

Decentralisation and Conflict in Indonesia: The Mamasa Case

I. OVERVIEW

Violence -- five people killed, five houses burned -- on 24 April 2005 in Mamasa district, a remote area of West Sulawesi, is raising concerns that Indonesia faces another outbreak of serious communal conflict.

The Mamasa conflict is administrative, rooted primarily in the desire of local officials for personal gain. No one from the area interviewed by Crisis Group believed religious differences were the cause. But because Mamasa is majority Christian and the 26 villages where opposition was initially concentrated are majority Muslim, the perception persists elsewhere in Indonesia that it is a communal struggle, and it has attracted the attention of Muslim radicals from outside the immediate area. The Indonesian government clearly recognises the danger of polarisation along religious lines and has moved quickly to make arrests and send additional security forces to the area. If communal conflict is to be prevented, however, the underlying administrative dispute needs urgently to be addressed.

The roots of the Mamasa conflict are in a by-product of Indonesia's decentralisation program known as *pemekaran*, literally "blossoming" -- a process of administrative fragmentation whereby new provinces and districts are created by dividing existing ones. Mamasa district was formed out of the district of Polewali-Mamasa (Polmas) in 2002, one of over 100 such divisions that have taken place since 1999 and have increased the total number of provinces and districts in the country by roughly 50 per cent.

During the campaign for the district, which began in 1999, villages in several sub-districts expressed opposition to their inclusion. The most persistent opposition was from 26 of 38 villages of Aralle, Tabulahan and Mambi sub-districts, known collectively as ATM. Supporters of incorporation in these sub-districts were dubbed "pro", while opponents were called "kontra".

When the national parliament passed a law to form Mamasa without regard for a compromise reached at local level to exclude the 26 villages, a system of parallel

governments emerged. Opponents received support from the government of the "mother" district, Polmas, which continued to pay the salaries of civil servants who refused to work for the Mamasa government and maintained an administrative structure in the three sub-districts. Mamasa established its own government structure in the sub-districts, so that there were two sub-district heads and often two village heads in the same place. Children were forced to go to different schools based on their parents' political affiliation.

The tensions associated with the pro-kontra divide, conflated with a local land dispute, led to three murders in late September 2003, triggering major displacement. No effective action was taken to resolve the conflict, however, and three more people died in October 2004 after another clash. By then, when the central government sent an independent team to evaluate the district boundaries, issues of displacement, segregation and justice loomed large, and the conflict had become much more than an administrative dispute.

There are now indications that youths previously involved in the nearby Poso conflict may have come into the area to stir up trouble. The site of serious communal violence from 1998 to 2001 and sporadic trouble ever since, Poso has been an incubating ground for terrorism -- several of those implicated in the 9 September 2004 bombing in front of the Australian embassy in Jakarta were Poso veterans. A repeat of this pattern in Mamasa needs to be prevented at all costs.

Mamasa is a case study of what can happen when there is not a clear procedure to resolve a dispute in the *pemekaran* process, the central government is too beset by other problems to find and implement solutions, and the law is not promptly and transparently enforced against those who commit violence. The latest deaths underline the dangers of allowing a low-level conflict to fester. The costs could be disastrous if militants decide the conflict is now ripe for exploitation.

II. BACKGROUND TO CREATION OF MAMASA

Mamasa lies in West Sulawesi, itself a new province carved from the north western corner of South Sulawesi in 2004.¹ Under the Dutch colonial administration, Mamasa had been a separate *kewedanaan*, the old term for district.² In 1959, ten years after Indonesian independence, it was merged with the district of Polewali to form Polewali-Mamasa or Polmas. Forty years later, the move to divide it again began. In 1999, after the fall of President Soeharto made possible hitherto unthinkable political change, including sweeping decentralisation, community leaders in Mamasa held a public meeting to launch the Committee to Form Mamasa District (Panitia Pembentukan Kabupaten Mamasa, PPKM).

