

The Role of the Indonesian Air Force in Safeguarding the Border Area of the Republic of Indonesia in East Nusa Tenggara (Ntt)

Jose Fernando Lopes Ximenes, Wawan Budi Darmawan, Akim

The state border is a geographical area which become an arena for power struggle between countries, where some countries struggling to expand the boundaries among them. As a state security and defence keeper, the Indonesian Air Force should be in the front-line while safeguarding the border area of the Republic of Indonesia, especially in the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) from transnational threats, especially human trafficking, radicalism and terrorism, border disputes, and smuggling problems. This study argued that in relation to the border guard strategy by the Air Force, the change in the status of the El Tari Lanud from type C to type B is an effort to improve its ability to carry out its duties. In the field of defense, the role of the Air Force becomes dominant, as they should have the ability to secure the sovereignty of the country in the air along with other components. This study employs a descriptive analysis method with a specific data collection technique to validate the findings. Thus, the findings of this study showed that we need a new Indonesian air strategy (grand aero-strategy) that expected to be able to establish joint operations for all elements of Air Force defence operation. This strategy is needed to secure Indonesia's air sovereignty and accommodate all national air potentials at the op-

Jose Fernando Lopes Ximenes, Wawan Budi Darmawan, Akim. The Role of the Indonesian Air Force in Safeguarding the Border Area of the Republic of Indonesia in East Nusa Tenggara (Ntt). *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 13, no. 4: 79–90.



erational level. With a well-prepared strategy, the problems in the NTT border area will decrease positively.

Keywords: Lanud El Tari, NTT, state border, sovereignty.

CEJISS

4/2019

The state border is a geographical area which from the beginning was a territory for power struggle between countries, that can be marked by the struggle to expand the boundaries between those countries. As part of the history and existence of a country, the history of border areas cannot be separated from the history of birth and the end of various countries (Riwanto, 2002). The country's border region is the main investment of a country's sovereign territory. This border area has an important role in determining the boundaries of sovereignty areas, the use of natural resources, as well as the security and integrity of the region. Border issues have complex dimensions. There are a number of crucial factors involved in it such as state jurisdiction and sovereignty, politics, social economy, and defense and security.

The development of the global and regional environment that occurred in the region of Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific, and the long and open border lines of the Indonesian territory become a threat to its national security. The vulnerability of the border areas become a focus of attention to the Indonesian government today due to significant problems: border disputes and changes in territorial boundaries that occur at certain coordinate points; be the entrance and transit point for criminals/ terrorists, as well as the occurrence of acts of transnational crime. A wide and open border area, weak law enforcement, political uncertainty and domestic economic crisis are the main factors in the weaknesses of the security system in Indonesia's sea border area.

The Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) as the national power of the country should be ready to face threats in the form of military forces both from within and outside the country in dealing with this threat with Military Operations (OMP) and Military Operations Other Than War (OMSP). OMP is used to deal with another country, while OMSP is a military operation carried out not in the context of war with another country, but for other tasks such as combating armed insurgency, separatist movements, task of overcoming transnational crime, task of humanitarian assistance and task of peace (Perpang TNI 72, 2002). To monitor the Indonesian border region from all the threats that come, we need a national defense system that can involve by all

potential and national forces. The Air Force is the main part of the TNI which is a major component of national defense and is ready to be used to carry out defense tasks, especially on borders between neighboring countries.

The economic, political and security balance of the Asia-Pacific region has changed after the revival of the China economy. As a superpower, the United States is worried and realise the need to increase its role in the Pacific as a response for thi situation. The United States military strength increased by 60% by 2020 (Farras, 2018). On the other hand, the political feud between North and South Korea, the problem of Japan's border with Korea, and China's claims also influenced the shift in the security situation around Asia. Even more, with Australia's interest in the Timor gap it will open opportunities for better relations with the Democratic Republic of East Timor (RDTL). This kind of regional situation, spurred ASEAN countries to increase the impressive preparedness for an arms race.

