

Prabowo, Kopassus and East Timor

On the Hidden History of Modern Indonesian Unconventional Warfare

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Militia violence at the time of the referendum for independence of East Timor in August 1999 was envisaged by the Indonesian Armed Forces even earlier than April of that year, when groups of organised hoodlums first appeared in the international media. Efforts at tracing the origins of their organisations point to 1998, well before the referendum idea was put forward by President Jusuf Habibie in January 1999. The recent forms of militia, as they are commonly known, date back to the early 1990s; they are connected with the name of Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo, General Commander of the Indonesian Army Special Forces, Kopassus, son-in-law of President-dictator and uncontested ruler of his New Order (*Orde Baru*), the former General Suharto. But when did Prabowo first introduce his ideas about this specific form of militia to a larger audience?

A former classmate of his recently revealed that Prabowo referred to militias in 1986/87 as a student officer (*permira siswa*) at the Army Staff and Command School (*Sekolah Staf dan Komando TNI-Angkatan Darat, Seskoad*) in Bandung, West Java. The classmate must, of course, remain unidentified, and there is no material proof to substantiate his claim. Also his memory of the event is no longer clear after twenty years and lacks some important details.

But the event itself, in which Prabowo for the first time presented his infant concept of a new type of militia for East Timor, has been incorporated into military study and is probably still kept in the archives of the school.

Militias

The employment of militias and other forms of proxy forces is a regular feature in the modern history of the Indonesian military, summed up perfectly by Geoffrey Robinson:

Militias have been a central element of Indonesian counter-insurgency and counter-intelligence strategy at least since the 1950s, and they have been mobilized in every counter-insurgency operation the Indonesian army has ever undertaken. Although justified in terms of the military doctrine of 'total peoples' defence', the main reason they are used is that they are cheap and effective, they help to establish bonds of loy-

alty with occupying forces, and they provide plausible deniability for acts of violence committed by soldiers.¹

Militias as an element of counter-insurgency (CI) warfare are not restricted to the Indonesian army, but are an element of a sub-sector conventionally known as unconventional warfare (UW), for which the United States Army has set standards. The Indonesian military came under the influence of the US Army from the early 1960s onwards, when US instructors made the Seskoad the centre for turning the Indonesian armed forces into a counter-insurgency force to fight the internal Communist threat at that time. The US Army Field Manual FM 100 became the standard for Indonesian army operations, which included CI operations.

Young Prabowo Subianto and East Timor

In mid-1986, following a stint with the Army Special Forces in East Timor, Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo, was assigned to attend the regular Officers' Advanced Course (Suslapa) at the Seskoad in Bandung. During the course duration of nine months he was often freed from attending classes in order to work on a study for the Seskoad which, in his words, would end the East Timor problem once and for all.² His study probably never left the confines of the school, and its specific relevance for Indonesian UW is unclear. But it was definitely an important step in Prabowo's approach to militias in the framework of UW and counter-insurgency.

When he attended the Staff and Command School young Lieutenant-Colonel (Letkol) Prabowo Subianto, 34 years of age, had spent the first twelve years of his military career with Kopassandha³, the Army Special Forces, which in December 1986 were renamed Kopassus⁴: There he had gained extensive experience in combat duty in East Timor, where he had served four times, for the first time in March 1976 "some three months after the half-island had been abandoned by Portugal and invaded by Indonesia"⁵.

¹ Geoffrey Robinson (2003) *East Timor 1999, Crimes against Humanity*. A Report Commissioned by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 82.

² According to the regulations at the staff and command school, his work on the study had to be part of the regular course and to be done in a small work group (*kelompok kerja* or Pokja) of three or four student officers. That was also the case with Prabowo's study, but my source remembers well that it was Prabowo alone who worked out more or less the complete study.

³ *Komando Pasukan Sandbi Yudha* (Covert or Secret Warfare Command) was the name for the Army Special Forces between 17.02.1971 and 23.05.1985.

⁴ *Komando Pasukan Khusus TNI-Angkatan Darat* (Indonesian Army Special Forces Command).

⁵ Tesoro, Jose Manuel (2000) Image of Evil. Prabowo's refracted reputation for ruthlessness in East Timor. In: *Asianweek* 26, 8, 3.3.2000.

As a young officer quickly rising through the ranks, Prabowo had several advantages: he came from a family of diplomats, grew up in Europe, received a Western education, and was the son of one of the most important businessmen in Indonesia. However, he also received international recognition, even beyond military circles, in his own right. He became regarded as a prodigy of a new generation of highly professional Indonesian military officers with a broad vision, and was considered to have a promising future in the Indonesian military, even as a future Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief.

Back home in Indonesia, after spending his youth in Europe and despite his upbringing, Prabowo decided to embark on a military officer's career path. He entered the Military Academy in Magelang, Central Java, in 1969, where his personality – totally different from the collective mind-set of his comrades and commanders – his broad worldview and command of several languages stood out and caused him to rebel against the academy's strict discipline. He graduated from the academy in 1974, one year late, having been set back a year for disciplinary infringements⁶. Thus, he joined the officer career path a year later than most of his comrades. But despite being a late starter, he had overtaken all of his former class comrades by the time he entered the Seskoad. He had proved to be an ambitious, fierce and even brutal commander who dwelled on the violence that Kopassandha, his army special force, reportedly displayed in the first decade of Indonesian military rule in East Timor. His superiors had obviously already noticed his progress and arranged for him to join Kostrad, the powerful Army Strategic Reserve Command and a necessary stepping stone for any young officer's career trajectory to the very top ranks of military command. When he joined the Seskoad, Prabowo had just finished a three-year stint as Deputy Commander of the Army Reserve Command's Infantry Battalion 328 Kujang, with which he had done combat duty in East Timor, stationed in Cikajang, West Java. Well aware of the situation in East Timor and having experienced the numerous problems his army faced in the province fighting the armed resistance movement *Fretelin*, he worked to offer a solution in the form of a new concept of militias based on the idea that 'it takes East Timorese to fight East Timorese'. The concept was neither new nor revolutionary, but it offered twists on the theme of militias that the army was accustomed to and his conservative superiors could accept.

⁶ The causes of his disciplinary infringements are unclear. Some say he slapped superiors in the face, others refer to frequent weekend trips back home, which were strictly forbidden for the academy cadets.

The US model of Unconventional Warfare

Prabowo entered the Seskoad at a time when the importance of Special Forces were gaining importance in US warfare strategy, after having been neglected for almost a decade.

Under President Reagan the position of Special Forces in the US Army was resurrected and the importance of counter-insurgency against conventional warfare was re-established. The terms of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment in 1987 created the SOCOM, the US Special Operations Command, “which controlled all of the special operations of the Army”⁷ and “established a de facto fifth branch of the United States armed services – one able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other unified commands and worthy of the same funding considerations”⁸. The 1st Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg was activated in the same year, and the first test of the new, improved Special Forces as the spearhead of a military intervention was ‘Operation Just Cause’ in Panama in December 1989, which successfully toppled the regime of dictator Manuel Noriega.⁹

The central duties of the Special Forces in the 1980s involved the covert backing of insurgencies in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, and in Nicaragua, where “the Central Intelligence Agency with select involvement in special operations personnel directed most of these efforts [...] Reagan used covert aid and US advisors from the Central Intelligence Agency and other organisations to increase the effectiveness of the Contras. With covert aid, the Contras were able to draw more recruits to confront the Sandinista armed forces in prolonged operations”¹⁰. Covert support was effective in swinging the military balance in favour of the US-backed insurgents. It included a whole range of support, besides the supply of small arms and ammunition, as well as military training to the Contras, delivered by US Special Forces. For this their members needed ‘indirect skills’ such as ‘cross-cultural communication and the ability to speak a foreign language’.

The Contras employed were largely uneducated and few spoke English. The need to understand the Contra psyche was also an invaluable asset.¹¹

The military category for this type of covert warfare, Unconventional Warfare (UW), was not new at that time but had developed from counter-insurgency strategies of the

⁷ Cerasini, Marc (2002) *The Complete Idiot's Guide to The US Specials Ops Forces*. Alpha, Person Education Company, 115.

⁸ Cerasini 2002: 126.

⁹ Cerasini 2002: 115f; and Clancy, Tom and John Gresham (2002) *Special Forces. Die Spezialeinheiten der US Army*. München, Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 210f.

