



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Economic, social and political conditions in East Timor

FRIDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 1999

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SENATE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE
Friday, 24 September 1999

Members: Senator Hogg (*Chair*), Senators Bourne, Brownhill, Lightfoot, Quirke and West

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Bolkus, Boswell, Brown, Calvert, Chapman, Cook, Coonan, Crane, Eggleston, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Forshaw, Gibbs, Gibson, Harradine, Knowles, Mason, McGauran, Parer, Payne, Tchen, Tierney and Watson

Senators in attendance: Senators Bourne, Hogg, Payne and West

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

- (a) economic, social and political conditions in East Timor including respect for human rights in the territory;
- (b) Indonesia's military presence in East Timor and reports of ongoing conflict in the territory;
- (c) the prospects for a just and lasting settlement of the East Timor conflict;
- (d) Australia's humanitarian and development assistance in East Timor;
- (e) the Timor Gap (Zone of Cooperation Treaty); and
- (f) past and present Australian Government policy toward East Timor including the issue of East Timorese self-determination.

WITNESSES

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Committee met at 9.08 a.m.

SMITH, Associate Professor Hugh (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I declare open this public meeting of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee. The committee is inquiring into East Timor in accordance with terms of reference given by the Senate. I welcome Professor Hugh Smith.

The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but, should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. For the purpose of obtaining an accurate record would you remain behind at the end of the proceedings so that the Hansard officer can check spelling and sources of information provided this morning. I now invite you to make an opening statement and then we will proceed to questions.

Prof. Smith—Thank you, Senators, for this opportunity. I would like to make a few comments on some military and defence aspects of the East Timor situation. First of all, operations: I think this mission is clearly at the top end of the peacekeeping spectrum. The chapter 7 mandate allows all necessary measures, which means any use of armed force that is legal. In practice, the peacekeeping may move into peace enforcement, even full-scale counterinsurgency if the worst comes to the worst.

One of the key questions will be the rules of engagement. How wide are they? Certainly, they allow the protection of civilians and third parties. One issue is whether they will allow pre-emptive action by the force commander. If, for example, groups of armed militia forces are assembling, is the force commander able to act first or must he wait until an attack? ADF doctrine and training suggest that you get much better security by being able to act first by positive action, not by reaction. So the force commander will have to take some very difficult decisions.

I think there is also clearly a need for an internal security force of some kind, locally based, but assisted by the international force—police forces, but also a kind of secret police, if you like, to collect intelligence information about potential militia activities. There are some parallels here with the Malayan Emergency in the 1950s and the Northern Ireland situation.

This also brings home the key point that the force commander needs the best intelligence available. This, I think, was why it was necessary that Australia provide the force commander. Australian intelligence about East Timor is probably second to none, backed by US intelligence. That intelligence could only be provided to an Australian, or perhaps to a British commander.

The other need will be some kind of civil affairs function for the international force—that is, an ability to liaise with existing authorities such as they are in East Timor or, indeed, to provide government functions in East Timor.

If the situation does worsen there will be casualties. People so far have tended to think in terms of casualties to INTERFET and are particularly worried about the impact on public

opinion at home. I think we need to be prepared for a wider range of casualties from all sorts of causes. Looking at peacekeeping operations over the last 50 years, deaths have come mostly from accidents, about 42 per cent; another 17 per cent from illness; and only 36 per cent from hostile action. So maybe we should prepare for that sort of pattern in East Timor. I think we should prepare to see the international force inflict casualties, deaths, on the militia and hostile elements. People think of peacekeepers as essentially passive or reactive, not as taking life, but I think that will be necessary to maintain security. We should also expect the hostile elements to attack soft targets—not the armed INTERFET troops, but civilian officials, aid workers, journalists, civilians.

My own view on public opinion of casualties is that in this case public opinion will hold up in Australia, even though Australian casualties are taken—provided, firstly, there is no division at home about the rightness and justification of the operation and, secondly, provided there is some progress in the operation towards creating security and independence.

Concerning military capabilities, briefly, I think the ADF has done remarkably well putting its force in despite downsizing, civilianisation, Commercial Support Program, Defence Reform Program, restructuring the Army—huge organisational turmoil. Three problem areas have been shown up as regards capabilities. The limited airlift capability: we have a small number of aircraft—a maximum of 24 C130s when they are all operational—conducting a constant shuttle service, some of those being required also for food drops and other activities. The move to the enclave will call upon them even more. That is something that the international force and Australia need to think about.

Similarly with the limited sea lift capability, there is a very heavy reliance on HMAS *Tobruk*. If that went out of commission through a fire or mechanical breakdown or whatever we would have great problems. The catamaran *Jervis Bay* can transport troops but it has a limited capacity for carrying vehicles. As far as the Army is concerned, there seems to be a need for greater mobility—more helicopters; access to the new Bushranger all-terrain vehicles.

That leads me to my third area of comment which is personnel. There has been quite a bit of discussion about the need to rotate units through and how long you can expect the peacekeepers—the ADF personnel—to be kept in East Timor. Ideally, it would be four to six months, but the suggestion is that nine months looks like being the term. That does create a lot of psychological strain on the individuals concerned—a long separation from families. It increases the chance of tiredness, accidents and illness.

How are they going to be replaced? Let me look at one or two options. If we are thinking of new recruits, raw recruits off the streets, I would say it is critical that they be trained to the existing very high standard of Australian soldiers. General Cosgrove has stressed that his forces have performed very well in terms of restraint, discipline and judgment. Those are absolutely critical qualities in this operation. Sending new recruits into East Timor would be dangerous. I would argue that they need at least 10 or 11 months training, which is the standard training period for infantry. Police need three to four months of full-time training before being sent onto the streets of Sydney or Canberra and then in company with an experienced constable. To send less well-trained personnel onto the streets of Dili would, I think, be militarily, morally and politically wrong.

I will make a couple of other points about the role of the soldier. Individual soldiers can have a very heavy responsibility for the safety of their group—their patrol, their section and their platoon. It can fall on a single person. There is need to give trainees extensive collective training in how to operate in a larger group.

Secondly, there is the phenomenon of the ‘strategic soldier’, as it is called. An individual soldier on an operation such as this can make mistakes through misjudgment, inexperience or panic. Someone could shoot a TNI officer or women and children by mistake under great pressure. So action at the lowest level of the operation could have strategic reverberations internationally and at the UN. That emphasises the responsibility on individual soldiers and the need to get them up to the highest level.

I think there would be some difficulty in recruiting sufficient extra personnel off the streets. These would need to be over and above the normal intake, and there are some difficulties in reaching the current intake, so the Defence Force would need to be looking at yet other individuals—reaching deeper down in the barrel, as it were.

Reserves are being, I am told, looked at very seriously. Some of these will have full and extensive training; probably they will need some top-up training. A lot of them, though, will not be that well trained. Some of the Army general reserves will have had six weeks’ continuous full-time training, which is an advance over previous arrangements. But, as I have suggested, that is not enough, given the fact, too, that, when I last looked at the figures, something like 40 per cent of new reservists drop out in the first two years. Of course, getting reserves up to scratch is quite a training burden for the regular forces who are going to be stretched anyway at the present time.

I am on record as saying that the Ready Reserve, such as we had until 1996, would have provided an ideal basis for rotating units into East Timor. It was a very capable group of young people who, I think, would have been available and well trained because of one year’s full-time military training—exactly the same as any regular. I was involved in a report into the Ready Reserve in 1995 with Lieutenant General John Coates, the former Chief of Army. I am happy to make available copies of the review, which sets out the nature of the scheme and its benefits. I can say, too, from speaking with General Coates in recent days, he is still very much of the opinion that the Ready Reserve would have been ideal for East Timor.

I will make a couple of comments on legislation with regard to reserves. There seems to be an idea that if you could push legislation through to provide for call-up of reserves and for job protection that would solve the problems. On balance, it may help to do that. But I think legislation would also create difficulties that need to be considered. Firstly, call-up. It is true, I believe, that the East Timor situation is not covered by the current legislation. It is not defence of Australia, it is not time of war, it is not declared defence emergency. New legislation could be passed to allow call-up of reserves for any situation, including peacekeeping. One problem might be that it could deter people from joining the reserves. It is also possible that reservists who really did not want to go on a peacekeeping operation would simply resign before they were called up—even if they had signed a form stating, ‘Yes, I will be available.’ Can we really imagine the government prosecuting people in that situation?

Secondly, legislation for job protection. There is a lot of employer opposition to this, I think particularly from small businesses which would find difficulty in keeping a job open for six months or whatever. It might deter employers from taking on reservists in the first place. In some cases, job protection is unnecessary. One assumes that those working for government agencies would automatically, one hopes, have their jobs protected.

So I do not think legislation is the complete answer. Reliance on having a pool of well-trained reserves more or less ready to go but on a voluntary basis is the way to proceed. Finally, flowing from that, I would hope that one outcome of this whole operation is that the country will look seriously at the reserves. It is time for a thoroughgoing review of the structure, nature and purpose of the reserves. The Army's general reserves at the present time number maybe 25,000 on the books. Maybe only half of those are actually turning up regularly for training and there is a suggestion that perhaps out of those 25,000 you might raise 200 to 300 for service. That is a one per cent return on your investment, 250 out of 25,000. That does not appear to be a sensible system to maintain.

My own view is that you should start with a clean sheet. There is a lot of tradition associated with the reserves. Their structure, essentially, derives from World War II—large divisions, 10,000 to 15,000 personnel. They would be ideal for fighting World War II again but I do not think that will be the sort of need that Australia will have to face in the future. There is a lot of expertise, a lot of commitment and dedication in the reserves but they do need to be restructured in ways that make them more readily available. I think most reserves, ultimately, would welcome that.

CHAIR—Thank you very much Professor.

Senator PAYNE—Professor Smith, in relation to your observations about the need for an internal security force particularly, how do you envisage that being structured in the current East Timorese environment and from where would that grow? You said, 'locally based but assisted with international support' and I am interested in how you think that would come about.

Prof. Smith—It is a very difficult task, given, as I understand it, the almost total lack of a police force outside the central government control. I think there is a major role for civilian police from outside to go in to train locals to a basic level of policing so that they can help maintain law and order and establish a basic rule of law which says that you do things by the book, not by violence. Local trainees would know the local community. They may be reluctant to come forward for fear of retaliation from militias. But it was found possible to do that in Cambodia. So I think a major effort from outside police agencies would be useful.

Senator PAYNE—We received some evidence about a week ago from General John Sanderson, Mark Plunkett and Gary James Wood who are involved in the PAXIQUEST operation—are you familiar with their work?

Prof. Smith—Yes.

Senator PAYNE—Is that the sort of civil and social approach to these issues that you are envisaging also?

Prof. Smith—Yes. I think my view would be that this is maybe a second order priority, the first being basic military and physical security and also humanitarian assistance, but certainly policing, law and order, justice systems.

Senator PAYNE—The operation of the rule of law itself.

Prof. Smith—Yes. That takes a long time, but that means it does have to be started as soon as possible. Resources and personnel need to be lined up to get them in. It is one thing for the military to go into an area to secure it, but then the military want to move on into further areas. They want to leave behind them a reasonably stable and secure set-up so that law and order is maintained. Also, as I suggested, you have agencies which can report any signs of trouble—an internal security force, if you like.

Senator PAYNE—You said ‘secret police’.

Prof. Smith—Secret police would maybe be the media’s term for it.

Senator PAYNE—I think there is probably a healthy degree of scepticism in East Timor about the operations of so-called secret police. They have been on the receiving end.

Prof. Smith—Yes. They have certainly won a very bad name for themselves in the Indonesian context. But just as we in Australia have internal security agencies and counterterrorist agencies, I think the need in East Timor is going to be greater while this threat of violence is there. Certainly, those sorts of agencies were quite effective in Malaya. I recognise, of course, they are open to abuse.

Senator PAYNE—You said in relation to the position of force commander, one of the reasons that it should have been an Australian had to do with needing the best intelligence available and it only being possible to provide that to an Australian. Could you expand on that a little more for me, please?

Prof. Smith—Intelligence in peacekeeping operations has always been a difficulty because they consist of five, 10, 20 or 30 different national contingents. Governments which collect intelligence are very reluctant to provide it to other nationalities. The key reason being that it can betray sources and it can betray methods of collection. Whereas, between Australia, the UK, Canada and the US—and previously New Zealand, until it upset the United States—there is very free exchange of intelligence. So an Australian force commander can readily receive all Australian and US intelligence. If it were a Thai force commander, a Latin American or Scandinavian, the Australian government, I think rightly, would be very reluctant to provide full intelligence to that force commander. It would be provided to the commander of the Australian national contingent, who is a different person altogether, which would help secure the Australian contingent. But, really, the intelligence needs to be available across the board for the whole operation.

Senator PAYNE—There were media reports yesterday, with accompanying vision, of militia in East Timor rallying in huge numbers, heavily armed with automatic and semiautomatic weapons, with intentions which were not particularly well spelled out by the media reports that I saw—and I saw most last night. You said INTERFET will inevitably end up inflicting injuries or deaths on hostile forces, and in this case on the militia, and we had to be ready to see that. How do you think INTERFET will deal with a hostile force of that nature, magnitude questionable, unknown?