The lure of all the new district posts that *pemekaran* would bring was one major rationale to form Mamasa. But Committee members also raised the fact that under Polmas administration, infrastructure development had been extremely limited: for instance, in Mambi and Aralle, the arterial road had fallen into serious disrepair, and much of the area was only reachable on foot or horseback. Only the town of Mambi had regular electricity -- and then for only part of the day.³

The procedures for securing a new district were set forth in a 2000 government regulation. Any would-be district had to consist of at least three sub-districts. After both the legislature of the "mother" district and the provincial legislature approved the creation of a spin-off district, the provincial governor would forward the proposal to the ministry of home affairs and the Indonesian parliament,

which were to evaluate viability according to several criteria. If the candidate passed muster, the parliament would enact a law authorising its establishment.⁴

The first hurdle for the campaign team was approval of the Polmas district legislature, and almost immediately "pro" and "kontra" camps emerged. Several legislators voiced opposition, as did representatives from ATM, then a single unit.⁵

ATM was not the only part of the proposed new district that objected to the division. Matangnga did as well but there were two key differences. Matangnga, a small sub-district of four villages, lay on the border of Polmas and Mamasa, and each of the four villages objected. This made it relatively simple to accede to their wishes by letting them stay in Polmas and drawing the border around them. But the ATM villages were much further inside Mamasa, and there was concern that allowing some of them to remain part of the original district could create an enclave not contiguous with Polmas.⁶

Pro and kontra divided very roughly along ethnic and religious lines, with pro areas more often than not Christian Torajan and kontra, Muslim Mandar.⁷ The lines were far from absolute -- for example, S. Nongkang, a former member of the Polmas legislature, is kontra and Christian. Representatives of both sides could be found in a single family. That said, peer pressure sometimes came into play: Pattabulu, a pro-Mamasa Muslim, claimed that local figures had confronted him and told him that rejecting incorporation was a matter of *aqidah* (faith).⁸ Most pro and kontra figures interviewed by Crisis Group denied the conflict was inspired by religious enmity, although many were concerned that pro and kontra crowds used red and white cloths respectively as identity markers in the October 2004 violence.⁹

Historical grievances to some extent follow the religious divide. Guerrillas of the Darul Islam rebellion fighting for establishment of an Islamic state occupied Mambi in

¹ See Crisis Group Asia Report N°74, *Indonesia Background: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 3 February 2004.

² The Dutch divided present-day West Sulawesi into four *kewedanaan* -- Mamuju, Majene, Polewali and Mamasa. In 1959, Mamuju and Majene were given district status in their own right but Polewali and Mamasa were combined into one district with its capital in Polewali, in part due to ongoing instability in Mamasa and Mambi.

³ Mambi and Aralle sub-districts lie along a mountainous road that starts 16 km south of Mamasa itself. The road was once paved, but large sections are now in severe disrepair, and four-wheeled vehicles can travel only as far as the river that cuts the road in Aralle village. From there, one can walk to Tabulahan sub-district, which is more easily accessed by road from Mamuju. A second road from the south links Wonomulyo near Polewali with Keppe just south of Mambi village, but this road can only be travelled by horse. Most villages are along branch roads from this main road and can only be accessed by foot or horse. In rough terms, the villages in the eastern parts of Mambi and Aralle are pro, with the western parts of each sub-district kontra.

⁴ For more details on the process of forming districts, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°60, *Indonesia: Managing Decentralisation and Conflict in South Sulawesi*, 18 July 2003.

⁵ Aralle and Tabulahan were part of Mambi sub-district until 2001, when they secured separate sub-district status.

⁶ The clarification of the text of the law forming Mamasa district reflects this concern. It states that Mamasa's territory does not contain any enclaves from other districts.

⁷ Some local figures claimed that the ethnicity of people in the three sub-districts was actually unclear, neither Mandar nor Torajan.

⁸ Crisis Group interview with Pattabulu, December 2004.

⁹ In both Ambon and Poso, "red" is understood as shorthand for Christian and "white" for Muslim.

1958.¹⁰ They were driven out by a combined operation of Indonesian army Battalion 710 and a local front, the People's Resistance Organisation (Organisasi Perlawanan Rakyat, OPR).¹¹ The OPR in turn drove Battalion 710 from Mambi and Mamasa, where it subsequently clashed with another local front, the Local Defence Organisation (Organisasi Pertahanan Daerah, OPD).¹² The clashes and the associated excesses caused widespread displacement. Mambi itself was abandoned for several years. The precise details do not appear to be well known but a few senior figures linked the current conflict to these old fault lines. When interviewed about events in his village, for example, the Salurindu village head (a kontra) alleged that a former OPR figure, Efrain Tane, was involved in mobilising residents of nearby Bumal to fight.