¹⁰ Greg E. Metzgar (2000) *Unconventional Warfare: A Mission Metamorphosis for the 21st Century?*. Thesis submitted to the School of Advanced Airpower Studies Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 65f.

¹¹ Metzgar 2000: 70

1960s, based on the US Army Field Manual FM 100. The US Army had already formulated strategies ‘to win the hearts and minds’ of enemy guerrillas by psychological operations (Psyops) and passed them on to the Indonesian Army as early as 1961, when the Seskoad became the centre for US Army training support for the Indonesian forces. Prabowo in 1986 must have had knowledge of the US Army’s CI and UW approaches on the Contras and certainly utilised them in his study.

Unconventional Warfare (UW) is defined by the Oxford Essential Dictionary of the US Military as “the military, paramilitary, political, psychological, and civil actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency”¹². It was created as a military reaction of states toward hostile guerrilla warfare in the contexts of decolonisation in the Cold War era after the Second World War. In military terms UW is an essential tactical and strategic element of counter-guerrilla and counter-insurgency (CI) warfare and in the West became popular as a form of counter-revolutionary war. The first counter-guerrilla war which employed CI was the Malayan Emergency directed against the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), commencing in 1948. A later conflict, which saw a more refined form of CI warfare, was developed and conducted by the French colonial army in Indochina from 1949 onwards. Recognising the futility of combating the Communist guerrilla forces in conventional battles, they trained and educated members of minority tribes, religious communities and even criminals and pirates in the Gulf of Tonkin to become secret agents, saboteurs and radio technicians in the units of so-called *maquis*, which were given the task of infiltrating Communist-controlled areas as counter-guerrillas. The *maquis* were a mirror image of Communist commando units and employed the same tactics as the enemy.¹³ The French answer to communist guerrillas in Indochina became known as counter-insurgency, the new concept of political warfare to combat insurgency, resistance and subversion.¹⁴ Since then Unconventional Warfare (UW) has grown to become the most distinctive task of Special Forces worldwide. It is defined in NATO terminology of that time as:

A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held, enemy-controlled, or politically sensitive territory. UW includes guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape (E&E), subversion, sabotage, direct action missions, and other operations of a low visibility, covert or clandestine nature. These interrelated aspects of UW may be prosecuted singly or collectively by predominantly indigenous personnel, usually supported and directed in varying degrees by an external source during all conditions of war or peace.¹⁵

A public definition for the US Air Force Special Forces:

¹² Cerasini 2002: 61

¹³ Napoleoni, Loretta (2005) *Modern Jihad. Tracing the Dollars behind the Terror Networks*. Verlag Zweitausendeins, 45f.

¹⁴ Napoleoni 2005: 47.

¹⁵ JCS Pub 1-02, NATO.

During wartime, AFSOC (Air Force Special Operations Command) may be tasked with directly supporting any resistance or guerrilla force from the air or on the ground. This may be accomplished by infiltration operational units such as the Rangers, US Army ODA teams (Operational Detachment Alpha or 'Alpha Team'), or SEAL (Sea-Air-Land) teams into the combat area for the purposes of training, equipping, and advising or directing indigenous forces. AFSOC will also undertake a number of direct-offensive, low-visibility, covert operations on or above hostile territory.¹⁶

The Indonesian Army developed its own counter-insurgency warfare immediately after Indonesia became independent by combating numerous separatist movements all over the Indonesian archipelago in the 1950s. Having successfully fought the Dutch colonial forces during four years of guerrilla warfare, the new mission of the guerrilla-turned state-army was fighting separatist movements, which turned it into a counter-guerrilla and counter-insurgency force. This complete turnabout in mission was formulated by one of the army's early strategic thinkers, General Abdul Haris Nasution in his book *The Fundamentals of Guerrilla Warfare*¹⁷, in which guerrilla warfare and its counterpart anti-guerrilla warfare are seen as essentially one and the same military approach. In the early 1960s the Indonesian Army came under the influence of the United States Army and their counter-insurgency strategy, as defined in US Army Field Manual FM 100. Under US tuition the Indonesian army created their own Green Berets in the form of the Strategic Army Reserve Command (*Komando Cadangan Strategis Angkatan Darat*, Kostrad) in 1961, but it was the Red Berets RPKAD that were finally chosen to become the Special Forces designed for counter-insurgency warfare. Their training centre (now Pusdiklat, Centre for Education and Training) at Batuujajar near Bandung specifically trains Special Forces members in tactics and techniques of CI and UW.

Prabowo and the Indonesian Special Forces

Prabowo's military identity was that of a full-fledged officer of the Special Forces, and at the time he attended the Seskoad, Special Forces had become *de rigueur* in international military circles. This was reason enough for him to put his stamp on the course and to outshine his comrades.

After graduating from the Military Academy in 1974, Prabowo joined Kopassandha's Special Forces Group I (*Grup I*), a paratrooper unit which conducted special warfare duties in East Timor. He was selected to become a member of one of the Group's special CI-units, Nanggala 28 and stayed there for three years (1977-80). The unit's main task was the assassination of Fretelin's president and foreign minister Nicolao Dos Reis Lobato, but in this the unit ultimately failed. After that first stint Prabowo joined a se-

¹⁶ Cerasini 2002: 202.

¹⁷ Nasution, Abdul Haris (1955) *The Fundamentals of Guerrilla Warfare and the Indonesian defence System, Past and Future*. Jakarta, Puspen AD.

lect group of some twenty, young Indonesian Kopassandha officers¹⁸, who were invited to attend a six-week anti-terrorism course at Germany's prestigious GSG 9 Police Special Force as the very first Indonesian participants. As the curriculum of the GSG 9 courses is kept secret it is not clear to what extent German training contributed to Prabowo's later missions in the Special Forces in East Timor. As a police force rather than a military force, the GSG 9 is specifically trained to counter-terrorist threats by means of anti-terrorist operations either inside German society or in order to protect German citizens and interests abroad from terrorist attacks on a limited scale. It is not a force which is intended for warfare operations.¹⁹ But the training in Germany was essential for the creation of Detasemen-81 (Detachment 81), abbreviated Den-81, established on June 30, 1982, with Major Luhut B. Panjaitan as its first commander and Captain Prabowo Subianto as its first deputy commander, who both had enjoyed German anti-terror training at the GSG 9.²⁰

Prabowo's pioneering participation in the course made him a celebrity in German and Indonesian military circles and raised his standing in the army. The practical knowledge he gained in Germany was surely of help for his studies, but on the more military-oriented level of the Seskoad, it was probably his broad interest in recent developments in the US military that helped him to complete his project, adapting the latest US approach on UW to his branch, the Indonesian Special Forces.²¹

Prabowo's attendance at the Seskoad was not just a matter of his formal career development, in which every officer had to visit the Seskoad to receive the formal preparation to become a full staff officer and rise to the rank of Colonel and General. It was also related to fractional disputes inside the army command.

The great Army reformation of 1983-85 had seen the Special Forces thoroughly overhauled by the Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief, General Benjamin Leonardus

¹⁸ It is kept confidential who Prabowo's comrades at the course were, but it has become known that two were later Kopassus General Commander Muchdi Purwo Pranyoto, recently implicated in the murder of human rights lawyer Munir in 2004 in his position as Deputy of the Indonesian Intelligence Agency BIN, and Major-General Hotmangaraja Panjaitan, later Indonesian Defence Attaché to Germany 1997-2000, Commander of Kopassus' Special Warfare Group IV from 2001-02, and Bali military commander when the first Bali bomb exploded in October 2002.

¹⁹ It is also unclear how the GSG 9 could have provided counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare tactics and methods – if it ever did – or knowledge and capabilities useful for such purposes. However, the GSG 9 also has a strong intelligence pedigree. As a force below the German Police's Federal Department (Bundeskriminalamt), the GSG 9 can rely on the department's police intelligence network and even has two specific intelligence units, the 1st and 4th Mission Units (Einsatzinheit), specialised in observation and raids. See Reinhard Scholzen and Kerstin Froese (2001) *GSG 9: Innenansichten eines Spezialverbandes des Bundesgrenzschutzes*. Stuttgart, Motorbuch Verlag.

²⁰ Indonesia's Elite Forces: SAT-81 GULTOR, <http://indonesiaeliteforces.tripod.com/id12.html>.

