

May 29, 1958

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2010/08/30 : HIA-R JONES HOWARD P

Indonesian D-2E-61-205-9 View on U.S. Involvement in Behalf
of Indonesian Rebels from Moscow 1958

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On May 29, the reporting officer had an after-dinner conversation with Izak Mahdi, the Counselor of the Indonesian Embassy in Moscow, on the subject of U.S. connections with rebel forces in Indonesia. It should be noted first that Mr. Mahdi has always made a point of stressing his friendly feelings for the United States and has gone out of his way to thank officers of this Embassy for American statements favoring the Indonesian point of view, for American aid to Indonesia (such as the recent PL-480 food agreement), and even for American success in launching artificial earth satellites. Mr. Mahdi is married to a Eurasian lady, who is probably about three-quarters Dutch, and his wife's sister is married to a Dutch foreign service officer. Both of them frequently visit Holland, and their children are receiving a portion of their education there. Moreover, English appears to be one of the languages commonly used among the members of the family, and there is no sign that Mr. Mahdi's tour of duty in Peiping, where he learned a substantial amount of Chinese, has made him into an enthusiast for Communist China, although he respects many of its achievements and believes that it merits consideration as a leading Asian power.



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approached Mr. Ma2E-61-205-9 frank statements of views. The reporting officer stated that he of course knew the official position of the U.S. Government, but a tremendous quantity of material had appeared in the Soviet press accusing the United States of intervention, and he wondered what attitude Mr. Mahdi felt in this regard. The latter replied that he was only speaking frankly and freely because he had been urged to do so, because the whole matter was quite painful to him, and he did not wish to offend his American friends.

Mr. Mahdi asserted that he had no doubt that the United States Government had been giving substantial covert assistance to rebel forces on Sumatra and other islands. He stated, moreover, that this was also the firm belief of every reasonable official of his Government. He pointed to evidence which he considered overwhelming, namely

that rebel forces were supplied with various types of weapons which could only have been distributed from American arsenals. He recalled that he had been a purchasing agent in Singapore in 1947 and 1948 on behalf of the Indonesian independence movement, which was then still fighting the Dutch army, and, as a result, he knew what types of weapons and supplies were available on the Southeast Asia military black market. Such things as B-26 bombers were not in that category, nor was a mortar device, highly accurate at two miles, which the Indonesian Government had been unable to buy from the United States, but which a friend of his, who is an Indonesian army officer and who fought in Sumatra there.

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Mr. Mahdi thought that the failure of the rebels had been guaranteed when the four major Indonesian political parties all rallied behind the Government, and it was also clear that the myth promoted by many American correspondents that the Indonesian army could not and would not fight to assert its authority throughout the whole archipelago was now exploded. Indonesian officials could not exactly forget the American role in the rebel movement, but they wanted to try to overlook it as a sort of aberration unworthy and untypical of the United States. Mr. Mahdi stated strongly that his Government was not Communist dominated and would not become so. Moreover, it did not want to become dependent on Communist sources of military and economic supplies, though it would purchase some items from those sources in any case, and would have to buy even more if alternative sources were not available. Above all, however, it wanted to restore good relations between Indonesia and the United States. Indonesia's leaders had received much inspiration from America, and this was what they preferred to remember rather than the recent unpleasantnesses.

