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Timor peace negotiations end in fierce gunbattle

Jakarta: Talks between an Indonesian official and East Timor guerrillas ended in a gunbattle in which he and several guerrillas were killed, senior Western diplomats said yesterday.

The battle, more than two months ago, might have scotched any Indonesian plans to seek peace talks with Fretilin, which wants independence from Jakarta, they said.

The official, who met

Fretilin unofficially on his own initiative, hoped to discuss to resolve the conflict with Fretilin.

A quarrel developed after several hours of talks which led to a gunfight in which the official, at least one of his men, and eight to 10 guerrillas were killed.

The last known talks between Indonesia and Fretilin were in March, 1983.—Reuter.

Expulsion of newsmen sours Reagan visit

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From Alex Brummer

In Bali

Amid loud protests from the White House, Indonesian officials last night detained and then expelled two Australian broadcasters travelling with President Reagan.

The chaotic scenes, on the steps of a Pan Am chartered jet carrying 267 members of the White House press corps, occurred just moments before President Reagan touched down to an eerily silent welcome at Bali airport. His visit is billed as promoting the "winds of freedom" blowing across the Pacific.

The airport arrests of corre-

spondents accredited to the White House and travelling with the President were unprecedented, and provided a sour start to Mr Reagan's three-day visit to this Indonesian island. President Suharto, who was at the airport to meet Mr Reagan, banned Australian correspondents after the Sydney Morning Herald published allegations of widespread fraud and corruption by the Suharto family.

The airport drama unfolded as soon as the Boeing 747 touched down. Six uniformed officials mounted the steps and asked by name for the two Australian reporters, Mr Rich-

ard Palfreyman, aged 41, and Mr Jim Middleton, aged 37, both of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

The correspondents were followed down the steps by a posse of US television crews who were waved away by armed guards as the Australian journalists were escorted into the main terminal building.

Just yards away, President Reagan, sporting a bright red and white flower garland over his blue suit, was being introduced to Indonesian dignitaries by Mr Suharto and his wife. Mr Reagan's arrival for a

series of meetings with leaders of the Association of South-East Asian Nations was sober and silent, with no cheering crowds. Bats flew wildly overhead as the President completed his uncanonically quiet tour of the reception line.

The summary expulsion of the Australians, together with the detention and ejection of a New York Times reporter, Miss Barbara Crossette, has focused attention on alleged human rights abuses, press censorship and alleged brutalities and killings in the former Dutch colony of East Timor, which the Indonesians occupied in 1975.

ALEX BRUMMER accompanies
President Reagan to Indonesia
where allegations of human rights
abuses and corruption are likely
to overshadow the Bali summit

Pacific Rim's chill wind of freedom

PRESIDENT Reagan yesterday abandoned the sand and surf of Hawaii and journeyed to the Asean summit in Bali, Indonesia, where the "winds of freedom" are being stilled by human rights abuses, corruption, and trade disputes.

The fragile freedoms in the region were brought home to the Reagan Administration when the Indonesian authorities formally notified two Australian broadcasters travelling with the White House press corps that they would not be welcome, despite high-level diplomatic representations by the US.

Australian correspondents are currently considered unacceptable in Indonesia as a result of allegations that President Suharto and his family, notably his wife, Tien Suharto, have accumulated up to \$2.3 million in wealth.

After complaints from Canberra, the Australian journalists decided yesterday to travel with President Reagan at least as far as Guam in the hope of a change of heart in Jakarta.

The Indonesian clampdown of foreign press coverage of its affairs, together with Congressional calls on President Reagan to raise human rights issues with President Suharto, have cast a shadow over Mr Reagan's three-day visit—the first by a US president since the brutal Indonesian occupation of East Timor in 1975. The Bali visit has been further complicated by the Libyan bombing, which has led Thailand to distance itself from the US and has embarrassed Indonesia as the largest Islamic nation in the world.