Kontra figures also made another argument. According to tradition, they said, seven mountainous kingdoms, known collectively as "Pitu Ulunna Salu" and of which Mambi, Aralle and Tabulahan were three, may not be separated from the seven coastal kingdoms -- Pitu Ba'bana Binanga -- before the "black of the eye separates from the white". Some kontra figures also advanced the argument that in historic terms, it would be a reverse of customary hierarchy for Tabulahan to be governed by Mamasa.¹³ Supporters of Mamasa countered that Mamasa and Polewali had existed as separate districts before 1959.

However important these historical, cultural, ethnic and religious divisions are as explanations for the conflict, private motives and competition for personal gain probably mattered more. Many original proponents of Mamasa district also had personal ties to the former Mamasa *kewedanaan* or later sought political office. For instance, the chairperson of the Committee to Form Mamasa District was Haji Mustapha, a retired high school headmaster (and, it is worth underscoring, a Muslim) whose elder brother, Tamadjoe, had been the last

administrator of the old *kewedanaan* and who himself ran unsuccessfully for deputy head of the new Mamasa district.

III. EARLY COMPROMISES

The biggest bloc of opposition to the new district came from ATM, in the form of 26 of the then 38 villages in the three sub-districts. The first significant compromise on the status of these villages was the "Matakali agreement", signed on 20 May 2000 by Haji Mustapha and A. Wahab Hafid, a representative of one of the major kontra organisations, the Association of the Family of the Seven Kingdoms (Ikatan Keluarga Pitu Ulunna Salu, IKPUS). It endorsed the formation of a new district but proposed its territory to be "ex-*kewedanaan* Mamasa except for those areas whose communities do not agree with the partition and wish to remain part of the mother district" (i.e. of Polmas).¹⁴

The agreement was signed in the Matakali residence of the then head of the Polmas district legislature, and five days later the Polmas legislature, in Decision No. 10/2000, endorsed the creation of Mamasa, including the compromise. The same formula continued to appear in each letter of approval prior to the law being signed by the national parliament.

On 16 February 2002, the Polmas legislature adopted Decision No. 6/2002, which also endorsed the new district but added an appendix that set down explicitly, one by one, which villages agreed to be included. The position of each was determined in village meetings held in late 2001, typically attended by members of the local village council. At this stage, 26 ATM villages were listed as "problematic", meaning they had not agreed to join.¹⁵

The status of these villages remained the subject of ongoing negotiation: The Indonesian parliament's Commission II summoned representatives of the district head and district legislature of Polmas, together with Haji Mustapha and several local leaders, for last-minute talks in late March 2002, the day before parliament enacted Law No 11/2002 on the Formation of Mamasa

¹⁰ See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°20, *Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the "Ngruki Network" in Indonesia*, 8 August 2002, and Crisis Group Asia Report N°92, *Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombings*, 22 February 2005. In fact, the Darul Islam insurgency in South Sulawesi originated as a rebellion against the central government for its failure to incorporate local militias into the Indonesian army after independence.

¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, Polewali and Mambi, November, December 2004. Kenneth M. George, *Showing Signs of Violence* (Berkeley, 1996), p.39.

¹² Crisis Group interview with former OPR member, Polewali, November 2004. Crisis Group interview with Mambi community elder, December 2004.

¹³ Proponents of this argument stated that Tabulahan had been the original source of all the inhabitants of Pitu Ulunna Salu and Pitu Ba'bana Binanga and was the customary head of Pitu Ulunna Salu, to which Mamasa was subordinate.

¹⁴ One line of argument advanced by pro figures is that the word "communities" was intended to mean only that kontra communities in the new Mamasa district could retain their identity cards from Polewali-Mamasa. A close reading of the language of the agreement does not appear to support this interpretation.

¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, the four villages of Matangnga sub-district also objected, and the sub-district remained a part of Polmas.

