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## LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Dear Editors,

Reviewing Jun Honna's book and my own on the Indonesian military in *Indonesia* 76 (October 2003), Douglas Kammen describes Indonesia's democratization (quoting Lenin!) as "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." (Kammen, p. 215) I agree with Kammen's broad analysis, and we appear to share similar normative ground. I also accept some of Kammen's criticisms of my book, *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military*, as fair comment. But where an author can be fairly criticized for being factually incorrect, the same also applies to the reviewer.

Apart from describing the book's outline and quoting its intent, Kammen is satisfied to ignore the book's thesis and instead focuses on its putative errors. The book's key error is its single misalignment of Indonesia's military and administrative structures, followed by a reference to East Timor's Kodim as Koramil (clarified on an attached map) and identifying "resort" as "garrison."

Kammen also notes a number of typographical and spelling errors. It is true that there is one instance of a typographical error in the proper name, "Wirahadikusumah," although lest this reflect lack of knowledge, it is spelled correctly on fifty-two other occasions. While other errors exist, according to the Australian Oxford Dictionary, "furore" is indeed spelled with an "e" and Kammen's phonetic "Tetun" is formally spelled "Tetum."<sup>1</sup> While Kammen cites my lack of Portuguese diacritics as a further spelling error, they are neither used nor available in Australian English.

Kammen also criticizes my book's "poor and incorrect translations," such as translating "Angkatan Darat" as "land force" and "army." Yet "land force" is indeed the literal translation, distinguishing it from the "sea force" (navy) and "air force," while "army" is the most accurate translation for meaning. More importantly, Kammen incorrectly translates "oknum" as "rogue" ("bangsat," "bajingan"), which derives from the TNI's public use of the term to misleadingly describe "elements" allegedly operating outside the formal command structure, e.g. in East Timor 1999. Internal TNI use of "oknum," in my direct experience, applies to "military criminals."

Kammen misspells the term "sewewang-wenang," the quotation of which implies the error is mine. He also says that my translation of this term as "arbitrary ruthlessness" is incorrect. Yet "sewenang-wenang" (my spelling) translates as "arbitrarily, without compunction."<sup>2</sup> "Ruthless," on the other hand, means "not having pity or compassion."

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<sup>1</sup> See Article 13, Constituicao da Republica Democratica de Timor-Leste.

<sup>2</sup> John Echols and Hassan Shadily, *Kamus Indonesia Inggris, edisi ketiga* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1989).

To act “arbitrarily, without compunction” fairly equates to acting without “pity or compassion,” especially in context.

A further misleading attribution by Kammen is that he claims I say Kostrad is stationed throughout the archipelago, when, he says, it is headquartered on Java. Yet, I clearly state that Kostrad is based at Cilodong and Malang (Java), with a separate reference to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade being located in Sulawesi (Kingsbury, *Power Politics*, p. 88). Completing that sentence, I add that Kostrad is “stationed and variously deployed throughout the archipelago.” I have visited Kostrad units stationed in Aceh, Central Sulawesi, Ambon, West Timor, and Papua and seen Kostrad troops deployed from these sites. Kammen is, at best, raising the marginal issue of the semantics of “stationed.”

In terms of basic errors, Kammen says I incorrectly identify SGI as a part of Kopassus, even though his co-authored book, *Masters of Terror*, also identifies SGI as part of Kopassus! SGI is the Kopassus intelligence group (part of Sandi Yudha), usually detached to various Kodam (or Korem in the case of East Timor) that report to Badan ABRI Intelijen Stragis (BAIS, the Armed Forces Strategic Intelligence Agency).

Kammen also refers to my “incorrect claim” that Kopassus Grup V is the “equivalent to” Detasemen 81. To confirm, Den 81 was reorganized and re-designated as Grup V on June 25, 1996.<sup>3</sup> Grup V was re-designated as Satuan 81 in 2001, although more commonly it is still called Detasemen 81.<sup>4</sup>

Disturbingly, Kammen describes as “bizarre” my identification of Kopassandha’s involvement in East Timor predating Indonesia’s formal invasion. Yet Kenneth Conboy’s *Kopassus: Inside Indonesia’s Special Forces*,<sup>5</sup> published after my book went to press, details this historical fact, as do the books by Julius Pour<sup>6</sup> and Desmond Ball and Hamish McDonald.<sup>7</sup> Apart from the earlier destabilization organized from West Timor, Kopassandha first entered East Timor in late August 1975, more than three months prior to the formal invasion.

Yet another misrepresentation is that I “assert” that in 1999 the TNI’s Territorial structure was expanded from ten to seventeen Kodam. Yet, I wrote that the reorganization of Kodam in 1999 was “designed to bring the number back up to 17 by 2009” (*ibid.*, p. 80), which half-way through has been partially completed.

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<sup>3</sup> See “KOPASSUS: Baret Merah Tak Cuma di Darat,” *Gatra*, July 6, 1996; “Inilah Kopassus Pascareorganisasi,” *Republika Online*, April 21, 1997; “KOPASSUS DIMEKARKAN JADI LIMA GRUP,” *Republika Online*, May 22, 1996; Angel Rabasa and John Haseman, *The Military and Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, Politics, and Power* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2002), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> See “Mabes TNI Kirim Tim Investigasi ke Aceh,” *Republika Online*, October 5, 2003; “Danjen Kopassus Akui Ada Prosedur Pemutusan Tali,” *Kompas*, October 5, 2003; “Cita-citanya Kandas di Tengah Jalan,” *Kompas*, October 8, 2003; “Menolak Dibujuk Cepat Menikah,” *Suara Merdeka*, May 29, 2003; “Kopassus dan Aceh,” *Pikiran Rakyat*, April 17, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Conboy, *Kopassus: Inside Indonesia’s Special Forces* (Jakarta: Equinox, 2003), Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>6</sup> Julius Pour, *Benny Moerdani: Profil Prajurit Negerawan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Keuangan Panglima Besar Sudirman, 1995), Chapter 19.

<sup>7</sup> Desmond Ball and Hamish McDonald, *Death in Balibo, Lies in Canberra* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2000), pp. 26-27, and Chapter 3.

Finally, Kammen claims that I “unwittingly replicate the Indonesian military’s own argument that it is the only institution capable of preserving the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.” “Rather,” he says, “a complete withdrawal of the Indonesian military from Aceh, Maluku, and Papua would be the surest means of reestablishing the eroded legitimacy of the state.” (Kammen, p. 217) Four issues arise here, the first of which is that Kammen misunderstands the idea of “legitimacy,” which cannot be established or maintained through military force. Secondly, he presumes to imply that I am concerned with the “eroded legitimacy” of the unitary state, which leads to point three.

As noted by Kammen at the beginning of his review, my thesis is that the state and the military are mutually dependent, and in the last sentence of the book I say this implies structural vulnerability for a “genuinely participatory and representative process of democratization.” Throughout, I clearly note a symbiotic structural dysfunction in both the state and the TNI. Ipso facto, this analysis suggests that to achieve genuine democratization, it is necessary to alter fundamentally the nexus between, and structure of, the state and the TNI.

The fourth point, then, is that Kammen’s claim that my thesis replicates the TNI’s own argument is, as with much of his review, unsustainable.

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