

General Sutanto
Indonesian National Police Chief
Remarks at a USINDO Luncheon, January 25, 2007

The Cosmos Club, Washington, D.C.

As its overarching mission, the National Police of Indonesia (POLRI) supports the government's construction of a democratic state under the rule of law. General Sutanto emphasized the role of the police in enforcing the law, for without the rule of law, there can be no democratic process. Democracy has placed new demands on the Police, for example, the great concern over corruption.

The General noted the separation of the police from the Ministry of Defense. He said that it was an important step in the development of the police as pillar of the democratic state as it facilitated a closer relationship between the Police and civil society, resulting in an emphasis on community policing, the goals of which are to empower the community and law enforcers within those communities and to prevent an escalation of problems where they occur. The overall goal is objective and transparent law enforcement, he said.

The general identified three tasks as the primary missions of the police:

1. To insure peace and order
2. To insure that the law is enforced properly
3. To facilitate the security of the community at large

Peace and order in Indonesia has gradually improved over the past several years, particularly in the separatist areas of Aceh and Papua. He asserted that the improved security environment in these areas has facilitated the advance of democracy and has resulted from improved police training with a greater emphasis on human rights. The payoff from this training was evident last year in the aftermath of disturbances in Papua when five security personnel were murdered by armed gangs. Unlike such past incidents, the Police responded with restraint and avoided indiscriminate retaliations. Before *reformasi*, such incidents would have been greeted with widespread negative public reactions. Furthermore, there have been peaceful elections in the two Papuan provinces there which will help bring government closer to the people.

In the matter of the recent unrest in Poso, the general viewed the unrest as criminal in nature, not religious. He reported that the police have responded appropriately and have already made several arrests and arms seizures. The nature of the violence in Poso, he underscored, resulted from dissident elements attacking the Police and government authorities, requiring the imposition of "strict laws" on the perpetrators.

Regarding the national campaign against terrorism, General Sutanto viewed the absence of bombing incidents since 2005 as an indicator that Police and other internal security measures have been successful.

A prime target of law enforcement is illegal logging activities, which Sutanto estimated to be responsible for approximately 10% of all the crime in Indonesia. U.S. and other importers and consumers should not purchase products made with “illegal” forest products, he said.

In closing, General Sutanto was optimistic that law enforcement would improve in Indonesia, provided the police gained the confidence of the people and enjoyed their cooperation.

The General’s remarks were followed by a lively question and answer period that was off the record.