District and Palopo Municipality.¹⁶ The records of this meeting retain references to compromise positions on Tabulahan and Mambi sub-districts. None of these concessions, however, was retained when the parliament passed the law the following day.¹⁷

Despite claims by the pro group that the new law overruled all previous agreements, the Polmas government has maintained active opposition to the inclusion of the 26 disputed villages in the new district, citing in particular Decision No. 6 and the survey of village positions.¹⁸ In support of this, the Polmas government has maintained an administrative apparatus in the three disputed sub-districts, a move that received written support from the South Sulawesi vice governor in March 2003.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Said Saggaf, a civil servant from the South Sulawesi governor's office who had been a member of the advisory council of the Committee to Form Mamasa District, was appointed as caretaker *bupati* (district head).²⁰ His task of forming a bureaucracy in the ATM sub-districts was complicated by the refusal of civil servants and public officials to be transferred to the new district or to receive funds from the Mamasa government. For instance, the *camats* (sub-district heads) of Mambi and Aralle at the time of the law's passage sided with Polmas, although the Tabulahan *camat* favoured Mamasa. The Mamasa government thus appointed new rival *camats* in Mambi and Aralle, while in Tabulahan, the Polmas government eventually installed the incumbent

sub-district secretary as *camat*. The result was parallel governments in the three sub-districts.

Even after Mamasa had appointed its *camats*, the kontra *camats* continued to occupy the sub-district offices in Mambi and Aralle, so the pro *camats* set up new offices in different villages: Bambang Buda instead of Mambi, and Salutambun instead of Aralle.²¹ Where village heads sided with Polmas, Mamasa appointed its own officials. Education structures were also replicated. Kontra villages refuse any development projects, and even emergency assistance, from Mamasa, and civil servants who side with Polmas will only accept wages from that government. Polmas district staff estimated they were spending approximately Rp 4 billion a year on wages and operational costs for civil servants in the three sub-districts (approximately \$450,000 out of a total budget of roughly \$20 million).²²

IV. VIOLENCE

In April and May 2003, a series of assaults on houses began to produce new physical boundaries, as pro or kontra adherents began leaving areas dominated by the rival group. For example, in Salurindu, Aralle sub-district, five pro-Mamasa families whose houses were attacked departed.²³ In Aralle village, Pattabulu, one of only several pro-Mamasa residents was twice assaulted and then fled to Salutambun village after his house was attacked on 14 May. He had been accused of attempting to gather Christian inhabitants from surrounding villages into a new village. The increasing segregation meant that some farmers could no longer tend fields they owned in areas controlled by rival communities. Some were forced to sell their produce in new markets within their community's territory; children were even refused access to school on the basis of their parents' political affiliation.²⁴

The brewing conflict reached its first climax in September 2003, as three people were killed in a dispute between Salurindu (kontra) and Bumal (pro) villages. The violence did not spread beyond these two isolated villages, which were also locked in a land dispute, but the murders and

¹⁶ *Laporan Komisi II DPR-RI dalam Rangka Pembicaraan Tingkat II/Pengambilan Keputusan Atas 10 (Sepuluh) Rancangan Undang-Undang Pembentukan 22 (Dua Puluh Dua) Daerah Otonom Pada Rapat Paripurna DPR-RI*, 11 March 2002, p. 6.

¹⁷ A Commission II member told Crisis Group the Commission adopted a formal legal approach. Because the application for the new district fulfilled administrative requirements, the mother district confirmed its support for the district's formation, and a ministry of home affairs policy forbade enclaves, the law was passed without the compromise. Crisis Group interview with Manasse Malo, January 2005.

¹⁸ Kontra figures concede that the stance of several villages has since changed but they continue to propose adherence to this decision as a record of the villages' initial "aspirations".

¹⁹ Surat Gubernur Sulawesi Selatan No. 138/838/OTODA, 6 March 2003.

²⁰ Saggaf subsequently won the local legislature vote for "definitive" *bupati*, after running with Viktor Pautonan, Secretary General of the Committee to Form Mamasa District (PPKM) as his vice-*bupati* (nominated by Partai Demokrasi Kasih Bangsa, PDKB). Their opponents were Ir. DK Paruan paired with Hj. Mustapha (nominated by PDIP), and Obed Negodeparinding paired with Thahir Paro (nominated by Golkar). Each candidate pair included both a Muslim and a Christian. PDKB is now defunct, while Golkar and PDIP won most seats in the national parliament in both 1999 and 2004.

²¹ Mamasa has also further divided Mambi sub-district into Mambi itself and a new Bambang sub-district, which consists entirely of pro-villages. However, this division was planned before the dispute and is not contested by kontra figures.

²² Crisis Group interviews, Polewali, November 2004. Figures expressed in dollars (\$) refer to U.S. dollars.

²³ Crisis Group interview with Salurindu village head, 18 December 2004.

²⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Mambi, December 2004.

their aftermath triggered an exodus of at least 8,460 people.²⁵

Several incidents against pro figures had contributed to heightened tensions in the days leading up to the murders.²⁶ David Dualangi, head of the local sub-district electoral committee, was beaten, while the houses of the Mamasa-appointed Sendana village head, Muh Nasir, and Ramlan, a Mamasa bureaucrat, were damaged.²⁷ Around 27 September, a leaflet also reportedly circulated using the name "Masse Bambang" (i.e. the people of Bambang ethnicity, all of whom were considered pro-Mamasa) and appealing to their families to take refuge in pro areas while awaiting unspecified action from the Mamasa government during the next two days.²⁸ These incidents generated rumours that attacks might occur in Salurindu, Aralle itself or elsewhere.

The two initial murders, of Hamdi, 37, and Nurdin, 35, took place on 29 September 2003 at Kondorubu, the contested patch of land between the two villages.²⁹ Eleven police officers were dispatched from the Mambi station to investigate a reported quarrel, and they buried the corpses that evening. The following day, the team accompanied a small delegation from Salurindu to Bumal to seek a peace settlement. The delegation, which included the Salurindu village chief and his brother Abdul Hakim, met a hostile reception, and Abdul Hakim was murdered. Fearing for their own safety, the police trekked in the opposite direction through the jungle to Lakahang in Tabulahan and then proceeded to Mamuju city in order to report back to their station.

Reports of the murders and rumours about the possible abduction of the police triggered a large-scale exodus from both pro and kontra villages in Mambi and Aralle sub-districts. Some who remained behind engaged in looting of abandoned stores and houses, mostly to obtain scarce food.³⁰

Shortly afterwards, on 6 October 2003, the provincial government summoned representatives of each side to a meeting in Pare-Pare, South Sulawesi. It produced a general statement, agreeing to cease violence and respect individual rights, while appealing to the ministry of home

affairs to demarcate the border between the two districts.³¹ Both pro and kontra communities understood that this would not be an effective means of conflict resolution and wanted more. Pro figures were unhappy that the perpetrators of attacks on pro houses had not been arrested, while kontra figures complained that the perpetrators of the murders near Salurindu remained free.

The legislative elections in April 2004 provided a renewed test of affiliations. Kontra figures had requested that they be allowed to vote as a part of Polmas district. The General Elections Commission (KPU), however, allowed only its Mamasa branch to conduct elections in Aralle, Tabulahan and Mambi. Kontra sources insist that kontra communities then boycotted the poll, and they accuse KPU Mamasa of fraudulently entering extra votes on behalf of registered voters who did not appear. KPU Mamasa itself stated that only one village -- Salumaka in Mambi sub-district -- boycotted. Other pro sources claimed that the election was held in the disputed territories but that the polling stations were grouped together in secure locations.

In July 2004, three more pro-houses were damaged, including those belonging to the pro-Mamasa Mambi sub-district head, M Ayub, the pro-Mamasa village head of Mambi, named Wahid, and the village head of Talipuki, Husaen. Pro figures, without offering proof, accused Achmad Appa, the kontra *camat* of Mambi, of being behind the attack on his counterpart's (vacant) house. Several people were briefly detained at the Mambi police station but were released in the face of local protests.³² People then began to gather in the pro-village of Bambang Buda. In a meeting there on 23 July, they gave the security forces four days to apprehend the perpetrators and agreed to set up *posko* (coordination posts) to monitor traffic entering and leaving Mambi.³³ Thahir Paro, an assistant to the *bupati* of Mamasa, who attended, claims that these *posko* were formed after many strangers had been seen circulating in ATM in 2003 (implying that outsiders were stirring up trouble).³⁴

The *posko* in Bambang Buda was effectively a blockade of kontra traffic into and out of Mambi and was followed

²⁵ Data from South Sulawesi Provincial Government Mediasi Centre.

²⁶ Crisis Group interview, Polewali, December 2004.

²⁷ Crisis Group interviews with Thahir Paro, November 2004, January 2005. Crisis Group interview with Tumangkeng, December 2004.

²⁸ Crisis Group interview, Polewali, 18 December 2004.

²⁹ Ma'rufi, Aduan kasus Pembunuhan 29 dan 30 September 2003 Tiga Warga Desa Salurinduk Kec. Aralle, letter to Polmas Resort Police Chief, dated 25 January [sic] 2003.

³⁰ Crisis Group interviews, December 2004.

³¹ "Sengketa Mamasa Menuju Perdamaian", *Suara Pembaruan*, 9 October 2003.