In Indonesia, East Nusa Tenggara is one of the border areas that deserves attention. This area is directly bordered by two countries: Australia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste (RDTL), where RDTL still holding potential problems, including the Occussie region dispute and several border points. NTT has a wide area of territory consisting of 1,192 small islands (PPID NTT, 2012). The Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes (ALKI) III A and the Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Lanes (ALKI) III B cleave the sea area, such conditions will be a potential for vulnerability. The ethnic diversity, culture and religion as well as economic limitations, making NTT as a territory tends to be volatile in the field of defense and security. To deal with this situation, a strong component of national defense is needed. But at this time, the existence of TNI as the main component of defense, has not been balanced when compared to the large of the area for which it is responsible. Especially with the Indonesian Air Force, in the province of NTT there is only the Indonesian Air Force Base El Tari and Company Rifle C Battalion 466 Paskhas and Radar 226 / Buraen unit.

In the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), in relation to the border guard strategy by the TNI, the change in the status of the El Tari Lanud from type C to type B is an effort to improve the Lanud's ability to carry out its duties. In the field of defense, the role of the Air Force becomes dominant as they has the ability to secure the sovereignty of the country in the air along with other components. However, at present, the

*Jose Fernando
Lopes Ximenes
Wawan Budi
Darmawan
Akim*

air power deployed in the Province of NTT is still very limited. The Air Force Base El Tari as an air operations unit is constrained by human resources, defense equipments, and infrastructures. It takes serious priority and efforts to improve these factors. The integration of all parties to help with the limitations of the Indonesian Air Force Base El Tari will be able to deliver it to carry out the task of supporting border defense in the territory of the NTT Province properly. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in formulating the problem with the question “What is the Role of the Air Force in the Safeguarding of the Border Region of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara?”

Theoretical Framework

In traditional approach, security is often interpreted in the context of physical (military) threats originating from outside. Pradwita in 2005 stated the definition of security as follows:

“A nation is in a safe condition as long as that nation cannot be forced to sacrifice values that it deems important (vital) ..., and if it can avoid war or, if forced to do so, it can come out victorious.”

In simple terms, defense means the efforts made to create conditions or stable conditions. National defense means all efforts to maintain national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the safety of all nations from threats and disruption to the integrity of the nation and state. In Indonesia, national defense is managed by the Indonesian National Army under the Ministry of Defense and is referred to as a defense force.

The essence of Indonesia’s national resilience is the tenacity and the toughness of the nation which contains the ability to develop national power, to be able to guarantee the survival of the country in achieving national goals. National defense of a nation consists of human resources, natural resources and geography, as well as dynamic aspects which include ideology, politics, economics, social culture, defense and security. These aspects interact with each other and form an integrated system called Astagatra.

“A country can not be prosperous without security and on the other hand security can not be achieved without prosperity. Thus, it can be defined that national resilience is a dynamic condition of a nation that includes all aspects of life in order

to remain victorious, in the midst of order and change that is always there” (Usman, 2003).

The national defense system of Indonesia is known as the universal people’s defense and security system (Sishankamrata), where its universality implies the involvement of all people and all national resources, national facilities and infrastructures, as well as the entire national territory as a whole and comprehensive defense unit (Departemen Pertahanan, 2010).

*Indonesian Air
Force and
Safeguarding the
Border Area*

Indonesia’s defense function is carried out with the Universal Defense System in order to realise and maintain the entire territory of the Republic of Indonesia with all its contents as a defense unit. This conception of national defense has two functions: Military Defense and Non-Military Defense (Departemen Pertahanan RI, 2008).

