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U.S. to resume military assistance to Indonesia: Juwono

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JAKARTA (JP): Minister of Defense Juwono Sudarsono has expressed his optimism that the United States will resume its military assistance to Indonesia.

Speaking before Indonesian citizens in New York on Thursday, Juwono said his prior talks with Pentagon officials indicated that the U.S. government would review the embargo on Hercules aircraft components in the next two or three months.

He said, however, the U.S. would not restore the International Military Exercise and Training (IMET) program, until after Indonesia manages to bring repatriation of East Timor refugees and pro-Jakarta militia activities under control.

"If all conditions are fulfilled, the program could be restored immediately," Juwono said as quoted by *Antara*.

Washington suspended all joint military exercises and exchanges and other support for Indonesia in September of last year to protest against the killings in East Timor.

Juwono said on Thursday that he had convinced the Pentagon of Indonesia's desperate need for Hercules aircraft for humanitarian missions, including in the riot-hit provinces of Aceh and Maluku.

"Never think that the planes were used only to transport military personnel to conflicting areas. The aircraft have saved many lives in the strife-torn territories also," he said.

Indonesia has eight Hercules aircraft, but five of them are not eligible to fly.

Juwono also said that the government would respond to the lawsuit against former Army deputy chief of staff Lt. Gen. Johny Lumintang 20 days after it was filed in the Washington DC district court on Feb. 28.

The decision was taken upon the advice of Pentagon officials, according to Juwono.

"Otherwise, *Pak Lumintang* might receive a subpoena when he visits the U.S.," Juwono said, adding that a quick response was a gesture of respect to the court.

He said the military attache of the Indonesian embassy in Washington DC, Brig. Gen. Dadi Susanto, had been assigned to meet the court summons on Johny's behalf.

The U.S.-based Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) and James Klimaski on behalf of several victims of the East Timor mayhem sued Johny, who is also the governor of the National Resilience Institute (Lemhanas), for his alleged role in human rights violations.

The charges against Johnny were made on behalf of a mother whose son was killed, a man who was tortured, and another man who lost his leg during the violence. The identities of the plaintiffs, who are East Timorese, are kept secret for security reasons.

The suit also cited a June 1999 army manual, also signed by Johnny, which stated that the Army's Kopassus intelligence operatives were to be trained in propaganda, kidnapping, terror, agitation, sabotage, infiltration, undercover operations, wire-tapping and photographic intelligence.

Juwono said many items in the lawsuit were incorrect. He suspected that certain Indonesian nongovernmental organizations whom he refused to identify offered the information on which their U.S. counterparts based their lawsuit.

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