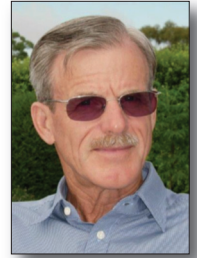


## *Indonesia's conventional defences boosted*

A paper based on an address to the Institute on 28 May 2019 by

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*Indonesia plans to form three joint regional defence commands covering the west, central and eastern islands and their northern approaches; and is expanding its armed forces, the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), to achieve a 'minimum essential force' by 2024. In this paper, Bob Lowry outlines the intended composition of the minimum essential force and its component ground, naval and air forces.*

**Key words:** Indonesia; Tentara Nasional Indonesia; TNI; Minimum Essential Force; Ideal Force.

In May last year, President Djoko Widodo (Jokowi) announced the long-anticipated formation of an additional navy fleet, an air force operations command, an infantry division, and a marine force. But, like his predecessor, he balked at authorizing the three joint regional defence commands that consecutive defence white papers have proposed to take command of these forces. Later in the year, he called for a review of command arrangements. Subsequently, in January this year, perhaps as a test-bed for these arrangements or for more streamlined, less politically sensitive, operational command arrangements, he authorized the formation of a joint command to oversee an outpost line of integrated forward bases in the Natunas, Morotai, Biak, Saumlaki, and elsewhere if and when established.

With the formation of this new command, the Indonesian Defence Force Headquarters now has responsibility for both strategic and operational command of 28 formations and has to make *ad hoc* arrangements for the conduct of joint operations. If the three joint regional commands are established, the span of command would shrink to 10 or 11.

### **Minimum Essential Force and Ideal Force**

The possible creation of these new commands should be seen in the broader context of the development of what President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) termed the 'Minimum Essential Force (MEF)' in January 2005. The composition of this force was outlined publicly in the 2008 Defence White Paper. The white paper projected a gradual increase in defence spending from less than one per cent of GDP to 2 per cent within 10 years. It also called for the revival of defence industry devastated by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, and imposed a freeze on personnel increases (now about 480,000 including about 60,000 civil servants) to make more room for capital expenditure.

In short, the MEF would comprise: joint operational commands, as mentioned above, and a 160,000-man general reserve force to be split among the three services. The Army also wanted one additional infantry division, a brigade in each military area command (Kodam), and a new 350,000-plus militia force, on the basis of one infantry battalion per district. The Navy wanted a 274-ship navy, an increase of about 120 ships, as well as the replacement of most of the existing fleet. The Air Force wanted nine fighter squadrons. Of course, they wanted much more to complement these forces, but the list is illustrative of the scale and scope of the proposed MEF. All this was to be achieved by 2029.

Continuing financial stringency, however, meant that there was no meaningful increase in the defence budget and it soon became clear that service wish-lists would have to be pruned and reprioritized. As a result of a series of strategic defence reviews initiated early in President SBY's second term (2009-14), wish-lists were cut and two whole categories of defence spending, reserves and national support, were deleted from the programme. With these changes, the MEF was to be achieved by 2024 and the remaining items on the wish-lists were pushed beyond that deadline into what would become the 'Ideal Force'.

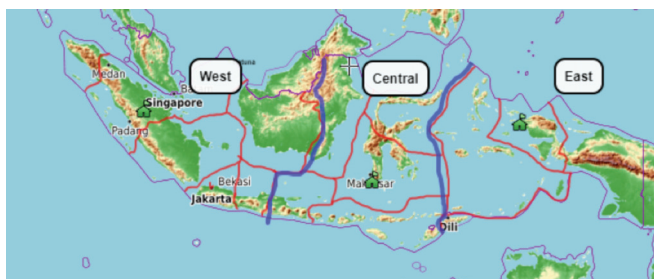
The President also approved a one-off top-up of about US\$5 billion for the capital budget for his second-term five-year defence plan. The new defence minister became so excited that he and the TNI chief talked of acquiring 180 Sukhoi fighters of various classifications and 12 *Kilo*-class submarines from Russia, and of achieving the MEF five years ahead of the target date. Rising oil prices and the heavy cost of subsidies, however, saw other government expenditures restrained, putting paid to such euphoria. Despite this, some new acquisitions were made and displayed at his last Armed Forces Day Parade on 5 October 2014 – in particular: Apache attack helicopters; Leopard tanks; additional F-16 and Sukhoi fighters; and new Landing Platforms Dock (LPD) able to support marines and

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humanitarian relief operations. Due to serendipity in the gifting or concessional pricing of some weapons systems, it was claimed that they were on track to achieving the MEF by 2024.

