

NOTE

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E P C R T NO. 12
DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY
CANADIAN FORCES HEADQUARTERS

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Canada and Peace-keeping Operations
West New Guinea (West Irian)

1. The purpose of this report is to record the Canadian contribution to the settlement of the Indonesian/Netherlands dispute over the control of West New Guinea. The sources used in the compilation of the report include open publications and classified departmental files. Also used were copies of correspondence and messages held by Flight Lieutenant A.E. Richards, (now Squadron Leader), who was the Commanding Officer 116 Air Transport Unit [ATU] in Biak, and an unpublished paper by the same officer. These have been photostated and placed in the Director of History's Kardex files. The only papers of The Secretary of State for External Affairs that have been used are those that appear on the departmental files.

The Dispute

2. The United Nations is the ultimate organ of arbitration for nations in dispute and is dedicated to the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.¹ The United Nations is also, by the terms of the same resolution,² dedicated to the principle that "any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a country" is incompatible with the United Nations Charter. As the Netherlands laid their case on one principle and The Republic of Indonesia laid claim to the other, the United Nations faced a conundrum.

3. The Netherlands had transferred sovereignty of the Indonesian archipelago to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia on 27 December 1949. This transfer, however, did not include the western half of the island of New Guinea. As the new Republic became established the agitation to acquire West New Guinea increased. In the face of this agitation the Netherlands increased its efforts to prepare the native Papuans for eventual independence.

4. In 1958 Indonesia looked abroad for aid to its cause. This more militant outlook led the Netherlands, in 1960, to place before the United Nations a draft resolution based on the premise that West New Guinea should become independent. Indonesia spoke against the resolution and propounded the point of view that West New Guinea was an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia. The necessary

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two-thirds majority was not obtained at the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations General Assembly and the problem remained unsolved.

5. The Indonesian attitude stiffened and in January 1962 Indonesian motor torpedo boats attempted to strike at West New Guinea.³ They were repelled by Netherlands naval forces.

6. As early as 29 March 1960 the NATO nations had been made aware that the Netherlands was preparing for an Indonesian attack. NATO, Paris, informed the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs that the Netherlands government had decided to withdraw two destroyers and two submarines from its NATO commitment to be dispatched to the waters of Netherlands New Guinea.⁴ Dutch troops were also being diverted to the trouble area but these were not being withdrawn from the NATO commitment.

7. The United States, already involved in Far Eastern affairs, assigned Mr. Ellsworth Bunker, a retired U.S. diplomat, to study the situation and propose a plan acceptable to both parties of the dispute. The Bunker Plan proposed the formation of a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority [UNTEA] to act on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and thus allow a transition period between the ending of Dutch control and the time when Indonesia assumed control. This would eliminate or greatly reduce direct contact. The proposal was unique in that it propounded, for the first time, the concept of a United Nations agency to control an area and its inhabitants, and to supply a force to police the area during the period of its control.

8. The Bunker Plan, in itself a compromise, was modified by shortening the period of United Nations' control and by deferring the referendum on "freedom of choice" by the Papuan population until 1969. The vote to decide whether the Papuans were to be independent or part of Indonesia was a concept strongly supported by the Netherlands. While these negotiations were continuing, Indonesia dropped paratroopers in West New Guinea. These troops remained and eventually had to be supplied by the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority. An Agreement, signed on 15 August 1962, provided for UNTEA to control the area from 1 October 1962 until at least 1 May 1963, when control would be passed to Indonesia. During its period of control UNTEA was given authority to have its own security forces, to promulgate new laws and amend existing ones.⁶ Largely because of the unique method of financing UNTEA and its security force the Secretary-General was permitted to proceed with these negotiations before seeking the ratification of the General Assembly. The entire expense of the operation was to be borne equally by the Netherlands and Indonesia.⁷

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The Area

9. New Guinea is the second largest island in the world, exceeded in size only by Greenland. It is an undeveloped island and from a Canadian point of view very inhospitable. It lies just south of the equator. Except for a complex mountain range, running generally north-west along the center of the island, it is made up of tropical rain forests and marshes, many of which are inundated at high tide. The main island is surrounded by groups of smaller islands. One of the island groups north of West New Guinea is the Schouten Islands. Biak is the main island of this group and it is bisected by 1° south latitude. The average temperature of New Guinea is about 81° , with the average morning temperature being about 72° and the average noon temperature about 92° .

10. West New Guinea had a population of about 700,000 Papuans and about 10,000 Europeans, many of the Europeans immigrated after the Indonesian archipelago had been placed under the control of the Republic of Indonesia.⁸

United Nations Request

11. It is to this area that Canada was requested to send an Air Adviser for the United Nations Security Force [U.N.S.F.] Commander⁹ and a float-equipped Otter with flying crew, spare parts and a minimum maintenance crew.¹⁰ At this early stage the entire United Nations force was to be made up of an interim Military Observer Team seconded from UNEF and UNOC for a period of six weeks. The main security force was to consist of a 1000-man Pakistani contingent commanded by a Pakistani officer. The functions of the Observer Team were to observe the cease-fire and to locate the Indonesian infiltrators dropped by parachute. The United States had agreed to supply the Indonesians by air drop from C130s in order to eliminate the necessity of Indonesian flights over West New Guinea and thus avoid the immediate withdrawal of Dutch authorities.¹¹

12. On receipt of the request for aid, the R.C.A.F. studied the suggested requirement and on 22 August 1962 advised the Minister of National Defence of the estimated cost of the commitment and the number of air and ground crew required. It recommended that "to make this a sound operation and provide continuity in the availability of one aeroplane, it is necessary...to have a back-up, i.e. we should send two Otters".¹² R.C.A.F. Headquarters advised Air Transport Command of the possibility of having to supply the aircraft to the United Nations and ordered preliminary steps to be taken in order "to provide minimum reaction to U.N. request".¹³ On the same day the Permanent Mission in New York [PERMISNY] requested External Affairs,¹⁴ subject to Canada's meeting the U.N. request, that the Air Adviser,

