
Garuda XII: Indonesian Peacekeeping in Cambodia

By JOHN B. HASEMAN

As the number and magnitude of peace operations around the world have grown in recent years, vigorous debates have raged in Congress and elsewhere on prerequisites for U.S. military involvement in U.N. and non-U.N. peace operations, even whether the United States will support such operations. Recent American experiences have had varied success, adding fuel to the debate on the future role of the Armed Forces in peace operations.

Washington is uneasy with military operations in which decisive force is not an option and no solution to complex social, political, and security issues is apparent. Peace operations doctrine, which is still evolving, stresses jointness. It is an realm in which the United States is not adept. Thus it is imperative to learn from other countries with experience in peacekeeping. Many of these states are located in the less developed world. Their national policies back such U.N. operations, and they have the military doctrine and training to execute them.

Indonesia, one of the most experienced supporters of peace operations, learned vital lessons while preparing for and executing a difficult mission in Cambodia during the largest and most costly U.N. peacekeeping mission to date.

Jakarta has provided forces for U.N. peacekeeping missions for almost forty years. While each numbered operation—designated *Garuda*—has varied, Indonesia has evolved a system which integrates preparation and execution in both standard doctrine and training. Its first U.N. operation was mounted in the Sinai in 1957 and the twelfth in Cambodia. In recent years Indonesians have served on the Iran-Iraq and the Iraq-Kuwait borders as well as in Namibia, Somalia, and Bosnia.

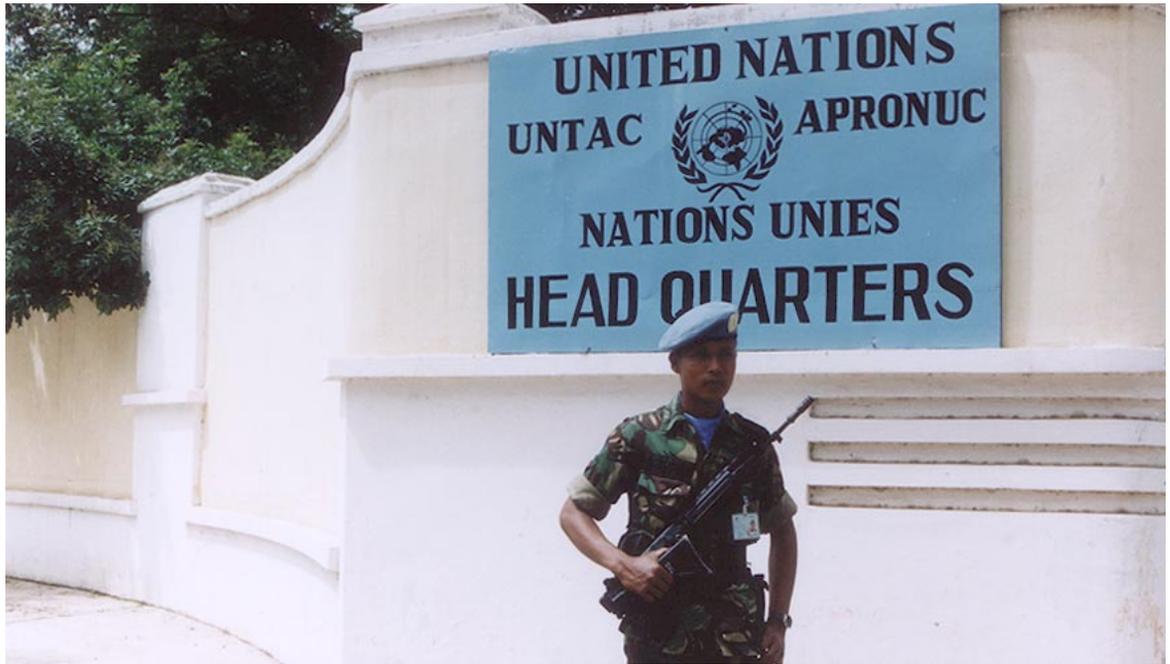
The preamble to the Indonesian constitution of 1945 provides for “maintaining world order based on freedom, eternal peace, and social justice.” National policy thus assumes a responsibility for peace not only in Indonesia but also in other nations, including the elimination of colonialism and restoring harmony around the world. The country recognizes that peace requires both military action and nonmilitary support for development.