In his presidential election campaign in 2014, Jokowi promised that, if elected president, he would raise defence spending to 1.5 per cent of GDP once national GDP growth reached 7 per cent per annum. Growth, however, remained static at just over 5 per cent for his first term (2014-2019) and defence spending continued to average under 1 per cent of GDP. Nevertheless, significant improvements have been made in conditions of service and some important acquisitions have been made. Three new submarines have been acquired from South Korea; participation in a joint fighter project with Korea continues; and more aircraft, ships, armoured vehicles, and munitions are being produced domestically. Today (2019), despite the shortfall in the budget, the Minister for Defence and the TNI Commander are both claiming that they are still on track to achieve the MEF by the end 2024.

So, what will the MEF look like? The map below shows the boundaries of the three proposed joint regional defence commands. The army area commands are also shown and the respective navy fleets and air force operational commands coincide with those of the proposed joint commands.



**Map:** Indonesia, showing the boundaries of the proposed West, Central and East Joint Regional Defence Commands (blue) and the Army area commands (red). Note: The regional command headquarters are located in Pekanbaru (West), Makassar (Central) and Sorong (East), respectively – each headquarters is indicated by a green house. [Source: The author]

### Ground Forces

The army comprises about 330,000 regular troops and is divided into: army troops; two centralized commands – Army Strategic Command (*Kostrad*) and Special Forces Command (*Kopassus*); and territorial commands embracing Indonesia's 34 provinces. Army troops comprise five helicopter squadrons, four engineer construction battalions, and five service battalions. *Kostrad* is expanding from two to three infantry divisions with the third headquartered in Sorong, West Papua, while the other two remain in Java. *Kopassus* comprises four group headquarters and 12 battalions and will not be expanded but their capabilities are continually monitored and upgraded under separate arrangements.

The territorial commands employ about half the army's personnel and shadow local government structures from province to village level. They have a complement of combat and service units as the first line of ground defence against external and internal security challenges, including extensive responsibilities for ground-based air defence. Each of the 15 Army area commands has a quick-response battalion and, when established in the remaining four area commands, all will have a brigade battle-group to support their operations. If an invasion occurred, the territorial commands also would provide the framework for leading guerrilla warfare in areas where conventional defence either is not a priority or is not possible, pending a strategic counter offensive.

Given that the threat of invasion is assessed to be very low, it would seem logical that much of the territorial force be composed of reserves. Indeed, trial units were formed in the 1990s for this purpose, but they were discontinued because of concerns about how reserve training might be exploited by groups contemplating the use of violence for political purposes and by the conflicting loyalties and repercussions that reserves might experience if called out to maintain order in their own communities.

In addition to the army, the navy and air force have extensive ground forces. The Marines were authorized to expand their forces from two to three Marine Forces Commands, sometimes called divisions. They comprise a brigade battle-group and a varying number of naval-base defence battalions. The new command is based in Sorong but has yet to be fleshed out and the pre-existing commands will remain in Java. Each command will have sufficient naval and amphibious support to put one battalion ashore in the first wave.

The Air Force Special Forces comprises three wings each with three battalions and specialized detachments. They are supplemented by two wings for ground-based air defence from close-in guns to short, medium and long range surface-to-air missiles. The latter two have yet to be acquired.

In summary, the land forces of all three services, including the marines, comprise the equivalent of four strategically-deployable divisions; a potent special forces contingent; and considerable territorial and fixed-asset protection forces to provide the initial response to either threats to national sovereignty, or, when called on to do so, to internal security and natural disasters.

### Naval Forces

The navy has about 60,000 service personnel, including about 25,000 marines, and sufficient ships, but wants to vary the composition of the inventory and replace many of its current ships. The rationale for the 151-ship target by 2024 was that they needed: 38 ships for sea control of two trouble spots at once; 50 ships to put ashore concurrently two battalion combat-teams

and, administratively, an army battalion; 44 fast patrol-boats for maritime security; and 19 support vessels. Given that the 50 ships for landing operations include support ships, Table 1 compares current ship numbers with 2024 and post-2024 Ideal Force targets.

