

“Future of U.S. - Indonesia Security Relations”

Book Launches in Washington and Jakarta

February 19, 2009 and March 24, 2009

Throughout 2008, USINDO conducted extensive research and analysis on the current strength of the U.S. – Indonesia security relationship. As a result of this research, John Haseman and Eduardo Lachica released their book titled *The U.S. – Indonesia Security Relationship: The Next Steps*. The book was launched February of 2009 in Washington, and in Jakarta the following month.

USINDO assembled a panel of experts, with varying opinions, in conjunction with the book launch. These included the authors of the book; Jonah Blank, the Chief Policy Advisor for South and Southeast Asia in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; T. Kumar, Director for Asia and the Pacific at Amnesty International; and Lt. Col. Desmond Walton, the Director of Southeast Asia at the Department of Defense.

Authors **John Haseman and Eduardo Lachica** opened up the discussions by giving a brief summary of their findings, including a briefing on the reform progress of the TNI, ways for the U.S. and Indonesia to work together, and challenges to the relationship, all of which can be found in further detail in their book.

The U.S. and Indonesia share several characteristics and interests, including their status as the 2nd and 3rd largest democracies in the world respectively, diverse geographic expanses, multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, a common experience fighting for independence against colonialism, and some shared national security interests. These shared interests make having a strong security relationship important.

There are several barriers to developing a strong security relationship. Both sides need to restore mutual trust, addressing criticisms and reducing suspicions and nationalistic accusations. The single biggest problem is the issue of vetting candidates to receive funding for U.S. training, schools, and conferences.

Under U.S. law, funding for such programs is denied to any candidate who has violated human rights in the past. However, the way the law has been implemented, these benefits are denied to entire units accused of past human rights violations, and all their personnel. This applies to soldiers who were not in the military when these human rights violations were carried out.

Since the fall of Suharto, Indonesia has come a long way in dealing with human rights violations. The current Indonesian military is led by a group of officers with an impeccable human rights record. They are a respected group of professionals. However, due to the training and exchange embargo, there is a “lost generation” of personal contacts between the U.S. and Indonesian militaries.

Both sides agree on the goal of denying funding to those officers who were involved in human rights violations. However when one side denies funding to an otherwise perfectly acceptable candidate with a clear record on the grounds that he happens to be assigned to a unit that was accused of human rights violations in the past, it creates an air of distrust and unequal grounds between the two sides in this relationship.

The report suggests that the emphasis be removed from “units” to “individuals” so that those who are or have been involved in human rights violations are still vetted out, but the door to training is open to those with a perfectly clean record.

Allowing more Indonesian officers to train at U.S. institutions will create stronger person to person ties between both militaries, strengthening the relationship between the two countries.

T. Kumar began his section of the panel discussion by stating that he is not against providing security assistance as long as it is to a professional military. This means a military that is reliant on its civilian counterparts for funding and

takes direct orders from the civilian government.

Mr. Kumar related several factors as to why we should continue to withhold security funding to the TNI. At the top of his list were the past human rights violations that the TNI has yet to be held accountable for, including the “1965 Massacre”, in which several TNI members have been accused of aiding in the murder of alleged communists across the country. He cited other major violations that occurred in East Timor, Aceh, and Papua. These allegations should be addressed in a more consistent manner before the U.S. releases any funding bans on the TNI.

Mr. Kumar stated that the TNI has yet to achieve the status of a professional military. As long as they remain outside of civilian control and funding, and continue interfering with local politics, they will not be considered “professional”. Mr. Kumar did state that steps have been taken by President Yudhoyono and his administration to relinquish all TNI business ventures from their control by October of 2009. If this is followed through on, it will be a large step forward in professionalizing the military.

Mr. Kumar had several recommendations to the current administration in order to help the TNI become worthy of security funding: (a) help the Indonesian Government to enforce the transfer of TNI businesses to civilian control; (b) set a time table to remove territorial commands; (C) help address past abuses.

Panelist **Desmond Walton** mentioned, for the first time publicly, that the

Department of Defense has an initiative to support a book on “Indonesian Defense Reform” which lays out ways the TNI can modernize defense management, create a budget based on strategy, how to manage an under funded military, and how to define its purpose.

He recommended the U.S. assist in funding and maintaining a professional Defense University, putting in place useful mechanisms to synchronize U.S. – Indonesian security relations and to increase IMET funding for the TNI.

Q: What are your overall recommendations for the TNI mission overall?

Haseman: We would like to see territorial forces go away, but the question is how to do this. The territorial force is the base of the business empire; removing them would assist in removing the businesses from the TNI. Cost accounting is very important. Make sure they say it will cost X to do a mission, and follow that closely.