The Indonesian armed forces have a unique dual mission called *dwi-fungsi*, which includes traditional military roles as well as a nonmilitary role in national development. It is this nonmilitary role that has prepared Indonesia exceptionally well for peace operations. The military is considered a representative of the entire nation through its involvement in such efforts.

In responding to any request for peacekeeping forces, the Indonesian military (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* or ABRI) tailors contingents to the mission, situation, requirements for logistical support, and equipment. Garuda

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Indonesian guarding UNTAC headquarters, Phnom Penh.



United Nations (P.S. Sothakaram)

contingents can be made up of individuals, teams for limited activity or missions, or organic military units reinforced as necessary.

Garuda XII

The Indonesian peacekeeping mission in Cambodia, known as Garuda XII, consisted of four army airborne infantry battalions reinforced with combat support and combat service support units. This was a joint operation that included elements from the army, marines, national police, and air force as required. (The national police are a branch of the armed forces with equal status; the marines are subordinate to the navy.) Each contingent served nine months in country including an overlap period with successive contingents.

Unlike deployments for smaller U.N. operations, Cambodia required battalion sized units and augmentation rather than individual soldiers. Indonesia's task was to identify well trained and led infantry battalions that resulted in a decision to respect unit integrity when possible in providing reinforcements. In such situations ABRI deploy units drawn from the elite Army Strategic Reserve Command (KOSTRAD), a two-division primary tactical formation. Military personnel assigned to KOSTRAD are recruited selectively, ensuring quality leaders and units.

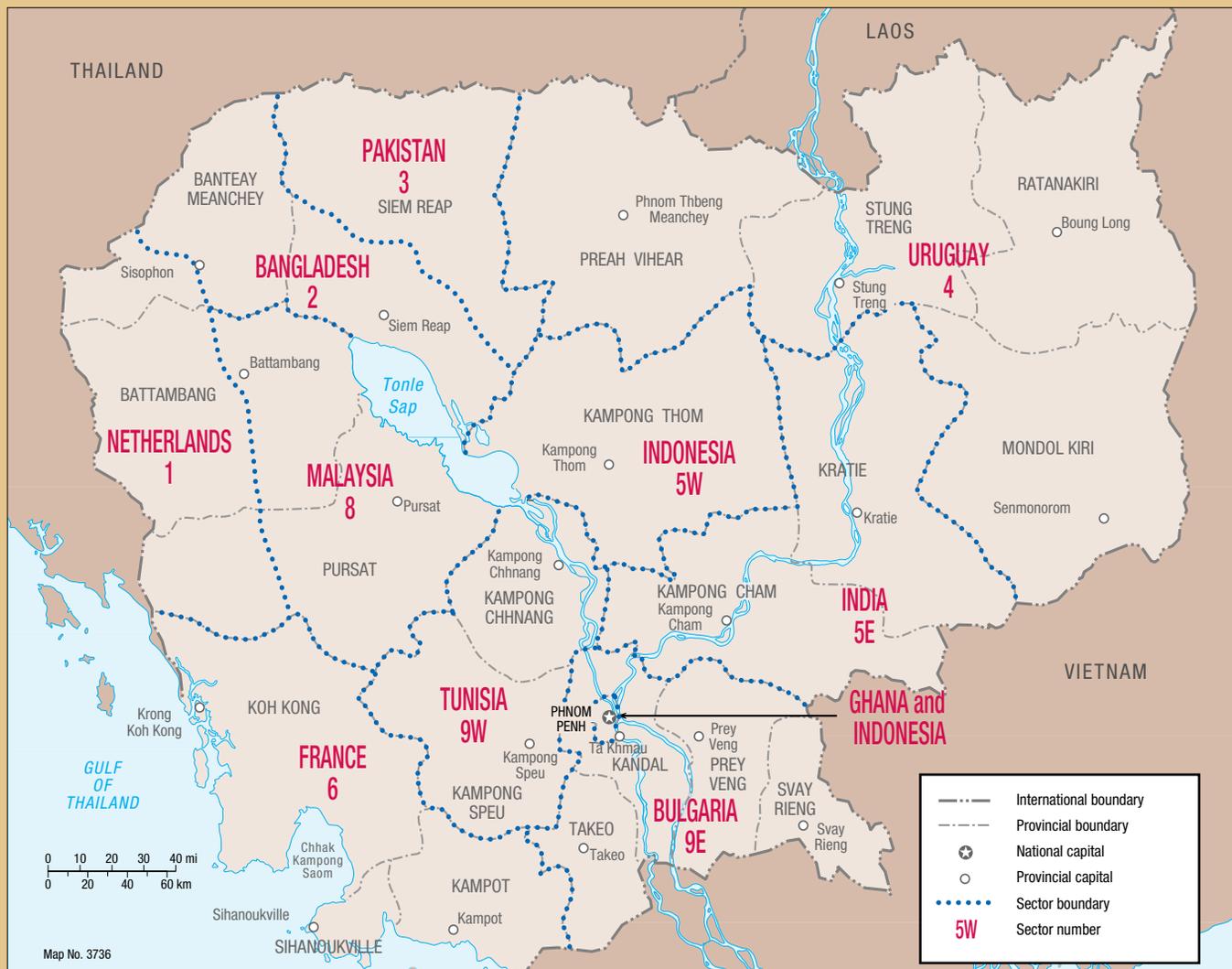
Indonesian doctrine stresses small unit and guerrilla warfare to defend the country against invasion. One of its key concepts is "territorial doctrine" and territorial operations that assign units and individuals in a geographically-oriented command system which places military personnel at all levels throughout the country. The closest recent U.S. comparison is the role which district senior advisors played in Vietnam where Army officers functioned tactically at the local level as well as in pacification missions.