**Table 1:** Commissioned naval vessels

Force	2019	2024 MEF	Post-2024 Ideal Force
Strike	51	61	110
Patrol	50	36	66
Support	66	54	98
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>274</b>

The most potent compositional change is the projected acquisition of 12 submarines for the strike force. Three new boats have recently been acquired from South Korea and orders have been placed for another three, but these will not be delivered until the mid-2020s. So, it is unlikely that the 2024 target of six new submarines by 2024 will be achieved, unless an off-the-shelf option is adopted. Similar challenges for frigate production are also evident. But there have been significant advances in the production of vessels that support marine corps operations and, more critically in the short-term, disaster relief.

The navy, along with other agencies, also has a major role in maritime security and commands an extensive coastal and seaborne radar network to assist in regulating traffic, particularly in restricted areas like straits and major harbours and their approaches.

The fleet air arm (Table 2) is also being re-equipped with more modern aircraft to fulfil its surveillance, anti-submarine and logistic functions. The projected formation of another anti-submarine squadron seems to have been delayed pending the acquisition of more aircraft to fill out existing squadrons.

**Table 2:** Naval air squadrons

Wing	Squadron	Role	Aircraft	Remarks
1 Puspenerbal Surabaya	400	Anti-submarine	Airbus AS 565 MBe Panther	11 (2017-19)
	600	Tactical Transport	NC-212	
2 Puspenerbal Tanjungpinang	800	Maritime Patrol	CN-235-200 MPA (5) NC-212-200	For targeting rather than surveillance
	200	Training	Bonanza G-36 (6)	

## Air Force

An effective and resilient air force is critical to the successful conduct of conventional operations by the army and navy (Table 3). The air force's personnel strength is about 30,000, including the base-defence forces mentioned above of about 8000. Only one more fighter squadron will be added by 2024. It is to be home-based in eastern Indonesia. This will bring its combat strength to seven fighter squadrons, one ground-attack squadron, and one fighter-conversion squadron. Squadron 14 has been without aircraft for

two years while awaiting the arrival of 11 Su-35 fighters from Russia.

Indonesia has a 20 per cent stake (50 aircraft) in the joint production of a South Korean 4.5 generation fighter due to begin production post-2024. Indonesia is expected to negotiate to take 24 aircraft from the first production run. So, at least 16 aircraft are needed from another source to equip the projected seventh fighter squadron by 2024. It might also need more to replace two Hawk squadrons if the South Korean project is delayed.

A maritime-reconnaissance squadron is centrally based in Makassar and a locally-produced unmanned-aerial-vehicle surveillance drone squadron is based in Pontianak to cover the South China Sea. One heavy and one light transport squadron were formed this year, and one helicopter squadron will be added this year or next, bringing the total number in each category to three, three, and four respectively.

Several air bases beyond the home bases in Java also will be upgraded to support air operations across the archipelago. Among them will be air facilities for four outer-island outposts manned by small integrated (joint) forces located on Natuna Island, Morotai, Biak and Saumlaki. New home bases also will be opened on Biak for a light transport squadron and in Jayapura for a helicopter squadron.

Two-thirds of its projected radar network of 32 stations is in place linked to the four sector commands under the National Air Defence Command – they also have links to the civil aviation radar networks. To demonstrate their prowess, they have intercepted and forced down several aircraft in recent years for allegedly entering Indonesian air space without proper flight plans and clearances.

**Table 3:** Air Force squadrons

Type of Squadron	2017	2024 MEF	Post-2024 Ideal Force	Notes
Fighter	6 (Squadrons 1, 3, 11, 12, 14, 16)	7	11	
Ground Attack	1 (Squadron 21)	1	1	
Fighter Conversion	1 (Squadron 15)	1	1	Assuming acquisition of simulators as well.
Maritime Reconnaissance	1 (Squadron 5)	3	3	
Airborne Early Warning & Control	0	0	1	
Heavy Transport	2 (Squadrons 31, 32, 33)	3	3	
Medium & Light Transport	2 (Squadrons 2, 17, 27)	3	3	
Helicopter	3 (Squadrons 6, 7, 8)	4	4	Squadron 9 raised by 2019-20.
UAV	1 (Squadron 51)	2	2	
VIP/VVIP	1 (Squadron 45)	2	2	17 Squadron also used for VIP/VVIP purposes. 45 Squadron has helicopters.
Training	2 (Squadrons 101, 102)	2	2	

## Defence Industry

Defence industry gradually rebounded during the SBY years, especially during his second term (2009-14). Beginning from a low base, plans call for defence industry to meet 40 per cent of capital requirements by 2024 and all of the Ideal Force requirements beyond

that. As well as achieving defence self-sufficiency, the emphasis on defence industry is also justified on the basis of its contribution to the growth of high-technology industries more generally and the potential for exports.

