FROM INDONESIA. PRESIDENT HABIBIE'S SURPRISE OFFER IN LATE JANUARY TO PERMIT EAST TIMOR WIDE-RANGING AUTONOMY OR QUICK SEPARATION FROM INDONESIA HAS SHARPLY ALTERED THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE. ALTHOUGH CABINET OPPOSITION TO CERTAIN AUTONOMY PROVISIONS HAS DELAYED FINAL GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, AGREEMENT STILL IS EXPECTED, WITH PORTUGAL AS THE UN-RECOGNIZED ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY OF EAST

TIMOR. THE SIGNING, NOW EXPECTED BY APRIL, WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A PERIOD FOR THE TIMORESE TO DEBATE THE AUTONOMY PACKAGE. THE UN THEN HOPES TO CANVASS TIMORESE PREFERENCES THROUGH A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED TIMORESE COUNCIL IN JULY. ALTHOUGH SOME INDONESIA OFFICIALS BELIEVE AUTONOMY MAY PREVAIL, MOST ANTICIPATE ITS REJECTION, OWING TO THE STRONG ANTI-INDONESIAN FEELINGS IN EAST TIMOR. WITH SUCH AN OUTCOME, HABIBIE WOULD ASK INDONESIA'S SUPREME LEGISLATIVE BODY, THE PEOPLE'S CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY, WHEN IT CONVENES IN AUGUST TO RESCIND THE 1976 INTEGRATION DECREE, RETURNING THE PROVINCE TO A "NONSELF-GOVERNING" TERRITORY UNDER PORTUGUESE AUTHORITY. AN OVERWHELMING PROINDEPENDENCE TIMORESE MANDATE WOULD COMPLICATE ANY EFFORT BY A NEW INDONESIA GOVERNMENT AND ASSEMBLY, TO BE FORMED LATER THIS YEAR, TO COUNTERMAND TIMOR'S DESIRES.

3. ~~(S)~~ JAKARTA INTENDS TO DELEGATE INCREASING OVERSIGHT TO THE UNITED NATIONS AS THE PROCESS PROCEEDS, INCLUDING ASSESSING TIMORESE WISHES. UN OFFICIALS ALSO ARE FORMING A "FRIENDS OF EAST TIMOR" GROUPING TO COORDINATE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND WEIGH OTHER ASPECTS OF THE TRANSITION. ALTHOUGH MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE TIMOR WILL REMAIN UNDER SOME UN/PORTUGUESE OVERSIGHT FOR 2 OR 3 YEARS, UN OFFICIALS HOPE TO AVOID A CULTURE OF DEPENDENCY BY FORMING AN UMBRELLA AUTHORITY THAT WOULD DELEGATE EXTENSIVE POWER TO THE TIMORESE BASED ON THE AUTONOMY MODEL.

4. ~~(S)~~ MIXED SECURITY PICTURE. EAST TIMOR FACES LOOMING SECURITY PROBLEMS AND UNCERTAINTIES AS IT ENTERS THIS TRANSITION PERIOD. ALTHOUGH VIOLENCE HAS BEEN LOCALIZED AND HAS LED TO FAIRLY FEW DEATHS, THE SITUATION IS VOLATILE. MILITANTS ON BOTH SIDES HAVE INSTIGATED VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION, BUT PRO-INDONESIAN MILITIAS RECENTLY HAVE BEEN MOST DISRUPTIVE IN THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICTS. THE POTENTIAL FOR UNREST IS LIKELY TO REMAIN HIGH AS BOTH SIDES COMPETE TO INFLUENCE THE INDEPENDENCE OUTCOME.

5. ~~(S)~~ THE VIOLENCE AND EXPECTATION OF INDONESIA'S DEPARTURE ALSO ARE CREATING NOTABLE DISLOCATIONS AND SOME REFUGEES. JAKARTA HAS GIVEN ASSURANCES IT WILL AVOID A HASTY DEPARTURE, BUT IT IS EAGER TO WITHDRAW ALL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL AND BUDGETARY SUPPORT BY EARLY NEXT YEAR IF TIMOR CHOOSES INDEPENDENCE. CIVIL SERVANTS, SCHOOLTEACHERS, HEALTH WORKERS, RETAIL MERCHANTS, AND OTHER NONNATIVE TIMORESE ARE DEPARTING, LEADING TO CLOSURES OF SERVICES, PRICE INCREASES, AND TEMPORARY SHORTAGES OF BASIC COMMODITIES.

6. ~~(S)~~ DESPITE THE GROWING PROBLEMS, RECONCILIATION EFFORTS ARE UNDER WAY, WITH RECENT PROSPECT FOR EASING TENSION. SEPARATE PEACE INITIATIVES ARE BEING PURSUED BY RESISTANCE AND INTEGRATION GROUPS, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND INDONESIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION.

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