²¹ For a historical overview of US military developments in the field see Marquis, Susan L. (1997) *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding US Special Operations Forces*. Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press.

(‘Benny’) Murdani (1983-88), himself a former Special Forces officer. The force’s personnel strength was reduced from 6,500 to 2,600 members, and its five combat groups were trimmed down to just two, Group I and II, both made up of army paratroopers. Revamped on the model of the British Special Air Services (SAS), the Army Special Forces, renamed Kopassus on 26 December 1986,²² were to become a leaner, better trained and more capable force. What was lost in numbers was to be compensated by the versatility and qualifications of their members. As a consequence, former Group IV, Sandhi Yudha (‘Covert Warfare’), which had specialised in Unconventional Warfare, was abolished and its functions integrated into the Kopassus training centre at Batujajar near Bandung, West Java.²³

Kopassus’ overhaul had placed Murdani-loyalists at the helm of the Special Forces, a move which ran counter to Prabowo’s interests. His shift to Kostrad in 1985 was both a move by his superiors to get him out of Murdani’s way, and Murdani’s move to detach him from his personal power base, Kopassandha. Only in March 1993, when Murdani was finally removed from all positions of influence in the armed forces after having lost the president’s trust, did Prabowo re-enter Kopassus again as commander of the Batujajar training centre. He certainly had his personal grudges when he entered Seskoad, and his motivation to prove that Murdani’s neglect of unconventional warfare was wrong surely encouraged him further.

The Army Special Forces and Unconventional Warfare in East Timor

Kopassus and unconventional warfare are two sides of the same coin, and the history of East Timor’s military occupation was always closely intertwined with the Special Forces. Prabowo emerged as one of the key players and put his personal stamp on the Indonesian military’s history of warfare in East Timor.

The military assault on East Timor in 1974/75 was conducted as an intelligence and Special Forces mission. The Military Strategic Intelligence Centre at the Ministry of Defense (Pusintelstrat Hankam), led in 1974 by General Murdani, employed means of covert intelligence and UW to execute and cover up the intended military annexation of East Timor: “In his [Murdani’s, I. W.] opinion, the best course of action was to infiltrate a small number of volunteers into East Timor to stimulate local resistance. On his own initiative, he summoned Colonel Dading Kalbuadi and outlined his plan to dispatch a team of volunteers to cross the border to assist those Timorese wishing to in-

²² Kopassus was given the new name on 23.5.1985, but the restructuring process took 19 months.

²³ Conboy, Ken (2003) *Kopassus. Inside Indonesia’s Special Forces*. Jakarta, Singapore, 305-308; Kingsbury, Damien (2003) *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military*. London, New York, RoutledgeCurzon.

tegrate with Indonesia.”²⁴ The mission was entrusted to Kopassandha, which initiated an operation code named *Operasi Poincana*, involving Sandhi Yudha commandos, who were given the mission to occupy potential Fretelin bases south of Dili. Meanwhile, a small number of Timorese volunteers were divided into three teams: Susi, Tuti and Umi, all common Indonesian female names, each led by Indonesian commanders.²⁵

Two newly-established East Timorese political parties, UDT and Apodeti, were also successfully made tools of Indonesian intelligence for combating the largest party Fretelin which aimed at full independence for Portuguese East Timor. The military operation to conquer East Timor, *Operasi Komodo*, was conducted as a large-scale military intelligence operation led by General Yoga Sugama, head of the nominally civilian state intelligence agency Bakin (Intelligence Coordinating Agency), and conducted mainly by Kopassandha forces. Kostrad, Marines and Army territorial units were consigned to auxiliary roles.²⁶

Formal East Timorese bodies of militias under direct military command had always been a regular feature of military rule. Among them were the Ratih (*rakyat terlatih*, ‘trained populace’) organisations, staffed with local conscripts and ‘volunteers’: “[They, I. W.] were village-based auxiliary units, designed to assist the armed forces in detecting and combating the enemy”²⁷. All these means failed to achieve their intended goals, however, and this must have left a deep impression on Prabowo. The common feature of early Indonesian CI was that locals supported combat roles and were not involved as pseudo-guerrilla forces as in unconventional warfare. This change of parameters was to become Prabowo’s personal contribution to Unconventional Warfare.

In March 1983 the military commander, Colonel Purwanto, signed a secret cease-fire agreement with the leader of the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretelin), José Alexandre ‘Xanana’ Gusmao. The agreement, however, lasted only until 8 August, when the Indonesian military initiated another operation, Operation Unity (*Operasi Persatuan*), which, for the first time, employed East Timorese combatants. Two battalions, attached to the Dili-based Korem (military regional command) were set up, and “locally-recruited paramilitary ‘teams’ with knowledge of regional dialects and terrain”²⁸ were used from that time on.

Prabowo is not known to have been specifically involved in the build-up of pro-Indonesian auxiliaries and militias at the time, though this later was to become his hallmark. These forms of co-opting East Timorese as fighters for the Indonesian side

²⁴ East Timor: Indonesia’s military involvement. In: *The Jakarta Post.com* 31.05.2004.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. See also John G Taylor (1999) *East Timor, The Price of Freedom*. London, New York, Zed Books.

²⁷ Robinson 2003: 83.

²⁸ Kammen 2001: 158f.

dates back to *Operasi Komodo* in 1975, when the oldest local militia, Halilintar (lightning) was established.²⁹ Halilintar was the first local auxiliary force set up following a covert military training program conducted in West Timor by the powerful military intelligence force at that time, Opsus. Opsus was the intelligence for Special Operations which directly reported to President Suharto. Halilintar forces³⁰, led by Tomas Goncalves and Joao Tavares, accompanied Indonesian forces in a support capacity in several operations conducted by the Special Forces (named RPKAD at that time) and Opsus in that year. In 1976 the majority of Halilintar troops were re-deployed to form the basis of the formal ('organic') military Battalion 744, attached to the East Timor Korem. Halilintar itself was disbanded in 1982. In the late seventies Timorese were again used in paramilitary roles in local defence units. The use of East Timorese as back-up for regular military and security forces, in the words of James Dunn, "took place against the background of a harsh, and at times brutal, campaign against the population of East Timor by the occupying military force"³¹.

Prabowo at the Seskoad – the International Situation in 1986

The entry of East Timor's former colonial power, Portugal, into the European Union in 1986 made the East Timor question a European issue. In Portuguese domestic politics, the former colony became the symbol of the country's renewed global orientation and role. In 1985 the first official talks took place between the Portuguese government and Jose Ramos Horta, the international representative of East Timor's Fretelin. On 25 September, following UN Resolution 37/30, which demanded self-determination for

²⁹ "The original Halilintar had been established by the co-opted local ruler of Atabae sub-district in Bobonaro district under Indonesian military instruction following the protracted 1975 battle for Atabae." Mason, Max (2000) *Heroes of Integration. Socialising Autonomy in Pre-ballot East Timor*. Unpublished manuscript, 13 (note 45).

³⁰ Robinson classifies Halilintar as one of several "more highly trained paramilitary units [...] which, I.W.] performed important reconnaissance, intelligence and combat roles, but they also took part in several operations, including assassinations. Formally coordinated at the level of the District Military Command (Kodim), they also had close ties with and often operated alongside the elite counter-insurgency force, Kopassus – and in particular the Intelligence Task Force, SGI, and operational units known as Nanggala." (Robinson 2003: 84). Another attempt to employ East Timorese for combat duties is revealed by Conboy (2003): in 1986 Kopasandha Detachment 81 began a special operation codenamed Task Force 86 (and using the local Tetum codename Railakan, meaning 'Fire and Water'). It was a counter guerrilla operation in which special forces would act as partisans, assisted by former Fretelin rebels mostly taken from prisons, to track down resistance forces. Two teams, team Alfa and Sera, were raised and, directed by Det 81 operatives in long-range patrols, the locals "acted as pseudo gangs by dressing and acting like Fretelin", with some success. Team Sera was credited with six Fretelin kills and 22 captured, and with another team (Saka) set up, the operation was extended a further year. It failed, however, to capture commander 'Xanana' Gusmao (Conboy 2003: 310-312).

³¹ Dunn, James (2001) *Crimes Against Humanity in East Timor, January to October 1999. Their Nature and Causes*, <http://www.etan.org/news/2001a/dunn1.htm> (14.2.2001).

