

Aug. 31 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continued Deployment of
United States Forces to East Timor
August 31, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In my report to the Congress of March 2, 2001, I provided information regarding the continued deployment of U.S. Armed Forces in support of East Timor's transition to independence. I am providing this supplemental report, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed regarding U.S. Armed Forces in East Timor.

As you are aware, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1272 established the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) on October 25, 1999. The UNTAET's mandate includes providing security and 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. The United States currently contributes three military observers to UNTAET. These personnel are assigned to the United Nations pursuant to the United Nations Participation Act (Public Law 79-264) and operate under U.N. operational control.

The United States also maintains a military presence in East Timor that is separate from UNTAET. This includes the U.S. Support Group East Timor (USGET), comprised of approximately 20 U.S. personnel, including a security detachment, which facilitates and coordinates U.S. military activities in East Timor, and a rotational presence of U.S. forces through temporary deployments to East Timor. These rotational presence operations include monthly U.S. Navy ship visits, and deployments of military medical and engineering teams that

conduct humanitarian and civic assistance activities in areas critical to East Timor's citizens. United States forces assigned to USGET and those conducting rotational presence operations operate under U.S. command and control and U.S. rules of engagement. The United Nations, and Australia as a leading contributor to UNTAET, have indicated that East Timor has benefited greatly from U.S. military deployments to and engagement activities in East Timor. Both the United Nations and Australia strongly support continued U.S. presence in East Timor.

At this point, U.S. rotational presence operations are envisioned to continue through December 2001. We are reviewing options for our military presence in 2002. My objective is to reduce the rotational presence operations, as well as to redeploy USGET, as circumstances permit, giving due regard to the situation on the ground and the views of our friends and allies in the region, including Australia.

I have authorized the continuation of 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,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Robert C. Byrd, President pro tempore of the Senate.