Prof. Smith—This is partly where very good intelligence comes in. Knowledge of the size of the militia forces, their intentions, movements, armaments and so on needs to be in the hands of the force commander as soon as it is available. I think the force commander would probably not have a mandate to cross the border into West Timor, even though the mandate says ‘all necessary measures’, it does imply that his operations remain in East Timor.

It does provide for the militias a potentially secure base from which to conduct raids and, given a long and difficult border that would be virtually impossible to fully police, there has to be a lot of threat there to the INTERFET forces. What I think the force commander would like to do is to be able to monitor their progress and, as soon as they cross the border, move to intercept them, rather than simply waiting until they find a target and waiting until people are shot at and killed and then reacting. I do not know whether the rules of engagement would permit that, but certainly that would be normal military practice.

Senator PAYNE—The INTERFET, as it is currently structured, has been reported over the past few days as trying to bring in as many of the extra expected forces as possible, given the scale and size of the challenge. It sounds like the further they fan out the more difficulties they find. I understand that when they went through Manatuto yesterday they discovered that it had been as badly destroyed as Dili, and one imagines that will continue. Are they adequately placed to address these challenges at the moment, in your view?

Prof. Smith—Every force commander would like more, and more quickly. I did notice that General Lewis MacKenzie, the Canadian who was in Sarajevo, said that a force of more than 50,000 would be needed to provide security in the whole territory of East Timor. Clearly that is not going to happen for a long time yet, if ever. What may happen is that the force commander will decide that there are certain areas he can secure and focus on those, particularly if refugees flood into those secure areas. There will be some areas where he simply will not move because he does not have the resources and the opposition looks too difficult to deal with. There will be a large grey area where the degree of control may vary. He will constantly have to make judgments as to how much effort to put into dealing with each of those areas—whether to keep the secure areas really secure or whether to put some forces into the grey areas to try to expand the area under control. He will also have to consider the skills, abilities and interests of the different national contingents.

Most of those contributing are countries experienced in peacekeeping, though one always worries about the level of training of some of the forces, or some individuals in some of the forces. That remains to be seen. As I said earlier, an individual or a small group of individuals can make mistakes and do things which cause huge problems. This will be a worry, I think, for the force commander.

Senator PAYNE—I have one final question in this area. In regard to your reference to hostile elements not so much going head to head with a force like INTERFET but selecting soft targets for their efforts, I imagine you see the violent killing and tragic death of one Dutch journalist from the British *Financial Times* newspaper this week as the first of those efforts?

Prof. Smith—Yes—if the militia do stand up and fight. The optimistic scenario is that they will give up the ghost, that Jakarta will not support them and the TNI will not support them.

Senator PAYNE—The picture in West Timor last night did not quite lend itself to that scenario.

Senator WEST—Previous activities in East Timor do not lend themselves to that scenario either, do they?

Prof. Smith—No. I think that would be very optimistic. One simply does not know how it is going to go. The more likely thing is some continued armed resistance—and people in the militias' position will naturally choose the weakest targets. They will not want to come out and confront well-trained, well-disciplined troops with fire power. It is the logical move of the weak to attack the unprotected, to attack civilians. We saw that in the Malayan emergency; we saw that in Northern Ireland with the IRA.

Whether that is going to be productive in the long run, I am not sure. One of the effects of killing journalists is to rouse public opinion in the home countries and to put the media offside. That would be a rational concern. However, I rather doubt the militias are thinking carefully and rationally on this. It is pretty clearly an emotional problem for them to simply give up the system that has looked after them for so long.

Senator PAYNE—Just briefly, given the degree of unpredictability in this process, if, say, at the end of next week it looks like the mandate INTERFET has—the chapter 7 arrangements that have been made—looks like it is not adequate, that it is not working, what can INTERFET do or what can be done at that level to change those arrangements to make sure that we do have some control?

Prof. Smith—There would have to be a change to the rules of engagement, which INTERFET itself cannot do. It would have to be—

Senator PAYNE—Done at the UN.

Prof. Smith—negotiated through the UN with Indonesia, in particular. For example, a force commander might want a right of hot pursuit across the border into West Timor. If he encounters some militia action and they then retreat towards the border, do you simply have to stop at the border and let them escape and regroup? That would be extremely frustrating. I rather doubt whether Indonesia would ever agree to that. The real key to this would be cooperation from the TNI to help maintain order on the western side of the border between East Timor and West Timor. Whether that will be forthcoming is, again, very much open to doubt.

Senator WEST—I have just a couple of questions following up Senator Payne. You mentioned it was necessary to know the level of preparedness of other nations within the force. Do we have some idea of what sort of peacekeeping activities these other countries have been involved with? Have they actually done any work at the ‘top end’, as you describe it, moving away from simple peacekeeping into more of the enforcing?

Prof. Smith—Looking at the countries contributing to INTERFET, most of them have had a fair amount of peacekeeping experience and have performed fairly well. Some of the less competent countries are not contributing, fortunately. Some of those contributing have had fairly significant experience of counterinsurgency operations—for example, the Thais and the Filipinos. That will give them some background in the sorts of activities they will have to engage in. Whether the individuals making up the contingents have actually had personal experience is another question. But it is quite likely that a fair proportion of their officers would have had experience.

Senator WEST—You said the Australian intelligence was second to none.

Prof. Smith—On East Timor.

Senator WEST—On East Timor; that is right.

Prof. Smith—Perhaps ruling out the Indonesians’ intelligence.

Senator WEST—I was just making that as an assumption, that we are second to none outside of the country we are actually looking at. At least I hope they know more about what is happening inside than anybody else.

It leads me to speculate this: if our intelligence is that good, did we fail to predict what might have been the outcome of the ballot? Because even on the public record there seemed to be a number of warnings about what might have been the outcome. We seemed to have dropped the ball. Did we drop the ball because our intelligence was not good or was it because of the analysis of our intelligence? Where did that happen? Have you any speculation or any ideas?

Prof. Smith—I should say that I have no inside information whatsoever of Australian intelligence performance.

Senator WEST—No, I am not expecting you to.

Prof. Smith—But, looking at the public record and perhaps reading between the lines, it seems that the intelligence agencies were predicting a very adverse reaction by the militia and TNI before the referendum, so there was no intelligence failure as such. Where problems may have arisen is in the use or the lack of use of that intelligence at the political decision making level. There are suggestions too that the intelligence agencies were asked—pressured—to maybe tone down their warnings for higher political purposes.

I think this does suggest a need to look at intelligence agencies generally, not at their performance as such, which I think was apparently good, but at how intelligence is handled

to make sure that assessments reach the decision makers in as free a way as possible so that those making the ultimate decisions have the best assessments. So it is how you deal with the intelligence once it has been produced that appears to have been the problem.

Senator WEST—Which raises a concern I have for General Cosgrove: how is he going to be able to get his intelligence without it having been through the sifters, the shakers and the movers that presumably put an interpretation—for want of a less polite word—upon the original intelligence that came up with a wrong result? Will he have enough resources to be able to interpret that material with what he is seeing on the ground, independently of them, and make those decisions? Is he going to be hamstrung by those same groups or individuals putting their interpretation on things and hamstringing him and therefore the whole operation?

Prof. Smith—I assume firstly that he has enough resources in his headquarters to manage the intelligence and to provide it to him in a proper form. I assume too that it will be provided directly to his headquarters simply out of urgency. A lot of this is time dependent and it simply cannot be filtered through normal channels.

I would also say that there now seems to be unanimity that the peacekeeping force, INTERFET, should be fully supported from the Australian side. There is very little political difference on that score and very little institutional disagreement, which seems to have been the earlier problem. So I would be reasonably confident he is getting good intelligence and in good time.

Senator WEST—I want to move to the figures you gave about casualties. You said 42 per cent for accidents?

Prof. Smith—Yes.

Senator WEST—Seventeen per cent from illness and 30 something per cent from hostile activity?

Prof. Smith—Thirty-six per cent and the UN gives another five per cent as ‘other’, which I take to be suicide and homicide but the UN does not call it such. I should say those figures include police and UN civilian officials as well. The total of military deaths over 50 years of peacekeeping is 1,375 and then another 200 or so police and UN officials.

Senator WEST—You also said that the length of time—say, if they stayed nine months—would create a lot of psychological strain and that you would see increased accidents and increased problems. Do you know if anyone has looked at—or perhaps have you looked at—morbidity/mortality figures from peacekeeping exercises in the differing periods of time to see what the accident and injury rates do with time?

Prof. Smith—I am not familiar with any studies. There have been some general studies in the United States about what happens when you keep people at a high level of activity and duty for extended periods, which would probably apply to peacekeeping. Certainly, the assumption in most armed forces is that you cannot keep people in the front line, as it were,

for too long. To some extent the length of time depends on the circumstances: the more difficult and dangerous it is, obviously the greater the stress is.

The British Army experience in Northern Ireland would be another relevant factor—the tours of duty there. That is a little different because people can come home on leave fairly easily. That may be more difficult in East Timor.

Senator WEST—If you put them there for nine months and then you take them out, what length of time are they going to need to recover before you can send them back again? Can you send them back in nine months for another nine-month tour of duty? What is the impact of that going to be—twelve months out of 18 months in a hot zone—on them psychologically and on their families?

Prof. Smith—I guess one answer is that soldiers will do as they are told, and if they are sent back they are sent back.

Senator WEST—Their spouses might not though.

Prof. Smith—But you do run into real problems. It is now standard practice for ADF personnel to be debriefed when they return from peacekeeping missions. If that reveals a need for counselling—for psychological support—that is provided. Certainly, some of those who were in Rwanda and saw appalling atrocities did need counselling, just as anyone would.

So you would have to go by the debriefings and the reports of the counsellors on individuals. I guess that, if it were essential, people could be put back into East Timor again. Some may be keen to go back. One of the interesting phenomena after the Somalia commitment was that a lot of the troops came back from Somalia after only 17 weeks, went back to the daily routine of training, marching and exercising, and found that very unsatisfying, after doing a real job in Somalia. There were a number of resignations on that basis.

So some may be willing to go back. But, if the situation is still difficult and dangerous, all sorts of factors come into play, not least family considerations. If you have survived one difficult period of nine months, do you really want to risk things for your family's sake by going back again? I think the ADF would be reluctant to push people reluctant to go for a second time.

Senator PAYNE—Do you know if we debriefed those in the AFP who were part of UNAMET, many of whom had some extremely traumatic experiences in the three months that they were there? That is the first thing. The second thing is that I know a lot of them are already trying to be engaged to go back in phase 3.

Prof. Smith—I would assume they are debriefed and that those who need it are given counselling. I cannot imagine otherwise, but I have not actually seen it written down.

Senator PAYNE—The Somalia phenomenon, I think, is occurring in those people: several of them that I know of have actually already indicated a wish to be part of phase 3.

Senator WEST—Regarding some of the specialty areas, referring to the health team that has gone in—where is that from? It is not an Australian health team. Is it a French one?

CHAIR—I think it is French.

Prof. Smith—A number of contingents are providing health teams. I think there are French, Portuguese and Singaporean ones. I think the South Koreans are providing some medical teams as well as troops. The Australian Defence Force would have some internal medical capabilities but it would have to rely, in some measure, on getting reservists to volunteer on the medical side.

Senator WEST—We are talking about medical teams; I am talking about health teams. I am not talking about doctors because they are only a part of it. They usually come in, do the glory bits, rack off and leave the RNs and the ENs and everyone else to carry the rest of the load. Given that Australia-wide there is a growing shortage of qualified nursing personnel—and that is also impacting upon the Defence Force—is there an issue in how they are actually going to be able to maintain their health teams—and some of their other speciality areas like that—through rotations and providing them with adequate breaks and rest?

Prof. Smith—On the health side generally, I would say that, being reasonably close to Darwin and the good medical facilities there, probably the preferred option in any serious or half-serious case would be to send people back to Darwin as soon as possible. Then you do not have to have people on the ground in the health area providing that care on the spot, which also requires buildings, security and so on. But, obviously, you do need some people on the ground who can deal with triage.

Senator WEST—Yes, triage and to be able to treat what can be treated there as it is required. The other problem with Darwin, of course, is that Darwin in fact itself has to evacuate a number of its civilian medical cases because it does not have the resources to cope with some of the more sophisticated work that is required. So they are evacuated to either Brisbane or Adelaide. What will be the impact upon the health services in Darwin if they are getting a continual stream? They may be not huge numbers, but even 10 or 12 a week will have an impact upon Darwin hospital and the resources there.

Prof. Smith—I am not really qualified to comment on that. Obviously there has to be a much wider national effort and coordination plan to bring in other health services so that everything does not fall on Darwin. It will probably require federal support.

CHAIR—One of the things that has so far been unsaid is what is going to happen in the enclave of Ambenu or Oecussi. The initial concentration of forces has gone into Dili and now Baucau. What are the military difficulties that will be faced when INTERFET finally—as I presume they will—goes into Oecussi, given that it is surrounded by Indonesian territory? I presume the waters are Indonesian waters.