East Timor, the first formal diplomatic contacts since the invasion were established between the governments of Portugal and Indonesia. Portugal positioned itself as the driving force for the self-determination of East Timor, thereby drawing the world's attention to the tiny country's terrible fate under Indonesian rule. This, in turn, put the Indonesian military under pressure to look for a military solution to keep East Timor under military control and out of the international spotlight. In early 1986, East Timor once again became an important topic in world politics and the international media, putting Indonesia's role as occupying force under critical global scrutiny.³² In July 1986, the very month Prabowo entered the Seskoad, the European Parliament passed a motion criticising the Indonesian annexation of East Timor.³³

Prabowo at the Seskoad

Prabowo, some said, became driven by a desire to 'solve' the East Timor question and thus ensure his place in short-term history and his future position at the highest levels of power.³⁴

Prabowo's ambition to rise to the top positions of military power and influence found its personal arena in occupied East Timor. Having established his identity within the framework of civilian versus military forces, Indonesia's provinciality versus his own international experience and Western lifestyle, the limited world-view of his military comrades versus his broader vision went beyond the strict limits set by the military. Prabowo never saw East Timor as a purely military problem, but was acutely aware of the diplomatic complexities of the issue and therefore attempted to find a solution that involved both the military and diplomacy. In the diplomatic sphere East Timor continued to alienate Indonesia from the rest of the world, and especially from the West which was now more concerned than ever about protecting human rights. From a military point-of-view East Timor was an embarrassing example of the army's inability to solve a problem handed over to them in 1974 by their mighty brother-in-arms, the United States of America, i.e. the task of defeating Communism in the Archipelago. The vast amount of military aid, both in equipment and in education and training, which had been provided for more than a decade, did not suffice to help the Army defeat a small-scale insurgency. For Prabowo the personal challenge was obvious; if he could solve the problem once and for all, who could stop him from reaching the very top of Indonesia's leadership? Given his close ties to the Suharto first family through

³² Schlicher, Monika (1996) Von der Schwierigkeit, Verantwortung einzuklagen. Die internationale Wahrnehmung des Konflikts. In: Ludwig, Klemens, ed. (1996) *Osttimor – Der zwanzigjährige Krieg*. Reinbek, Rowohlt, 82-107.

³³ For an historical overview, see Taylor, John G. (1990) *The Indonesian Occupation of East Timor 1974-1989, A Chronology*. London, Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR).

³⁴ Friend, Theodore (2003) *Indonesian Destinies*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 324.

his marriage to the President's daughter, Siti Hediati 'Titiek' Suharto in 1983, all doors would be open to him.

Another factor contributing to his success was the open display of brutality and sadism that he almost always managed to utilise for his personal military career advancement. He rose through the Army Special Forces ranks because of his highly ambitious approach to fulfilling, and at times over-fulfilling his tasks. Rather than making him popular, however, Prabowo's ambition sometimes alienated him from some of his superiors, notably from General Murdani. Prabowo's assignment to the Seskoad was also an educational measure by the Army command to let him cool his temper for a year.³⁵

Militias for East Timor – The Scenario of 1999 conceived in 1986?

Prabowo attended the Regular Course (*kursus reguler*: Susreg) at the Sekolah Staf dan Komando TNI-Angkatan Darat (Army Staff and Command School) in Bandung, West Java, for the educational year (*tahun pelajaran*) 1986-1987 as a regular student officer (*perwira siswa*, Pasis). This course is to prepare the officers, who usually rank from major to lieutenant-colonel, for higher command staff duties as senior officers and generals (*perwira tinggi*, pati). Training at the school emphasises preparing individual working papers (*kertas karya perorangan*: taskap) and staff studies (*telaah staf*) in working groups.

During the course the school command assigned Prabowo the task of preparing and presenting a staff study (*telaahan staf*) on a new socio-economic approach to security in East Timor that would contribute to a military solution of the East Timor problem. Although he worked as part of a small work group (*kelompok kerja*, Pokja) of three or four fellow students, unlike his comrades Prabowo was exempted from most of the regular coursework in order to devote more time to his own study. Unfortunately, no information is available about the other students of his group or what happened to their work. The results and analysis were presented to the class and the school command at the end of the course, and presentation material included diagrams, graphs and transparencies. But, in keeping with school policies, the students were given neither the study nor the presentation material.

Prabowo's study went far beyond the regular scope of such staff studies, as outlined by the Seskoad Student Handbook, the *Vademikum Seskoad*.³⁶ However, as the Seskoad has always claimed to be a think-tank for strategic military affairs and a place for forward-

³⁵ "But his methods in the field alienated his (Prabowo's) boss, General Benny Moerdani, armed forces commander at that time. 'I sent Prabowo to East Timor to set up long-range patrols,' he told Adam Schwarz. 'He became obsessed with catching Xanana. He had gone out of control. I heard reports that Prabowo was beating patrol leaders when they came back empty-handed. I had no choice but to bring him back to Java.' Prabowo went from protégé to subversive regarding Moerdani. Such daring endangered his relationship with Suharto" (Friend 2003: 324).

oriented analysis, a study like Prabowo's could well have found its place in the Seskoad archives.

The main thesis of Prabowo's study was as follows: the successful incorporation of East Timor into the Unitary Indonesian Republic must offer strategic groups in the annexed territory exclusive and obvious advantages in terms of material benefits. Only by means of giving them something in return for integration, which they could lose if they went back to fighting for independence, could they be convinced to fight for integration into Indonesia and to defend it against their own people. Accepting material benefits would also make them tools dependent on their Indonesian masters, thereby making it impossible for them to switch loyalties. The pro-independence forces could not offer them anything comparable to what Indonesia was willing to offer. Being motivated to fight the insurgents out of pure self-interest these strategic groups would therefore create a social layer of dependent minions and collaborators eager to please their masters in their role as chain dogs and driven by their known material interests. The hands of the military would ultimately be kept clean from any overt suppression, which would be taken over by their proxies as a force for social control. To the outside world, those proxies could also be presented as the 'real' defenders of East Timor's popular will for integration into Indonesia, sidelining the insurgent Fretelin as a minority voice.

Prabowo explicitly outlined a proposal to offer certain grants and to set up institutions of vocational education and training for pro-Indonesia youths, disadvantaged youth at the fringes of society, and social segments of street and organised crime in return for loyalty to Indonesia. In short, Prabowo advocated a strategic plan to embrace the subclass, the outcasts of Timorese society, to turn them into minions. Such a soft course for bolstering integration would at some later stage replace the repressive approach altogether and consequently alter the negative international perception of Indonesia's occupation of East Timor.

Prabowo implemented this approach in 1994 in his Gada Paksi militia. But his proposal for a 'new solution' for the East Timor question even then was far from new. It reflected the military's dual security approach (*pendekatan keamanan*) which consisted of violent suppression, on the one hand, and the welfare approach (*pendekatan kesejahteraan*) offering material and other benefits, on the other. What was really new was that the 'welfare' approach focussed on one target group that was already known in Indonesia – the *preman* (urban thugs) and street criminals in their East Timorese form.

³⁶ Sekolah Staf dan Komando TNI-Angkatan Darat (1987) *Vademikum Seskoad* (3. edition). This handbook was issued immediately after Prabowo's course, and it is possible that some of the results of his study were included in the book. The content, however, is almost entirely devoted to military matters and barely touches on regional or time-specific aspects.

The Contras in Nicaragua: Prabowo's Model?

The most prominent CW campaign at that time was the one that the US Army and the CIA waged against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. They had set up and maintained a counter-revolutionary proxy force, the *contras* (counter-revolutionaries), made up of members of the armed forces of former dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle but fully dependent on their US masters.³⁷ Elements of their campaign had been financed by a covert operation that later became known as *Irangate* or the *Iran-Contra* Affair. Many features of those *Contras* must have appealed to Prabowo, particularly their anti-Communist outlook, which was almost entirely applicable to the *Fretelin* resistance which the world already identified as pro-Communist. But there were decisive differences; Prabowo could not rely on an East Timorese military force from which to recruit and man his militia forces, and his financial means were much more limited than those of the US. Thus his militias would have to be made self-sustainable without losing their dependency on Indonesia, specifically on Prabowo himself.