The Bali gathering, which will bring together leaders from Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, had originally been envisaged by the White House as an opportunity to emphasize the US's growing strategic and economic relations with what President Reagan calls the "Pacific Rim" countries.

Trade between the US and the Association of South-east Asian Countries has soared in the last two decades, climbing from just \$945 million in 1967 to an astonishing \$23.5 billion last year. This trading boom across the Pacific has been accompanied by closer political and strategic ties as the Asian countries have sought to confront the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea and the growing Russian naval presence in the Pacific.

"The long-term global Soviet military build-up, especially in the Pacific, is continuing unabated," Mr Reagan said in an interview before leaving Honolulu.

This perceived Russian threat has encouraged strategic collaboration between the US and its Asean friends. This has been underlined in recent weeks by the US decision to supply covert assistance to the non-Communist rebel front in Cambodia led by Prince Sihanouk and Mr Son San. The stepped-up US military effort has been seen as part of the "Reagan Doctrine" which seeks to roll back territorial and political gains by Marxist regimes around the world. The rebel front may soon be bolstered, like the Afghan and Angolan rebels, with the supply of Stinger shoulder-held anti-aircraft missiles.

In spreading the "winds of freedom" around the Far East, the US is also now liberally supplying its Asean partners with advanced F-16 jet fighters. It was disclosed here that Indonesia, as well as Singapore and Thailand, will soon be receiving this advanced plane.

But this broad-based cooperation is not enough to

mask the developing fissures in the relationship. The press clamp-down in Indonesia, repeated human rights violations, and rampant corruption in the world's fifth largest country, are hardly seen as consistent with the "winds of freedom" theme.

On the eve of Mr Reagan's departure from Washington, some 23 senators led by fellow Republican Mark Hatfield of Oregon and more than 100 House members wrote to him insisting that the "problems faced by the East Timorese not be overshadowed by talk of military bases and geopolitical strategies."

Human rights groups, such as Asian Watch, have estimated that more than 100,000 of East Timor's 700,000 largely Catholic population have been slaughtered by the Muslim dominated Indonesian forces since the 1975 invasion. Torture and what are politely called "extra-judicial executions" are still said to be common. East Timor has been all but closed to journalists, and human rights groups and Catholics have been forced to take part in population limitation programmes.

Despite this raft of complaints about East Timor, together with charges that President Suharto's government has suppressed the civil rights of more than a million Indonesian citizens, the White House says that Mr Reagan is not planning to raise the matter. Mr Larry Speakes described the charges of human rights violations and corruption as an "internal matter" and sought to contrast Indonesia with the "systematic" crushing of human rights in Vietnam and Cambodia.

White House silence on human rights and democratic abuses by Indonesia and by some other Asean nations are in stark contrast to its recent successful role in dislodging dictators in Haiti and the Philippines, and its efforts to bring about change in Chile. It also suggests that the US is only applying its "winds of freedom" slogan to economic rather than political systems.

However, even on the economic front the US is facing tensions with its Asean partners. It is hoping to soothe strained relations with the new government in the Philippines by offers of up to \$100 million of extra aid when President Reagan meets Vice-President Salvador Laurel in Bali. But more seriously, perhaps, it will face vociferous complaints from other Asean nations about the impact of creeping US protectionism on their economies.

Thailand is up in arms about the US farm bill which subsidises the American rice farmers, pushing down the international price of the crop. Singapore is complaining bitterly about US releases of tin from its stockpile, its efforts to dilute tariff preferences, and to renegotiate textile agreements on terms which are tougher for Asean countries. The Mercantilism which has become fashionable in the US, as a result of the huge US trade deficit of \$200 billion, is beginning to eat away at the freedom of trade flows across the Pacific Rim.

Such economic uncertainties, if they persist, can only breed further political discontent of the kind which erupted in the Philippines in March. In Indonesia, for instance, the world spotlight which Mr Reagan's visit attracts may well serve to bring to the surface the seething resentment of a government and bureaucracy nourished on over-regulation and corruption.