Prof. Smith—Yes.

CHAIR—What difficulties will that pose for the force operationally?

Prof. Smith—Very great difficulties. My first reaction would be that, if it is at all possible from the military point of view, you would not move into the enclave. It goes against the basic principle. You divide your forces and you create an outpost in the enclave which is very vulnerable. Having set it up, it would be very difficult to retreat from it, which might require more personnel to be put in there to make sure your people are not forced out which, of course, takes away from the effort you can put into East Timor.

There are obvious transport difficulties. I would assume an overland route would be very difficult to negotiate. I am not sure how good the road would be in any case. You would probably have to rely on sea access—as you say, through Indonesian waters—unless you took a very long trip around. I am not totally sure of the sea boundaries off the enclave. So it creates a whole host of additional problems. Radio and other communications could also be at hazard since they would be across Indonesian territory. I am not sure about flights and whether there is an airstrip in the enclave or not. As I say, frankly, as a force commander, I would rather not have that problem.

CHAIR—That raises the other issue of our relations with Indonesia, both at the diplomatic level and at the military level. Both of those seem to be very strained, to say the least. I think that would be an understatement. How important is the mending of the relationship at both the diplomatic and the military level to the success of INTERFET in the longer term?

Prof. Smith—It is very clear that we have to see the East Timor operation in the wider political context of the Australia-Indonesia relationship and also the place of Indonesia in ASEAN and the UN. It may be that that will place certain constraints on the force commander—in terms of the force he can use, where he can use it and how he uses it—in order not to create too much concern or anxiety on the Indonesian side. That will be a very fine judgment. Clearly, in the longer term Australia and the other forces involved do not want to upset Indonesia irretrievably because that is not going to help East Timor in the long run and that is not going to help Australia's position in the long run. So the mission in East Timor may have to be modified in that light.

Obviously, relations would be a lot easier with a more democratic regime in Jakarta, a regime where the military would have less political involvement. If those trends work well, we may see increasing cooperation from the Indonesian side, which will help the force in East Timor no end. It will see the Indonesians controlling the frontier with West Timor. It will see them providing access to the enclave and access to the refugee camps. That is some way down the track, I suspect. In the meantime, I think it is important not to break ties totally—both diplomatic and military ties.

CHAIR—It seems to me that, whilst America have been reluctant to become involved in any significant military way in the INTERFET force, they are very important in the overall scheme of things in terms of both the diplomacy and the pressure upon the Indonesian military themselves. How are we, and the other countries involved in INTERFET, going to be able to keep the pressure on America? It is a small dot on the globe, as far as America is concerned. There are no significant American concerns in East Timor. How are we going to keep the pressure on the Americans to ensure that they play the role that they should be playing in this?

Prof. Smith—I agree fully. The diplomatic role of the United States in this whole business has been a key one. Australia has shown that it can put together the troops on the ground sufficient to manage that situation. I think the United States is probably quite relieved that it is not actually sending personnel there—for all the reasons you mentioned. East Timor is not a key interest of the United States. So there is a kind of specialisation of labour, if you like, in the alliance in this part of the world. It would probably apply to PNG and to the South Pacific, where Australia might play the leading peacekeeping role in terms of operations and troops on the ground. The deal would be that the United States would provide the diplomatic back-up and, if necessary, the economic clout, maybe through the IMF and other agencies, to create the right political and diplomatic atmosphere.

I might comment in that context that this operation is likely to be the largest that Australia will ever get involved in in our region. As long as we stay within those nearby parameters—East Timor, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific—that is probably reasonably within our capabilities in the longer term, with some effort. I hope that has begun to answer your question. As to how we actually keep the US's attention on this, one way is to do our part in the deal as well, as efficiently and as seriously as possible so that there is really no question of the US cavalry having to come riding to the rescue. We hope we can do without. That is probably a line that Australia should have taken from the beginning and we should not have pressed publicly for US troop commitments.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Professor. We do appreciate the evidence that you have given to the committee this morning. We thank you for appearing.

Proceedings suspended from 10.09 a.m. to 10.21 a.m.

DUNN, Mr James Stanley (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comment on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Dunn—I am here as an individual, someone who has been a specialist in the matter of East Timor for 38 years now, and also a specialist on Indonesia and someone who has served in the department of foreign affairs in places like the Soviet Union, Paris and, of course, at the United Nations.

CHAIR—Thank you. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but, should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I invite you to make an opening statement, and then we will proceed to questions.

Mr Dunn—Thank you, Mr Chairman. My professional involvement in Timor goes back to 1961, when I was on the South-East Asia desk of the then Department of External Affairs, before going off as consul to what was at that time the colony of Portuguese Timor. I should explain that in the 1950s, for several years, I was a defence analyst and a specialist on Indonesia, particularly Indonesian politics and the military. So my background on this particular issue, particularly as it is at the moment, goes back a very long way.

I suppose the lesson to me in that time is that Timor is not just about a little territory near Australia. Symbolically, it has become a barometer reading of our foreign policy perspectives and, in particular, of our relationship with Indonesia. Also, as we look at the way the issue has developed in the past, it has shown the changes that have taken place. In the early 1960s we made a big change. Suddenly, the government decided at that time that Portuguese Timor did not really have any great strategic consequence to Australia.

In the councils of government, the defence department and the Department of External Affairs, it was generally accepted that at some stage, when Indonesia gained control over West Irian, the next to go would be Portuguese Timor. I suppose that is one reason why I was sent there. I remember that, as I was leaving and my hand was on the doorknob, Sir Arthur Tange said, ‘Oh, Dunn, by the way: if things go wrong, we will not be able to bring you out.’ In fact things did not really go wrong. When West Irian was gained by Indonesia in the first stage, of course, the Sukarno government turned its attention to Malaysia, and confrontation took up the rest of my time in East Timor.

East Timor was fairly quiet, in fact, and I also should point out that, although it was a type of colonialism of which I was critical, it was an extraordinarily calm situation. Although it was very undeveloped, the Portuguese had an extraordinary, harmonious relationship with the Timorese people. Not many of them were well educated, but at least there was a participation in government. In fact, as I sometimes pointed out to my Australian colleagues, the participation was at a rather higher level than existed in our colony, Papua New Guinea, at the time.

The one thing that was really significant to me, because I went there as a critic of colonialism looking for resistance movements, and I think it is important to understand this

now, was that I never came across any. I travelled widely everywhere in East Timor, almost always by myself or with my driver and never with an escort. What was also astonishing in those years—and this existed before and after I was there—was that Portugal maintained security in East Timor, better security than has existed since 1975, with 1,000 European troops, extraordinary as it may sound. So, although it was a colonial system which could not have lasted and was, indeed, abandoned at the April coup of 1974, it is really important to point out that although Timor was undeveloped it was not an unhappy place.

The Portuguese, who have always had easy race relations, intermarried and mingled easily with the Timorese. There was no sense of discrimination, other than on the grounds of civilisation—as it used to be called. That is to say, the better educated always mixed together and the less educated did not, in fact. That was the general character of society. This, of course, all changed after 1975.

I want to dwell on one point which I think is a very sad experience for me because, in his earlier times, I was reasonably close to Prime Minister Whitlam. I was really astonished that he failed to address a problem, in the sense that I thought Australian foreign policy should be addressing problems at that time. He made the mistake that we had often made in the past, and that is that when we were looking at foreign policy we really did not look far beyond our feet. It was, in that sense, opportunistic. Mr Whitlam saw East Timor, I believe, as a little aberration on the big sprawling map of the Indonesian Archipelago. His conclusion was that the only realistic solution was for it to join with Indonesia; and that view persisted, as far as he was concerned—that is my understanding—while he was in office and, I am sorry to say, also since then.

It did make a big difference, because it is important for us to accept this tragic aspect of the problem, that when a group of Indonesian generals became interested in seizing East Timor and incorporating it, step by step they moved with careful regard as to the attitude of Australia. They were constantly making contact with us, feeling out how we felt about their position, and were generally encouraged by the attitude that built up in Australia in the government and, of course, in the opposition at the time. It was a kind of short-sighted pragmatism, if you could call it that, that East Timor was small and weak and economically viable, so why shouldn't it go to Indonesia? This was at a time when the government, on the other hand, in the United Nations said that it was strongly committed to self-determination. I only want to dwell on the one point. Through 1974 and 1975 it was the Australian accommodation of these attitudes—and, I want to stress, not of the notion that East Timor could be seized and the people put to the sword, but that East Timor ought really go to Indonesia—that, I believe, encouraged military moves to seize the territory.

It is really important to stress again, because it is the legal essence of the problem, that in 1975, when East Timor was invaded by Indonesia, there was no justification whatever and there was no civil war. There had been a short civil war, but it was over. Even Fretilin, though a party somewhat to the left, was trying to negotiate with the Indonesians. They sent a long petition to President Suharto and, of course, they were trying to get the Portuguese back but Portugal was in a political crisis and did not come. They were seeking our help and they got none from us.

What is really important is that for much of 1975 we were aware in Canberra that President Suharto was reluctant to allow the military invasion that his generals were planning and that he kept on holding back. It seems to me that perhaps our greatest failure was that we did not take up the challenge of sending a special envoy to Suharto to tell him in diplomatic language that he was absolutely right. We could have joined with him to help self-determination in such a way that at that time it would have been possible for East Timor to become independent and have a special relationship with Indonesia. We did not do that; we refused to do it. The Prime Minister and the government were persuaded by some other foreign affairs officials who said we should not be giving a lecture to President Suharto, we should be turning our faces away and letting events take their course. I think that was a tragic failure, because we could have headed this off.

As I understand it, it was only a matter of weeks after the Indonesian military had yet again tested the waters, as it were, that they persuaded Suharto to allow the invasion, stressing that Australia was on-side, that they would get no problem from Australia, and that the United States would not get involved. I think it is pretty apparent that that happened. So, really, that is an aspect of the problem that I would like to mention here.

It is a long way back; I do not want to go over it; I have written a fairly detailed account of it. But what is unfortunate after this, and in relation to the behaviour of the Indonesian military now, is that the military launched a covert operation in East Timor. Everybody knows about Balibo. They actually managed to kill five newsmen from Australia—they were not all Australians—without a formal protest ever being lodged over it—even though I believe, from my contacts with them from years ago when I was a Defence official and I knew some of them and knew the deputy chief of the naval staff—that they knew very well that we knew from our monitoring of their communications.

The fact that, knowing that, we did not even protest was to the Indonesian military a green light. Once again, after the invasion, which was a very brutal affair, there were constant reports coming out of East Timor of the killings, rape and destruction of the sort that we have had vividly brought to our attention recently—at that time probably in greater numbers as far as killing was concerned. But there was never any protest coming from our government and not much from the opposition, particularly while it was led by Mr Whitlam.

It is important to understand that the army got away with murder, and it built up an expectation that it could carry out quite oppressive, brutal operations in East Timor without being exposed to the international community—as were other countries at the time. I believe that not only helped to develop an attitude of confidence that should not have developed, but also made the military become even more brutal because it could do things like that and get away with it. It was not until the 1991 massacre that it was exposed because some journalist happened to be there.

Even though we did respond, it was not really strongly critical. There was a statement by Prime Minister Hawke at the time, but not long after that we were congratulating the Indonesians on their inquiry into the Dili massacre—which was a sheer farce. As an outcome, you may recall that the Indonesian troops who did the shooting got something like between six and 18 months and, as I understand it, were really merely confined to barracks;

whereas the poor Timorese who were leading the demonstration and were subsequently arrested were sentenced to periods like 12 and 15 years.

I do not really want to go on and would rather deal with any question that you may have, but the point is that our policy was very short-sighted, because we were helping to create a monster whose behaviour is inimical not only to the rights of the Timorese and Indonesia generally but to security in the region. To think that there are general officers who have been in charge of operations which anywhere else would have led to charges on the grounds of war crimes but that they have actually got away with it! That is one of the problems, as I understand it, with the present situation.

East Timor was the Indonesian military's single biggest operation in its entire history. Most of the generals have won their spurs, if you like, in East Timor. That is why there is a special attitude towards it—not just because thousands were killed there, but because it was their training ground. This is an extraordinary situation, when one thinks about it, and is certainly a contrast with our own military. It really reminds one that their entire military experience has been with suppressing their own people, as it were, and that they have had almost no experience in ordinary combat—which I believe, of course, would be a great advantage for INTERFET in Timor right now. I just wanted to mention that one point.

I am very pleased to see a major shift in Australian foreign policy. I think this is going to cause some problems and that the problems are a hangover from the past, in the sense that we built up, by our responses in 1974 and right up until recently, expectations that were totally unrealistic. Now, of course, the realism is coming out; and that has caused a severe decline in the state of relations between Canberra and Jakarta. But I am not pessimistic about it. If the democracy movement gains in strength, which I believe it will, the time of difficulty may only be a few years. If, of course, the military stays there and becomes worse, then we would have to argue whether we do really want to have a close relationship with it.