Premanisation of Societies: Indonesia and East Timor

The social foundations of Prabowo's concept were already laid in Indonesia, but not yet in East Timor. He began with the social phenomenon of organised *preman*, like the urban thugs and street criminals who had been employed as proxy forces by military intelligence during the late 1970s to provide 'security services' for the military and civilian members of the regime, and to actively 'guide' voters' choices during the general election campaigns so that the preferred candidate for President Suharto would win. Those gangs had eventually got out of hand and were eliminated between 1982 and 1984 in a killing spree which the public called *Petrus*, an abbreviation for *pembunuhan misterius* (mysterious killings). Those targeted assassinations were conducted by killer squads believed to be from the Army Special Forces. In their wake many of those groups of *gali-gali* vanished from view, only to reappear a few years later in the guise of *preman* in the first half of the 1990s in the urban centres of Indonesia, specifically in Jakarta and Medan. During Prabowo's *Seskoed* days, these *preman* were dormant, only to be resurrected with his active support years later.

The institutional basis for Prabowo's study was could build his study on was the New Order's security system, which had a formalised back-up of the security apparatus through civilian support for internal and external security during the early 1980s. The Police set up the environment security system (*sistem keamanan lingkungan*, *siskamling*), that placed under police command civilian security organisations set up by the police, thereby expanding the police force considerably with civilian security personnel largely

³⁷ My comparison of *Gada Paksi* and *Contras* is inspired by Loretta Napoleoni (2003).

recruited from among petty criminals and organised crime.³⁸ At the same time, the military established the system of self-initiated security (*keamanan swakarsa*) by recruiting civilians for unarmed security duties, particularly in the army territorial command system. This system was established by order of the Minister of Defence and Army Commander-in-Chief in 1981³⁹ and drew intensively from counter-insurgency and unconventional warfare concepts and practices. It formalised such paramilitary organisations as Menwa (Students' Regiment), Hansip (civil defense), Wanra and Kamra (both paramilitary organisations that acted as extensions of the military at local and district levels) and Pramuka (Boy Scouts). The regulations and the contributions of these organisations for military purposes were part of the Seskoad curriculum and are specifically mentioned in Part VI of the *Vademikum Seskoad*.⁴⁰ Prabowo certainly was cognizant of them, and it seems remarkable that the relevant chapter in the *Vademikum* did not, yet, mention irregular and covert proxy forces. This was probably to keep such measures hidden from the outside world.⁴¹

Independence for East Timor: Proposed in 1986?

Another point that Prabowo regularly raised was his proposal to grant East Timor independence – an idea that appears, on the surface, to contradict his UW approach. But from the economic assumptions on which Prabowo based his argumentation it made sense. The idea was: release East Timor into independence, and it will surely collapse, because an independent East Timor is economically unsustainable. After the collapse, East Timor and the world would demand East Timor's re-integration into Indonesia, and Indonesia's victory would be complete.

Privately at the Seskoad, and from 1986 onwards in selected circles, Prabowo frequently proposed this strategy of pseudo-independence. At the moment when East Timor was offered or granted independence, he argued, his vigilante proxy groups would go into action and demonstrate to the world East Timor's true desire to remain with Indonesia, denouncing independence as treason. After going through various developmental

³⁸ “[...] a term that was first coined by the head of the Indonesian police in the early 1980s to describe a new way of organizing the local security apparatus so as to give police the responsibility for coordinating and supervising neighbourhoods, and for training and supervising private security guards (*satpam*) for use in commercial and public settings.” In this context the term *sistem swakarsa* was also used for ‘system of self-initiated security’, i.e. allegedly organised by local citizens, but in fact set up by police institutions. Barker, Joshua (1998) State of Fear: Controlling the Criminal Contagion in Suharto's New Order. In: *Indonesia* 66, 7-42.

³⁹ *Vademikum Seskoad*, 194.

⁴⁰ *Vademikum Seskoad*, 194-204.

⁴¹ Since the regular Seskoad courses were regularly attended by officers from foreign armed forces who frequently took the manuals back home, internal or secret affairs were usually for Indonesian eyes only.

stages of argumentation, Prabowo made his proposal in public in the early 1990s, but failed:⁴²

In the early 1990s, Prabowo tried to persuade Jakarta to grant autonomy to the territory – a fact confirmed by Indonesia's ambassador-at-large Francisco Lopez da Cruz and former foreign minister Ali Alatas, both long involved in East Timor policy. That would make Prabowo one of the earliest proponents of autonomy. 'In any insurgency situation, there must always be a political solution', says Prabowo, 'and I thought that a special autonomous region would be ideal. But of course who would listen to a second lieutenant, a first lieutenant or a captain?'⁴³

The same idea later reappeared in Germany-friendly circles around Minister Habibie in a slightly modified version, and was even raised in Habibie's private discussions with Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Habibie in 1997 had a secret diplomatic note delivered to Helmut Kohl, proposing that Germany should push for the territory's independence in United Nations discussions. Such a move could solve the East Timor problem in two alternative ways: either it could lead to a self-sustaining independence that would remove the 'pebble' from Indonesia's shoe, or it could follow the Prabowo line and ultimately lead East Timor back into the fold of Indonesia. Helmut Kohl, however, aware of the strain which the delivery of the former Eastern German navy war ships to Indonesia had placed on German-Indonesian relations, declined Habibie's proposal. The initiative resurfaced in late 1998 when Habibie moved to hold the East Timor referendum on autonomy or independence in 1999.

Prabowo after the Seskoad: Joining Kostrad again

Having graduated from the staff and command course, Prabowo went back to Kostrad again and served two stints in Infantry Brigade 17, rising to the rank of a colonel in 1991.⁴⁴ His new position gave him ample opportunity to return to duties in East Timor and establish contacts with a new generation of Kopassus commanders in the field, most notably Brigadier-General Kuntara.⁴⁵

⁴² This aspect played an important part in my discussions with Prabowo's former comrade. Prabowo's line of argument according to him was clear, but differently formulated. His initial proposal was for independence, because only that would, in his view, guarantee final victory. Later, when in a more powerful position at Kopassus, he said autonomy but meant independence. The idea remained the same.

⁴³ Tesoro, Jose Manuel (2000) Image of Evil. Prabowo's refracted reputation for ruthlessness in East Timor. In: *Asianweek* 3.3.2000.

⁴⁴ As commander and Lt.-Colonel of the Airborne Infantry Battalion 17, 1989-1991, and Chief of Staff of the Kostrad Airborne Infantry Brigade 17 Kujang, West Java, as a Colonel 1991-1993.

⁴⁵ Not much is known about Kuntara or Kuntoro. Born in 1939, a Cirebon Muslim of mixed Chinese ancestry, he rose through the ranks of the Special Forces and surfaced in 1986 as Deputy Commander of Kopassus. In August 1987 he became General Commander of Kopassus. In July 1992 he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Kopassus, a position he held until September 1994.

East Timor after 1986

The Indonesian government initiated a second attempt to 'normalise' East Timor's status in November 1988, when the province was granted 'equal status' with Indonesia's twenty-six other provinces, thereby removing travel restrictions for Indonesian citizens and, to a limited degree, for foreigners as well. This was done to smooth the strained relations with Europe, especially the former colonial power Portugal, which had become a member of the European Union in 1986. A number of international dignitaries visited East Timor in tightly guarded and stage-managed 'tours' that attempted to present a peaceful province to their eyes, in most cases unsuccessfully. The military, however, supported the government's political soft-line approach, because East Timorese resistance had changed from violent to non-violent forms in which clandestine Fretelin-networks were set up, consisting largely of urban youths who no longer outwardly challenged the military. Indonesian intelligence reports and assessments at that time created the misleading impression that the East Timorese population by-and-large approved Indonesian rule, a self-deception that went on to become a central myth in the self-betrayal of Indonesian intelligence on East Timor.⁴⁶ This was the atmosphere Prabowo plunged into when he returned to East Timor in 1989 as Commander of the Kostrad's Airborne Infantry Brigade 17, headquartered in West Java. As soon as he arrived, signs of unconventional warfare began to appear in East Timor's capital, Dili:

In July 1989 [...] new covert operations were unleashed in Dili and the urban centres. During this period hooded gangsters, referred to locally as *buffo* (clowns), terrorized Dili at night. [...] They were, I. W.] East Timorese collaborators given special training by the Special Forces for intelligence, interrogation, and assassination work.⁴⁷

Not much is known about the paramilitaries at that time. During Prabowo's absence, the new Kopassus commanders had stepped up the paramilitarisation of society, a process in which Kuntara must have played an important role. The paramilitary 'scene' had become much more established.