The next approach is Air Defense. The national airspace of a country is entirely closed to foreign aircraft, both civilian and military. Because of its nature, then in the national airspace there is no known right of peaceful crossing of foreign parties such as in the territorial sea of a country. Only with a state permit under the advance, through either multilateral or bilateral agreements, can national air space be passed by foreign aircraft. Such a closed nature can be understood, considering that air space as a medium of movement that is very vulnerable in terms of underneath state security and defense. As we know, attacks by the air have many advantages and conveniences, such as being fast, wide range, impromptu, and infiltration that can be carried out optimally. This is what drives every country to adopt strict and rigid national airspace maintenance standards (Heilenday, 1988, p.10-16). In the framework of the implementation of state sovereignty over the airspace of the Republic of Indonesia, it has been determined that the government exercises the authority and responsibility of airspace regulation for the benefit of aviation, national economy, national defense and security, socio-culture, and the air environment.

Mr. Soekarno, the former President of Indonesia once said that to control the air means to control the national power in the air as a decisive factor in modern warfare, and if our army wants to stand on equal footing with the international army, we must have the best army. The development of advanced aerospace technology is so rapid that it makes national borders meaningless and vulnerable to external threats. The emergence of several types of modern defense equipment in the form of aircraft proves the truth of General Giulio Douhet’s theory:

“To have command of the air means to be able to cut an enemy’s army and navy off from their bases of operation and nullify their chances of winning the war”.

CEJISS
4/2019

Douhet argued that air power is revolutionary because it operated in the third dimension. The role of the aircraft then becomes dominant for the reason that the aircraft can fly over the surface of the troops and send them for secondary interests. Likewise, the vastness of the sky makes defense almost impossible, so the essence of air power is attack, the only defense is to carry out good attacks. The air force that can carry out orders from the air by carrying out bombardment of enemy forces, means a victor.

The importance of the existence of air power by aircraft makes the violation of national airspace by the parties concerned is not something that can be considered light. Indonesia’s sovereignty in air space must be upheld. Because at present there are many violations of state sovereignty over Indonesian air space. All move in parallel along with global developments so that it becomes a challenge that the TNI must continue to anticipate, especially the Air Force.

Starting from the idea that the NTT Province’s position is very strategic, bordered with two neighbouring countries (Australia and Timor Leste), both land and sea boundaries, it has the potential to become an arena of conflict for Indonesia due to several violations carried out by neighbouring countries. Indonesia needs a defense and security system that are strong, one of which is the Air Force carrying out the task of upholding the law and maintaining the sovereignty of the country in the air. This view can be used as a basis by the Air Force to see the air defense area as a unified whole in projecting the development of the air defense system. One of them is the ability of the El Tari Lanud to air defense quality in the province of NTT. El Tari Lanud as an air operations base, representing the presence of the Air Force in the NTT region has a heavy duty and responsibility faced with the vast territory and potential vulnerabilities that may arise.

Research Method

This study employs a descriptive analytical method with a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through library research that is looking for references from book literature, data, regulations, legislations, manual books, journals, and information through other internet and printed media related to the subject matter with this study.

Likewise, all the data obtained serves to validate the findings of this study.

Discussion

The development of global and regional environments that occur in Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific region recently, also the long and open borderlines of Indonesia's territory have the potential to pose as a threat. This condition causes the political, economic and security conditions at the global and regional levels to be factors that influence the situation in Indonesia. In the field of defense, the role of the Air Force becomes dominant as it has the ability to secure the sovereignty of the country in the air along with other components. The Indonesian Air Force, as the enforcer of the country's sovereignty in the air, is obliged to carry out security in the border area in order to prevent various intervention actions from certain parties who try to change the national boundaries that are the main part of the Republic of Indonesia sovereignty. In the border region of Indonesia and Timor Leste, Lanud El Tari Kupang has a full role in carrying out air force duties in the form of national security and defence in the airspace.