I must say here that a few months ago I went to Jakarta for an extraordinary invitation to address a seminar of mostly political leaders from democracy movements at an Islamic university in Jakarta. I was really struck by their commitment to democracy. They had one common theme: we have to do something about the military and we are not going to become very democratic until we can get the military back into the barracks. Events of the past few weeks have yet again, in a very tragic way, highlighted that fact. I will leave my introduction at that, because I may be taking too much time. Of course, I would be only too happy to deal with your questions.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Dunn.

Senator BOURNE—I will start with two questions. Could you tell us, firstly, your opinion of where those 300,000 people who have been displaced out of East Timor probably are, and what you think is likely going to happen to them?

Mr Dunn—Actually, I know where one family is, because they happen to be the family that I stayed with in Timor. It is a very personal, awful experience for me because I had just one desperate message from them. I thought they had been killed but they had been rounded up, taken at gunpoint over the border into Indonesian Timor and then into Kupang. He

simply made a quick call saying, 'I have been allowed to use this phone. We are alive, but our situation is dreadful.' This brings me to the point that the figure may not be as high as 300,000. I know that has been mentioned, but I think it could be 200,000 certainly. There are a lot around Kupang in different camps. We do not know where, but hopefully UNHCR will be able to establish this. I have been getting in contact with them in the hope of identifying this family and getting them out.

I must mention that here is an example of the kind of crisis you can come into in a situation like this. I stayed with this family because they invited me. They were really the most hospitable and delightful family to be with; but, of course, the militia and the military are now looking for people who have had links with the UN, with UNAMET; so their lives are in danger. This is an awful problem for somebody like me, to think that something awful could happen to them when it is discovered that they actually accommodated a UNAMET observer.

Many of the others are actually in the Atambua area. Some people were pushed over the border. What is interesting is that, while some went voluntarily, the general assessment is that most were actually forced over there. There seems to have been an earlier plan to move masses of Timorese away from Timor, even away from Indonesian Timor, to disperse them elsewhere and then to resettle other people from West Timor, Flores and Alor back into East Timor. I suppose the design was that then they could call for another referendum, which they would win because there were different people there.

It seems to me to have been a crazy plan, because it has not really worked out very well, although a massive number of people have been dislocated. What it does mean in total is that probably only Kosovo would compare as a country in terms of the percentage of population that in Timor has been massively disrupted. This is an enormous social problem—not only moving people to West Timor, but moving them from the towns, forcing them into the hills and to other parts. This is a big problem. What makes it more serious is that West Timor is beyond the authority of UNAMET or INTERFET. They cannot go over that border.

What is really important, I believe, is that UNHCR should, along with other organisations like the International Red Cross, be encouraged to become established in Kupang and Atambua as quickly as possible, with a priority being to interview these people and ask them where they want to go. If they want to go back to East Timor, their return should be facilitated as quickly as possible.

Senator BOURNE—Can I also ask you what in your view is the best thing Australia can do now to try to maintain a reasonable relationship with Indonesia? Obviously, there is some demonising of Australia going on. There are suggestions that that could be to try to take some of the heat off the military because of all the changes to the laws at the moment. But, whatever the reason, Australia is not the best friend of Indonesia, as far as Indonesians are concerned at the moment. What, in your assessment, would be the best thing we could do?

Mr Dunn—It is a very difficult situation. Although I am one of those who argue that, particularly in our own country, we have to discourage any racist attitudes that come from

this, I think we should constantly be reminding people in our own country that what has been done in East Timor does not reflect the will, attitudes or values of the Indonesian people. This is a very appropriate session to suggest that, at this particular time when there is a lot of behind-the-scenes questioning—and we are not hearing much of it, because the cameras focus on demonstrations outside the Australian Embassy and some of the others. The seminar where I actually had dinner with different leaders of the democratic parties leads me to think that a bold move would be for this parliament to send over a delegation specifically to talk to democratic party leaders and members in Indonesia, with a view to improving our relationship, based on the standards that we share in common and talking to them about it. I think you will find when you sit down with them that they are much more forthright.

I must say that I was really astonished by several people, one of whom is very close to Megawati and said to me about Timor that Megawati does not think East Timor should go but she will accept the outcome. He said, 'As for me, not only would I give East Timor independence, but I would renegotiate that shameful treaty with Australia so they got a better deal out of it.' That was from quite a leading and highly respected Indonesian politician. So it is important to bear in mind that there are people like that who are looking beyond the propaganda they get from Jakarta.

Another thing to bear in mind about Indonesia is that, as you all know, it is a country full of satellite dishes. They are seeing the other side. In the case of Timor, there has been so much media coverage that I think most of them would be well and truly aware of what the military are up to and very troubled about it. So I think it would be a very good move which could actually help the general government policy in this regard and take away some of the abrasive edges that have developed. I do not think we can do a lot about the military, though. I am afraid that, with the way they are behaving, there is really not much scope for doing anything.

CHAIR—I will follow on from Senator Bourne's question. An issue I have raised with a number of witnesses now is the importance of Radio Australia. The government closed down Cox Peninsula as the transmitter, which really cut the archipelago. Of course, as you know, Radio Australia has, over a long period of time, enjoyed the status of being an independent broadcaster and not a voice of government, regardless of the political persuasion of the government in power. Is it important for us to re-establish the likes of Radio Australia, or is everything now too much into satellite dishes with TV? Should we be looking to ATV to be projecting the independent reports in there?

Mr Dunn—Thank you for that question—I have some link with this. Years ago, I was a liaison officer for a period to Radio Australia. I considered it important then. While I was in East Timor, I was appalled at the impossibility of getting anything from Australia—even though the BBC is excellent; the only clear signal that came in on my short-wave radio was the BBC. At this time, I think it is more important than ever that Radio Australia be opened. It is not only for the Timorese; it is also to give another side to the Indonesians who listen into radio quite a lot. They can hear the BBC and, even though the BBC programs are excellent, it is about not just giving them information but also taking away these distortions they are getting about Australia being ready to invade Indonesia and all this sort of nonsense. It should give our point of view and demonstrate over the airwaves, as Radio

Australia was always good at, that Australians really care and are not just picking on Indonesia. At this point, when our diplomatic channels and all other channels are a bit on the fragile side, Radio Australia could do an extremely valuable job. Surely it would not be all that costly to get it going again.

Senator WEST—You seem to have almost given up on the Indonesia military, but unless there are some reforms there they are always going to be a threat to democracy within Indonesia as a whole and in Timor because of the possible supplying of the militias around Atambua so that they can indulge in skirmishes across the border. Have you no hope for the Indonesia military?

Mr Dunn—No, that is not quite right. As someone who followed the military and political side of events in Timor quite closely, I must say I was really appalled. I was one of those who believed that maybe General Wiranto did not really know a lot about what was happening and that he was being misled. There may still be some truth in that, but I have to say that, from a number of things that happened there, I got the very strong impression that Wiranto had a pretty good idea of what was happening and was doing nothing about it. As for whether he actually planned this, I should say here what I have written several times. It is not just that the militia have links with the TNI. The militia were set up by the TNI. The militia is a surrogate TNI. If they attack, they are directed to by the TNI. If you observe them, most of these so-called gangs have a strong sprinkling not only of TNI but also of NCOs or even an officer here and there. We believe that those people, particularly those wearing balaclavas, were probably officers.

Coming back to the Indonesian military, I think the big puzzle, even to the experts, has been what the attitudes to democratic reform are on the part of the generals. We do not get many encouraging views on it. There are people who were military in the past, like Muladi, of course, who is relatively progressive. We also thought Bambang would be, but he seems to have swung back behind the standard military position. This is something that has to happen from within Indonesia, but the big problem is that getting the people with the guns back into the barracks really means getting some of the people with the guns on side, if you know what I mean.

The thing is, though, that many of the military did not like the Suharto regime in the end. They felt let down by it. The problem is that, under this *dwifungsi* or dual function concept under the Suharto regime, they built up enormous privileges in Indonesia and even in Timor. You have just to look at the houses of the army colonels and above. They are really quite grand and well equipped. They have made a lot of money out of the system. For them, giving up power means giving up a lot of privileges. It is a really big problem, and I have suggested this idea of democratic contact because it is a big problem facing the democratic community. I think it can be done. At one stage, they thought they might have Wiranto on side. Who knows? Maybe if he were to be vice-president, he might be a broker in this process. I am not entirely pessimistic about it, but the problem is that at this moment, after what happened in Timor, I find it extremely alarming that the general staff of the military would tolerate this brutal behaviour.

Bear in mind that I mentioned not long ago that the Portuguese ruled Timor with 1,000 European troops and there were over 20,000 troops in East Timor and yet they could not

stop mass killing. They did not stop anything. In fact, by the way they operated—from the point of view of those of us on the ground, I took a great interest in what they were doing—they were actually helping the operation. It was not just that they did not stop the militia. I watched them. They would rush to the Mahkota, where there were many journalists and news teams and tell them, 'There could be an attack any moment.' They would force all the journalists and photographers back inside the hotel and then the main groups of militia trucks would go by. Of course, they were not photographed because the journalists were hemmed in.

I saw this in our own case where there was a lieutenant and we had 10 guards with assault weapons. That was actually after the parliamentary delegation went. It was the last night, and a commander came to me and said, 'You must go away from here because some wild men with knives are going to come and attack you.' As I speak Indonesian, I said to him, 'Just a moment. I have been a soldier. Are you going to tell me that you 10 guys with assault weapons can't stop some wild men with knives?' He grinned a bit. I said, 'Why not give me one of those assault weapons? Maybe I'll do it.' He just laughed a bit and went back, and we had no problems. Quite obviously, it was a design to move us because then a Timorese came and said to me quietly, 'You mustn't go. It's a trap.' What the trap was, we did not know, but it was an example of the military helping. When there was shooting outside, you would say, 'This is the militia,' but I felt that very often it was the military.

If you watched television last night, you would have heard about the shooting. From my observation of the low level militia, they do not have those weapons. They just have rifles or shotguns that go bang now and then. Those were automatic weapons. My guess is that that automatic fire was not coming from any militia; it was coming from the TNI. The TNI run it, they turn it on when they want to turn it on and they turn it off.

I might mention that, in the case of what happened in East Timor recently, it was very clear that it was not anarchy. It was carefully coordinated. They ran these teams through Dili first, frightening all the news men into their hotels or frightening them to leave Timor completely. Then they put pressure on the UN force and forced them into the UNAMET headquarters so that they could not get out. Then they had the streets to themselves. Then they turned on their real targets, and they were the people of East Timor. Of course, as everyone had been disarmed in the past, the East Timorese had no defence whatever. From all the reports that have come, they were really brutally treated and, at the same time, the town was virtually destroyed.

It was done so systematically that it was a grim reminder that it was not the militia at all; there was somebody who had planned this exercise. It swept right along the north coast. According to my work—which I did with some of the military people in the UN and with Timorese—the whole militia campaign did not start this time in Timor at all. It began in Indonesian Timor where General Zacky Anwar had been sitting for weeks. He was supposedly somewhere else, but I believe he was commanding the operation. They moved along that road on the north of Timor, first attacking Maliana, which was almost destroyed, then Dili, and then moving on to other towns. It was a clear military operation. I fear something like that may well be mounted against INTERFET.

Senator WEST—Do you think that there remains the potential for a reservoir of protagonists to be on the western side of the border and conduct insurgencies across?

Mr Dunn—Yes, but still I want to make this point. It will only continue while that Indonesian military commander says it will, because if they switch it off, it will stop like that. Just look at the militia commanders like Eurico Guterres and Joao Tavares. Joao Tavares is a nobody. He was actually in charge of some workers on a coffee plantation before he was promoted to this unusual position by the Indonesian authorities. The others, in themselves, have no special skills that would make them guerilla commanders as is necessary for an effective guerilla force. Nor do they have any real values, aims or objectives, other than just behaving brutally. They are the tools. It will be decided by the Indonesian military. If the Indonesian military were to say, 'It's all over, we'll stop now', I think it would end very quickly.

Senator WEST—Can I ask about the intelligence that we were receiving. From what was on the public record, one would have been given the impression—from the leaked document of March and also evidence to the estimates committee and other public utterances from people in East Timor—that there was a very great potential for conflict and for what did eventually take place to take place. Have you got any ideas as to whether it was our intelligence gathering that was at fault, or whether it was the interpretation, the analysis or the reaction to it?

Mr Dunn—As somebody who used to be in the world of intelligence gathering on Indonesia, I have to say that I have often felt that that was our most effective and efficient operation in the sense that we have always had a very comprehensive cover without going into the sensitive areas of communications intelligence. We have long known in great detail what Timorese leaders and military commanders have been more or less saying to each other. We obviously have known quite a lot. I cannot say what was known recently. I have heard those reports and it makes a lot of sense.

What I would like to point out though, because I was involved to some extent in these negotiations—I had frequent discussions, in particular with Francisc Vendrell, who has really been the key UN negotiator and a person very close to Kofi Annan—that they did know the risks when this came up. They knew that the TNI would really be out to torpedo it, even with this May agreement. But they decided to go ahead simply because there was a good chance it would work. I think they were working on assurances that had come from Wiranto whom they had been watching. They were hoping that he would rein in these TNI generals who were already involved in causing problems. Everybody knew the risk. Australia knew. We all talked about the danger time being the day the results of the plebiscite were announced. As it turned out, within an hour raging gangs of militia were tearing around Dili. It was all planned.

