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Onderwerp: The Indonesian-Dutch naval encounter and its repercussions on the Indonesian Air Force.

Referenties:

Datum van waarneming: Tweede helft maart 1962.

Bron: Van bevriende zijde.

Subbron: Iemand van de Indonesische luchtmacht, die in nauw contact staat met Umar Dani.

Opmerkingen:

Verzonden aan: de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken.

Aan Zijne Excellentie Prof. Dr. J.E. de QUAY
Minister-President

Plein 1813 no. 4

's-GRAVENHAGE.

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Indonesia

THE INDONESIAN-DUTCH NAVAL ENCOUNTER AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS
ON THE INDONESIAN AIR FORCE

The following account of the incident in which an Indonesian task force was intercepted off the coast of West Irian (Netherlands New Guinea) by Dutch Naval vessels was given to an Asian friend in a "gossipy" conversation on March 6, 1962 by Lt.Col. WIRIOSOPUTRO, Principal Staff Officer (Operations) of the Indonesian Air Force (AURI).

Wuri

AURI were asked to provide aircraft to ferry a party of armed Indonesians from Djakarta to East Indonesia. AURI headquarters was told that they were being sent on a highly secret mission which must on no account receive any publicity. AURI did not know the purpose of the mission nor did Air Marshall SURYADARMA know of the existence of a special military command which had been set up to direct such secret missions. AURI replied that, if the party's movements were to be kept secret, it should assemble in Soerabaya and not Djakarta. The Army insisted on leaving from the latter city, however, and HALIM was selected as the airfield for the party's departure.

AURI were "electrified" to discover at Halim airport a large mixed party of Indonesian Army and Naval personnel. Many were obviously of Papuan or Aru Islands extraction and looked very raw and "jungly". AURI were equally surprised that Commodore JOS SUDARSO, the Naval Deputy Chief of Staff was included in the party. A large crowd of well-wishers, friends and relatives saw the party off from Halim.

The party was ferried by stages to what WIRIOSOPUTRO described as the southern airstrip (presum-

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ably in the Aru islands); the northern strip could not be used owing to the presence on its perimeter of Warga Negara (i.e. citizens) who were in fact Dutch missionaries.

Four boats were used for the sea crossing. The task force was commanded by Lt.Col. SUDOMO of the Indonesian Navy. SUDARSO was in the second craft. The objective of the mission was to land and hold a small piece of West Irian, which fact would enable SUKARNO to announce the "liberation" of part of the territory, and thus contribute to the effectiveness of his (then) projected important policy speech on West Irian. This operation was not planned as an infiltration operation. It took with it an Indonesian flag which it intended to plant on West Irian soil.

At 2100 hours the four craft were nearing the West Irian coast when radar contact was made with Dutch warships. (These, incidentally, were sighted steering towards the party earlier in the day by an Indonesian naval craft, which failed to report the sighting to any naval headquarters, although she herself had been challenged by the Dutch warships). The range was then estimated at nine miles. A 180° change of course was ordered. The Indonesian vessels were in Irian territorial waters. The Dutch warships closed in. Somewhere around the three miles limit the radar of the boat carrying SUDARSO went out of action, followed shortly afterwards by its engine. The craft drifted with its bow pointing straight at the oncoming Dutch vessels which were closing rapidly.

One of the other Indonesian craft opened fire allegedly at a low-flying Dutch aircraft. The Dutch warship promptly retaliated against SUDARSO's craft, killing

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him. The whole complement of the latter was either killed, wounded or captured. The other craft escaped and returned to their base. Their requests for air cover remained unanswered throughout the encounter.

The aftermath

The Indonesian authorities were informed of the debacle by an Indian journalist who had by chance heard a news flash from Radio HILVERSUM (at 10.00 hours? local? Dutch time), and roused General JANI from his bed seeking confirmation.

JANI reported to NASUTION and SUKARNO who summoned the AURI leadership to the Palace.

SUKARNO was in favour of bombing Biak, Fakfak and one other target as an immediate reprisal. Air Marshall SURYADARMA, Colonel UMAR DANI, his Director of Operations, and Lt. Colonel WIRIOSOPUTRO, the Principal Staff Officer (Operations) all demurred. They advised that although all the targets could be reached from Ambon and Morotai airfields, the Indonesian bombers would be "sitting ducks" for Dutch fighters armed with "side-winders" and backed by an efficient radar warning system. They argued that an unsuccessful attack would have a most unfortunate effect on AURI morale. As it was, AURI had just lost a P.5.1 on a training exercise. When SUKARNO heard this advice he relapsed into a sullen silence and dismissed the AURI officers. He asked NASUTION and MARTADINATA to remain.

SUKARNO then announced that he had decided to rejuvenate AURI. He asked NASUTION whom he thought to be capable of making AURI an effective force. NASUTION replied that Colonel MAKKI was the man for this job. SUKARNO said that he favoured Colonel UMAR DANI. SUKARNO added that SURYADARMA, Col. SISWADI (for whom he has a strong antipathy),

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Lt. Colonel WIRIOSOPUTRO and Lt. Colonel HENR ADISUPUTRO were all to be "rejuvenated".

SUKARNO recalled Colonel UMAR DANI and Colonel MAKKI to the Palace and explained his decision and his choice of UMAR DANI as Air Chief of Staff, despite General NASUTION's recommendation in his capacity of Minister of Defense of Colonel MAKKI for the post.

Following the appointment Admiral MARTADINATA made overtures to Colonel UMAR DANI to concert courses of action in order to frustrate too close a control by NASUTION over the affairs of the Indonesian Navy and Air Force. Colonel UMAR DANI had been receptive. Although UMAR DANI has a reputation of being pro-western (he was a student at the R.A.F. Staff College, Andover) NASUTION was in for a shock since the new Air Chief of Staff had a healthy respect for the Russians. Furthermore his force was orientated towards the communist bloc by reason of its dependence upon the latter for most of its modern equipment and for its training.

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Tweede helft maart 1962.

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