During the last decade of Suharto's rule, since BrigGen Kuntara became the commander of Kopassus in 1988, there were about 3,000 'clandestine' Kopassus members, who did not have official registration numbers who were funded by Prajogo Pangestu. These are highly trained troops, where even a sergeant has the capacity also to fly some fighter airplanes. They are certainly very well-trained snipers. These forces that were only loyal to Prabowo Subianto, Suharto's son-in-law, were based in East Kalimantan, not in Java where the three main Kopassus bases are located [...].⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Kammen, Douglas (2001) *The Trouble with Normal: The Indonesian Military, Paramilitaries, and the Final Solution in East Timor*. In: Anderson, Benedict R. O'G., ed., *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*. Ithaca, New York, Cornell University, 160-162.

⁴⁷ Kammen 2001: 162 and footnote 24.

⁴⁸ Aditjondro, George J. (2000) *Financing Human Rights Violations in Indonesia*, www.koteka.net/part2.htm.

The nature of these shadow forces remains largely unknown, particularly their relationship with Prabowo. It could well be that the personal bonds with Prabowo mentioned in the quotation were established later, after Prabowo had regained his formal position at the helm of Kopassus, and that personal connections led to their formalisation during the 1990s.⁴⁹ Prabowo's Kalimantan connections survived his dismissal from the military in 1998 and became his economic base in post-Suharto Indonesia.⁵⁰

Another Kopassus commander with whom Prabowo established good working relations at that time was Major-General Sintong Panjaitan, Commander of the Udayana Military Regional Command, which covered East Timor, from 1988-1992. Sintong was close to the 'green' network of generals with close affiliations to political Islam and he assisted in introducing Prabowo to Jakarta politics. He later got close to Habibie and became his advisor on security matters, having played a significant role in President Habibie's decision, announced on 27 January 1999, to allow the East Timorese to vote to accept or reject an Indonesian autonomy offer. One account states that Habibie held the 'most intensive' discussions with Sintong Panjaitan before the decision was made in two successive cabinet meetings.⁵¹

Santa Cruz, 12 November 1991

On 12 November 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on unarmed protesters at the Santa Cruz cemetery outside Dili, killing dozens, if not hundreds of civilians in the process. Unfortunately for the military, the incident was filmed and the footage was successfully smuggled out of Indonesia and aired on international television, effectively destroying any credibility the claim that the East Timorese population accepted Indonesia's rule might have had. That incident shook US American-Indonesian military relations to the core and they broke down at the end of the year. Indonesia's army, now without the vital support of the West, and with neither the Cold War nor the threat of Communism to legitimise it, found that the military's harsh rule was no longer accept-

⁴⁹ These forces later received the more or less official designation *milsus* (*militar khusus*, special military). "The term *milsus* should be distinguished from *milsas*, which in fact refers to paramilitary militias, who were often trained by *milsus* members. These *milsus* (and their *milsas* proxies) have been used for covert or illegal operations, especially against civilians, in which formal military involvement would have invited a strongly negative international response. Furthermore, these *milsus* have never been an acknowledged part of the army, despite the fact that, according to documents leaked from East Timor in 1999, they operate on the army payroll and under army orders." Kingsbury 2003: 103.

⁵⁰ Most recently were his intentions to unite the PT Kiani Paper project on Kalimantan with the Deutsche Bank in 2006, a move which ultimately failed.

⁵¹ McDonald, Hamish, Desmond Ball, James Dunn *et al.* (2002) *Masters of Terror: Indonesia's Military and Violence in East Timor in 1999*. Canberra Paper 145, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University.

able to a more human-rights-conscious world. Washington imposed a partial military embargo against Indonesia in 1993, which was later raised to a full embargo against Indonesia, banning the export of military equipment to Jakarta and the training of its military.

Prabowo reunited with Kopassus – The Birth of his ‘new’ Militias

The loss of US support hurt the Indonesian army, but handed Prabowo the platform to make his mark on unconventional warfare in East Timor. He re-entered Kopassus in March 1993 and became head of Kopassus Group III Training Centre in Bandung, thereby frequently moving between West Java and Dili. This position was the first of a tour of duty that led him to the very top of Kopassus, as he became General Commander with the rank of Major-General in June 1996.⁵²

During his five years in Special Forces command positions Prabowo oversaw a number of operations throughout the archipelago, trained a record number of foreign students at Batujajar and increased the cooperation with the US Army. The strength of Kopassus rose to the record number of 6,500 and Prabowo involved his forces in covert ‘dirty’ operations that intended to protect his father-in-law, President Suharto, who was increasingly beleaguered by rival military factions and a growing grassroots democracy movement. Prabowo closed ranks with Islamic militants that he employed as covert agents and proxies, and he expanded the range of activities of Kopassus Group IV/Sandhi Yudha and Group V (Anti-terror) in terror operations against democracy activists and religious minorities. These networks survived his departure from Kopassus when his father-in-law installed him as Kostrad Commander and Lieutenant-General in 1998, partly to protect him from allegations of being responsible for the ‘disappearances’ of student activists conducted by his Group IV in 1997-98.

Prabowo returned to East Timor, where after Santa Cruz the Indonesian armed forces applied much harsher measures against the popular resistance. From 1993 onwards the Operation Execution Command (Kolakops) was strengthened, putting the area under much stricter military control. This was the military scenery awaiting Prabowo in 1993.

To crush political dissent especially among young people, Prabowo, assisted by the military leadership in East Timor, employed far-reaching measures of unconventional warfare. Compulsory military training for civil servants and university students was introduced, and the expansion of the people’s defence units (now resembling more paramilitary militias than the former teams) was stepped up. In July 1995, Prabowo personally

⁵² Colonel and Commander of Grup III/Training Centre in Batujajar, March 1993 until October 1994; Deputy Commander Kopassus (Brig. Gen.), October 1994 until November 1995, and Commander-General Kopassus (Major-General) June 1996 until March 1998.

funded the creation of the Garda Muda Penegak Integrasi (Young Guards Upholding Integration), which became the institutional realisation of his UW-approach of 1986, i.e. the model organisation of East Timorese ‘contras’ for unconventional warfare.

Prabowo recruited youths from the fringes of society and provided vocational education and training, such as setting up car repair shops, “but quickly developed a host of illegal or semi-legal smuggling, gambling, and protection rackets. Gada Paksi developed rapidly: by early 1996 it had 1,100 members; in April it was announced that there were plans to add 1,200 members per year; and in May six hundred members were sent to Java to receive training from the Special Forces. Despite its public links to these Forces, two years after its establishment the head of Gada Paksi, Marcal de Almeida, lamented the fact that his organisation was reputed to be *maubu* – the local Tetum term for military intelligence”⁵³.

Gada Paksi became embedded in a range of psychological operations aimed at terrorising the population. From 1995 onwards black-clad ‘ninjas’, disguised as traditional *buffo* (clowns), roamed the streets of Dili at night and terrorised the inhabitants. The formal paramilitary organisations set up and controlled by Kopassus like Halilintar, Saka, Alfa, and Makikit⁵⁴, were enlarged and they rampaged through the cities and villages. All these psywar measures contributed to the rise of social conflict in East Timor, and consequently from 1995 onwards riots erupted throughout the urban centres.⁵⁵ The basis for Kopassus military and UW-operations were the Task Force Intelligence units, SGI (*Satuan Tugas Intelijen*). Formally an executive unit directly under the military command (Korem), it was mainly staffed with Kopassus intelligence personnel and operated outside the regular lines of military command. Its posts were also used as interrogation and torture centres.⁵⁶

⁵³ Kammen 2001: 168-169. Besides those proxy-organisations, formal militias under direct military command did exist side by side, but because of their overt status as military civil organisations can only to a degree count as UW-tools. For an overview and more on the proxy-organisations see Greenlees, Don and Robert Garran (2002) *Deliverance. The Inside Story of East Timor's Fight for Freedom*. Crows Nest, Allen&Unwin, 129-136.

⁵⁴ On the history of these paramilitary units see also Crouch, Harold (2000) *The TNI and East Timor Policy*. In: Fox, James J. and Dionisio Babo Soares, eds., *Out of the Ashes: East Timor*. Canberra, Australia National University Press, 151.

