



# EAST TIMOR REPORT

Issued by the East Timor Sub-committee of the Australian Council  
for Overseas Aid

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## EAST TIMOR WAR ONE OF THE MOST VIOLENT - CLAIMS

### U.S. RESEARCH AGENCY

According to the highly respected Center for Defense Information in Washington there are approximately 40 major and minor armed conflicts in the world today. And of these, says the Center, the war in East Timor is one of the longest-running and most violent, having resulted in "more deaths than any current war except Kampuchea".

The CDI is a non-government organisation headed by two retired US Rear Admirals, Gene LaRocque and Eugene Carroll. Its basic philosophy favours a strong defence but opposes excessive expenditure or forces.

In the first issue of its 1983 newsletter, The Defense Monitor, the Center provides the following chart (page 2):

THE MOST VIOLENT CONFLICTS		
<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Number of deaths</i>	<i>Year began</i>
1. Kampuchea Civil War	1-4,000,000	1970
2. East Timor Guerilla War	100-250,000	1975
3. Afghanistan Civil War	100,000 +	1978
4. Iraq-Iran War	80-100,000	1980
5. Lebanon Civil War	80,000 +	1975
6. Philippine Guerilla Wars	50-100,000	1972
7. China-Vietnam War	47,000 +	1979
8. Guatemala Guerilla War	30-40,000+	1967
9. El Salvador Civil War	30,000 +	1977
10. Ethiopia-Eritrea Guerilla War	30,000 +	1962

*Chart prepared by the Center for Defense Information*

On page 10 of its newsletter the CDI reports as follows:

Although few Americans have heard of it, the tragic war in East Timor has resulted in more deaths than any current war except Kampuchea and possibly Afghanistan. When Portugal withdrew from its

tiny island colony of East Timor in 1975, a brief civil war (\*) ensued which was won by Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor). In December 1975, shortly after Fretilin declared East Timor's independence, 15-20,000 Indonesian troops invaded. Ninety percent of their weapons were American-made.

At least 100,000 Timorese died as a result of the invasion and occupation. Many deaths were due to starvation caused by the inability of citizens to plant and harvest crops while fleeing from Indonesian aerial bombardments and search and destroy missions.

By 1979, Fretilin strength had been greatly reduced, but there were still guerrilla campaigns in the mountains. Over the past few years, however, fighting has increased. In the summer of 1981, Indonesia launched a massive effort (Operation Security) to wipe out Fretilin. Every Timorese male over thirteen was ordered into the mountains, unarmed, to form a 'human fence' to sweep out the guerrillas. Church sources said over 1000 citizens died in the operation.

Operation Security was not successful in eliminating Fretilin. Indonesia said that it reduced Fretilin to 300 men and 120 weapons. Fretilin spokesmen claim to have 6500 armed men. There is no way of knowing the precise number of guerrillas, but it seems unlikely that Indonesia would continue to maintain a sizable garrison force on the island, to carry out offensives such as Operation Security, and to restrict foreign access to East Timor if only a few hundred poorly armed guerrillas remain.

Indonesia has been fighting low-level wars against separatist movements in the archipelago for decades. Muslim extremist groups are fighting for an independent Islamic state. The best known of these is the Free Aceh Movement in northern Sumatra. In West Irian, the Free Papua Movement has conducted a 17-year campaign to gain independence.

*Indonesia:* population - 158 million; GNP - \$67.7 billion;  
military spending - \$2.8 billion.

*Impact of East Timor war on defense of the US:* minimal.

*US military assistance to Indonesia 1972-1981:* \$447 million.

*Proper role for the US:* encourage the prompt withdrawal of Indonesian troops from East Timor; discontinue or reduce US military sales and aid to Indonesia; promote the opportunity for political self-determination by the people of East Timor.

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(\*) The Portuguese withdrew to the off-shore island of Atauro during the short civil war. P.W.

*EAST TIMOR REPORT* is issued to bring you items on East Timor which have not been publicised in the mass media. Please circulate it to appropriate sections of your organisation, to concerned colleagues, friends etc.

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