

Strengthening the Maritime Partnership with Indonesia: Opportunity for the Undersea Warfare Enterprise to Assume a More Prominent Role in Theater Security Cooperation

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14. ABSTRACT Strengthening the Maritime Partnership with Indonesia: Opportunity for the Undersea Warfare Enterprise to Assume a More Prominent Role in Theater Security Cooperation. The Joint Force is continuously engaged in activities that are designed to further theater security cooperation objectives with strategic partners around the world. An assessment of the Indonesian naval construction program suggests that there is a unique opportunity for INDOPACOM to leverage the expertise within the Undersea Warfare Enterprise to advance the strategic partnership. This paper provides a synopsis of the Indonesian Navy's maritime strategy and the ongoing recapitalization program with a particular emphasis on their efforts to build a larger and more capable submarine arm and the struggles they have encountered. The author discusses the current state of U.S.-Indonesian defense cooperation and identifies considerations that could shape future engagements between the Undersea Warfare Enterprise and Indonesian Navy. Finally, the author examines potential obstacles to future bilateral engagements between the Undersea Warfare Enterprise and the Indonesian Navy and also discusses how INDOPACOM might mitigate or alleviate these potential roadblocks.					
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INTRODUCTION

Grappling with the challenges of great power competition in a multipolar world, U.S. leadership has reinvigorated its efforts to build alliances and partnerships in the pursuit of foreign policy and national security objectives. Recent U.S. strategic planning directives reflect this emphasis on the necessity for allies and partners. The prioritization of alliance and partnership building is particularly evident in the Indo-Pacific theater as exemplified by the initiation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialog in 2007 and the announcement of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) trilateral security pact in 2021. Although much less conspicuous than announcements of grand strategic partnerships or new security pacts, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) consistently engages in a multitude of efforts to influence strategically important nations and build the capacity of our allies to pursue shared regional security objectives. The vast oceanic expanses of the Indo-Pacific result in a security environment that necessitates the U.S. maritime services assume a more salient role in U.S. theater security cooperation efforts.

One aspect of the evolving maritime security environment in the Indo-Pacific, and in the South China Sea region in particular, is the importance of the undersea domain. The recent AUKUS agreement and the expanding submarine fleets of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam are illustrative of the importance that South China Sea nations attach to the undersea domain. Indonesia presents a unique opportunity for the U.S. Navy to play a greater role in furthering INDOPACOM theater security objectives. Indonesia's maritime strategy and naval recapitalization effort places an emphasis of development and expansion of their submarine arm. Although Indonesia aspires to build a more capable undersea warfare capability, their submarine construction efforts have displayed limited success and the recent KRI NANGGALA tragedy revealed the force's struggles to build proficiency and readiness.

Although the U.S. places a high priority on development of the security cooperation relationship with Indonesia, provision of assistance to the Indonesian Navy's submarine arm is not one of the focus areas of INDOPACOM's theater security cooperation initiatives with the country. As a recognized world leader in the disciplines of undersea warfare and submarine construction and operation, the U.S. is in a position of strength to utilize the competencies of the Undersea Warfare Enterprise to build ally capacity and positively influence the partnership with Indonesia. INDOPACOM should leverage the expertise within the Undersea Warfare Enterprise to proactively engage with the Indonesian Submarine arm to advance the security relationship with Indonesia and support the INDOPACOM objective of building partner capacity.

INDONESIA'S MARITIME SIGNIFICANCE AND NAVAL ASPIRATIONS

The geographic position of Indonesia elevates its importance as a strategic partner and dictate the maritime nature of this relationship with the United States. An archipelagic nation connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia consists of over seventeen thousand islands and spans more than 700,000 square miles. The sea lines of communication passing through the Malacca, Lombok, Makassar, Sunda, and Wetar/Omboi Straits all border Indonesian territory.¹ Of these global shipping lanes, more than half of the world's merchant tonnage passes through these straits in a given year.² In addition to Indonesia's geo-strategic importance as a focal point for international shipping, it is also the fourth most populous country in the world and home of the world's third largest democracy.³ A key trading partner, Indonesia ranks as the largest economy in Southeast Asia and the seventh largest economy in the world as measured by