The execution of the tasks does not always run well. Regarding airspace violations, the Air Force's strategic planner at the 2019 Indonesian Air Force leadership meeting said that the plan to allocate Alutsista in the form of airplanes in Lanud El Tari had become a concept in the construction of a power display. If faced with fulfilling the Minimum Exential Force (MEF) program towards 2024, Indonesia needs to accelerate in the process of placing air squadrons in NTT. According to data from the Radar 226/ Buraen unit, the potential for airspace violations in NTT and its borders are still quite significant (Adji, Sugeng & Sardjono, 2019, p. 13). In addition, the presence of the Indonesian Air Force aircraft to become an air bridge is urgently needed, especially in military operations other than war (OMSP) in assisting the National Police and local government. OMSP can come from various types of threats and reasons, including: armed separatist movements, armed uprisings, acts of terrorism, border conflicts, issues of national vital objects that are strategic, the task of world peace in accordance with foreign policy, in order to secure the President and Vice President along with their families, empowering defense territories and supporting forces early according to the system in the framework of universal defense, assisting the tasks of government in the regions, supporting the

*Jose Fernando
Lopes Ximenes
Wawan Budi
Darmawan
Akim*

National Police of the Republic of Indonesia in the framework of security and public order as stipulated in the law, helping to secure state level guests heads of state and representatives of foreign governments who are in Indonesia, helping to cope with the effects of natural disasters, refugees, and providing humanitarian assistance, assisting with search and rescue, assisting the government in securing ship and flight against piracy. barriers to piracy and smuggling ((Undang-Undang TNI No 34 Tahun 2004).

At the Indonesia-Timor Leste border, the biggest security threat comes from the many cases of terrorism. This border is often one of the entrance points to the threat of radicalism and terrorism, especially in Belu District (TTU), which borders in land with Timor Leste and borders in sea with Australia (World Bank, 2011). In addition to the threat of terrorism, human trafficking is also a major threat to the Indonesia-Timor Leste border in Kupang. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has published that in the period March 2005 to December 2014 the number of human trafficking in Kupang reached 6,652 people, of which 82% were women and 12% were men (Deny, 2015). It was also quoted from the foreign workers Syndicate (SPLNI) that NTT Province is currently categorised as one of the top provinces in terms of crime and the threat of Human Trafficking, which is mostly directed, to the nearest countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. Crimes and threats of human trafficking have become an actual issue in NTT in the past few years, NTT occupies the top rank and was asked as the area of origin for victims of human trafficking (Daniel, Mulyana & Wibhawa, 2017) Efforts to eradicate trafficking in people in NTT remain in the spotlight such as the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which gave a signal that the problems of migrant workers in NTT had reached a chronic condition, so that the handling steps became a joint urgency. In general, the number of migrant workers from NTT is not the highest in Indonesia, but the number of human trafficking cases from NTT is the highest according to the Criminal Investigation Police data in Indonesia. Since February 2014, the case of human trafficking has become a 'hotspot' in protest by the civil society movement in NTT (International Organisation for Migration, 2017, p. 111).

In addition to the above threats, there are also threats from regional and international cooperation. For example, regional cooperation between the United States and Australia in building military bases in

Darwin, North Australia and planning to place 2,500 marines and their combat equipment there that it could be a threat to Indonesia's defense. Although the United States reasoned that this development was carried out with the aim of providing the fastest assistance in the event of a natural disaster or other threat to the countries around the location, we could instinctively understand that this cooperation could be a threat in the form of spies and so on Indonesia. In addition, cooperation between Timor Leste and China also poses a threat to Indonesia's defense and security. China has recently become the largest foreign investor in Timor Leste. This will certainly become a threat to the sovereignty of the Indonesian State.

Another thing that could be a threat to Indonesia defense and security is the bilateral approach between the government of Timor Leste and the government of Australian related to the maritime boundaries of the two countries, so that the national integrity of the two countries can be distinguished from the management of natural resources contained there. Australia as a more developed country compared to its neighbor countries both politically, economically and militarily, insisted in negotiations by setting maritime boundaries marked by the Australian government and did not want to discuss maritime boundaries according to the international law. Timor Leste as a sovereign state has the right to its sovereign territory so that all problems can be resolved in the International Court of Justice. Timor Leste's desire is an international recognition of its sovereignty over land, sea and air and can utilize its natural resources for political and economic development. The difference in opinion between Australia and Timor Leste regarding the Timor gap and the existence of a dominant Australian interest in the Timor Gap will certainly have an impact on the interests of the Indonesian State at the border.