³² Crisis Group interview with South Sulawesi Mediasi Centre, November 2004. Crisis Group phone interview with Thahir Paro, January 2005.

³³ *Laporan: Keputusan Rapat Konsolidasi Membahas Kasus Pengrusakan Rumah Bersama Isinya dan Pembakaran Motor pada Malam Kamis Tanggal 21 Juli di Kec mambi Kab. Mamasa yang Dilakukan oleh Orang-Orang Kontra Kab. Mamasa Yang Dipimpin oleh Ahmad Appa, Bambang Buda, 23 July 2004.*

³⁴ Crisis Group interview with Thahir Paro, November 2004.

by a *kontra* blockade in Pokko, six kilometres from Polewali, which prevented vehicles from going to Mamasa as well as to Aralle and Mambi. Neither blockade actually harmed those who tried to pass but traffic in both directions was turned around, bringing economic activities in Mamasa, Mambi and Aralle to a standstill. In response, the provincial government organised a meeting in Makassar on 3 August of government and security officials from the provincial to the sub-district level. Participants agreed to lift the blockades the same day and signed another agreement, in general terms, to exercise restraint.³⁵

The two *bupatis* and representatives of the provincial government attended a further meeting in Jakarta a week later, which again produced a general written agreement. Then in September 2004, with the status of the villages still unresolved, the *bupatis* made a joint visit to Mambi. Lest this be interpreted as its recognition of a role for the Polmas government in the sub-district, the Mamasa government insisted that the visit be a *silaturrahmi* (social call), not an official working visit. During this visit, the Aralle (pro-Mamasa) sub-district head, Abdul Wahab, a local youth leader, Kaharuddin, and Ridwan Badula, an official of the local planning board, were beaten up.³⁶

The following month, on 7 October, a pro delegation led by a man named Darwis arrived in Aralle village and asked permission to repair the house of Pattabulu, the pro-Mamasa leader who had fled in May 2003 when his house was ransacked. The delegation was refused permission but managed to install five banners nearby calling for an end to violence and stating "Aralle is a part of Mamasa". This resulted in rival groups throwing rocks at each other before a peace agreement was signed and the pro group, which included Andi Djalilu, head of Aralle Utara village and Elianus, head of Salutambun village, went home.³⁷ Police arrived that afternoon from Mambi, and the banners were ripped down the following day.³⁸ This incident has been widely viewed as the most

direct trigger of the violence that occurred just over a week later and claimed a further three lives.

Djalilu embodies the shifting affiliations in the disputed sub-districts that defy reduction to simple religious or ethnic enmity. A Muslim, he was originally a *kontra*. His son was detained for hitting David Dualangi, a pro supporter, in September 2003.³⁹ Despite his initial affiliation, Djalilu became the pro-Mamasa village head of Aralle Utara, a majority *kontra* village. The *kontra* sub-district head of Mambi, Achmad Appa, dismisses Djalilu's motive as money, while even Haji Mustapha says that he offered the position of village head to Djalilu as an incentive to become pro, an offer that he claims was accepted.⁴⁰

Tensions remained high, until on the evening of 15 October 2004, a pro crowd that had already burned eleven houses that day returned to Aralle village and burned another five. One belonged to Burhanuddin, the *kontra* village head, whom Pattabulu accused of involvement in planning the ransacking of his house in May 2003.⁴¹ In the face of this attack, most of Aralle's residents fled, either into the hills or along the road towards Mambi.

The following day, a clash occurred at Aralle Utara village in which a *kontra* man was killed, and two days later, on 18 October, another *kontra* supporter was killed at Uhailanu village, on the road from Aralle to Mambi.⁴² The following night, seven houses were burned in Saluassing village, Mambi sub-district.⁴³ Some *kontra* figures saw this pattern of attacks as evidence of a plan to go after Mambi town.⁴⁴

Other clashes were also reported, for example in the remote village of Ralleana, Aralle. In total, these events resulted in three deaths (including an infant, who died as the family was fleeing), destruction of at

³⁵ *Nota Kesepakatan Pertemuan pada Hari Selasa*, Tgl 3 August 2004.

³⁶ The alleged perpetrator, Burhanuddin, was later arrested and sentenced to six months in prison, as well as a further five months for another case.