¹ Premesha Saha, "Indonesia's Potential as a Maritime Power", *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India Vol 23, No 2* (2016), 30

² GlobalSecurity.org, "South China Sea Oil Shipping Lanes", last modified 7 November 2011. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/spratly-ship.htm>

³ "U.S. Relations with Indonesia – Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet", U.S. Department of State, last modified 21 January 2020. March 2021, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-indonesia/>

purchasing power.⁴ In 2018, Indonesia accounted for over \$29 billion in trade with the United States as well as \$11.1 billion in U.S. foreign direct investment.⁵

The 2005 Archipelagic Sea Defense Strategy (Strategi Pertahanan Laut Nusantara, SPLN) and the 2008 Defense White Paper underpin Indonesia's maritime aspirations and provide a basis for understanding their ongoing naval recapitalization efforts. The SPLN directs the armed forces to utilize a layered defense concept to execute the defense of Indonesia. This layered defense consists of a buffer zone (Exclusive Economic Zone and beyond), the primary zone (between the EEZ and territorial seas), and the resistance zone (territorial seas, archipelagic waters, and coastal areas). The SPLN further proscribes the role of maritime forces through the emphasis of strategic funnels as a focus for naval operations. Strategic funnels include entrances to archipelagic waters, critical choke points, as well as the narrow approaches along Indonesia's outer territories.⁶

The Indonesian Navy's deliberations regarding the capabilities necessary to execute the SPLN provided the context for policies and force structure expressed in the 2008 Defense White Paper's concept of the Minimum Essential Force (MEF). The MEF concept directed five broad objectives intended to achieve Indonesian strategic independence. These objectives consisted of capability modernization, encouragement of Indonesian economic growth, avoidance of dependence on a single source of military material, a reduction in the dependence on foreign arms through development of the indigenous defense industrial base, and pursuit of national interests through defense cooperation and diplomacy.⁷ Although the MEF concept does not

⁴ "U.S. Relations with Indonesia – Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet", U.S. Department of State, last modified 21 January 2020. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-indonesia/>

⁵ "U.S. Relations with Indonesia – Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet", U.S. Department of State, last modified 21 January 2020. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-indonesia/>

⁶ Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh Swee Lean (eds), *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 69

⁷ Aris Sarjito, Sumartono, Wijaya, Andy Fefta. 2016. "Policy Effectiveness Evaluation of Minimum Essential Force (MEF) Main Component Indonesian Navy". *International Journal of Management and Administrative Sciences* 4 no. 04 (2016), 15

clearly define the force in terms of numbers, it evolved from the 2005 “Green-Water Navy” blueprint that consisted of a 110 ship “striking force”, a 66 ship “patrolling force”, as well as a 98 ship “supporting force” and included a force of at least twelve submarines to be acquired by 2024.⁸

Indonesian defense leadership expressed three justifications for the inclusion of an expanded submarine arm as part of the MEF construct. Firstly, as President Widodo explained in his Global Maritime Fulcrum vision, Indonesia is an archipelagic nation and the intersection of multiple maritime transit lanes. Although this geo-strategic feature has the potential to benefit Indonesia, it could also prove to be a significant vulnerability as the archipelago can be penetrated relatively easily by foreign maritime forces threatening Indonesia’s control of territorial waters and inter-island communications.⁹ Indonesian naval planners assessed that the capabilities afforded by submarines could address this issue and serve as a persistent sea control platform in the buffer and primary zones as well as in the strategic funnels.¹⁰ Secondly, Indonesian leadership viewed submarines as a valuable deterrent to aggression. As expressed by Defense Minister Sudarsono in 2008, “irrespective of the country’s financial situation, the Indonesian military must acquire submarines because of their excellent deterrent value”.¹¹ Lastly, Defense Ministers Yusgiantoro and Ryacudu both cited the importance of an Indonesian submarine arm to serve as an enforcement mechanism for the archipelagic sea lane (ASL) passage regime.¹² The ASL passage regime established by Indonesia follows from the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which provided the legal

⁸ GlobalSecurity.org, “ALRI – Navy of the Republic of Indonesia – Modernization”, last modified 21 November 2020. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/indonesia/alri-modernization.htm>