The interesting thing was that although there was some violence before voting day, the voting took place very well. There were only one or two areas where there were some serious problems. I think that gave people a lot of encouragement. I spoke to Ian Martin. I spoke to the senior political officer, who is Anthony Goldstone, and everybody had this same feeling. We were on edge and just hoping that it would turn out.

What needs to be borne in mind is that the UN did try to negotiate originally, and then later, some sort of peacekeeping presence and some formula according to which the TNI could be moved away from this political process. But on each occasion they were told it was just not on. Indonesia would not agree to it or rather, in particular, General Wiranto would not agree to it, the military would not agree to it. So it was just not going to be accepted. In the end, there was a general feeling that there was a good chance that it would work. Let us not forget that it has worked in one sense. You have had this awful behaviour and the killing of several thousand people, but despite all this horror, in a weird ironic sort of way, East Timor is now on the road to independence, because I cannot see a UN peacekeeping force withdrawing from a country where 80 per cent of the people have made it absolutely clear that what they want to do is go their own way.

So despite this massive upheaval, which is a great tragedy on top of all the other tragedies, one interesting outcome is that maybe, by doing it this way, they will get their independence, despite the great suffering, the tragic losses and great destruction they have had to suffer to get there.

Senator WEST—What about the relocation out of East Timor of the East Timorese around to various parts of the archipelago and the bringing in of people from West Timor, Flores and other places? Re-run a ballot and get a different result?

Mr Dunn—One thing we can ask of the international community is that their locations be identified and that people be sent there—the UNHCR and the International Red Cross—to ask them whether they want to go back. They should then be allowed to go back. This is an important initiative which Australia could follow up, by asking UNHCR—if it has not already done so—to try to find out if thousands of Timorese have been sent to distant locations and if not, where they are.

Even if nothing were done, do not forget Indonesia has moved a little bit towards a democratic format. I think we could expect that at some stage these people will be making contact. After all, Indonesia does have hardly a flawless one but an extensive communications network. They are not primitive people in that sense. They will be out to make contact. I think we can expect that there is enough freedom and democracy within Indonesia today for these people to make contact and to ask to be sent home.

Senator WEST—The military and the Indonesians said no to a peacekeeping force. So what is to stop them from saying, ‘No, we’re not going to tell you. They have not been moved or they have moved of their own free will’, and making it very difficult for the UNHCR, the International Red Cross and other organisations to actually track these people down?

Mr Dunn—That would make it more difficult, but we can ask other organisations which are more caring, like the Indonesian Human Rights Commission. These would be useful initiatives for Australia. The military probably will not tell us, but I am saying that there is enough democracy and freedom in Indonesia for these people to make contact from wherever they have been sent and to let others know. I think this is bound to happen because things have eased up a bit since Suharto’s day. It is a very serious problem.

It leads me on to one thing that has not been discussed. Indonesia is about to be the recipient of massive aid to help her recovery from the disaster of the Asian economic meltdown—billions of dollars. At some point, if we can establish through these inquiries that are being considered just who is responsible for this awful destruction in Timor, for the shifting away of people, then some of that money should be recalled to help with the rehabilitation of East Timor. There is no doubt in my mind that there was a very strong, official organisation behind it. Everything the militia did—the killing and the destruction—was done not just with people turning a blind eye, but with help.

In one area in Dili we knew the militia had moved in. You could see the fires. We tried to go there. The military stopped us and said, ‘You can’t go there. It’s too dangerous.’ We tried somewhere else—the same thing. It was very clear that they had nobody there. They were just blocking people from going to see the terrible punishment that was being meted out on the Timorese. There are so many cases where it was not just the military not doing anything about it; they made it all possible. For that reason, I think there is a good case for finding out who shares responsibility and for asking Indonesia to pay for some of this awful damage, destruction and suffering that has been brought on the people of Timor.

Senator WEST—You talk about the increasing democracy in Indonesia. We will wait to see the result of the ballot for the president in November. We hear reports in the media today that there will be demonstrations by students and others within Jakarta about some of the human rights and democracy issues, and that the military are issuing warnings. Just how fragile and secure do you think things are there?

Mr Dunn—At the moment, as you know, much of the demonstration that has been going on is against legislation which has just been passed but not yet signed by President Habibie, legislation which gives the military greater powers. If you have seen what it has done with the powers that it has, it is a frightening thought that it might be given even greater powers. I think it is a very precarious time until after the election. At this moment, we cannot guess at what the direction of Indonesian politics is going to be. A lot depends on who wins the presidency and how. We are not hearing much from Megawati. I guess she is counting on getting some support from the military and for that reason is not saying much. But I am rather hopeful that, if she were to become president, she would be more sensitive to humanitarian issues. Of course, she has this declared commitment to democracy.

I would like to come back to this point because this is one of the most useful and appealing elements in the present situation, the fact that there has been a strong commitment towards moving towards a more democratic format—the reformasi—in Indonesia. This election was supposed to have led to that. It certainly will not go as far as we would like it to go. The point is that Indonesian parliamentarians want to be accepted. They want to be part of this more democratic community around them—not just Australia, but countries like the Philippines and Thailand. I think you will find that this will carry with it, on the one hand, a growing intolerance and questioning of what has happened in Timor and in other parts—Aceh, Ambon and the Moluccas. On the other hand, I think there is a readiness to listen to people like us and to accept that in taking the stand we have taken, we were not really trying to invade or embarrass Indonesia. Australian politicians should constantly make the point that we take this position because we think that what has been happening in East

Timor and elsewhere is not just bad for Timor, it is bad for Indonesia and for Indonesians. It is bad for the objectives they have set themselves.

Senator PAYNE—Mr Dunn, just on the question of the vote, which I think occurred yesterday, on the increased emergency powers that the army will have. In the context of the current environment where things are so tense about East Timor, when President Habibie has made his statement to the parliament about why things have progressed to the point that INTERFET is there, the Indonesian parliament making that decision right now is, in my view, one of interesting timing. They must have known obviously that there would be more rioting or perhaps more demonstrations from students, democracy advocates and activists, and that it would only serve to heighten tensions that were already fairly high around the East Timor question. So why would they proactively go down that road while the world is looking on at almost nothing else and allow that to happen?

Mr Dunn—As I understand it, this was taken by the old parliament, which has a much more powerful military component in it. Maybe it is significant that it is done now because it could not be done later. I think they are looking at the scene in Java and other places. Obviously, there is growing alarm at the unrest. After all, there have been lots of demonstrations going on. Unfortunately, we have heard mostly about the demonstrations against the Australian missions. There has been a lot of emphasis on them in the media reporting. But at the same time there have been demonstrations going on against President Habibie, against the regime and in many other areas.

That may have been one reason for it. But I think the real reason is that it may have been a last ditch stand by the military in the sense that in this particular circumstance they have more influence than they are going to have in the future—at least that is what we are all hoping anyway.

Senator PAYNE—Down the road, when we start to look at questions of war crimes and appropriate investigation of that, I understand that the United Nations vote yesterday on the issue of whether they would discuss the question of war crimes at all—Mary Robinson's resolution—was carried by only one vote, which was a postal vote from Rwanda, according to reports. The extraordinary diplomatic activity of the Indonesians behind the scenes to try to preclude that from happening seems to indicate to me again a lack of willingness, readiness, of the Indonesians to accept that international eyes are not about to turn away from what has happened and, in fact, will become even more focused. It also seems that, as INTERFET proceeds to discover more horrific things in Dili and the rest of East Timor, it will only get worse. How do you think the Indonesians will handle that?

Mr Dunn—I think that is a very good point, actually. As far as the international community were concerned, one of the main problems was that people are afraid of throwing another spanner into the works when there is a political vacuum at the moment. Even in some Western countries people are afraid that—although the Western countries were generally in favour of this war crimes inquiry or one in some form—this could make it even more unstable and may even push Indonesia towards a military coup. Even though it was carried by only one vote, I think something will still happen. What is really important in this circumstance is that something should happen.

I have long argued—and I won support from some members of the Human Rights Commission in Jakarta on this question—that if you do not have an investigation into these crimes against humanity, the world blames the Indonesian people, the people wear the stain. But if, on the other hand, you can identify that it is, say, General Zacky Anwar, Sjafrie and others, then we can blame particular people. I think this is really immensely important—not least, of course, because we want to know who did this and make them pay for it. Even if they cannot or do not pay for it because Indonesia does not cooperate—and it probably will not cooperate—at least they will be named and they will know that if ever they leave Indonesia there are many countries where they could be arrested and charged.

One final point, in this present phase in which democracy is still big on the agenda in Indonesia among the politicians who will be meeting soon, is whether they can go on talking about democratic reform and hide people who have been responsible for mass murder, for killings and the sort of destruction that went on in Timor? Despite the fact that Mary Robinson's proposal just got through precariously, I think something will come of it and I think it is really important that we subscribe to it.

We can always use this argument, which I have used effectively on several occasions, that we are really not trying to blame Indonesia, we are trying to identify who did this. I think this is one way of getting the Indonesians to take up the issue. It is a great idea at the moment, and very appropriate at the moment. Now, unlike in 1976, 1977 and 1978, when tens of thousands of people were killed, the UN will have control of much of East Timor—hopefully all of it. Of course, we will then be able to start investigations of other killings.

I might mention that there was one reported to me when I did the first short report compiled in 1976, and which became a UN document in 1977. It was not very far from Bobonarao—and I had several witnesses who spoke of a spate of killings by Indonesian troops against the Timorese refugee camp because they had just had a bruising engagement with Fretilin and lost some troops. One said they had killed 2,000 in four hours of shooting. The other two said, 'That is too high; it would only be 1,200.' Those figures would be bigger than any individual killing that took place in Kosovo. In places like that, there will be areas where there have been mass killings and probably are mass graves. I think we really want to know who did this. I do not think anybody should get away with it. After all, unlike the sort of behaviour of Nazis in death camps, it is not 60 years ago; it is really only still less than 25 years ago that this happened.

Senator PAYNE—I wanted to ask you a question about UNHCR that I have asked a couple of other witnesses in a previous hearing. When Sadako Ogata visited the refugee camps in West Timor last week, she was accompanied by Eurico Guterres. I cannot imagine what it would be like to be an East Timorese refugee in a refugee camp in West Timor, Kupang, Atambua or somewhere near there and have somebody say to me, 'This is the UN high commissioner for refugees, and that bloke beside her would be Eurico Guterres.' I cannot imagine how you would feel and I cannot get a grip on the context in which that might have happened. I wonder if you could shed some light on that for me.

Mr Dunn—I know a little about the UNHCR, because a god-daughter of mine was a UNHCR field officer in Bosnia for two years during the bad times. Some of them are great, but my understanding this time is that UNHCR did not really have a lot of background.

After all, it came from Jakarta and not from Dili. It turned up at this refugee camp, and Eurico Guterres, who is a powerbroker in that area, would have joined them. I suppose Mrs Ogata would not have known who he was—I have no doubt about that. Quite often, frankly, they are not well briefed on the political complexities of a situation. I think if she had been told—

Senator PAYNE—Does that compromise their ongoing efforts?

Mr Dunn—I think it could. I think they should have been better briefed. The problem is that she came from Jakarta. If she had gone to Timor and talked to UNAMET about the situation and then gone, she would have been much better briefed. From speaking to the UNAMET people in Darwin, I do not think they had any contact with them at that time, because she came from Europe, I understand.

Senator PAYNE—From Europe to Jakarta.

Mr Dunn—Yes. In that sense, I think she really just did not know who she was walking with. Had she known, she may have acted differently. I have been a little troubled about that aspect of the operation. Because of what has transpired and because of the people who have been forced over there, I think it was of paramount importance that they have a thorough briefing about the refugee scene in West Timor and, of course, I have worries that they probably did not get it.

Senator PAYNE—I have one last question which, again, is seeking your help in putting things into context for me. One of the questions that I have been asked since we left Dili is in relation to the severity and volume of attacks on the Roman Catholic Church and its representatives—nuns, priests and supporters in general. Why would the militia target them so severely, as opposed to anybody else in the general East Timorese community? I would be interested in your view on that.

Mr Dunn—That is an interesting question. I am afraid that is something that really shocked me. I did a lot of investigation into what happened after the invasion in 1975. At that time, church property, church officials and the bishop were never touched. Their safety was never in question. The bishop used to complain. Perhaps it reflected the fact that the leading general at the time was Benny Murdani, who was a Catholic. This time, the attacks were something that was unprecedented in Timor. The Timorese generally have had enormous respect for the church right through history, because the church was a kind of a buffer between them and the colonial power. If they had problems, they would see the priests and the priests would try to work them out. The terrible situation in Suai where eight nuns were murdered is really shocking. I have never seen that kind of brutality before.