Reform has to come from within; deepening the reform movement that has already begun would be a huge success.

Kumar: Human rights regulations come from Indonesian law, not U.S. law. We should strengthen these laws by linking funding to them. Let Indonesians decide how to use U.S. support.

Q: If we institute a stronger security relationship, how would this affect relationships with the regional powers?

Haseman: This is a different way of dealing with non-allied countries. Indonesia is the only country rated “Free” by organizations such as Freedom House. While we should not end our current alliances, a stronger security relationship with Indonesia will be a new strategy in the region.

Q: Where are the Indonesian National Police compared to other regional police forces on corruption reform?

Lachica: The Indonesian police receive a low rating in public opinion polls. If you ask police experts, there is great deal of top-down reform. For example, they ordered the arrest of a General in the Munir case. However, reform takes a long time.

Q: How does the TNI adapt to the amount of money the Government allocates it, which is far short of what the TNI says it needs?

Haseman: Previously, when the Indonesian Parliament allocated funding, there was the assumption that the TNI would get additional funds through its businesses. Now, this is no longer allowed, so the TNI has to find alternate ways of funding, and the best route is by asking Parliament.

Q: While conducting your research, did you have a chance to look at what the TNI is doing in Papua?

Haseman: There is still a curtain of inaccessibility on Papua. The feeling that I got is that the military is less likely to be involved in reported human rights violations than the police. The military is believed to want to increase its strength in Papua.

Q: Is there a risk of TNI members becoming linked to extremism, such as in places like Turkey and Pakistan?

Haseman: In the 1990's there was a split in the leadership - nationalists versus hard-line Muslims. There was a lot of tension, and the hard-liners had strength in numbers. Currently, the TNI is, without exception, led by strong, professional soldiers. There is no longer a secular / extremist divide. I am not worried about the TNI following the Pakistani model.

Kumar: I agree. I do not believe the TNI will follow the Pakistani model. The Pakistan military became Islamist because of the Russian War and the Indian War.

Q: The Indonesian Government is closing down TNI businesses. Will we be opening new rackets if we move the TNI into environmental protection?

Haseman: It depends on who is involved. There have been lots of accusations about illegal logging and over-fishing in several areas.

Q: What do TNI officials think about strengthening the security relationship?

Haseman: We have lost a generation of leaders who do not have a relationship with their U.S. counterparts due to the cessation of IMET funding. Everyone on both sides wants more. They want everyone at every level to know each other.

Following the release of the book in Washington, a similar forum was held in Jakarta in March of 2009. At the forum, Agus Widjojo, Senior Fellow at CSIS in Jakarta, and Ikrar Nusa Bakti, a Research Fellow at LIPI, discussed the key themes of the book from the Indonesian perspective.

Agus Widjojo began by noting the importance of developing a U.S.-Indonesia security relationship, stating that the militaries are currently moving in the opposite direction, and that this could potentially add confusion to Indonesia's ongoing push for reform.

While acknowledging that the TNI was institutionally guilty of human rights violations in the past, Widjojo believes that current sanctions under the vetting process should be reserved for individuals, not the institution as a whole.

Widjojo also stated that the police should be put under the supervision of a ministry, rather than remain as an independent agency under the President, because under the current arrangement, there is no political will to take responsibility for their actions. The police should also be focused on law enforcement, rather than taking on the role of a second military.

Finally, there should be policies to strengthen and enhance the professionalism of the TNI, focusing on national defense, and empowering civil authorities during peacetime. He concluded by stating that any assistance by the United States should be towards empowering the Indonesian government, rather than dictating specific policies.

Ikrar Nusa Bakti first stated that the U.S.-Indonesian security relationship is currently in the intermediate stage, and that, at present it is not possible to further develop the relationship. He continued by noting that the reform of the TNI is much more advanced than the reform of the police or of the intelligence agency; the TNI is more transparent and more open to the public.

Bakti recommended that in order to improve and strengthen security reform in Indonesia, the U.S. could invite civil society organizations and members of parliament to take courses or receive training in the United States.

Following the remarks by Widjojo and Bakti, a few comments were made by members of the audience. Participants noted that the military reforms are not moving forward because of concerns by the TNI over loss of revenues, and because the Indonesian culture is based on tradition, and not looking into the future, and that the country is still learning about democracy and how best to operate in a democratic society. Additionally, the U.S. currently uses sanctions to achieve its security aims in Indonesia, rather than empowering the government. However, a more empowering approach is needed if the countries are to strengthen their security relationship.