⁹ Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh Swee Lean (eds), *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 65-66

¹⁰ Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh Swee Lean (eds), *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 69

¹¹ Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh Swee Lean (eds), *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 59

¹² Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh Swee Lean (eds), *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 68

justification for Indonesia to assert legitimate control over the seas surrounding the archipelago. Under UNCLOS, foreign submarines are required to sail on the surface to comply with the rules of “innocent passage” while transiting archipelagic waters. Recognizing that few foreign submarines would comply with this stipulation, Indonesia established three ASLs allowing foreign submarines to conduct submerged passage of archipelagic waters provided transits were executed in a continuous and expeditious manner.¹³

Indonesia’s efforts to expand their submarine arm appear consistent with the objectives delineated in the MEF concept. In 2011 Indonesia established a contract with Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering (DSME) to build the first of three CHANG BOGO class submarines as a first step in the revitalization of their submarine arm. Per the MEF goal of developing an indigenous defense industry, a critical provision of this contract stipulated that PT-PAL (Indonesia’s state-owned shipbuilding enterprise) engineers would participate in the construction of the first two hulls and that the third submarine would be constructed in Indonesia. In August of 2017, the Indonesian Navy commissioned the KRI NAGAPASA, their first new submarine in 36 years.¹⁴ In 2019, the Indonesian Navy launched their first indigenously built submarine, the KRI ALUGORO at the PT-PAL facilities in Surabaya.¹⁵ The Indonesian Navy also embarked on a construction program to build additional facilities and bases to accommodate the expanded fleet. These new facilities include the Palu Naval Base on Sulawesi as well as the naval base at Natuna Besar in the South China Sea which commenced construction in April of 2021.¹⁶

¹³ Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh Swee Lean (eds), *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 67

¹⁴ Ridzwan Rahmat, “Indonesia Commissions First New Submarine in 36 Years.” *Jane’s Defence Weekly* (August 3, 2017)

¹⁵ Ridzwan Rahmat, “Indonesia Launches First Locally Assembled Submarine.” *Jane’s Navy International*, (April 12, 2019).

¹⁶ Ridzwan Rahmat, “Indonesia Begins Construction of Submarine Base in South China Sea.” *Jane’s Navy International*, (April 7, 2021).

Despite demonstrating a commitment to expanding their submarine force, it appears increasingly likely that the Indonesian Navy will fall short of the 2024 deadline to complete their force development objectives. Technology transfer issues encountered with the Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft (HDW) Shipyard caused the construction of new submarines to lag behind schedule (the DSME CHANG BOGO submarine class is based on an HDW Shipyard design).¹⁷ Launch of the KRI ALUGORO also encountered significant delays due to sediment deposits fouling the PT-PAL submarine launch facility.¹⁸ Since commencing the submarine force recapitalization effort in 2011, the Indonesian Navy has only managed to acquire three additional submarine hulls. In addition to numerous construction delays, the loss of the KRI NANGGALA in April of 2021 highlighted a variety of maintenance, training, and readiness shortfalls within the submarine arm that must be addressed before the Indonesian Navy can pursue further growth.¹⁹ These complications to Indonesia's naval modernization program suggest that Indonesian efforts to grow their submarine force have reached a critical juncture. The ability of the Indonesian Ministry of Defense to resolve these issues will determine if their submarine arm will be capable of supporting the naval strategy as envisaged by the SPLN.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP?

Since the Indonesian democratic reforms in the early 2000's, U.S. foreign policy has sought to strengthen the bilateral relationship with Indonesia. The 2010 U.S.-Indonesian Comprehensive Partnership developed to the point that the governments of the United States and Indonesia released a joint statement affirming a strategic partnership in October of 2015.²⁰ Key

¹⁷ Schreer, Benjamin, "Moving Beyond Ambitions? Indonesia's Military Modernisation": *Strategy, Australian Strategic Policy Institute* (November 2013), 19

¹⁸ Ridzwan Rahmat, "Indonesia Launches First Locally Assembled Submarine." *Jane's Navy International*, (April 12, 2019).