In the air defense and security problem, to address the various problems above, we need a new Indonesian air strategy (grand aero-strategy) that accommodates these interests. This strategy is expected to be able to establish joint operations for all elements of TNI's air defense. This strategy is needed to secure Indonesia's air sovereignty and accommodate all national air potentials at the operational level. The birth of a global air strategy is very important while faced with Indonesia's geo-strategy as an archipelagic country with vast territorial sovereignty. The military becomes a political tool of force for the interests of diplomacy and the interests of elevating the bargaining position of

resolving bilateral and international problems in defence and security area of the Republic of Indonesia.

Several problems occur in the NTT province borders. One of them are problems of political upheaval / instability. The Republic of Indonesia is called as the Archipelagic State, which means an island nation located between two continents namely Asia and Australia and two Oceans namely the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean causing its position to be important and strongly influenced by the development of strategic environment. From this geographical condition, many benefits that can be obtained by Indonesia besides that much vulnerability that also potentially arise and endanger the integrity of the nation and state. As we know, Indonesia directly borders with ten neighbouring countries in the sea and land area, that countries are Malaysia, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, India, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Australia and Palau. This wide and open border area and weak law enforcement, as well as domestic political uncertainty, are become the main factors in the weakness of the security system in Indonesia's border regions.

There are many non-traditional security threats that span widely in the border areas of Indonesia. They are interrelated and sometimes overlapping areas such as threats to environmental security, food security, economic security, energy security, human security, maritime security and so on are considered to have a serious impact on various levels, be it security for individuals, national security, regional security, international or even global security. The developments of international actors and security issues subsequently make contemporary global security interactions more complex and varied. Some efforts to change the status of the Lanud El Tari should be accompanied by an increase number and quality in human resources, facilities and infrastructures as well as an increase in defense equipment.

The issue of upgrading the Lanud El Tari status has emerged since this past decade. In 2022, it is targeted to have a squadron of fighter planes in El Tari Lanud. This process not suddenly happen as it has carried out the development process since 2016. In January 2019, the Commander of Operations Command III has submitted a request letter for review of the validation of the Lanud El Tari status exchange from type B to type A. Increasing this status means equating the standard of Lanud El Tari with to the type A air force airport which in addition is equipped with a combat squadron, also a squadron reconnaissance,

upgrading tools and facilities, and the addition of personnel to 800 to 1000 personnel. This process will generally be achieved in one to two years depending on costs and other various factors (Nong, 2019). With a strategic position on the border that serves as the main air defense portal to dispel threats from the east and south, as well as the last portal for threats from north and west, the Lanud El Tari strengthening should be accelerated. Unfortunately, the Indonesian Air Force found difficulties with the budget because it required a sizable budget to complete defense equipment and infrastructure development while the portion of Indonesia's defense budget from the state budget was still very limited (Redaksi Timor, 2017).

*Jose Fernando
Lopes Ximenes
Wawan Budi
Darmawan
Akim*

Conclusion

In national security and defense issue, the military sector will always be an instrument of political power in the interests of diplomacy and in the interests of bargaining positions improvement to resolve the bilateral and international problems of the Republic of Indonesia. This is the main reason why Indonesia must complete a new air strategy (grand aero-strategy) that accommodates all interests and can establish joint operations for all elements of TNI's air defense. When this strategy is wholly complete, it will provide a significant development solution to the problems faced by the Air Force in the Southeast Asian border region. In the Central part of Indonesia, Lanud El Tari Kupang has become the leading air defense portal from threats from Australia and Timor Leste. This causes the Lanud El Tari to require special attention, especially the strengthening of status and facilities through upgrading type from type B to type A. With an appropriate aero-strategy that is consistent with the needs of the El Tari Lanud, every year significant targets and efforts will be established to reduce the number of threats to the border area in Indonesia. It is hoped that this interdimensional strategy will be implemented well by each element so that the timeline can be measured accurately.



