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A REPORT REGARDING FORCES IN EAST TIMOR

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT CONSISTENT WITH THE WAR POWERS RESOLUTION REGARDING U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN EAST TIMOR



MARCH 1, 2000.—Referred to the Committee on International Relations and ordered to be printed

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THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, February 25, 2000.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: On October 8, 1999, I reported to the Congress, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, the deployment of a limited number of U.S. military forces to East Timor to provide support to the multinational force (INTERFET) peacekeeping mission in East Timor. This force, established by the United Nations Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter, was to restore peace and security in East Timor, protect and support the United Nations Mission in East Timor, and, within force capabilities, facilitate humanitarian assistance operations. The U.S. support to the multinational force was limited to planning and staff, communications, intelligence, and logistics.

This multinational force was formally replaced in East Timor on February 23, 2000, by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Consequently, the U.S. personnel who were the subject of my October 8 report have redeployed from East Timor. The UNTAET, which was established by Security Council Resolution 1272, has a mandate that includes maintaining law and order throughout East Timor, establishing an effective administration, ensuring the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance, and supporting capacity-building for self-government. To implement this plan, the Security Council authorized UNTAET to deploy up to 8,950 military personnel, 200 military observers, and 1,640 civilian police.

The U.S. military contribution to UNTAET is small. The United States has agreed to provide three military observers and one judge advocate; these personnel serve in the United Nations pursuant to the United Nations Participation Act (Public Law 79–264) and will operate under U.N. operational control.

Nonetheless, because the United States has a strong national security interest in promoting regional security and supporting East Timor's transition to independence, the United States will maintain a credible and visible presence in East Timor. The United Nations also supports a continued U.S. presence in East Timor and has indicated that East Timor would benefit greatly from U.S. military deployments to and engagement activities in East Timor.

As a result, I have authorized the deployment of a support group (USGET), consisting of approximately 30 U.S. personnel, to facilitate and coordinate U.S. military activities in East Timor. Personnel assigned to USGET will operate under U.S. command and control and rules of engagement. In addition, I have authorized a rotational presence of U.S. forces to be achieved through temporary deployments, including periodic ship visits, to East Timor during

which U.S. forces will conduct humanitarian and assistance activities throughout East Timor. These rotational presence operations will provide peacetime exercise opportunities for U.S. forces in East Timor, allow for a flexible and visible U.S. force presence independent of UNTAET, and provide humanitarian and civic assistance to East Timor's citizens in critical areas.

The first rotational presence operation, involving the USS BONHOMME RICHARD amphibious group, her embarked helicopters, and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), commenced in East Timor on February 23, 2000. These forces are operating under U.S. command and control and rules of engagement.

At this point, our rotational presence operations are envisioned to continue through the summer of 2000. It is likely that future rotational presence operations will include rotation of naval assets, embarked aircraft, and small light engineer units. Certain of these forces, including those of the BONHOMME RICHARD, will be equipped with the normal complement of defensive weapons. The duration of our support depends upon the course of events in East Timor. It is, however, our objective to redeploy USGET and reduce rotational presence operations as circumstances permit.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

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