

# TIMOR INFORMATION SERVICE

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## THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WASHES ITS HANDS OF TIMOR

On Sunday, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrew Peacock made a statement on East Timor following the Indonesian invasion. Below are some excerpts from Peacock's statement and some reactions to it :

Peacock : "THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEEPLY REGRETS THE COURSE WHICH EVENTS IN EAST TIMOR HAVE TAKEN."

"...WE HAD HOPED - AND HAVE PRESSED - THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE A RECOURSE TO THE USE OF FORCE BY OUR NEIGHBOUR."

That is the only comment Peacock made about the Indonesian invasion. It is clearly a token disapproval of the invasion. It is far from being a condemnation.

Peacock : "THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FULLY APPRECIATES THE GRAVITY OF THE PROBLEMS POSED FOR THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT BY THE BREAKDOWN OF ADMINISTRATION IN EAST-TIMOR, THE CONTINUATION OF FIGHTING BY THE COMPETING PARTIES, AND THE MOVEMENT OF 40,000 REFUGEES INTO ITS TERRITORY, ..."

Mr. Peacock does not say here what caused the "breakdown of administration". The U.D.T. group staged a coup on August 10-11 seizing key buildings in Dili, killing some FRETILIN members, calling on the Portuguese government to imprison Fretilin leaders and to grant the colony immediate independence (Canberra Times 13/8/75). After this FRETILIN was prepared to have talks with U.D.T. and the Portuguese administration on the condition that U.D.T. was disarmed. This condition was not met. No-one could expect FRETILIN people to just accept an armed takeover. Civil war broke out.

Mr. Peacock's statement that the continued fighting in East Timor was a grave problem for Indonesia is absurd. It is well documented that Indonesia was chiefly responsible for the continued fighting through late September, October and November. Indonesia armed and trained anti-FRETILIN groups from East Timor and involved its own troops, field guns and warships in the fighting.

As for the 40,000 refugees, Peacock does not mention the reports of Indonesia not allowing the refugees to return to East Timor and Indonesia's forcing of refugees to build roads and undergo military training. (See for example Canberra Times 7/10/75)

Peacock : "WE BELIEVE - AND IT IS A MATTER OF RECORD NOT OF HINDSIGHT - THAT A MORE POSITIVE ROLE BY AUSTRALIA IN EARLIER STAGES - A STRONG REGIONAL INITIATIVE FOR EXAMPLE - WAS POSSIBLE, DESIRABLE, AND MIGHT HAVE HAD VERY BENEFICIAL RESULTS."

This is presumably a reference to Peacock's ideas to involve the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) which is composed of the Phillipines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand (see Peacock's article in The Herald (Melb.) 6/11/75). It might be worth noting the report that Malaysia, Singapore and the Phillipines, some time ago, urged President Suharto to take more decisive action on Timor (see Sydney Morning Herald 29/9/75). Anyway, there is no point in talking about what could have been done. The reality of an Indonesian invasion must be faced now.

Peacock : "SINCE COMING TO OFFICE WE HAVE CO-SPONSORED AND VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTED A DRAFT RESOLUTION IN THE UNITED NATIONS REAFFIRMING THE RIGHTS OF SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE TIMORESE, URGING THE NEED FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, CALLING FOR A REVIVAL OF TALKS AMONG THE CONFLICTING PARTIES, AND PROPOSING THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF PORTUGAL SHOULD REQUEST A U.N. VISITING MISSION TO EAST TIMOR."

One of the other co-sponsors was Indonesia - which at the time was planning its invasion of East Timor. Australia was a party to the duplicity. Of course, the U.N. motions made no reference to Indonesian military involvement in East Timor over the past three months.

Peacock : "IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY ATTEMPT TO ASCERTAIN THE WILL OF THE EAST TIMORESE, THE EQUATING OF FRETILIN'S CAUSE WITH THAT OF THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE CANNOT BE ACCEPTED."

Is Mr. Peacock implying that it is possible that the other groups, U.D.T. and Apodeti, have any claim to represent the will of the East Timorese? Clearly they have no such claim. By asking Indonesia to invade East Timor they have irreversibly eliminated any chance of the East Timorese expressing their will freely. Mr. Peacock should look at what happened in Irian Jaya in 1969.

Mr. Peacock has apparently not taken any notice of the reports from Australian journalists, politicians and aid officials indicating the wide support for FRETILIN by the East Timorese. He does not mention that FRETILIN is not a political party - it is a movement for Timorese wanting independence. In its Declaration of Independence, FRETILIN made plans for elections in East Timor.

Peacock : "...WE MUST REJECT ANY SUGGESTION THAT AUSTRALIA HAS "BETRAYED" THE TIMORESE, OR IS RESPONSIBLE IN ANY WAY FOR THE PRESENT RECOURSE TO FORCE."

It is clear why the East Timorese feel they have been betrayed. 40,000 Timorese died during World War II supporting Australians against the Japanese on Timor. Australian casualties were few. Now, Australia has sat on the fence; it has not condemned Indonesian designs on Timor. Australia has betrayed the Timorese in the interests of keeping good relations with the Indonesian military government.

Peacock : "IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE INITIATIVES OPEN TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ARE LIMITED."

It is not obvious! The Australian government should -

1. Strongly condemn Indonesian military intervention in the affairs of East Timor.
2. Immediately withhold all military aid to Indonesia.
3. Demand that Indonesia immediately withdraw its troops from East Timor.
4. Demand that Indonesia create and respect a neutral zone in East Timor so that doctors and observers can go to East Timor.

These are minimum requirements of the Australian government if it has any desire at all to allow the Timorese to decide their own future.

#### ACTIVITIES

##### 1. Australian/East Timorese Association (A.E.T.A.)

The inaugural meeting of the A.E.T.A. was held on Sunday 7/12/75. Over 200 people attended. The Association recognises the Democratic Republic of East Timor as initiated by FRETILIN.

A large number of activities were initiated ranging through telegrams to the government, vigils outside the KLM office (KLM is the agent for the Indonesian airline GARUDA) and the Melbourne Foreign Affairs Department, a delegation will be sent to the United Nations, union action planned, attendance at political meetings.

Any action that will force Indonesia out of East Timor should be taken.

The next meeting of A.E.T.A. will be held next Sunday night.

For further information on :

- a) Demonstrations and other activities Phone 41 5972 or 419 4673
- b) Liaison with interstate groups, information, analysis, history Phone 63 967
- c) Demonstrations, leafletting at election campaigns Phone 347 7433  
347 8307
- d) Press statements, liaison with international contacts Phone 41 7055
- e) Liaison with church groups Phone 347 3120

If you have any after-hours enquiries, and if none of the above answer 48 3566.

2. Pax Christi - an International Christian peace movement is organising a meeting for Wednesday, December 10, at 63 Queensbury Street, Carlton. Time 8 pm. After a talk by Mark Raper, a member of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid team that went to East Timor recently and discussion, the meeting will march down to the vigil outside the KLM offices in Collins Street. All are welcome.
3. Vigils are being kept outside the KLM offices, 50 Collins Street and the Foreign Affairs building, 486 Bourke Street, Melbourne. If you have time, join the vigil if only for an hour. A roster has been prepared - ring 63 9673.
4. As everyone knows, you cannot run an Association without money. We still need lots more to cover the fares of our delegates to the United Nations. Please send your donations to : the Australian/East Timorese Association, C/- 75 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, 3065. We'll pass it on.

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