³⁷ Djalilu and Elianus were each arrested after the October 2004 violence and sentenced to six months in prison less time in custody. Djalilu was charged under Clause 160 of the Criminal Code, for inciting criminal activity or committing violence against public authorities, which carries a maximum sentence of six years. Crisis Group phone interviews, April 2005.

³⁸ Nurjo, *Kronologis Kejadian di Desa/Kelurahan Aralle Kecamatan Aralle Kabupaten Polewali Mandar*, nd. Crisis Group interviews, December 2004.

³⁹ Crisis Group interviews, November 2004.

⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview with Achmad Appa, Hj. Mustapha, November 2004. Pattabulu, another pro figure, offered the more altruistic explanation that Djalilu had realised his *kontra* stance would only bring ruin to ATM.

⁴¹ And who was arrested after the October violence. See footnote 40 above.

⁴² "Aralle Kembali Rusuh", *Kompas*, 19 October 2004; Crisis Group interviews, Mambi, Aralle, December 2004.

⁴³ "Kerusuhan Merembet ke Mambi, 7 Rumah Dibakar", *Kompas*, 20 October 2004.

⁴⁴ Aralle Utara and Uhailanu each lie along the road to Mambi, while Saluassing is a border village between pro and *kontra* territory along another road from Mambi. Assaultants from Aralle could have reached Saluassing by footpaths from Salutambun and Aralle Timur. Crisis Group interviews, Mambi, December 2004.

least 47 houses and exodus of approximately 2,000 people from Aralle to Mambi.

In the wake of these incidents, security forces, particularly the paramilitary police, Brimob, were dramatically increased in ATM. Police made a series of arrests, including, belatedly, suspects in the 2003 murders near Salurindu and the earlier May 2003 attacks on houses, and 42 people, including Kris, a youth from Poso, were in custody by 9 November. They also seized two weapons and more than 600 bullets at Saludurian, a sub-village near the junction of the disused back road from Wonomulyo (near Polewali) to Mambi.⁴⁵

Following the October incident, Vice President Jusuf Kalla took a personal interest, summoning pro and kontra figures to meet him and explain the conflict. An independent team, with members from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, and Hasanuddin University in Sulawesi, was dispatched to ATM to research a solution. Nevertheless, the problem of the boundaries between the Polmas and Mamasa districts remained unresolved.⁴⁶

In early 2005, administration of the disputed sub-districts was turned over to the West Sulawesi caretaker governor, Oentarto Sindung Marwardi.⁴⁷ He deferred demarcation of the border but with the agreement of the governments of Polmas and Mamasa, he installed new sub-district heads in Mambi (Drs. Arifuddin) and Aralle (Drs. Syarifuddin) on 5 March in an attempt to end the parallel governments, at least temporarily.⁴⁸

While this was an important step forward, failure to resolve the underlying issues meant that further violence was almost inevitable. On 8 April 2005, shortly after Arifuddin occupied the *camat's* office in Mambi, it burned down. Local sources suspect arson, as the building did not adjoin others and caught fire at around 3 a.m., although the police reached an initial conclusion that the fire was not deliberate.⁴⁹

Then, during the night of 24 April, a small group attacked Ranu sub-village, Salubanua village, in Mambi sub-district. The assailants reportedly shot at villagers who had gathered to plan a traditional (*adat*) funeral, and also set fire to several houses. Five residents were killed: Gempuan, 45; Pelimong, 50; Besuju, 50; Pamiang, 28; and Uttang, 7. Three of these died after they were trapped in the flames. Two others were hospitalised with gunshot wounds.⁵⁰

Police immediately sent hundreds of additional officers to the area, and South Sulawesi Police Chief Saleh Saaf, who is also responsible for West Sulawesi province, stated that five "outsiders" were being sought for the attack. On 28 April 2005, they announced their first arrest, a Muslim man, Amiruddin, who was from Poso, Central Sulawesi, an area to the northeast that has been the site of bitter communal conflict between Muslims and Christians. They also seized a loaded FN pistol and ten spare rounds of ammunition.⁵¹

Saleh told the press that two others had escaped when Amiruddin was captured, of whom one, Jimi alias Dabo, had been sought since October 2004. Both Amiruddin and Jimi are believed to have been involved in the conflict in Poso before coming to Mamasa. Police also released the initials of the other men wanted in connection with the attack -- and subsequently announced that they had recovered a coded document with instructions on how to make bombs.⁵²

The conflict spawned by the failure to resolve the question of the villages and sub-districts unhappy with the creation of Mamasa thus appeared to be leading directly to outside intervention, in ways that could produce polarisation along religious lines and mobilisation of outside fighters to come to the aid of their own community.