JOSE FERNANDO LOPES XIMENES is affiliated with Security Studies, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia.

WAWAN BUDI DARMAWAN is affiliated with the Department of Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia.

AKIM is affiliated with the Department of International Relations, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia.

The authors can be contacted at nandoloxi3180@gmail.com.

CEJISS
4/2019

References

- Adji, K.S., Sugeng, U. & Sardjono, H.B. (2019). Optimalisasi Gelar Radar Hanud Guna Meningkatkan Pertahanan Udara dalam Rangka Menjaga Kedaulatan Negara di Udara. *Markas Besar Angkatan Udara TNI AU*.
- Daniel, E.S.R., Mulyana, N. & Wibhawa, B. (2017). Human Trafficking di Nusa Tenggara Timur. *Share: Social Work Journal*, 7 (1).
- World Bank. (2011). *Rencana Induk Pengelolaan Batas Wilayah Negara & Kawasan Perbatasan Tahun 2011-2014*. Decentralisation Support Facility: Jakarta.
- Deny, S. (2015). *Catatan IOM: Human Trafficking Paling Banyak Terjadi di Indonesia*. Diakses dari Liputan6 dalam <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/2249883/catatan-iom-human-trafficking-paling-banyak-terjadi-di-indonesia>
- Departemen Pertahanan RI. (2008). *Buku Putih Pertahanan Indonesia 2008*.
- Departemen Pertahanan Republik Indonesia. (2010). *Buku Putih Pertahanan Indonesia*.
- Direktorat Jenderal Strategi Pertahanan. (2008). *Perkembangan Lingkungan Strategis dan Prediksi Ancaman tahun 2008*. Ditjen Strahan Dephan RI: Jakarta.
- Farras, B. (2018). *Waspada! Tanda-tanda AS Resesi Makin Kuat*. Diakses dari CNBC Indonesia dalam <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/market/20181215103629-17-46546/waspada-tanda-tanda-as-resesi-makin-kuat>
- Heilenday, F. (1988). *Principles of Air Defense and Air Vehicle Penetration*. MercuryPress: Washington D.C.
- International Organisation for Migration. (2017). *Laporan Mengenai Perdagangan Orang, Pekerja Paksa, dan Kejahatan Perikanan di Indonesia*. IOM: Jakarta.
- Nong, Ryan. (2019). *Kenaikan Tipe Pangkalan Udara El Tari Kupang! Panglima Komando Operasi III Surati Danlanud*. Diakses dari: <https://kumpang.tribunnews.com/2019/01/25/kenaikan-tipe-pangkalan-udara-el-tari-kupang-panglima-komando-operasi-3-surati-danlanud>
- PPID NTT. (2012). *Tentang Provinsi NTT*. Diakses melalui <https://ppid.nttprov.go.id/tentang-provinsi-ntt/>
- Redaksi Timor. (2017). *Lanud El Tari Disiapkan jadi Tipe A*. Diakses dari <https://timorexpress.fajar.co.id/2017/08/10/lanud-el-tari-disiapkan-jadi-tipe-a/>
- Tirtosudarmo, R. (2002). Tentang Perbatasan dan Studi Perbatasan: Suatu Pengantar". *Jurnal Antropologi Indonesia* 67 (XXVI): iv-vi.
- Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 34 tahun 2004 tentang Tentara Nasional Indonesia.
- Usman, W. (1997). *Pembangunan dan Ketahanan Nasional*. Universitas Terbuka: Jakarta.