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Department of State

Case 96-41

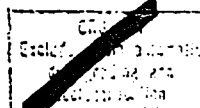
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SUBJECT: Possible Closure of U. S. Consulate in Surabaya

1. The Department of State, in a telegram dated 10 September (DEPTEL 295) to Djakarta has stated its intention to close the Surabaya Consulate during the week of 13 September unless effective guarantees are received from the Indonesian Government ensuring the safety of U. S. personnel and properties and has instructed the Ambassador to start bringing dependents and employees who can be spared from Surabaya to Djakarta within the next few days. The Department's telegram bases its justification for this move primarily on considerations of personal safety of U. S. personnel and dependents and on the thesis that vigorous action with respect to Surabaya may result in the Indonesian Government's taking effective action to protect the Medan Consulate and Djakarta Embassy.

2. It is believed that both arguments are weak at best. While the personal safety of U. S. personnel in a situation such as exists in Indonesia is obviously a key factor in making a determination of this nature, it is not believed that there is any evidence to support the conclusion that Indonesian mob action against U. S. installations and/or residences is likely to result in personal injury to personnel. On the contrary, the Communist action squads which burned the British Embassy and personal effects of staff personnel in September 1963 were particularly careful not to injure personnel. In fact, one group of arsonists brought a British female clerk to the American Embassy for her personal safety after burning her possessions. In Medan, a mob attempting to burn the British Consul's home and office was successfully turned away by the Consul armed with a shotgun and he was not further molested. The sacking of the Indian Embassy in Djakarta on 9 September 1965 followed a similar pattern. Indian Embassy personnel were overwhelmed when they attempted to block entry to the mob but without injury to anyone. The present pattern of demonstrations against U. S. installations in

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Indonesia is obviously more intense and sustained than that encountered previously but sight should not be lost of the fact that at various times over the past five years these same installations have been physically attacked by Communist-led mobs, including a heavy stoning of the Embassy over the death of Lumumba in early 1961 which resulted in virtually all its windows being broken. No serious effort to enter the installations has as yet been made, however. In all these cases, there was, of course, the danger of accidental injury from flying rocks or broken glass, but no evidence that the mobs intended injury to personnel.

3. The second argument in favor of closing the Surabaya Consulate, i.e. forcing the Indonesians to take measures to ensure the future protection of other U. S. installations or face their closure with concomitant closure of equivalent Indonesian installations in the United States, is not impressive in view of the fact that the Indonesian Government clearly desires a major reduction, if not elimination, of U. S. influence in Indonesia. There is little evidence to suggest that Sukarno would be particularly reluctant to give up some or all of his diplomatic and consular representation in the United States if this were the only price he had to pay to drastically reduce the U. S. presence in Indonesia. Sukarno is well aware that the U. S. would lose more than would the Indonesians in such an exchange.

4. Despite the burning of their Embassy and harrassment of their personnel in 1963, the British have maintained a presence in Indonesia, including an Embassy of 21 officers in Djakarta and two-man Consulates in Medan and Surabaya. (Figures based on November 1964 diplomatic list, believed still accurate.) This is consistent with British actions in other areas where they have been subjected to similar harrassment, e.g., Iraq, where their Embassy was burned in the late 1950's and in Greece, Israel, Hanoi, etc. Despite the very evident desire of the Indonesian Government that the incumbent British Ambassador, a tough, outspoken Scot, leave the country, the issue has not been forced in the face of British determination to keep him on nor has he or his staff been subjected to any form of continuing deliberate harrassment.

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5. The recent mob actions appear to be deliberately aimed at intimidating or outraging U.S. sensibilities to the point where some, if not all, of the installations will be closed. It is debatable to what extent the Communists are seeking to go further in this regard than the central government, but there is little doubt that the government condones, if not encourages, the basic thrust of the efforts. Closing of our installations as a result of this pressure will be interpreted in Indonesia, and presumably in other areas where Communists or ultra-nationalist forces seek the removal of U.S. influence, as indicating that the U.S. Government is susceptible to intimidation and that mob action against our installations is an effective means of effecting such intimidation. The present U.S. line that the treatment accorded our installations prevents the normal conduct of foreign relations is not likely to carry much weight with listeners in Indonesia or elsewhere, particularly with the British example at hand. We may expect that a Communist success in Surabaya will be followed by similar activity aimed at the Medan Consulate and Djakarta Embassy and may well encourage similar attempts in other countries.

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1.5(c)(d)  
3.4(b)(1)(6)

13 September 1965

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