



Submission No 51

Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Indonesia

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The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

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This submission is concerned only with Australia's relations with the Indonesian Defence Force.

Members of the Indonesian Defence Force including Kopassus have trained in Australia with Australian forces. The record of the Indonesian Defence Force and Kopassus in particular, in West Papua (Irian) and East Timor is very poor.

Some of the Indonesian military made a lot of money out of East Timor. In West Papua the military are involved in the death of main Papuan Chief at one of their functions. Kopassus' activities in West Papua in relation to the huge Freeport-McMoran mine resemble the activities of the Sandline mercenaries who came to Papua New Guinea in 1997. An article by Hamish McDonald in the *Sydney Morning Herald* 2-3 November, 2002 claims that more than \$US10 million was paid to the army as an annual protection fee by the mine. Several stories in the media have claimed that Indonesian soldiers ran the ambush that killed three schoolteachers including two Americans.

I believe that one day Australia will probably be at war with Indonesia. It may arise as a result of the struggle of the Papuan people in West Papua to gain independence from Indonesia. A few years ago nobody would have believed that Australia would have a significant defence deployment in East Timor. Thousands of Papuans have been killed by the Indonesians and this killing will probably continue. In Australia we hear very little about the situation in West Papua. I worked in Papua New Guinea for 15 years and have tried to follow what has happened in West Papua.

Further repression by Indonesia will only lead to many more deaths. If Australian public opinion changes on the issue of freedom for West Papua, relations with Indonesian will become very strained. I am certain there are other possible scenarios that could lead to conflict between the two countries.

Yours sincerely

Mr Christopher Michael OWENS

