

SECRET

GSRG 500

IMMEDIATE

CYBER CAT/A

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SECRET

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On para 1 see  
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145  
Pa. SH 1251

TO IMMEDIATE F C O TELNO 394 OF 24 OCTOBER 1975, AND TO  
MODUK (D 12 FGB). R F I TO KUALA LUMPUR, WASHINGTON,  
SINGAPORE AND CANBERRA.

SYDNEY DISTRESS TELNO 51 (NOT TO ALL): JOURNALISTS KILLED  
IN TIMOR.

1. ON 16 OCTOBER 5 JOURNALISTS FROM AUSTRALIA WERE KILLED  
IN AN ANTI-FRETILIN ATTACK ON BALIBO, TIMOR. AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY  
HAVE CONFIRMED THAT 2 OF THESE, BRIAN PETERS AND MALCOLM RENNIE,  
WERE BRITISH BORN. THEY WERE WITH THE FRETILIN FORCES IN  
BALIBO WHEN THE HOUSE IN WHICH THEY WERE ALL SHELTERING WAS  
HIT AND SET ON FIRE. PRESS PICTURES OF THE HOUSE HAVE BEEN  
PUBLISHED, WITH A HOLE IN THE CORRUGATED IRON ROOF AND  
SIGNS OF BURNING. ON THE WALL OUTSIDE HAS BEEN PAINTED AN  
AUSTRALIAN FLAG AND THE WORD AUSTRALIA.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE NEWSMEN WERE  
KILLED, ALMOST CERTAINLY INADVERTENTLY, IN THE COURSE  
OF AN ATTACK BY INDONESIAN/UDT FORCES AND THAT THEIR BODIES WERE  
IMMEDIATELY DISPOSED OF BY THE LOCAL COMMANDER, PROBABLY BY  
BURNING.

3. UNDER PRESSURE FROM CANBERRA THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY HAVE BEEN  
PRESSING THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT TO FIND OUT DETAILS OF WHAT  
HAPPENED TO THE NEWSMEN. FOREIGN MINISTER MALIK AGREED PUBLICLY  
TO ENQUIRE FROM UDT AND APODETI; BUT THE INDONESIANS HAVE  
RESOLUTELY AVOIDED FURTHER AUSTRALIAN REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION  
PARTICULARLY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BODIES. THE LOCAL UDT/  
APODETI COMMANDERS HAVE NOW, THROUGH THE GOVERNOR OF INDONESIAN  
TIMOR, MADE A STATEMENT TO THE AUSTRALIANS (TEXT IN MIFT).

THIS IS A COPY  
THE ORIGINAL HAS BEEN RETAINED  
IN THE DEPARTMENT UNDER SECTION  
3(4) OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958

4. THE RELATIVES OF RENNIE AND TWO OF THE AUSTRALIANS H  
AGREED TO BURIAL IN TIMOR. THERE HAS BEEN NO REPLY YET FROM  
PETERS' RELATIVES IN UK. THE PARENTS OF THE LAST AUSTRALIAN  
HAVE ASKED FOR THE RETURN OF THEIR SON'S BODY IF POSSIBLE.

5. THE INDONESIAN REFUSAL OF INFORMATION MUST ARISE PARTLY  
FROM THEIR THESIS THAT WHAT HAPPENS IN TIMORE IS NOTHING TO DO  
WITH THEM; BUT ALSO PARTLY FROM THE FACT THAT THEY CANNOT  
PRODUCE THE BODIES. WE HAVE SUGGESTED TO THE AUSTRALIANS  
THAT, SINCE WE, IN FACT, KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NEWSMEN  
IT IS POINTLESS TO GO ON DEMANDING INFORMATION FROM THE  
INDONESIANS WHICH THEY CANNOT, OR ARE UNWILLING TO PROVIDE.  
THEIR EMBASSY ARE INCLINED TO AGREE BUT ARE APPARENTLY UNDER  
PRESSURE FROM CANBERRA NOT TO LET THE INDONESIANS GET AWAY WITH  
THEIR BLAND DENIALS.

6. I BELIEVE THIS IS A CASE OF THE LOCAL COMMANDER PANICKING  
WHEN HE FOUND HE HAD KILLED THE JOURNALISTS. SINCE NO PROTESTS  
WILL PRODUCE THE JOURNALISTS' BODIES I THINK WE SHOULD OURSELVES  
AVOID REPRESENTATIONS TO THE INDONESIANS ABOUT THEM, THEY WERE IN  
THE WAR ZONE OF THEIR OWN CHOICE. THE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR IS AN  
APODETI/UDT INVITATION IN DUE COURSE TO VISIT THE SITE WHERE THEIR  
REMAINS ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN BURIED.

FORD

F I L E S  
SEAD  
SED  
FUSD  
CONSULAR DEPT  
NEWS DEPT  
MR MALE  
MR CAMPBELL  
MR HIBBERT  
MR HAWLEY

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