There has been a suggestion coming from some information given in Macao by Thomas Goncalves, a former militia leader—who, incidentally, was once actually trained by BAKIN. He was in Balibo when the journalists were killed, as was Juan Tavares. The suggestion is that the idea was put up by the governor himself, which is kind of shocking—

Senator PAYNE—Soares?

Mr Dunn—The idea that they should kill priests and nuns and burn church property—

Senator PAYNE—Was Soares's idea?

Mr Dunn—Yes. That shocked me. That just does not fit entirely. It seemed to me this would have to come from some Indonesian military source, perhaps representing an extremist Moslem position, because it just does not fit. It really made the whole scene even more brutal—even though not as many people have been killed this time—than it was in the past. It is deliberately brutal. Whereas in the past, after 1975, Indonesian troops shot people, this time we saw a young boy being hacked to death with a katana, which is the Timorese name for a machete. These brutalities are really much more severe. There is something profoundly disturbing about this.

This is something that is a matter of priority. I am really hoping that General Cosgrove makes a point of capturing militia people so that we can work on their chain of command: who is giving the orders, and what are their orders? It is profoundly disturbing. There has been a lot of church property destroyed. Of course, as you know, it was quite close to our hotel.

The other thing which is equally disturbing—because even the Taliban stopped short of this—is that at the International Red Cross next door, where I was advising people before the evacuation to go because they would be safe there—the militia broke in and, at gunpoint, took the entire population out and away somewhere. We do not really know where they ended up. They were last seen being marched along the beach. And, of course, the militia then set fire to the building. This is extraordinary. What makes it profoundly disturbing is that you must take into account that it is not a matter of the militia going wild: it is systematic. They are getting orders. That is why it is a matter of great importance for us to find who is doing that. Who is behind this? What sorts of orders are they giving? What are their motives? I think these are really important intelligence questions.

Senator PAYNE—The militia are now massing in West Timor—according to last night's television reports—and are armed with automatic and semi-automatic weapons, waiting to do who knows what to INTERFET, and obviously under somebody's orders. It seems that having the eyes of the world on them has absolutely no effect at all on the people who are giving them their orders. Whether it is the generals to whom you refer, or whether reports that Prabowo is in Kupang are accurate, it seems to be having no impact, and INTERFET is about to face this whole problem. Is that something for which you think INTERFET is ready?

Mr Dunn—It really reveals what was a very clever strategy when they started this. When I was in Jakarta in December I was told by an Indonesian official that he would like to see Timor stay with Indonesia, but he said, 'I am very worried about what the generals are up to in training.' That was the first indication I had of it, but we have had a lot since. I believe that this was a very carefully worked out strategy by a group of generals. There was some suggestion Prabowo is involved—there have been reports that he may have been in Indonesia and Timor—but it is possibly more of a rumour.

But I think it was done very intentionally, so that the TNI could engage in these sorts of operations and be themselves protected, because they say, 'This is the militia. We can't stop them,' or, 'Because many of our soldiers think they are on our side, they do not like shooting them.' But, in fact, it really needs to be considered that this is a very deliberate, carefully put together military operation. When the militia hit hard, they have been told to hit hard. When they kill, they have been told to kill. Equally, they could be switched off. They love parading Juan Tavares, but Tavares is really a nobody. He makes all sorts of statements. One moment he is going to eat our hearts out, and then the next moment he says he will not shoot Australians. But these people, really, are just puppets. The big question is—they are gathering in Atambua—when will they be given orders, and what will those orders be?

Senator PAYNE—That is right.

Mr Dunn—That is why it is very difficult for us. But the really important thing would be to know who is behind all of this, and to try to get Jakarta to take some real action against them.

Senator WEST—Given that you said we have the capacity to know a lot of these names, do you think that whoever is behind it is known?

Mr Dunn—I think that in intelligence headquarters in Australia they might know. I have to say that there is a kind of intelligence which, as I guess you all know, is kept very secret. In fact, it is so secret they do not like telling anybody what they know. It is my view that in parts of Russell there would be people who would know who is behind this and who is giving the orders. I know that if I was back in that world I would know.

CHAIR—Is part of the strategy of spurring the militia on to have them, in effect, wiped out by INTERFET, and therefore wipe away any hope of tracing who are the dastardly souls involved on the militia's side—sacrificing them, in effect?

Mr Dunn—There have been reports that the Indonesian military might themselves kill the militia, because they have served their purpose and they do not want this evidence running around. That might be, but the thing is that they did not seem to me, as a former soldier, to be very brave. Most people were terrified of them. I am not very brave, but I was walking and a group of them and a group of soldiers were standing there, and I just said, 'How can you behave like that? I have been a soldier. A soldier protects the people, but you are really killers of the people.' They just stood quietly by and let me go off. But I did not get the impression that they were soldiers; they are just hired guns. If they had to face up to a force like the Australian force of INTERFET, I do not think they would put up the sort of fight that would risk their lives.

In my reading of the situation, the people to be wary of are the TNI soldiers who are strongly sprinkled through all of those militia bands. You could tell by their boots. They gave the orders. Some of my observer colleagues claimed that they also did a lot of the killing. There was one terrible case where some militia attacked a group of young Timorese. The young Timorese started running, and a nearby soldier pulled out a pistol and shot one of them dead. He shot him in the head as he was running away. He had, supposedly, nothing to do with the militia.

The militia is really a kind of a front put up for the TNI which, if it were left on its own, I do not think would do very much. In answer to your question, I cannot see them fighting if the Australians came up against them. But, of course, we have to wait and see. There probably are some who are dedicated. I ought to mention one group. A couple of years after Indonesia invaded East Timor, it set up two battalions—744 and 745—which are made up of Timorese troops. But the officers and most NCOs are actually Indonesian. Some of the militia are said to have come from that environment, so they are probably better trained.

My feeling is that General Cosgrove is at the moment being very careful to avoid killing anybody, bearing in mind that the very risk for Australians is that, if they engage militia and shoot a few of them dead, they might find out they are Indonesian TNI troops. That could complicate the situation, but it is a risk that they will have to face. Last night when I was listening to the shooting, I thought all of that shooting was being done by the TNI, because the local militia do not have those kinds of weapons; they just have single-shot weapons. So I think that was the TNI.

CHAIR—Part of the problem that was put to us by a witness before the committee recently in evidence was that the militia are in receipt of about 50,000 rupiah a day, which is about \$A10 a day, and that these people have nothing to turn to and this is a form of them sustaining themselves. How does one overcome this problem? I am not justifying their position, but if these people are facing a difficult period themselves, what can we do to convince them that fighting just for blood money is not the way to go?

Mr Dunn—That is a good question. Actually 100,000 rupiah is the figure I have, but that was for a week. It is still a lot of money in Indonesia. Incidentally, according to my inquiries, the money came partly from Indonesian businesses with property in East Timor and partly from the military. A kind of fund has been set up, with donations having been asked from each provincial government in Indonesia, from which this money has been taken.

But coming back to the militia themselves, what is interesting is that on a number of occasions the UN observers actually encountered them. A woman told me that she talked to a couple of the militia about the elections. She said, ‘I suppose you will be voting for autonomy?’, and they both said, ‘Oh, no.’ One said, ‘I’m voting for independence’, and the other one said, ‘I haven’t made up my mind yet.’ Here they were, part of the militia.

I think a lot of the people in the militia were just opportunists who got involved in it, who could switch either way. In fact, after the Australians have arrived, I would guess that quite a lot of them will abandon being part of the militia. Once again, the problem is not the East Timorese; it is the people who are brought from outside. My reading of the situation was that near Oecussi they have a staging camp to which they bring young people from Flores and from other parts of Indonesia, Timor and elsewhere who look like the people in Timor. They are given some training and then moved eastwards along that road and formed into units which, of course, are really commanded by the TNI and have TNI NCOs. Many of those people are said to be crooks, criminals and people who cannot get jobs and so on; that is in Timor. I think many of them could quickly be persuaded by INTERFET to abandon it.

What really is important is for the INTERFET force to establish the widest possible security. I know that makes me sound like General MacArthur, but I think I would have

headed for Maliana to close off that route from Indonesian Timor, rather than just concentrating on Dili and Baucau. I do not question General Cosgrove's strategy, but I think it is really important to create the impression in the whole of East Timor that things are different now and that the militias have no real power.

The real problem is not the militias, once again; I think it is that the TNI have been humiliated by the vote. What really made them angry was that, after 24 years, almost 80 per cent of the people would say they did not want to stay with Indonesia. A second humiliation would be if—with the TNI having failed in the eyes of the world to do anything about the violence and the destruction in Timor—INTERFET were to be able to set up in a few weeks a province of perfect peace. I think that is something that the TNI will not let happen, for the sake of avoiding a second humiliation.

CHAIR—On that note, Mr Dunn, we will have to finish, because we need to wrap up these proceedings by 12.30 and we have one more witness to go. We do thank you very much for your evidence this morning. Undoubtedly, it will assist us greatly in the compilation of our final report.

Proceedings suspended from 11.36 a.m. to 11.40 a.m.

DUPONT, Mr Alan (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I now welcome Mr Alan Dupont. Do you wish to make any comments about the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Dupont—I am appearing in a private capacity, but I am the Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre.

CHAIR—The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public but, should you at any stage wish to give any part of your evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I now invite you to make an opening statement, and then we will proceed to questions.

Mr Dupont—I am very conscious of the fact that we are running out of time, so I will make just three or four very brief points. Just by way of qualification, I think probably I am best able to discuss the political and strategic implications of what has happened in East Timor. So, if you would care to direct your questions to those points, that is probably the area I can best help you with.

It is self-evident that building security in East Timor is going to be critical for the future viability of any East Timorese state. Most of the focus has been on establishing security on the ground with a peacekeeping force and dealing with the militias. Clearly, they are problems that we have to deal with. But I think there is one area that we in Australia can help with. I am concerned that the debate in Australia over East Timor may degenerate into a bit of a partisan bunfight. I think it would be unfortunate if finger pointing overrode our political and strategic interest in appearing at least to give strong unified support for our peacekeeping troops in East Timor. So my first point is really a plea to, if possible, manage the political debate in a way that does not undermine our commitment in East Timor in the way that it did during the period of the Vietnam War.

The second point I want to make is that I think the immediate crisis facing the international community and Australia in East Timor is actually not what is happening in East Timor but what is happening in West Timor, with the 200,000 displaced people in those camps. I am very concerned that some Indonesians are seriously thinking about physically relocating most of those people in an attempt to decapitate, if you like, the leadership of the independence movement. I think some of it is partly driven by revenge. I think that is something we should focus on in the next week or two. We should use every means at our disposal to persuade the Indonesians of the futility of attempting such a venture, because I think that would be absolutely disastrous for our already fraught relations with Indonesia.

My third point is that I think we now have to significantly review the economic aid that we may have to give East Timor in the future. The sorts of figures that were bandied around before the ballot were probably \$100 million to \$150 million a year to basically help East Timor build up its infrastructure. I think we need to think about doubling that kind of figure. I am not suggesting that Australia needs to contribute the whole amount, but we will obviously have to think more seriously about increasing the aid that we give to East Timor, because it has been clearly devastated in terms of infrastructure.

My final point is that at some stage we are going to have to pick up the pieces of our relationship with Indonesia. It is very difficult to see how we can do that at the moment, but I think that after the presidential elections we will need to devote all of our diplomatic and political skills to building, once again, our relationship with Indonesia, but can I suggest on a more realistic basis than perhaps we have had in the past. That, to me, would rest very much on hard-headed calculations of national interest from Australia's point of view; much more of a business relationship with Indonesia, rather than talk of special relationships. That is all I have to say. Thank you.

Senator BOURNE—What is your view of the possibility of there being ongoing guerilla warfare to ensure that East Timor is destabilised for quite a while into the future as an example to other parts of Indonesia? Do you think that is possible?

Mr Dupont—I think that is more than possible: I think it is very real prospect. I heard a previous witness talk about the degree of Indonesian support for the militias. It is my view that the militias are essentially a creation of TNI and that the Indonesian military will seek to use the militias for political purposes. It will not be a fully-fledged guerilla war of the classic kind where you have thousands of people in the hills in East Timor, because they will not have the political or popular support. But there is a real risk that elements of TNI will seek to destabilise East Timor in the way you have suggested in order to do a couple of things.

First, they might seek to destabilise East Timor to demonstrate that the difficulties of East Timor come from the nature of the country and to say, 'You Australians are now facing the same problems. Look, you cannot control them either.' That is one way of thinking. Secondly, they might seek to destabilise East Timor—and this point has been made a number of times—to demonstrate to other areas of Indonesia which may be tempted to secede that there are a lot of costs if you think about doing that, and they are being played down in Australia.

Thirdly, there might be a sense of needing to teach the East Timorese—and, by association, Australia—a lesson for, in the case of the East Timorese, having rejected autonomy and, in the case of Australia, for being seen to have supported that process. A lot of people are thinking that way. So there is a real risk, but I think we have the military capability to deal with that. What we have to do is bring a lot of pressure on the Indonesians to not do that, because it is not in their interests, if you think about it. But that message probably has not got through yet.