⁵⁵ Kammen 2001: 168f; Kammen, Douglas (1999) *Notes on the Transformation of the East Timor Military Command and Its Implications for Indonesia*. In: *Indonesia* 67, 74-75.

⁵⁶ Moore, Samuel (2001) *The Indonesian Military's Last Years in East Timor: An Analysis of Its Secret Documents*. In: *Indonesia* 72, 9-44.

What was really new in Prabowo's 1986 Approach?

The totality of Prabowo's UW-approach can be seen in the person of Eurico Guterres, commander of Gada Paksi, who later rose to global prominence as the symbol of militia violence during the Referendum in 1999. He was the ultimate 'product' of Prabowo's UW.

Prabowo set his UW-organisations on three pillars, tightly controlled by Kopassus: the material bases of self-sufficiency, the recruitment base, and the militia organisations themselves with their fields of operation. All of these pillars were designed to offer sustainability and longevity and to increase self-motivation, vital elements in making the militias fight for their perceived self-interest.

But another crucial element was necessary to prevent the militias from breaking up or switching sides: a strongly ideological orientation. Here Prabowo borrowed heavily from the US Army's book on psychological warfare and the Contras of Nicaragua and applied a heavy dose of an aggressive, even hysterical, brand of nationalism to the militias which they displayed constantly to justify and motivate their violence. Their emotional nationalism in essence was not East Timorese at all, but a crude mix of simple ultra-nationalist sentiments which was indoctrinated into militia members by the military and culminated in the demand that East Timor must be integrated into Indonesia. It gave the militias a sense of mission and an exclusive belief system that put them above the majority of their own population, who were seen as 'disbelievers' who had to be converted to the right belief. Their nationalism gave the militias a common fighting spirit that took on quasi-religious forms, but was ultimately non-religious and materialistic and served as the ideological superstructure for their material and organisational foundations, which were totally reliant on Kopassus. It also loosened the few roots they had in their own society to such an extent that the militias became commodities which could even be exported to other regions.

The element of self-induced motivation was most certainly based on brainwashing and psychological operations techniques and according to my source, was totally lacking in Prabowo's 1986 study. But it created a uniform group personality of 'converted' proxy-firebrands, which had biographies similar to that of Eurico Barros Gomes Guterres, born in 1971:

Eurico was born in Uatulari (near Viqueque), East Timor. His parents were killed in 1976 by Indonesian TNI forces due to their known pro-Fretilin views. Though Eurico later accuses Fretilin of their deaths, this is after his conversion to Indonesian ideals. Young Eurico was brought up by an Indonesian civil servant until he was sent to attend the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School in Becora, Dili. He left senior High School becoming involved in petty gangster activity including the government-protected gambling hall (*bola guling*) at Tacitolu, Dili. In 1988 Indonesian military intelligence detained him for his alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate President Suharto, who was to visit Dili in October. At this time Eurico changes from pro-inde-

pendence to pro-Indonesian alliances, becoming an informer for Kopassus and double agent against the Independence movement until he was expelled around 1990. A counter-insurgency officer, Prabowo had taken special interest in his abilities and in 1994 recruited him into Gada Paksi, an organisation that gave cheap loans to start small businesses, but also used them as both informants and in pro-military vigilante squads. Governor Abilio Soares strongly supported Gada Paksi, which developed a record of human rights abuse.⁵⁷

Young Eurico was traumatised by the early death of his parents, which would explain the turnaround in his personality as his search for a new family and home led him to the 'big family of the Indonesian military'. In Jakarta in May 2006, when he was finally convicted to ten years in jail for his crimes during the Referendum violence in 1999, he testified:

Regarding his sentence Guterres said he was ready and would be happy to serve it. He said he was proud he had fought to defend the Red and White flag in East Timor 1999. He said he respected the decision of the Supreme Court although it was against his conscience because he is a good citizen. (...) He shed tears when telling about the events in 1959 and 1976 when his parents and relatives were killed by Xanana Gusmao's group and forces. 'I will never forget the events. Until today, I don't know where their bodies have been dumped', he said. He said he would try to locate the graves of his parents and relatives after completing his jail term.⁵⁸

Eurico Guterres was groomed for higher tasks by his masters, who provided him with knowledge that would be useful for his militia activities, economics:

In 1997 with a high school certificate supposedly provided by the military he began attending the Economics Institute in Dili. Though the Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi (STIE) was run by pro-integrationist Filomeno Hornay, Eurico attended only three semesters. He is married to the niece of Bishop Nascimento of Baucau, and has three children.⁵⁹

This qualification, however rudimentary, made him one of Indonesia's first entrepreneurs in the business of violence and security. After the East Timor referendum failed and Guterres' Dili-based militia Aitarak was in exile in West Timor and no longer of use, his skills lay dormant. He established his personal financial base in Jakarta in two gambling halls and flew regularly to West Timor to oversee his former militia. In December 2003, he set up the Laskar Merah Putih (Red and White Army) intended to crush West Papuan pro-independence groups by UW means. That venture failed, and his endeavours to become an entrepreneur in the growing domestic security and privatised military firms businesses came to an end. In May 2006 he was finally sent to prison for his role in the East Timorese militia violence.

⁵⁷ http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/enc3/eurico_guterres.

⁵⁸ Eurico Guterres Begins Serving 10-Year Jail Sentence. In: *Antara* 4.5.2006.

⁵⁹ http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/enc3/eurico_guterres.

Expanding UW beyond East Timor: Preman-Exports

Prabowo did not limit his newly-established militia weapon to East Timor, but planted offshoots of Gada Paksi-style *preman* organisations in the major urban centres on Java. The term *preman*, literally free men, designates organised gangs of petty criminals which “quickly carved out niches for themselves in the urban underworld of rackets and extortion, often coming into direct conflict with other paramilitary criminal groups”⁶⁰. They were employed in the illegal shadow economy of the cities, often in close contact with and protected by the local military and police. The *preman* phenomenon raised the level of gang violence considerably in the latter half of the 1990s. *Preman* often were ethnically distinct, regularly competing in their intra-gang turf wars with similarly ‘exported’ street youths from Ambon (South Moluccas) and other fringe regions of Indonesia. A militia leader of another product of Prabowo from East Timor made a name for himself as a *preman* leader in Jakarta’s Tanah Abang District: Hercules Rozario Marsal, a native East Timorese commonly known as Hercules. After serving in militias in East Timor, he was planted in that district together with his band of dependents (*anak buah*) around a huge market complex, and with the help of some military backing (*beking*) quickly became an influential underworld figure. After the riots in May 1998 he disappeared from Jakarta, but reappeared in 2001 and was immediately able to re-establish his turf.

In March 1998, after Suharto had successfully stage-managed another victory in the general elections for another five-year term as president, Prabowo was assigned to the position of Kostrad Commander-in-Chief at the behest of his father-in-law. Almost immediately Prabowo pulled his most loyal UW-forces from East Timor to Jakarta and closer to him, where they could help him achieve his personal military and political ambitions. *Preman* groups were now used for political ends – what Friend (2003) refers to as “the army’s use of the underclass to defend the regime against the middle-class”⁶¹.

Kopassus had come under heavy public pressure, when it became known that student activists had been abducted by Group IV/Covert Warfare in 1997-98, and the democratic movement demanded legal action against the Special Forces. Burdened by human rights issues and hoping to use Suharto’s political difficulties for his own ends, Prabowo lost interest in East Timor. Having lost his personal battle for the top military position to General Wiranto, who became Army Commander-in-Chief after Suharto’s fall from power, Prabowo found that the Army leadership was no longer willing to protect him. He was honourably discharged from the Army in September 1998 and moved out of the public eye via Germany to the Middle East, where he re-established contacts with Jordan and Jordan’s Special Forces, which had enjoyed excellent working relationships

⁶⁰ Kammen 1999: 75.

⁶¹ Friend 2003: 345.

with Kopassus during his command. In 2000 he was asked to re-join the circles of the military and political oligarchy and, by making use of the many contacts he had established during his military career, became a wealthy businessman in his own right.

