

INDONESIA

Suharto's



General Suharto:
brutal purge.

Secret cables reveal strong US

SYDNEY — The recent elections in Indonesia were the first in three decades not stage-managed by the Army and former President Suharto. But casting a long shadow over the poll are the brutal events in 1965 that first brought then General Suharto to office and toppled the Government of President Sukarno, the father of Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Between 500,000 and a million Indonesians, many of them members or supporters of Indonesia's then Communist Party, the PKI, are estimated to have died in the slaughter that accompanied the military takeover. Tens of thousands more were rounded up and sent to gulag-style prisons.

Some of these former political prisoners are calling for any new

Government to hold a truth commission into this dark period of Indonesian history, and several recent events lend weight to those calls.

The present brutal activities by paramilitary groups in East Timor have direct parallels with the events of 1965. Cables from the US State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, recounting the Indonesian Army's strategy in 1965, eerily reflect many incidents now taking place in East Timor: most disturbingly, the training and arming of paramilitary death squads to kill leftist opponents.

The records from 1965 show damning evidence of the Indonesian Army directing massacres and employing death squads against its communist opponents. Over the

hidden

support for the anti-communist

massacre

purges in 1965. **MARIAN WILKINSON** reports.

past two decades, leading American and Australian academics have been examining these records as they became declassified.

In 1990, a US lawyer, Kathy Kadane, published an extraordinary account detailing how an American diplomat provided lists of Indonesian communists to the Suharto forces when the mass killings were beginning. A collection of former "Top Secret" and "Secret" US records on the massacres was recently gathered by Washington researcher John Kelly.

Using these and other recently declassified documents, it is possible to chart one of the greatest massacres of postwar history through the voices of American diplomats and intelligence officers.

Many of the cables, written over

five months from October 1965 to February 1966, are from the US Ambassador, Marshall Green, who later served as ambassador to Australia. They are addressed to the then US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, and his aides.

One of the most confronting aspects of the cables is the American accounts of the Indonesian Army's use of death squads drawn from Muslim and Catholic youth groups, and the propaganda efforts used to whip up their political supporters into a frenzy.

The cables reveal the strong US support for the anti-communist purges even as the killings mounted. They also reveal the extensive links between senior Indonesian

Army officers and the US Embassy.

Two key US connections were General Nasution, Suharto's close confidant, and Adam Malik, the man who would become Suharto's long-serving Foreign Minister. Indeed, as Kadane revealed, it was Malik's aide who was given the list of communist names by the US Embassy to hand to the Army.

The events that triggered the bloody Army takeover are bitterly disputed, even today. Both the Indonesian Army and the West maintained the bloodshed began after an attempted coup masterminded by the PKI.

In September 1965, Indonesia, under the left-wing nationalist President Sukarno, was in crisis. Sukarno's power rested, in part, on

the support of the PKI, the largest political party in the country. Sukarno used the PKI to contain the power of the Army. His relations with his top generals and the West were tense. His country was in armed border confrontation with Britain over Malaysia, and he was threatening to break diplomatic relations with the US and nationalise American oil assets. His deputy, Foreign Minister Subandrio, only months before had accused the West of working with senior Army officers to assassinate the President, and rumours were rife that pro-US generals were planning a coup for early October.

On the night of September 30, a

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small group of junior military officers, led by one of Sukarno's bodyguards, Colonel Untung, kidnapped and killed six senior Army generals and announced that a revolutionary council was now running the country to save Sukarno from a CIA-backed coup. But one of its main targets, General Nasution, escaped to launch a counter-attack with General Suharto, then head of the Army's strategic command.

There was confusion at the time over who ordered the original attack: was it

Sukarno himself, a dissident military faction or the PKI? Despite the contradictory evidence, Suharto and Nasution moved quickly to blame the PKI and used the September 30 affair as justification for the bloody suppression of the communists and their supporters.

The PKI could muster very little resistance, despite the Army's claims that it had been preparing an armed uprising. In just five months, hundreds of thousands were slaughtered. The US and Australia came out strongly behind Suharto.