Senator BOURNE—How long do you think it would go on if it happened? Do you think it would be a very long-term thing? Do you think the plan is for the long term?

Mr Dupont—It could be. You could sustain a low-level harassment for many years with relatively few resources. But we are really talking about how serious this would be from a military point of view. It is one thing to talk about small groups of militia infiltrating areas across the border. That is something that can be managed. If we are talking about something more substantial than that, the Indonesians and the militias would have difficulty sustaining a major insurgency in East Timor for a number of reasons. I do not think that is a real prospect at this stage.

Senator BOURNE—I am glad to hear you say that. We have heard some talk of a possibility of the western districts of East Timor being partitioned and the fact that the TNI would particularly like to see that. Do you think that is still a possibility?

Mr Dupont—I think there is some discussion about that in the Indonesian high command, and certainly among the militia leaders, as to the viability of doing that. It is a possibility but, if Major General Cosgrove and the multinational force are robust in carrying out the UN mandate, it would be very difficult for them to do that. To partition that part of East Timor, you would have to have a very substantial military force, and I do not believe they have the capacity to do that—provided the UN force takes robust measures, and I think it will if they attempt to do that.

Senator BOURNE—You could say that there are sections of West Timor that are now populated by the East Timorese.

Mr Dupont—That is true.

Senator BOURNE—In fact, I think I might say that a little more frequently! What do you think are the most useful things we can do—when this settles down a bit—in relation to Australia's relationship with Indonesia? In particular, what do you think would be the most useful things that the parliament, even down to the level of this committee, would be able to do?

Mr Dupont—The most useful thing would be a continuation of some of the things we have already done. It would be useful to continue making it clear to Indonesia that we see East Timor as a special case and that we are not about to go and support liberation movements or secessionist movements in other parts of Indonesia, because that would be a recipe for ramping up the whole conflict in East Timor. I think the message there is that East Timor was a special case for all kinds of reasons, not the least of which is that we have a direct national interest in what happens in East Timor. We need to convince the Indonesians—many of whom do not believe this, by the way—that we have no designs to seek to break up Indonesia or to support and foster insurgencies in Aceh, Irian Jaya and elsewhere. I know some Indonesian military officers believe that will be our strategy. We have to dissuade them from believing that.

Secondly, we probably need to do what our ambassador in Jakarta is doing at the moment, which is to say, 'Look, at the end of the day we have to live with each other. We have to do business. We need to see East Timor in the context of our overall relationship.' We must continue to have this relationship because the alternative is conflict and hostility. That is not in anyone's interest. That is all very well for me to say, but the difficulty is getting the message through to powerbrokers. This is the real problem.

Essentially, there are diverse centres of power in Indonesia at the moment. During the Suharto period—whatever his domestic sins—the point was that everybody knew where the power resided. That is not the case now. You have multiple centres of power. East Timor has become politicised in Indonesia, and that is half the problem. Some groups are using East Timor to undermine President Habibie's position. I do not think there is much prospect of having any sort of sensible dialogue on this for the next two months. What we need to do

is think about a strategy for after the presidential election when there is a new president in power.

Senator BOURNE—That is a good point.

Senator PAYNE—I was going to ask a question about managing the relationships with Indonesia similar to the question Senator Bourne asked, but your concluding idea that it will not be possible to have a sensible dialogue on this for about the next two months stops me in my tracks. Two months is an extremely long time when you think about what is happening in West Timor, let alone East Timor. We had evidence earlier which suggested that Golkar may even be considering dumping Habibie as its candidate and that, if you end up with Megawati as the President and Wiranto as the Vice-President, that puts the TNI in a whole new power position. If Wiranto is not prepared to deal with what TNI has been perpetrating, where does it stop? If you have a two-month vacuum, how does Australia—and the international community, for that matter—manage that? With all those potential changes to the power structure, are we in a position to deal with the new one?

Mr Dupont—What we have to do in the next two months is have multiple strategies tailored to individual power blocs in Indonesia. Normally in government-to-government relations, the Prime Minister talks to the President of Indonesia and things happen. We have to accept that that is not going to work now. We have to have a strategy for dealing with the military and dealing with some of the other opposition groups—in other words, a five- or six-prong strategy in order to influence as much of the Indonesian political and military elite as is possible. We cannot focus all our efforts and strategies on President Habibie, whose position is extremely weak at the moment. I suspect he may not survive beyond 20 October, which is when their party is meeting to decide the leadership. I think that is the best that we can do in the next two months. I am not trying to say that it is all hopeless and that we should not try to do anything, but we have to accept that it will very difficult to have a major policy shift in Indonesia in the next two months that is sensible and that has a favourable outcome in East Timor.

Senator PAYNE—It seems to me that almost anything could happen to the hundreds of thousands of refugees who are potentially in West Timor, and the international community would be relatively powerless to do anything about it. INTERFET's mandate does not extend to that area.

The UNHCR is slow off the mark, it would seem, but in the context of the negotiations they have to encounter that is not entirely surprising. If we face the scenario where suddenly those people start to be moved or start to disappear in greater numbers than they already are, what capacity does Australia have? What capacity does the international community have to do anything about it?

Mr Dupont—I think it has, in theory at least, considerable capacity to do something about it. I think this has to be an international effort and not an Australian one. It has to actually be essentially led by the UN. If you look at the way in which the post-ballot period was managed where tremendous international pressure was brought on Indonesia to accept peacekeeping forces, I think that kind of effort is now required to basically protect the 200,000 or so East Timorese in West Timor. In other words, we need to crank up the United

Nations again, the Americans have to be brought on board in a very direct way, and we need to make representations to all of those groups that I was mentioning that this is not acceptable—remembering that this has developed very quickly so it is only probably in the last three or four days that people have come to realise how serious the problem is in West Timor. Everyone has been focusing on East Timor, understandably. I think an international awareness campaign about the plight of those people in West Timor is now required, and Australia can play an important role there.

Senator PAYNE—In the international context, though—and I am not sure if you were in the room when I asked Mr Dunn this question—the vote in the UN to even debate the question of war crimes on Mary Robinson's motion was only carried by one vote, and the Indonesians are doing a lot of work in the diplomatic shadow lands to stop that sort of scrutiny. It seems to me that the international effort becomes quite diluted in that process. There is an enormous effort attached to INTERFET, which may need an increase in its number, there is an enormous effort attached to the war crimes issue, and this would be the third level of enormous effort at the international level. My concern is that the intensity cannot be maintained across all of those levels.

Mr Dupont—That is a good point. I suppose what I would say in response to that is, first of all, I think this takes priority over everything else, so that message has to be delivered. Secondly, the concerns that many countries in the region have about war crimes tribunals would not diminish their sympathy for the refugees. I think we need to make the distinction. You can see the concerns of countries like China because they are worried about the precedents it might set for their own domestic situations. On the other hand, this is a clear-cut refugee emergency in West Timor. If it was portrayed in that way and it was elevated to top priority for the international community then I think you would see some action. I think the war crimes tribunal is something that can be dealt with a little bit later on, quite frankly.

Senator WEST—You made the comment in your opening statement that you thought—and I might have misunderstood you—that the militias and the TNI would have difficulty maintaining high level activity for a long period of time for a variety of reasons. I would like you to outline the reasons, please.

Mr Dupont—There are some military reasons and some political reasons. On the military side, the point I was making is that the classic guerilla war relies upon popular support so what you tend to have is a guerilla movement rising out of popular support in a country against either occupying troops or whatever. We have almost the reverse situation in East Timor. If you accept the ballot as being a legitimate one, at least 80 per cent of people are not going to support an insurgency against INTERFET, against the United Nations, so they are not going to have the popular support they need to sustain a large scale guerilla war in East Timor. Secondly, what would be the objective of doing that? Normally, guerilla armies are all about fighting for independence. In this case, independence has already been granted so what are they actually fighting for? To return East Timor to Indonesia? Well, I hardly think that is going to really sustain them in terms of, again, winning popular support in East Timor.

Thirdly, militarily, they would be taking on a highly trained, capable force. I do not want to belittle the military capability of the militias. They could be quite effective in low level insurgency, interdiction, harassment and so on. But to step up to the next level and to really take on the multi-national force, I do not believe they have the military capability to do that, nor the training, nor anything else. So my concern would be, as I said, about this low level harassment, interdiction, a few mines, shooting of people, sniping, that sort of thing, just to make it difficult.

The other point here is really crucial. We keep coming back to the attitude of the Indonesian military. There is no way that you can consider the militia to be an independent force. Therefore, the decision to turn on and off the militias will come from TNI. That is where we have the ability to do something about that, by increasing our pressure and our dialogue with the TNI to ensure that they do not do that. It may not be effective, but I think we have to actually make a big effort to influence the armed forces leadership in Indonesia not to pursue that line.

There are different groups in the military. We should not think about them as a unified group all doing one thing. There are several competing factions in TNI at the moment. Some are on the liberal side, some are on the conservative side, and a lot are in between. I think Wiranto is in between. He has to deal with a lot of different constituencies there, all of whom have different views about what should happen in East Timor. There are some hardliners who want to actually go down the military route—that is, sustain an insurgency. And there are others I know who are arguing that they should cut their losses and get out and leave it alone. So we need to help those sorts of people argue their case with General Wiranto.

Senator WEST—That is interesting. I would like to go back to a question I have asked everybody else. On the issue of intelligence, from what is on the public record, it would have appeared reasonably easy to predict that this would have been the outcome, that there was adequate intelligence being gathered. Did we slip up on the interpretation or the analysis, or did we just choose not to take the worst case scenario which was what was being warned about on a number of occasions? Do you have some thoughts on that?

Mr Dupont—Yes, I have some thoughts on that. It is a difficult one to answer for the simple reason that none of us has full access to all the information.

Senator WEST—I realise that.

Mr Dupont—A lot of what I am saying is, I suppose, by way of speculation. The key points are, firstly, I do not believe there has been an intelligence failure as some people are arguing in the press. I have seen the arguments and some of the evidence. I am not persuaded that we did not know what was happening or we got it so wrong that we completely misforecast the violence. I think that when historians look back on this period they will probably find that our intelligence on what was happening in East Timor, while not perfect, was certainly good enough to see what was happening in its essential details.

I think the intelligence community generally expected there to be quite serious violence and bloodshed after the ballot. The difficulty here is, how serious? What are we talking

about—shootings, killings? Okay, that was expected. But did anybody really expect this scorched earth policy—the total devastation of East Timor and the removal of a quarter of its population? I think, no, no-one did because, at the end of the day, you cannot get into the minds of the key people making these decisions. Even if you could, would that actually help you to predict in detail what was going to happen? I suspect that, although there was a degree of orchestration, there was an element of mindlessness here that, once the parameters were set, the local people on the ground just basically were out of control for large periods of time.

So it is very hard to make specific judgments in detail about that. Even if you were able to, then the next part of this process is the policy process. Even if your intelligence is 100 per cent accurate, policy makers will use what intelligence they believe is valid, or perhaps supports their predispositions, or whatever.

You sometimes get a dilution when the information moves from the intelligence side to the policy process and politicians get involved. It may well be that some of our politicians and policy makers did not quite focus on how serious the post-ballot period might be. I think that is probable. But at the end of the day when I look at it, I do not see it as some major failure of intelligence, although clearly there are gaps in our knowledge.

CHAIR—There has been a suggestion made this morning that this committee might recommend when it reports that a delegation of politicians go to Indonesia to eyeball counterparts in Indonesia, so that they could be told our views and remove some of the mischief-making that is currently being put around in Indonesia about Australian views. Given that you cast some doubts on doing anything for up to two months, is that a practical sort of thing for this committee to consider? Should it be an official delegation? If so, should it be a high level delegation or a low level delegation? And when should it go?

Mr Dupont—I think that anything the parliament can do to help rebuild this relationship is to be supported. On the first point, timing: yes, there is a case to be made for parliamentarians meeting their Indonesian counterparts and putting our point of view, and listening to their point of view as well, because obviously it is a two-way street.

CHAIR—As an official delegation or unofficial, or doesn't it matter?

Mr Dupont—If you are going to do it, it would obviously be an official parliamentary delegation, but I think you would have to make it clear what the purpose of it was. The thrust of that should be to have a genuine dialogue, not to tell the Indonesians what our views are, because I think their feeling is that they have heard enough from Australia; hence the comments about megaphone diplomacy. I think we have to play that in a fairly low key way and emphasise the dialogue component. As to the timing, I would strongly recommend that if you were to do that it should be after the presidential election, for the reasons I have already touched on. I think it probably would be counterproductive to do it now. Who are you actually going to talk to anyway? After the presidential election, the parliament is stabilised, you probably have a new president. That might be the time to think about it.

CHAIR—Thank you. The issue of Ambenu, the enclave, Oecussi. It does not seem to be much in focus, yet it is surrounded on all sides by Indonesia. The focus currently, of course,

is Dili and Baucau, for obvious reasons. What is your assessment of what is happening there?

