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Dear Ms Budiardjo,

Thank you for your letter of 29 June to the Foreign Secretary about the UK's engagement with Kopassus.

We take allegations of human rights abuses very seriously. As you know we are actively engaged in discussing the situation in Papua with a wide range of interlocutors at Ministerial and working level in Jakarta, Papua and the UK. We also follow events in Papua very closely and the most recent Embassy visit was on 17-18 June.

We are aware of the recent Human Rights Watch report and my colleagues at the Embassy in Jakarta met with Human Rights Watch during their visit to research the report. We will study the report's findings and recommendations.

As we have discussed Indonesia has come a long way over the last 10 years. Whilst there are many challenges ahead for the reform process real progress has been made, including with respect for human rights. In recognition of that progress Tony Blair, during his visit to Indonesia in 2006, announced the UK's intention to deepen cooperation with the Indonesian government across a range of sectors. This included the defence relationship. In a joint statement on 30 March 2006 the Prime Minister and President Yudhoyono agreed to launch a 'modern defence relationship' in order to address present-day challenges and provide UK support to on-going security sector reform.

We recognise that security forces in Indonesia, including Kopassus, have been implicated in very serious abuses in the past. However we believe that they are genuinely seeking to professionalise and that the best way to encourage further progress is through constructive

engagement and the delivery of appropriate training. The Indonesian armed forces and police are making important contributions to international peace-keeping efforts around the world and we want to encourage this.

Recent UK engagement with Kopassus is limited to a scoping exercise in December 2008, conducted by 2 individuals from the UK armed forces that specialise in the delivery of counter-terrorist training. As you mention in your letter a three week training period is planned to follow up this scoping exercise later in 2009. This exercise will focus on regular military training skills and will be delivered by the UK's Joint Counter Terrorist Training Team.

We agree that more needs to be done to tackle impunity and implement commitments already made to security sector reform. This is likely to be a slow process but there have been some positive signs, including in response to recent incidents in Papua where senior army and police figures have both made clear that the police should be take the lead.

We will continue to press the Indonesian authorities to tackle impunity at all levels but we believe that the best way to achieve this is through engagement and not isolation.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Atmore
South East Asia Pacific Group