After Suharto's fall, the militias rapidly diversified into a wide variety of guises, displaying a range of UW that transcended Prabowo's concepts by far – a development which shows that UW has never been a weapon confined to specialised troops, but is simple enough for almost anyone to use. One temporary form of proxy-militia, for example, acting as 'security providers' in late 1998, and very similar to East Timorese militias, was the so-called PAM Swakarsa (Self-Organised Security). They were secretly mobilised, set up, and financed by Kostrad as their founder, Major-General Kivlan Zein (or Zen), revealed in detail after the militia had been disbanded.⁶² All of the army's three forces and the police utilised proxies, *preman* and militias more or less regularly for their own ends.

The urban *preman* later became a part of communal and inter-ethnic violence after the collapse of the New Order. During the Moluccan civil war from 1999, *preman* groups, who had been brought back from their Jakarta turfs, were employed as means of UW by different units of the military and the police.⁶³

In areas with strong separatist movements, like in Aceh and West Papua, post-Prabowo Kopassus set up proxy-militias, which never achieved the impact of East Timor's proxies. They were staffed mainly by minority groups of migrant communities and were never accepted by the local population. More refined forms of unconventional warfare organisations with a distinctively radical-Islamic outlook, such as Laskar Jihad and the Front Pembela Islam (FPI), were militias transformed into fully-fledged privatised military firms which opened a new chapter in the commercialisation of covert warfare and the rise of the private business of providing security and violence.⁶⁴

⁶² Zen, Kivlan (2004) Konflik dan Integrasi TNI-AD. Institute for Policy Studies, Jakarta, based on a Master's-Thesis at the University of Indonesia, and A Book and a Soldier's Shame. In: *Tempo* 22.-28.6.2004.

⁶³ Aditjondro, George Junus (2001) Guns, Pamphlets and Handie-Talkies. How the military exploited local ethno-religious tensions in Maluku to preserve their political and economic privileges. In: Wessel, Ingrid and Georgia Wimböfer, eds., *Violence in Indonesia*. Hamburg, Abera, 100-128; Aditjondro, George Junus (2001) Di balik asap mesiu, air mata dan anyir darah di Maluku. In: Salampessy, Zairin and Thamrin Husain, eds., *Ketika Semerbak Cengkih Tergusur Asap Mesiu*. Jakarta, Tapak Ambon 131-177.

⁶⁴ Singer, P. W. (2003) *Corporate Warriors. The Rise of Privatized Military Industry*. Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press. Also: Myrntinen, Henri (2003) Alte 'neue' Kriege. Die Privatisierung der Gewalt in Indonesien. In: Azzelini, Dario und Boris Kanzleiter, eds., *Das Unternehmen Krieg. Paramilitärs, Warlords und Privatarmeen als Akteure der Neuen Kriegsordnung*. Berlin, Hamburg, Göttingen, Assoziation A, 129-142.

The Militias and the Referendum of Independence in 1999

Although the general lines of unconventional warfare in the run up to the Referendum on Independence developed in an almost straight line from Prabowo's Seskoad concept, their implementation was no longer his. There were some remarkable differences, probably due to different commanders with different mindsets and approaches. Most notably a shady intelligence general, Zacky Anwar Makarim, with a career in military intelligence and not a Kopassus man, was put in charge of a covert military operation to keep East Timor inside the Indonesian state:⁶⁵

He had been ordered to put in place 'a typical model for an intelligence operation'. Its main feature was the use of the militias as a front for the army's activities. The militias' main goals were to prevent the pro-independence side from campaigning effectively and to incite fear among the population over the consequences of rejecting Indonesia's offer of autonomy.⁶⁶

The most striking departure from Prabowo's UW concept was the use of militias as overt proxies and not as covert actors. Zacky initiated a more war-like intelligence operation and robbed UW strategies of a vital component, which Haseman⁶⁷, a former US military attaché to Jakarta, explains in military intelligence terms:

A cardinal component of any covert operation is the need for 'plausible denial'. [...] Western intelligence agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the United Nations itself were all aware of the involvement of military and intelligence covert operatives in organizing, recruiting, training, and directing militia force activities. Worldwide television showed police and soldiers standing by while militia forces wreaked violence on a defenceless populace [...]. In short, the perpetrators of the covert operation attempted to conduct their efforts using the rules and standards of 20 years ago and completely failed to take into account the impact of instantaneous communication and an open society.⁶⁸

Prabowo's successors employed militia forces as a fully-fledged pseudo-army and overstretched the possibilities of unconventional warfare by far. The military intervention of the United Nations in September 1999 was a consequence of the extreme use of militia violence.

Abdullah Makhmud Hendropriyono is credited with having created the concept of an armed civilian militia in Aceh and East Timor in his position as Head of the Centre for Education and Training Command (Kodiklat) from 1994 to 1996, and his following assignment as Secretary for Operational Guidance of Development to the President (*Sek-*

⁶⁵ Modeled, as the Master of Terror Database records, on the success of General Ali Murtopo's covert operation to have West Papua integrated by dirty warfare means during the 'Act of Free Choice' in 1969, which led to the internationally recognised integration of that half-island into the Indonesian Republic.

⁶⁶ Greenlees and Garraan 2002: 138.

⁶⁷ Haseman, John B. (2000) East Timor: The Misuse of Military Power and Misplaced Military Pride. In: Fox, James J. and Dionisio Babo Soares, eds., *Out of the Ashes: East Timor*. 180-191.

⁶⁸ Haseman 2000: 184f.

retaris Pengendalian Operasional Pembangunan). “This made him in effect the president’s assistant to deal with regional security matters. He became a kind of roving operator, observing and monitoring likely places of unrest in remote parts of the country. His concept of arming civilians emerged during this period.”⁶⁹

Little is known about the personal relationship between Prabowo and Hendropriyono. They did in fact serve together in East Timor’s Kopassus forces in 1976, but in different units.⁷⁰ And since Hendropriyono was senior to Prabowo⁷¹, their relationship must have been rather distant. Their later career paths also differed considerably, making it unlikely that Hendropriyono would have been close to Prabowo. Hendropriyono certainly was a member of a top team of planners, managers and executors of UW beginning in the second half of the 1990s. His role, however, never was a dominant one, and many blind spots on his contribution to UW remain. It is more likely that a select group of commanders in the field, among them Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, another Kopassus-man, Prabowo classmate and ally, collectively made the decisions regarding the militias. But the central role in UW in East Timor in 1999 was played by Major-General Zacky Anwar Makarim, as he was heavily implicated in militia violence in the final Report on East Timor by the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR).⁷² The role of the Army Headquarters is not known, but it seems likely that the almost exclusive use of Kopassus-officers under the military Commander-in-Chief, General Wiranto, was part of Wiranto’s policy of assigning them to special missions outside the capital in order to keep them away from the political nerve centre of Indonesia.⁷³

It is also unclear whether Makarim, Hendropriyono and their comrades knew of Prabowo’s UW concepts, appreciated them and made specific use of them, or neglected them altogether. Since nearly all of them were former Kopassus commanders, they must have been cognizant of the UW concepts, but they apparently felt that a different strategy was necessary. That said, it is clear that Prabowo never held a copyright on UW, but he conceptualised, initiated and accelerated developments in the history of Indonesia’s Unconventional Warfare – and probably much earlier than was previously known – that had severe consequences for both countries: for Indonesia UW meant new forms

⁶⁹ Tapol (2001) *Hendropriyono and Bambang Kesowo, the key figures in Megawati’s kitchen Cabinet*, <http://www.tapol.gn.apc.org/news/files/st010821.htm> (21.8.2001).

⁷⁰ *Karir para perwira Indonesia yang bertugas di Timor Leste*, www.etan.org/etanpdf/2006/CAVR/bh-08-Anneks4-Karir-para-perwira-Indonesia.pdf.

⁷¹ Hendropriyono, born 7.5.1945, is a graduate of the class of 1967 of the Military Academy. Prabowo, 11.11.1951, graduated from the Class of 1974.

⁷² <http://www.ictj.org/cavr.report.asp>.

⁷³ The Editors (2001) *Current Data on the Indonesian Military Elite: January 1, 1999 - January 31, 2001*. In: *Indonesia* 71, 135-156.

of organised violence with a devastating influence on post-New Order internal conflicts. In East Timor, UW almost completely annihilated the country, but the weapon turned against its master, for without international condemnation of the large scale militia violence directed at freedom fighters the tormented country might never have achieved what Prabowo himself frequently had proposed: independence.