Significant projects include joint ventures with a number of foreign companies: including with South Korea for the supply of fighter aircraft (mentioned above), submarines and landing platforms dock; with Turkey for the supply of medium tanks; with the Netherlands for the supply of frigates; with China for the supply of surface-to-surface missiles; and with Airbus for the supply of light transport-aircraft and helicopters. Where joint manufacturing is not undertaken, offsets are demanded, such as the barter arrangements with Russia for the supply of 11 Su-35 fighters.

Obviously, all these projects include significant supply of foreign components and modules, but it does advance skills development and industrial capacity for defence and the general economy. History, however, indicates that the costs of these programmes often are underestimated and the benefits exaggerated, and service chiefs have complained periodically about quality and tardiness. Only time will tell whether Indonesia has the balance right.

### **Residual Political Role**

The armed forces gave up their last political posts in 2004 and no longer play an active formal role in retail politics. To help preserve their cohesion and prevent political parties from wooing their support, members of the armed forces are denied the right to vote. They retain significant political influence, however, due to the concept of total people's defence that underpins defence policy and their continuing role in internal security.

The ministry of defence remains a military fiefdom, the commander of the armed forces remains an ex-officio member of the cabinet, territorial commanders retain close links with respective regional governments, and nation-wide indoctrination campaigns continue to promote their concept of the state and the role and obligations of citizens for defence and security.

The armed forces continue to hanker for statutory powers to deal with internal security and counter terrorism, blocking the passage of legislation that would close this option and update the laws governing the employment of the armed forces in these roles. They are not subject to civil law for civil crimes and retain enough political influence to prevent an accounting of past human-rights abuses.

Nevertheless, the armed forces remain the most respected agency of the state and, through their retirees, retain considerable influence in most political parties, parliament, and the ministries and agencies of the state. Elites remain fearful that pushing for further

military reform or allowing an accounting of past abuses, might open cracks in the prevailing political consensus that could be exploited by radical opponents of the state.

### **Conclusions**

None of the developments outlined above indicate any change in Indonesia's free and active non-aligned foreign policy. The same is true for its self-sufficient defence policy of total people's defence. What it does do potentially is strengthen Indonesia's conventional defences, increasing its deterrent effect and its capacity for combined operations with partners.

Without significant increases in defence budgets, however, it will be impossible to meet the quantitative and qualitative targets set for 2024. Much has been done to improve conditions of service, but there are still major shortfalls in the funding provided to maintain the asset and to attain the level of training and operations of all the capabilities needed by modern conventional defence forces. The other option, of course, is to reduce the size or composition of the force to fit what governments are realistically prepared to spend.

Despite recent changes in regional and global strategic circumstances, Indonesian defence policy planners sees little prospect of invasion and remain much more concerned about defending the nation's founding myths, maintaining national cohesion, and securing national development. Hence, the army will remain the dominate service for some years to come.

**The Author:** Robert W. (Bob) Lowry is a defence and security analyst and a member of the United Services Institute of the Australian Capital Territory and of the Senior Advisory Group of the Indonesia-Australia Defence Alumni. He is the author of: *The armed forces of Indonesia* (Allen & Unwin, 1966); *Fortress Fiji: holding the line in the Pacific War, 1939-45* (R. W. Lowry, 2006); and *The last knight: a biography of General Sir Phillip Bennett AO KBE DSO* (Big Sky Publishing, 2011). Following service in the ranks and graduation from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, he was commissioned into the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. His service included deployments to South Vietnam, Singapore and Indonesia. He retired as a lieutenant colonel after 30-years' service in 1993. Since then, among other roles, he has been acting national director of the Australian Institute of International Affairs and associate director of the Australian Defence Studies Centre. In 2001, he was a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group in Jakarta doing policy-orientated research on military and police reform, and on military operations in Aceh. In 2002-03, he was adviser to the Timor-Leste National Security Adviser; and, in 2004, he chaired the Fiji National Security and Defence Review. [Photo of Colonel Lowry: the author]