¹⁹ Craig Hooper, "The KRI Nanggala Tragedy: Old Subs Are Getting Pushed To The Limit," *Forbes Magazine*, 26 Apr 2021

²⁰ "Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia", U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Indonesia, last modified 26 October 2015. <https://id.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-by-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-republic-of-indonesia/>

aspects of this statement asserted the desire for closer maritime and defense cooperation. The U.S. Department of State Integrated Country Strategy for Indonesia further elaborates on defense cooperation intentions stipulating two specific mission goals with relevance to Indonesian security development. Specifically, the Integrated Country Strategy for Indonesia calls out the goals to build Indonesia's capacity to contribute to regional and international peace and security and to partner with Indonesia's security forces so that they may advance the rules-based international order.²¹

INDOPACOMs security cooperation efforts with Indonesia reflect the Department of State goals set forth in the Integrated Country Strategy and add further granularity. Specifically, INDOPACOM identifies six focus areas for defense cooperation including maritime security and domain awareness, defense procurement and research and development, peacekeeping operations and training, professionalization, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and countering transnational threats.²² INDOPACOM also identifies future areas of collaboration to include development of Indonesia's defense industry to facilitate future collaboration, technology transfer, cooperative research, industrial collaboration, and logistics support.²³

Consistent with many other security collaboration initiatives, defense cooperation efforts with Indonesia consist of a combination of joint exercises, foreign military sales (FMS), and military education opportunities. According to the Department of State Security Cooperation Fact Sheet for Indonesia, cooperation has expanded to include dozens of annual military-to-military engagements as well as \$1.88 billion in active FMS cases. In addition to engagements

²¹ "Integrated Country Strategy - Indonesia", U.S. Department of State, last modified 31 January 2020. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-indonesia/>

²² "U.S. Security Cooperation with Indonesia Fact Sheet", U.S. Department of State, last modified 23 March 2021, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-indonesia/>.

²³ "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region", U.S. Department of Defense. Last modified 1 June 2019. <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-/1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>

²³ "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region", U.S. Department of Defense. Last modified 1 June 2019. <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-/1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>

and FMS, Indonesia received \$22.6 million in security assistance funding under Section 333 and is eligible for further assistance under the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative (Section 1263) which is specifically intended to strengthen naval and coast guard capabilities.²⁴

U.S. relationship building efforts with Indonesia's maritime services are primarily expressed through a combination of regular joint engagements and training initiatives. Indonesia routinely participates in regional exercises such as Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) as well as the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises.²⁵ June 2021 marked a significant progression in the bilateral maritime partnership between the U.S. and Indonesia with the commencement of construction on the Batam Maritime Training Center. This training center represents a \$3.5 million investment to aid the development of the Indonesian maritime services to address a variety of maritime security challenges.²⁶

Despite the emphasis the Indonesian Navy places on recapitalization of their submarine arm, INDOPACOM's areas of collaboration do not specifically address capability development in the area of undersea warfare. Past bilateral engagements between the U.S. and Indonesian submarine arm have been primarily limited to exercises of opportunity including passage exercises (PASSEX) and simulated submarine casualty exercises (SMASHEX). An Indonesian submarine has yet to participate in larger multi-lateral submarine exercises such as PACIFIC REACH or RIMPAC; however, Indonesia did send representatives to take part in these events in an observer status.²⁷

²⁴ "U.S. Security Cooperation with Indonesia Fact Sheet", U.S. Department of State, last modified 23 March 2021, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-indonesia/>.

²⁵ "U.S. Security Cooperation with Indonesia Fact Sheet", U.S. Department of State, last modified 23 March 2021, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-indonesia/>.