Territorial operations in Indonesia provide detailed information about every corner of the country in the event of war. The concept is to cohesively meld army and people to resist an invasion, as occurred during the Indonesian struggle for independence in the late 1940s. Almost everyone in the military spends part of their career in territorial units through routine personnel assignments. It is ideal preparation for overseas peacekeeping because it provides person-to-person experience at the local level. The U.S. military has no equivalent seasoning; the closest experience is disaster relief in which servicemembers provide domestic support when emergencies strike local communities.

Senior ABRI leaders stress that there is no standard peacekeeping preparation training. Ordinary proficiency for territorial and tactical operations is the prime mechanism for training units designated for overseas peacekeeping. Unit readiness and proficiency in individual military skills are the keys to preparing for deployment.

the Indonesian peacekeeping mission in Cambodia was a joint operation

UNTAC Sectors of Cantonment and Demobilization



Initial UNTAC deployment was designed for phase II of the ceasefire, in which the forces of the four factions were to gather separately in cantonment areas, relinquish their weapons, and begin their reintegration into civil society. (Names of U.N. member countries indicate which troop contributor was in command of a given sector.)

Source: United Nations, *The United Nations and Cambodia, 1991–1995*.

Such training is augmented by location-specific specialty training. Area studies familiarize personnel with conditions in the peacekeeping area of operations (AO). This includes lectures on the differences between their home base and the foreign operational area and focus on geography, demography, and socio-economic conditions. Area orientation covers familiarization with climate, weather, and terrain; religion, history, culture, language, and customs; the background of the U.N. mission; operational objectives and rules of engagement—what soldiers should and should not do; and stern indoctrination with respect to local beliefs and mores.

In preparing for Cambodia, key officers and NCOs received instruction in English. There was also a unique opportunity for Cambodian language instruction. Cambodian asylum-seekers at a refugee center on Galang Island in Indonesia provided a pool of instructors on language, culture, and history. Selected Cambodians were brought from Galang Island to teach at unit base camps. They also helped compile a simple Cambodian-Indonesian dictionary for use by peacekeepers.

In addition to a solid base of military readiness and area studies training, Indonesian units also received more specialized instruction. For the Cambodian operation, deploying contingents had extensive training on mine detection, mobile patrolling, and the tactics and doctrine employed by the Cambodian political factions which they



United Nations (P.S. Sudhakaran)

Indonesian peacekeepers at Pochentong Airport.

would encounter. Moreover, unit leaders received intensive training on negotiating skills, intelligence collection, interpersonal communications, and psychological operations.

The Cambodia Connection

Indonesia had a vested political interest in Cambodia based on the key role which it played in negotiations among the warring factions that led to agreement on deploying peacekeepers under the United Nations. Jakarta began informal meetings in 1988 with the four factions as well as the other international players. With France,

it co-hosted the 1989 Paris conference of the Cambodian factions and 20 nations which led to the signing of a peace agreement.

ABRI saw several reasons for Indonesia being asked to assume a leading role in providing manpower for the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) that resulted from the Paris conference. First, both Cambodia and Indonesia were former colonies and, in an earlier period of Southeast Asian history, there had been extensive

contacts between the ancient kingdoms on Java and in Cambodia. Moreover, Indonesians noted a common skin color and shared social-cultural systems. Despite key differences in language, national history since independence, and religion, Indonesian familiarization programs with regard to its own people stressed building on similarities and minimizing deviations.