Mr Dupont—To be frank, I do not have any great knowledge of what is actually happening in that enclave at the moment because not a lot of information has emerged, certainly on the public record. Basically, my understanding is that it is certainly no worse than most of the other areas of East Timor. It is going to be more difficult to sustain the viability of that enclave in the future than the rump of East Timor. Obviously it is far more vulnerable to the sorts of things we are talking about. On the other hand, if you were going to destabilise East Timor, I do not know whether much would be achieved by infiltrating into that little salient there. Relatively speaking, there is a pretty low population and there is not much there. I think they are the things that would be going through the minds of people looking at this. But it is obviously very vulnerable because it is totally surrounded effectively by a hostile West Timor.

CHAIR—What about the political and strategic difficulties in INTERFET taking up a presence in the enclave? That must pose some major problems indeed in the longer term, if there is to be an INTERFET involvement there.

Mr Dupont—Sure.

CHAIR—How does one handle the delicacy of that issue?

Mr Dupont—The bottom line is that it is part of the mandate. The UN mandate does extend to that Oecussi salient there on the enclave, so at some stage that issue has to be grappled with. I would suggest that it would probably be the last thing that the force commander will look at, because his obvious concern will be to look at the rump of East Timor. Because it is symbolic of the whole effort, I think the UN force commander and the UN have to make it clear that the mandate does extend there, that peacekeepers will be there and that the viability of that enclave must be sustained in this post-ballot period. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of being in East Timor. How do you actually do that in practice? It is the same issue as you are dealing with elsewhere in East Timor. It has to be handled delicately and so on. But the bottom line is that I do not believe we can allow the Indonesians to dictate terms on that or try to negotiate that away by saying, 'Okay, you can have control over two-thirds of East Timor but the other third is off the agenda.' I do not believe that that is acceptable.

CHAIR—What is your strategic assessment of the force that is required to secure the rump of East Timor, firstly, to make it safe and, secondly, to stop incursions across the border from West Timor?

Mr Dupont—I think the point has been made that it really all depends on the attitude of TNI. If there is no attempt to destabilise East Timor by running the sorts of guerilla operations we have been discussing, then I think the force they have got there is quite adequate for the task. If there was some kind of military confrontation or conflict involving substantial numbers of militia, which is conceivable, certainly in that area of the western portion of East Timor, then you may find that the forces there are not sufficient to actually provide security for that region.

There are two ways of providing security. You can either build a kind of shield or wall right across the border and man it with a very dense concentration of troops, or you can look at mobile responses, in other words, you do not do that but you respond when there are incidents, you just man your checkpoints and so on. I think there is probably some debate about what is the appropriate strategy for the multinational force to adopt if there is confrontation with the militias.

If you are talking about a cordon sanitaire of troops across there, you are going to need a lot more people than we have there at the moment. Personally, I do not think that is the right strategy, but that is possibly something they will think about.

CHAIR—What sort of length of involvement do you think will be necessary to return a degree of safety and security for the East Timorese?

Mr Dupont—I can give you two answers—

CHAIR—I know it is like asking how long is a piece of string, but there is a need for some sort of projection, some sort of idea, because it is going to involve the commitment of our forces and resources over a period of time.

Mr Dupont—I would think about it in this way: there are two kinds of commitments here. The first and the current phase is essentially a peace enforcement operation. If that is not resisted substantially by the militias, I would say within, say, three or four months East Timor should be generally secure. At that stage some of those people could be withdrawn and replaced by a new peacekeeping force with a new mandate. Depending again on the security on the ground, you could actually get away with relatively small numbers of peacekeepers if the Indonesians or the militias chose not to interdict across the border. It really comes down to the attitude of TNI and the militias.

The force they have there at the moment I think is enough to stabilise the situation, but how long it is going to have to be there after that and what its task would be is essentially dependent on the attitude of the Indonesian military, in my view.

CHAIR—How important is the role of the US in ensuring that Indonesia is prepared to listen to the pleas of the world? It seems that, unless the US is in there waving the big stick and being active behind the scenes, there is a reluctance on the part of Indonesia, partially because of its size, because of its perception of its position within that South-East Asia region. There are 210 million in population; it is not small. How do you assess the role of the US and the ongoing need for nations such as Australia to keep the US abreast of what is happening?

Mr Dupont—I think it is crucial for the US to remain engaged, primarily politically. Militarily, I do not think its role is crucial in the sense that we need to have lots of American forces on the ground, and clearly we are not going to get that anyway. I think it is absolutely critical for the US to remain engaged politically and to be prepared to pressure the Indonesians, if necessary, because at the end of the day the US is the world's only superpower. It has tremendous political and strategic weight and I think that it needs to be prepared to use it when required. I do not suggest it throws its weight around and gets in

there all the time, but it should be prepared when the crunch comes. If, for example, we found that the TNI were supporting militias in a guerilla campaign, I think that is the time when you need to enlist the support of the Americans to stop them from doing so. The short answer is that I think American political support is crucial to seeing ultimately a viable East Timorese state emerge from the ashes of the destruction of the last couple of months.

CHAIR—What role should Portugal play as the ex-colonial masters?

Mr Dupont—The Portuguese have indicated—and I think rightly so, since they must share a large part of responsibility for rebuilding East Timor—that they are prepared to spend substantial amounts of money. They have already committed \$100 million a year. I think that is to be encouraged. I think that Portugal also has a very important political role to play, like the US, in terms of marshalling European support behind the attempts to make East Timor viable. I think the Europeans have a role to play here and Portugal is the lead country. It is kind of comparable, if you like, to the US. Whereas the US plays a hand by virtue of its own strategic weight, Portugal is a kind of catalyst, if you like, for being able to marshal European opinion behind resolving the East Timor problem. So I think it has a crucial role there.

CHAIR—One important issue that has been raised on two occasions with us has been the importance of the Timor Gap Treaty in terms of oil and gas exploration and the need for stability for the exploration companies in those areas; whether it is zone A, B or C does not matter. They need a great degree of certainty because there are huge amounts of money about to be invested in that area. There are tenuous, at best, relations between us and the Indonesians at this stage, and I understand the Indonesians have already conceded that if there were to be an independent East Timor they would see rights under the Timor Gap Treaty going to East Timor. But in that interim period there is a paramount need to ensure that stability remains in terms of that treaty. How do we proceed to ensure that that stability remains, given the parlous state of our diplomatic relations and military relations with East Timor at this stage?

Mr Dupont—The short answer to your question is that what happens in the Timor Gap is very much a reflection of what happens generally, in terms of East Timor's future and Indonesia's attitude. Foreign Minister Alatas had already made it clear, before the ballot, that Indonesia accepts that if East Timor became independent then there is no question that East Timor would inherit Indonesia's position in the negotiation on the Timor Gap. So there was no attempt to say, 'We want to keep the proceeds of the Timor Gap'. I think that is to the credit of the Indonesians there. One hopes that they continue to take that line.

If we can improve relations with Indonesia and resolve the tensions in East Timor, then that will essentially resolve any problems over the Timor Gap. But I guess if you were looking at it from an investor's point of view, you would have to say that right at the moment it is a little bit parlous because it is being caught up in this whole turmoil. It is going to be very difficult to make substantial investments there in the next six to 12 months because of the political uncertainties. That is just a fact of life. There is not much we can do about that in terms of the Timor Gap.

I am fairly optimistic that in the longer term that will go ahead because so much has been invested in it. If we can resolve the political impasse and the problems that have developed with Indonesia, then essentially that will resolve the Timor Gap problem, too.

CHAIR—The other question I wanted to raise was the aid. You said there may be a need to double the aid and you did not place the onus solely on Australia. Arising from a number of witnesses who have appeared before the committee, one of the problems that I foresee is that there needs to be a very good coordination of the aid that finally does start to seep into East Timor. Whilst there are good intentions, without good coordination and good prioritisation of the aid it may well go astray. The aid will be misplaced or it may not meet the real needs and the immediate needs of the people in East Timor. What can be done to ensure that the coordination and the prioritisation of the aid program meets the real needs of the East Timorese people and the aid is used widely in the first instance, given the almost complete devastation of the country?

Mr Dupont—The first thing that needs to be done is a total reassessment of what aid East Timor will require. The point I made in my opening statement is that what we thought, before the ballot, would be required has clearly changed. The first thing is to get a team of aid experts under UN auspices on the ground to actually look at what is required and to work out the priorities. There are different kinds of elements to whatever aid package is put together. First of all you are going to have to have, essentially, emergency aid—just getting the water working, the infrastructure and feeding the people. The initial emphasis has to go on that. I think that should largely be in the hands of the NGOs—and also some of the UN agencies—who are best placed to do that. They have a lot of experience on the ground.

I think that Australian aid should be looking more towards the medium and longer term requirements of an East Timorese state, not just ‘giving’ them things, in an emergency sense, but actually enabling them to develop their human resources, because that is going to be the critical deficiency. It is the human side. You can build a hospital in six months or turn on a water system in a year and a half, but how long does it take you to train someone to run a country? I think Australia is uniquely qualified to help on the human resource side.

It is really going to have to be the Australian aid organisations talking with their UN counterparts and NGOs—actually getting together and working out some kind of coordinated strategy about who is going to do what and how. There have already been quite a lot of discussions about that. That is what is required in the first instance.

CHAIR—One of the other things that has been put to us is the establishment of a civilian police force within East Timor as time goes on. Where would you see that police force coming from, within East Timor, given the devastation of the male population and given that—

we understand from evidence—there are problems in terms of educational standards? It goes to the whole issue of the establishment of rule of law.

Mr Dupont—Realistically, you could not expect to see an East Timorese police force operating for at least five years. They do not have the wherewithal to do it. What you are looking at is that the first police force will essentially be an international police force. It will

be part of the peacekeeping exercise. That is, peacekeeping troops will essentially be policemen as well for quite a long period of time—I suggest up to five years. What you will then hopefully have is a phased introduction of East Timorese into a new police structure. You will not be able to have the handover immediately. It is going to have to be a phased period, over time.

If you look at what happened in South Africa, for example, and other places you can see a kind of blueprint for doing this. The whole point is to not expect the East Timorese to have the capability to do that for quite a long time. But we need to start thinking about what they will require and start to identify people and structures. Again, Australia is well placed to assist in that area. To talk about having an East Timorese constabulary or police force in the foreseeable future is really just not viable.

Senator WEST—You talked about the militia not being able to survive because they are actually a creature of TNI. Outside of East Timor where there are other areas of conflict in Indonesia—in Ambon, Aceh, Kalimantan or West Irian—do you think that they have used or perfected this use of the militias or are they, in fact, already using them?

Mr Dupont—I think the kind of militia activity we are seeing in East Timor and the structure there is unique to East Timor. There are militia paramilitary groups used extensively by Indonesian armed forces all around the region for security but not in the way in which they have been used in East Timor. They are very much supplementary forces to the Indonesians. They have what is called territorial responsibilities. In my view, they are not likely to be used in the same way as they were in East Timor. I would be very careful about drawing parallels between the use of militias in East Timor and elsewhere. In other parts of the country where there are security problems, I think the Indonesian army and local forces are taking head on what they would see as the secessionists and it is much more a direct confrontation there, rather than through proxies like the militias in East Timor.

Senator WEST—Do you have any thoughts or comments about the media reports that there are going to be student demonstrations in Jakarta today and how that is going to be dealt with?

Mr Dupont—Do you mean against the new national security law?

Senator WEST—Yes.

Mr Dupont—It just illustrates the complexity of the political situation in Indonesia. We have been focusing on the anti-Australian demonstrations by so-called students and so on.

Senator WEST—Yes.

Mr Dupont—But my own view is that a lot of those people are rent-a-crowd and basically the children of military families, and do not necessarily represent a widespread feeling of revulsion against Australia. In this particular case, what we have here is the same tensions that we have seen over the last 18 months. Many students and, if you like, the pro-democracy forces, see this as a step backwards—that is, to give the military more power in civil emergencies. They feel they have been fighting against this kind of thing and that there

seems to be a return to the past. Those people demonstrating against that now are the same people who started the demonstrations against Suharto 18 months ago. I think there is a lot of concern among the political establishment in Indonesia about this national security law.

From the military point of view, they think it is perfectly reasonable that, given the undoubted problems they have, they need to have more powers to control it. So you see the tensions there between these two elements.

Senator WEST—Has no-one ever taught them about hearts and minds, and there being alternative ways of winning hearts and minds?

Mr Dupont—I am afraid that hearts and minds are not really part of the TNI culture.

Senator WEST—Maybe they should be.

Mr Dupont—Unfortunately, the knee-jerk reaction of the military has tended to be to deal with political problems through military means—the so-called security approach. There seemed to be some suggestions in the last 18 months that they would be turning away from that but I think they have actually regressed back to that model. They genuinely believe that: ‘We can do all that hearts and mind stuff in 20 years time when we become a democracy, but right now we have these immediate problems and we have got to deal with them. Keep the country together.’ That is the thinking.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Dupont. We appreciate the evidence you have given to our committee this morning. We will take it into consideration when we are writing our report. We will undoubtedly look with interest as to what the future is. Hopefully we can see some peace starting to come for the East Timorese people. Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 12.30 p.m.