²⁶ Aristo Rizka Darmawan, "Why the New Indonesia-US Maritime Training Center is Strategically Important," *Fulcrum*, last modified Jul 7 2021, <https://fulcrum.sg/why-the-new-indonesia-us-maritime-training-centre-is-strategically-important/>

²⁷ Geoffrey Till and Collin Koh Swee Lean (eds), *Naval Modernisation in Southeast Asia, Part Two* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 74

Given the challenges the Indonesian Navy faces with respect to submarine construction, maintenance, and training and readiness, INDOPACOM has an opportunity to leverage the competencies of the Undersea Warfare Enterprise to offer Indonesia meaningful assistance to build the capability of their submarine arm and supporting organizations. The FMS case providing assistance to Spain to resolve construction issues with the S-80 class submarine provide a useful template to INDOPACOM illustrating how to structure a defense cooperation initiative to assist with Indonesia's submarine construction issues.²⁸ Furthermore, the recent U.S. Submarine Force experience transitioning from the Naval Submarine Support Center paradigm to the Submarine Readiness Squadron model affords an opportunity to convey lessons learned and best practices for maintenance, readiness, and training issues to the Indonesian submarine arm.²⁹ Bilateral engagements concentrating on these aspects of undersea warfare directly contribute to INDOPACOM's focus areas of force professionalization as well as industrial collaboration and logistics support. Additionally, facilitating the development of the Indonesian submarine arm builds a credible deterrent and supports the State Department's goal of enabling Indonesia to further contribute to regional peace and security.

CHALLENGES TO FUTURE UNDERSEA WARFARE COOPERATION INITIATIVES

The potential lack of interest on the part of the Indonesian Ministry of Defense stands as the most significant obstacle to future security cooperation initiatives between the Undersea Warfare Enterprise and the Indonesian Navy. Other obstacles such as budgetary limitations and constraints on U.S. capacity for additional security cooperation engagements are immaterial if INDOPACOM cannot gain Indonesian support for this proposal. INDOPACOM can mitigate Ministry of Defense indifference by demonstrating that future engagements emphasizing

²⁸ Sam LaGrone. 2014. "Spain Asks U.S. For More Help To Fix Flawed Sub." *U.S. Naval Institute News*, 15 Apr 2014

²⁹ U.S. Department of the Navy. 2021. "U.S. Navy Submarine Force Announces Submarine Readiness Squadrons, Formerly Naval Submarine Support Centers" 15 July, 2021 <https://www.sublant.usff.navy.mil/Press-Room/News-Stories/Article/2695427/us-navy-submarine-force-announces-submarine-readiness-squadrons-formerly-naval/>.

submarine construction, maintenance, and readiness issues will contribute to realizing the Indonesia's goals of capability modernization and development of indigenous industrial capacity.

Provided INDOPACOM can build Indonesian interest for future undersea warfare engagements, secondary considerations such as budgetary limitations and constraints on U.S. capacity could be addressed through a variety of mechanisms. One potential mechanism to alleviate budgetary limitations is the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Initiative. This initiative could be leveraged to allocate additional fiscal resources to support future undersea warfare engagements should budgetary constraints prove an obstacle. Constraints on the availability of military subject matter experts could be diminished through utilization of the civilian expertise across the Undersea Warfare Enterprise and in the workforces of private shipyards that support submarine construction. A significant portion of the Department of the Navy personnel with proficiency related to submarine construction, program management, and submarine maintenance can be found within the Naval Sea Systems Command civilian engineering cadre. Furthermore, the example of U.S. assistance to Navantia shipyards to resolve construction issues with the S-80 submarine demonstrate how an FMS case can be utilized to facilitate assistance from private industry to partner nations when U.S. government engineering assistance is not available or not appropriate to the task.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia appears to be committed to expanding their submarine arm as a critical component of their archipelagic maritime strategy. It is in the United States' stated interest to build capacity in our strategic partners so they may contribute to shared regional security goals. Given the challenges faced by the Indonesian Navy in expanding their submarine force, there is an opportunity for INDOPACOM to leverage U.S. expertise in submarine construction, maintenance, and operations to foster closer security cooperation between the United States and Indonesia. INDOPACOM should consider expanding the scope of their defense cooperation

efforts with the Indonesian Navy to include a disciplined series of engagements to provide best practices and lessons learned to the Indonesian submarine arm to facilitate their development into a more capable partner. Conducting bilateral exchanges with a focus on the challenges currently confronting the Indonesian submarine arm and consistent with the objectives in the MEF concept have the potential to positively influence the U.S.-Indonesian strategic relationship and to contribute to the Indonesian Navy's overall credibility as a deterrent and as a regional U.S. partner capable of enforcing the international rules-based order in the South China Sea.

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