By the time the UNTAC mission was completed in 1993 Indonesia had provided the largest contingent. Its four reinforced battalions plus observers totalled some 3,400 of the 15,000 troops assigned to UNTAC. Two Indonesian brigadier generals served as chief of staff of the UNTAC military component. One battalion served at headquarters in Phnom Penh while another served in the crucial province of Kampong Thom (see map). Indonesians believe that their most important contribution was the operation in Kampong Thom which was a barometer for all aspects of politics and security in Cambodia because all factions maintained a powerful presence there. Most central government infrastructure was nonexistent, which made ABRI territorial operations significant for reestablishing government services and forging communications both among the four factions and between UNTAC and the people. The number of weapons held by the warring factions required a sizeable force to collect arms and demobilize units.

Kampong Thom was an important province for historical, political, economic, strategic, and tactical reasons. Centrally located and bordering eight other provinces, its economic potential was great even by Cambodia's wretched post-war conditions, with extensive fishing on Tonle Sap and fertile rice fields. Its strategic advantages included lake ports, a river system for north-south transportation, a large airport, and two national highways. Each of the factions wanted control of Kampong Thom, with the Khmer Rouge being in a particularly strong position. Both Pol Pot and Khieu Sampan were born there, and it was a Khmer Rouge stronghold during the Indochina War.

Provincial Operations

An airborne battalion reinforced by a marine infantry company, a national police team, and specialists—850 members overall—were assigned to Kampong Thom. (Infantry battalions have an authorized strength of 699 with five line companies—four organic army and one marine.) Each company in turn deployed its platoons geographically. The 14 districts of Kampong Thom made unit deployment easy, with one platoon assigned to each district and one at battalion headquarters in Kampong Thom City. Special purpose teams (such as intelligence, medical, and riverine) were deployed as needed throughout the province.

Kampong Thom was important for historical, political, economic, strategic, and tactical reasons

Faction Forces (Kampong Thom Province)

	Strength
Khmer Independence National Army [Leader: Norodom Ranarith]	2,800
Khmer People's Liberation National Armed Forces [Leader: Son San]	400
National Army of Democratic Kampuchea [Leader: Pol Pot; controlled most rural areas within province]	5,000
Cambodian People's Armed Force (CPAF) [Leader: Heng Samrin; controlled towns and main highways]	3,600

Transportation was possible by both land and water, and U.N. helicopters were on call when other forms of transport were not feasible.

The primary challenge for the Indonesian contingent was to establish credibility with each armed faction, then to build on that to demobilize them and their weapons. With 12,000 factional fighters in the province (see figure) the task was daunting. All four factions saw the importance of Kampong Thom province to their varying political and military agendas, and all had considerable capabilities. Based on the past record and strength, the Khmer Rouge were particularly feared and hated. The Indonesians, as part of a deliberate policy, treated each faction the same, including the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian People's Armed Forces.

Employing territorial operations doctrine, the Indonesians concentrated first on winning the confidence of the population. "We were already very similar in skin color and cultural traits," one battalion commander observed, a factor which he believed was a key to success in the field. The Indonesians felt that the system of territorial operations used for rural development at home would also work in Cambodia.

Once settled, operations in the province began at the lowest practical level, usually platoon. Commanders emphasized local culture and social systems. Indonesian military camps were open to locals, and they mingled freely with soldiers. Discussions began with small groups of villagers and townspeople through which all factions were contacted. Patience was important in exchanging views and approaches to more recalcitrant groups. Gradually the Indonesians gained

information on the various factions. Communications emphasized mutual respect and understanding. Soldiers were keenly aware that even one man could have great impact on the mission.

Informal contacts worked the best. Indonesian commanders sought key communicators such as village leaders, faction chiefs, and unit commanders. "Coffee shops first, formal meetings later," noted a young officer. The junior officers—platoon and company commanders—mediated small local disagreements. Indonesian soldiers celebrated their holidays, traditions, and customs and invited Cambodians to observe or take part. They also encouraged Cambodian cultural events and ceremonies and sometimes took part.

Cambodians were attracted to Indonesian activities such as medical and dental care, video broadcasts, sports events, and village construction projects planned and executed with the people. Priorities included village sanitation and cleanliness, school repair and construction, and teaching done by rank and file Indonesian soldiers. Daily ABRI needs were met by local purchases at fair prices and no rear area supply system was used to obtain food, water, and other necessities.

