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ACTION SS-00

INFO LOG-00 OASY-00 ANHR-01 TEDE-00 ADS-00 /001W
-----F91627 100952Z /38

O 100950Z NOV 97
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8244
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE IMMEDIATE
INFO JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
DIA WASHDC//DH-3// PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 006622

VIENTIANE PLEASE PASS TO DEPUTY SECRETARY TALBOTT'S PARTY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/16

TAGS: PREL, MASS, ID

SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROTH'S MEETING WITH
- INDONESIAN SPECIAL FORCES COMMANDER PRABOWO

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY DCM MICHAEL P. OWENS; REASON 1.5(D).

2. (S) ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE STANLEY ROTH MET WITH MAJOR GENERAL PRABOWO SUBIANTO FOR AN HOUR OF CANDID AND PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION ON NOVEMBER 6. IN ADDITION TO MR. ROTH'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT JAMES FOSTER, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION OWENS, AND DEFENSE ATTACHE COLONEL DON MCFETRIDGE ATTENDED THE MEETING. MR ROTH'S MEETING WITH PRABOWO

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ALLOWED THE TWO TO RENEW THEIR ACQUAINTANCES, FIRST

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ESTABLISHED WHEN MR. ROTH WAS AT THE NSC AND, EARLIER, AT DOD/ISA.

2. (S) SECRETARY ROTH OPENED THE DISCUSSION WITH A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF U.S.-INDONESIAN RELATIONS. HE NOTED THE RECENT SENIOR VISITS AND MEETINGS THAT HAVE MARKED U.S. EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN, STRENGTHEN, AND EXPAND OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. IN THIS REGARD, SECRETARY ROTH ALSO STRESSED U.S. MEASURES INCLUDING THE FIRE FIGHTING EFFORTS WITH C-130 AIRCRAFT AND THE 3 BILLION USD SUPPORT TO THE IMF-LED FINANCIAL SUPPORT PACKAGE.

3. (S) MAJOR GENERAL PRABOWO SAID ALL SENIOR OFFICERS AND IMPORTANT INDONESIAN OFFICIALS HE KNEW THOUGHT INDONESIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS VERY IMPORTANT. INDONESIANS WANT A STRONG BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE THEN MADE THE FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS:

A. PRABOWO SAID HE HOPED THAT THE U.S. WOULD LOOK CLOSELY AT CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES IN INDONESIA. INDONESIA HAS ALL THE INGREDIENTS TO BECOME ANOTHER YUGOSLAVIA. ETHNIC, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, RELIGIOUS, AND LINGUISTIC DIVISIONS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DESTABILIZE INDONESIA.

B. INDONESIA HAS ALREADY ENCOUNTERED AND OVERCOME SUBSTANTIAL PROBLEMS. IN ITS EARLY HISTORY, INDONESIA FACED DOWN ISLAMIC EXTREMISM AND COMMUNISM. ALTHOUGH MANY INDONESIANS DO NOT AGREE, PRABOWO SAID HE FEELS
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THAT AMERICA BOUGHT TIME FOR INDONESIA TO OVERCOME ITS COMMUNIST THREAT. "THE 58,000 AMERICANS WHO DIED IN VIETNAM GAVE ALL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA BREATHING SPACE." WITHOUT IT, COMMUNISM WOULD PROBABLY HAVE SWEEPED THROUGHOUT ALL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. FORTUNATELY, INDONESIA DID NOT NEED DIRECT AMERICAN HELP TO DEFEAT THE INDONESIAN DOMESTIC COMMUNIST MENACE. THE NEXT GREAT NATIONAL CHALLENGE WILL BE THE IMPENDING POLITICAL TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE COUNTRY.

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C. PRESIDENT SOEHARTO HAS BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY. SOEHARTO'S BACKGROUND WAS AS A SOLDIER. HE HAD NO FOREIGN TRAINING AND LITTLE FORMAL EDUCATION, BUT HE IS EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT AND HAS A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY. HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTAND WORLD CONCERNS AND PRESSURES. FROM PRABOWO'S PERSPECTIVE, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF SOEHARTO STEPPED DOWN IN MARCH 1998 AND THE COUNTRY MOVED PEACEFULLY THROUGH AN ORDERLY TRANSITION OF POWER AT THAT TIME. WHETHER THIS HAPPENS IN MARCH OR TAKES A FEW YEARS, THE SOEHARTO ERA WILL SOON END.

D. BELOW THE SURFACE, THERE ARE ALREADY INTRIGUES UNDERWAY BY PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEY ARE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE THE PRESIDENT DIRECTLY. THESE POLITICAL MANEUVERS ARE DANGEROUS BECAUSE THEY INCREASE THE VOLATILITY OF THE SOCIETY. TRANSFORMATION IS INEVITABLE AND IS COMING. THE MILITARY, HOWEVER, HAVE THE DELICATE TASK OF ENCOURAGING REFORM WHILE HOLDING CHAOS AND DESTABILIZATION IN CHECK. PRABOWO USED THE
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EXAMPLE OF YUGOSLAVIA WHERE A STRONG LEADER DEPARTED
AND THE COUNTRY FELL INTO ANARCHY.

E. THE ARMED FORCES WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE A FACTOR IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM. PRABOWO'S GENERATION OF ABRI LEADERS WANT TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLES OF SOUTH KOREA, TAIWAN AND THAILAND. "I HATE POLITICS. I WANT THE MILITARY OUT OF POLITICS," HE SAID. THE KEY TO SPEEDING UP THIS TRANSFORMATION IS EDUCATION.

F. PRABOWO SAID HE HAD GONE OUTSIDE THE MILITARY TO OBTAIN THE BUDGETARY RESOURCES TO SEND 53 OFFICERS TO UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE SCHOOLING IN THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN. THESE INCLUDED THE FIRST INDONESIAN MILITARY CADETS AT VMI, THE CITADEL AND NORWICH, ALL OF WHOM HE NOTED PROUDLY ARE EXCELLING IN THEIR STUDIES. PRABOWO WANTS INDONESIA TO BE LED BY ITS "BEST AND BRIGHTEST," AND THEY MUST BE WELL EDUCATED.

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INDONESIAN SPECIAL FORCES COMMANDER PRABOWO

G. PRABOWO ALSO WANTS TO BUY U.S. MILITARY TRAINING THROUGH FOREIGN MILITARY SALES (FMS). HE ISN'T WAITING OR ASKING FOR IMET. HE WANTS TO SEND SPECIAL FORCES OFFICERS OVERSEAS TO BE EXPOSED TO WESTERN VALUES, STANDARDS OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM. PRABOWO SAID HE WAS A PRODUCT OF WESTERN EDUCATION AND KNOWS ITS IMPORTANCE. BUT "SOMEBODY", HE CLAIMED, IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OR THE PENTAGON HAS STOPPED HIS
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REQUEST FOR FMS TRAINING.

4. (S) RESPONDING TO PRABOWO'S POINTS, MR. ROTH ALSO AGREED INDONESIA WILL EVENTUALLY NEED TO DEAL WITH POLITICAL TRANSITION AND THAT THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSFORMATION WILL HAVE AND MUST HAVE AN INDONESIAN SOLUTION. THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT GET INVOLVED OR TRY TO MANIPULATE THE PROCESS. WE HAVE SEEN IN SOUTH KOREA THAT A MAJOR POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT DAMAGE TO THE ECONOMY. MR. ROTH ALSO PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE STATUS OF PRABOWO'S REQUEST TO PURCHASE FMS TRAINING.

5. (U) THIS CABLE HAS BEEN CLEARED BY S. ROTH.
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