

Eliminate overlapping duties of TNI, police

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The battle between the police force and the airborne battalion of the Army Strategic Reserves (Kostrad) in Binjai, North Sumatra was clearly not an isolated case. Since Jan. 2001, the country has witnessed at least 12 clashes between its military personnel and police force, not to mention smaller cases, which did not involve guns or a battle between the two.

There must be something wrong with our security system. Security officers tend to negate the systematic problem by blaming each other, based on a narrow sense of l'esprit de corps. Just a day after the Binjai clash, in a discussion with several middle-ranking military officials blamed the incident on the arrogance of police officers, who made the soldiers angry.

The police cited intervention from military officers when the former was handling a case, with the military demanding the release of suspects in police custody.

Police and military leaders claim to be the defenders of their beloved Indonesia. But people laugh; All citizens simply carry out their specific duties.

The Binjai case and the tarnished image of the Indonesian Military (TNI) are, of course, counterproductive for the future direction of our Armed Forces. Military and civilian leaders need to move quickly to push forward military/defense reform without further delay. Otherwise we will be without a proper security and defense system, which the law no. 3/2000 on national defense says is to secure sovereignty, territory and to protect people.

The involvement of the police and military personnel in extra income-generating activities is conducted either through legal foundations or cooperatives, or done illegally, such as backing the drug business (as in Binjai), illegal logging, gambling, prostitution or smuggling diamonds.

The classic argument is the low military budget. It was not surprising to hear that officials of the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency (IBRA) need to pay trillions of rupiah to several regional military commands (Kodam) for protection.

Military members engaged in these extra income-earning activities are not exactly mercenaries. Nor are the military or police like gangsters battling over a territory providing them with security fees. So what is wrong with them?

References to *oknum* ("unscrupulous members") of the security forces when their negative activities are exposed is escaping the real problem; It reflects the inflated pride of a corps, an attitude which has contributed to a culture of impunity.

How could one battalion or a company of troops just be *oknum*? Still fresh in our minds is the murder of a Papuan leader, Theys Hiyo Eluway, which implicated several of the Army's Special Force (Kopassus) members, the rampage in East Timor and so on. All this needs to be corrected as we urgently need dedicated soldiers who can protect our sovereignty, the territory and the people.

What about the military's function of command, control, communication and intelligence? Are they paralyzed? Where is the Soldiers' Pledge and the *Sapta Marga*, the seven TNI principles? Have they become detached from their roots, their fellow citizens?

TNI's anniversary of Oct. 5 is the best time to reflect on a feasible and alternative solution toward a better and proper defense system. Firing and jailing soldiers involved in gangsterism and in cases like Binjai are merely the proper penalties for violators of military conduct and ethics. It is a rule of thumb in the TNI, for instance, that weaponry cannot be taken without proper procedures, and that its use is only for a proper cause.

However, the basic problem is the overlapping of security personnel on the ground and the confrontation of interests between the military and police.

The problem is related to the overall policy in our defense system that has not yet changed despite TNI's declared reform. The only progress has been the separation of the police from the TNI, the instruction that active members withdraw from posts in the bureaucracy and the independency of the TNI/police during the 1999 election.

However, TNI's new paradigm of redefinition, reposition and reactualization is still political. The primary focus is for the TNI to exert influence in the political process as well being ready to share nondefense roles with civilians.

This is still incompatible to the democratic principle of civil control over the military, where the civil political elite make guidelines and policies for strategic levels of defense to be obeyed by the military.

The only solution is the reorientation of our defense policy, to enable the protection of the world's largest archipelagic state. Yet the policy is still based on the strategic romanticism of pre-independence strategy to fight the colonial power -- a revolutionary war, a guerrilla warfare strategy -- which is focused on land. However, strategies in warfare on the land, the sea or in the air need to also change due to revolutionary changes in military affairs.

A continuation of our land-based strategy is inadequate not only for the future, but right now! One consequence of this continued strategy is the prolonged territorial command structure (Koter), the TNI's backbone in politics and business. The Koter is believed to be a source of non-budgetary funds taken from security services as well as other protection service methods.

Hence, our future defense policy needs to be redefined to boost the dismal protection of our territorial boundaries. This has to become a major concern for our strategic planners despite

our "multidimensional crises". What is needed is a national defense strategy that is no longer based on private or group interests but on our national security interests.

First, we have to reconstitute our territorial defense, which is based on the threat assessment in war games. The territorial structure needs to be replaced by models of joint forces/command between the Army, Air Force and Navy and perhaps only five to seven regional defense structures are needed across the country. Current territorial structures contradict changes in military affairs, especially considering the country's geography.

Second, TNI's doctrine and organization need to be reformed. The military doctrine, which is basically political, needs to be changed into a normal military doctrine. There is a lack of serious will at the TNI Headquarters to change its doctrine. It needs to be directed to have a professional military, not only in the technicalities of combat, but also in the philosophical basis of the profession -- mainly the acceptance of civil authority in a democratic state. Training needs to be directed to meet these technical and philosophical demands.

Third, the military reform needs a leader -- both in the civilian and military population -- who is committed to reform and does not only abuse reformist rhetoric or actions for power games.

If civilian leaders are not capable of steering reform and its commitment to clean governance, this will also hamper military reform. Pro-reform leaders are also needed within the Air Force, the Navy and the Army. Antireform leaders will only destroy the future defense system, especially if they are more interested in keeping cozy relations with the country's chief executive.

Defense reform needs a serious and honest strategy and defense review, currently conducted by the Ministry of Defense. The key is commitment to reform and understanding the objectives of the country in an interdependent world. However, one retired general and former army chief of staff told me that "we cannot pin hopes on the top brass, they are over-contaminated".

He added, "We should focus on the younger (members) and those who are of a middle rank." But can we speed up the much-needed reform of the TNI? This would need a patriotism of a new kind from among our top brass, the heroic generals who flee with impunity when they should be brought to justice.

This kind of behavior is not that of patriotic generals, but of corporals with stars on their shoulders. If we can focus on defense reform, further damage of the military can be stopped. People can then be proud of a TNI that is really able to protect the people.

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