Top Secret
No Foreign Dissem

[redacted]

The overall exemption is b3.

HR

Weekly Review

[redacted]

Top Secret

SC 00755/75
April 11, 1975

Copy № 683

es

s

PORTUGUESE TIMOR: MORE TALK

Indonesia's armed forces are continuing their contingency preparations for a possible move against the Portuguese colony of Timor, but during the past several weeks most activity has been in the diplomatic arena. Recent discussions between Indonesian, Australian, and Portuguese officials have been aimed at trying to head off any precipitate Indonesian action over Timor.

The highest level talks were held last week in Australia between President Suharto and Prime Minister Whitlam. The Suharto trip was billed as an informal visit to Australia returning Whitlam's trip to Indonesia last fall. The timing of the talks and the interest surrounding them, however, were undoubtedly stimulated by Canberra's fear that Jakarta was preparing for an imminent move against Timor.

[redacted] the Indonesian President planned to make it clear to Whitlam that Jakarta opposes recent Portuguese proposals to grant Timor self-government over a long transition period. Suharto evidently hopes to get Whitlam's support for his position that Lisbon should arrange a plebiscite in Timor—and should organize the voting to assure victory for forces favoring merger with Indonesia. Lisbon has indicated some sympathy for Jakarta's desire to incorporate Timor and is apparently willing to help Indonesia improve its image among the Timorese, but the Portuguese are unlikely to accede to the kind of blatant thwarting of Timorese self-determination that Jakarta has in mind. Nor would Whitlam want to be a party to such a scheme.

Whitlam is concerned about the consequences that an Indonesian military move would have on the political scene in Australia as well as on bilateral relations. The Australian left has already publicly taken up the cause of the Timorese, and several leftist politicians recently made a much-publicized trip there. Indonesian aggression against Timor would strengthen the hand of those in Whitlam's party who have long opposed the Suharto regime and object to giving it military assistance.

Suharto would prefer to acquire Timor peacefully with all the constitutional niceties preserved, but he would not let this stand in the way of military action if he believes that is the only way to assure Indonesian control. The continuing round of inter-government discussions about Timor may have convinced him that he need not make an early decision on pre-emptive action, as advocated by his military advisers. At the same time, the discussions have doubtless brought home to Indonesian leaders that Lisbon will not simply relinquish the colony to Jakarta. The course of political events in Lisbon itself has increased concern in Jakarta about Portugal's ability to carry through on any long-term promises regarding Timor. Undoubtedly with this in mind, Indonesian officials overseas are presently lobbying hard to promote Jakarta's interests in Timor, trying to head off recriminations in world forums should Jakarta decide to move militarily. [redacted]

Whitlam