While such cooperative efforts were with the people rather than armed factions, since all the people were members or supporters of one faction or another these approaches were very effective. Indonesian troops conscientiously conducted development projects in areas controlled by all of the factions including the Khmer Rouge. As one battalion commander said, the most difficult problem was constantly emphasizing that factions were not the enemy but instead people with other ideas. This emphasis gradually won acceptance by the Khmer Rouge.

The results were important. The Indonesians were always able to enter, visit, and operate in areas controlled by all four factions, a situation not achieved by many other national contingents. "Everything had to be accomplished by repetitious efforts and patience," one commander stated.

Phase one of the operation was to establish communications and relations with all factions. Phase two was to create a climate in which the U.N. mission and its personnel could be accepted. The Indonesians found that even being conciliatory to the Khmer Rouge did not bring compliance. Often all factions would comply with U.N. instructions save for the Khmer Rouge. Indonesian battalion end-of-tour reports all cautioned that the Khmer Rouge would remain a threat throughout and after the UNTAC period.

While Indonesians saw their efforts as balanced, some other national contingents felt that they were consistently too close to the Khmer Rouge. Indonesian reports noted such concern

but their ability to mediate the release of other U.N. personnel seized by the Khmer Rouge indicated that their policy provided them with access which other UNTAC elements lacked.

One incident illustrates the degree of Indonesian effectiveness. When the Khmer Rouge seized six UNTAC members in Anlung Ranh and another two in Osala, a mixed UNTAC military working group in Phnom Penh was unable to

the success of Garuda XII can be attributed to implementation of doctrine and tactics

resolve the crisis since Khmer Rouge demands could not be met. An UNTAC officer subsequently flew to Kampong Thom to negotiate the release of the hostages but could not land because his helicopter was fired on. The UNTAC commander then called on the Garuda contingent.

The Indonesians agreed to help on condition that no other national contingents be involved. They prepared a negotiating team and special operations quick reaction force for use if bargaining failed. Negotiations were tense, with the Indonesians placed under armed control. But following some highly emotional exchanges, the Khmer Rouge released the hostages.

Lessons Learned

Major General Tamlicha Ali, Indonesian army—who served as UNTAC military chief of staff for more than a year—has outlined six lessons from the Indonesian experience in Cambodia.

- Develop broad knowledge of the area of operations, including geography, demography, socio-economic conditions, culture, customs, and religion.
- Maintain vigorous standards in selecting personnel and units, including psychological testing.
- Require high standards of personal and unit discipline since soldiers routinely face situations requiring great restraint.
- Besides English, key contingent leaders should master the language of the area and individual soldiers should have a basic vocabulary in both English and the local language.
- Train officers in negotiation techniques and other diplomatic skills.
- Ensure that civic action and humanitarian assistance are an integral part of military doctrine. While not always thought of as integral to peace operations, they proved successful in Cambodia and were the basis for winning popular support and thus cooperation from the various factions.

Overall, the success of Garuda XII can be attributed to deliberate and detailed preparation and implementation of both doctrine and tactics. As the largest force deployed to Cambodia with peacekeeping expertise, Indonesians were the logical trainers of other national militaries, including the United States, in the intricacies of international peacekeeping operations.

Senior Indonesian officers credit their success to training, discipline, and professionalism. One key to their success was a willingness to quickly establish good relations with the Cambodian people and members of all political factions. There was no “enemy.” This is a difficult concept for Americans who are used to “good guys and bad guys” to accept. Somalia was a poignant example of an inability to maintain evenhanded relations with all sides in a conflict.

Indonesia cross-attached elements of three services—army, navy, and national police—in its unit deployment. While joint units may not be appropriate in all peace operations, it is essential that skills, requirements, and the environment be considered in tailoring forces for an operation.

Finally, Indonesian success can be attributed to a national policy that fosters participation. A willingness to support international peacekeeping was critical in the national-level commitment to the Cambodian mission. Within ABRI, participation in U.N. peace operations is an organizational and personal plum. Units take pride in such deployments and officers view their involvement in them as career enhancing. In short, commitment to peace operations is integrated at the national and individual level in Indonesia. This is a dimension of peace operations that is obviously lacking in the debate within the U.S. policymaking and doctrinal development communities. **JFQ**