Just when the Army first decided to exploit the September 30 affair, to purge the PKI, is outlined in a cable from Green to Washington after the generals' murder. Dated October 5, it shows Green is still unsure of the evidence for the PKI's role. He says the rebels probably included the Air Force, a key Army division, and Colonel Untung but that the inclusion of Sukarno and or PKI leadership was not certain although there is evidence that both were probably involved.

— SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Brutal facts exposed in Jakarta embassy cables

The scale of the slaughter finally registered with US diplomats

By MARIAN WILKINSON

SYDNEY — Former "Top Secret" and "Secret" US records on the bloody purges against communists in Indonesia in 1965 reveal reveal strong US support for the anti-communist purges even as the killings mounted.

Many are cables, written over five months from October 1965 to February 1966, from the US Ambassador, Marshall Green, who later served as ambassador to Australia. They are addressed to the then US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, and his aides.

In one, Green stresses: Whatever the background ... Army in control, and it has important instruments of power such as press, radio and TV. It also has a cause in murder of six top leaders if Army chooses to use it and it has already begun to do so ... Army now has opportunity to move against PKI if it acts quickly ... Momentum is now at peak with discovery of bodies of murdered Army leaders.

Green's recommendations to Washington were: Avoid overt involvement as power struggle unfolds ... However, indicate clearly to key people in Army such as Nasution and Suharto our desire to be of assistance where we can ... Maintain and if possible extend our contact with military, and: Spread the story of PKI's guilt, treachery and brutality [this priority effort is perhaps most-needed immediate assistance we can give Army if we can find way to do it without identifying it as solely or largely US effort].

By October 8, Green cabled Washington optimistically: Communists are now on the run for the first time in many years in Indonesia. The most encouraging developments, he reported, were: ... PKI organisational apparatus has been disrupted and party documents dispersed. This capped today with burning of PKI headquarters in Jakarta.

By October 13, Green could report that the purge was going well: Anti-communists continue [to] make most of their present ascendancy. Today's tally included closing of communist universities, banning of leftist student organisations and still more attacks on PKI premises.

The same day, in a cable dealing with anticommunist actions, Green wrote that confidential sources reported that: Army has already executed 74 communists seized in connection with coup attempt.



FLASHBACK TO 1965: Marines wade into protesters on the streets of Jakarta.

By October 20, the mass killings of PKI supporters was under way in earnest, causing even some senior Indonesian Army officers to balk, as Green reported on October 29: Army sources report All-Sumatra Commander Mokoginta wants to stop Army-inspired violence against PKI but his subordinates continuing to incite attacks behind his back. Atjehese has decapitated [sic] PKI and placed their heads on stakes along road.

On November 7, 1965, the American Consul in Surabaya, Ted Heavner, cabled Washington with information that: Army recently held meeting Malang with Muslim youth leaders and told them be ready face PKI and prepared "kill or be killed."

Five days later, Green reported confidential information from Jakarta's police information chief that: almost all of top PKI leadership, politburo and central committee levels, had been seized by Army, and further on the death squads, that: from 50 to 100 PKI members are being killed every night in East and Central Java by civilian anti-communist groups with blessing of Army.

Soon after, on November 16, another cable from the American consul in Medan brutally illustrated that US officials were being informed of planned massacres.

The consul then noted that confidential sources: indicate that much indis-

criminate killing is taking place ... Sources have connected some of this violence with declaration holy war against PKI by local Muslim leaders ... Attitude: Pemuda Pantjasila leaders can only be described as bloodthirsty. While reports of wholesale killings may be greatly exaggerated, number and frequency such reports plus attitude of youth leaders suggests that something like real reign of terror against PKI is taking place.

The scale of the mass slaughter, whipped up by the propaganda campaigns, finally began to register in the embassy by February and in a cable to Washington, Green's deputy reported intelligence from a friendly power that: as a result of ... calculations by his embassy as well as [confidential], a total of about 400,000 killed as a result of the Sept 30 affair had been agreed.

But, the cable admitted, there could be many more dead.

For the US and its allies, the success of the Army's anti-PKI campaign was a triumph. The purge broke the power of Sukarno, who was forced to resign, and Suharto's military-backed regime took over.

A year later, US scholars were estimating that between 500,000 and a million Indonesians had died in the slaughter.

— SYDNEY MORNING HERALD