But what to do? Mambi and Aralle cannot be administered directly by the provincial government indefinitely, and the issue of which district will administer each village or sub-district must eventually be addressed. A resolution will have to take account of patterns of land ownership that do not correspond with village administrative boundaries. Either the central government will have to intervene to offer incentives to the villages to join with

⁴⁵ "Senjata Api Asal Moro Diamankan", *Fajar*, 26 October 2004.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group phone interview, March 2005.

⁴⁷ Because West Sulawesi is a new province, Oentarto has been appointed as caretaker until a "definitive" governor can be chosen by direct election in October 2005. He is the former director-general for regional autonomy in the ministry of home affairs, and as such was responsible for overseeing the *pemekaran* process across Indonesia.

⁴⁸ Crisis Group phone interviews, March 2005. "Gubernur Janji Benahi Jalan ATM", *Fajar Online*, 8 March 2005.

⁴⁹ Crisis Group phone interviews, April 2005; "Kebakaran: Kantor Camat Mambi Terbakar", *Kompas*, 9 April 2005.

⁵⁰ "Warga Mambi Mengungsi: Jumlah Korban Tewas Jadi Lima Orang", *Kompas*, 28 April 2005; Crisis Group phone interviews, April 2005.

⁵¹ Crisis Group phone interview with South Sulawesi police, 28 April 2005. For a description of the Poso conflict, see Crisis Group Report, *Indonesia Backgrounder*, op. cit.

⁵² "Polisi Tangkap Seorang Pelaku Penyerangan di Mamasa", *detik.com*, 28 April 2005; "Polda Sulsel Temukan Dokumen Rencana Teror Mamasa", *Kompas*, 1 May 2005.

Mamasa and to ensure the viability of the new district; or local leaders will have to sit down with a map to redraw district boundaries in a way that meets local aspirations as far as possible without completely defying geographic logic; or the existing division will have to be enforced, with extra security forces on the ground to prevent further conflict. Implementation of any of these solutions will require a long-term commitment of time and resources.

Any lasting solution is now complicated by the personal experience of the conflict for everyday people. The status of these villages has remained in dispute for three years. Over and above abstract political status, the residents of Mambi and Aralle in particular have lost access to farming land, seen their children's schooling disrupted, undergone enforced displacement, and put up with the heavy presence of security forces.

There is also the issue of justice. The trials of Kris, the man from Poso, and those accused of the 2003 murders are ongoing. The trials related to the October 2004 violence, however, produced light sentences -- six months in prison or less -- meaning that most persons were effectively sentenced to time served and immediately released or are due out shortly.⁵³

V. CONCLUSION

The division of the original Polewali-Mamasa district into two is but one of over 100 that have taken place since 1999 in a process that has increased the total number of provinces and districts in Indonesia by roughly 50 per cent. In most cases, this fragmentation has taken part without violence and indeed without much opposition.

The Mamasa conflict is a case study of what can happen when there is not a clear procedure to resolve a dispute in this *pemekaran* process, when the central government is too beset by other problems to find and implement solutions, and when the law is not promptly and transparently enforced against those who perpetrate violence.

More generally, this has implications for the direct elections of *bupati* and governors that will be held in some districts and provinces starting in June 2005.⁵⁴ With so

many elections happening almost simultaneously, local disputes are unlikely to receive prompt attention. At the same time, the small number of votes required for victory may tempt some candidates to use communal sentiments to mobilise support or intimidate rivals.

Until now, the short-term cost to the provincial and central governments of failing to resolve the Mamasa problem has not been significant. The area is remote, and the number of deaths, in comparative terms, has been low. However, the latest fatalities and the discovery of firearms and ammunition in October 2004 underline the dangers of allowing a low intensity conflict to continue unresolved, especially when there is a widespread assumption that it is essentially a communal conflict.

The earlier conflicts in Ambon and Poso proved to be superb recruiting mechanisms for jihadist organisations. Preventing another eruption of communal conflict is essential if terrorism is to be contained in Indonesia. The possibility that young armed radicals from Poso are starting to come to Mamasa to exploit the conflict makes it imperative not only that they be stopped, but that the underlying dispute be addressed -- and urgently.

Singapore/Brussels, 3 May 2005

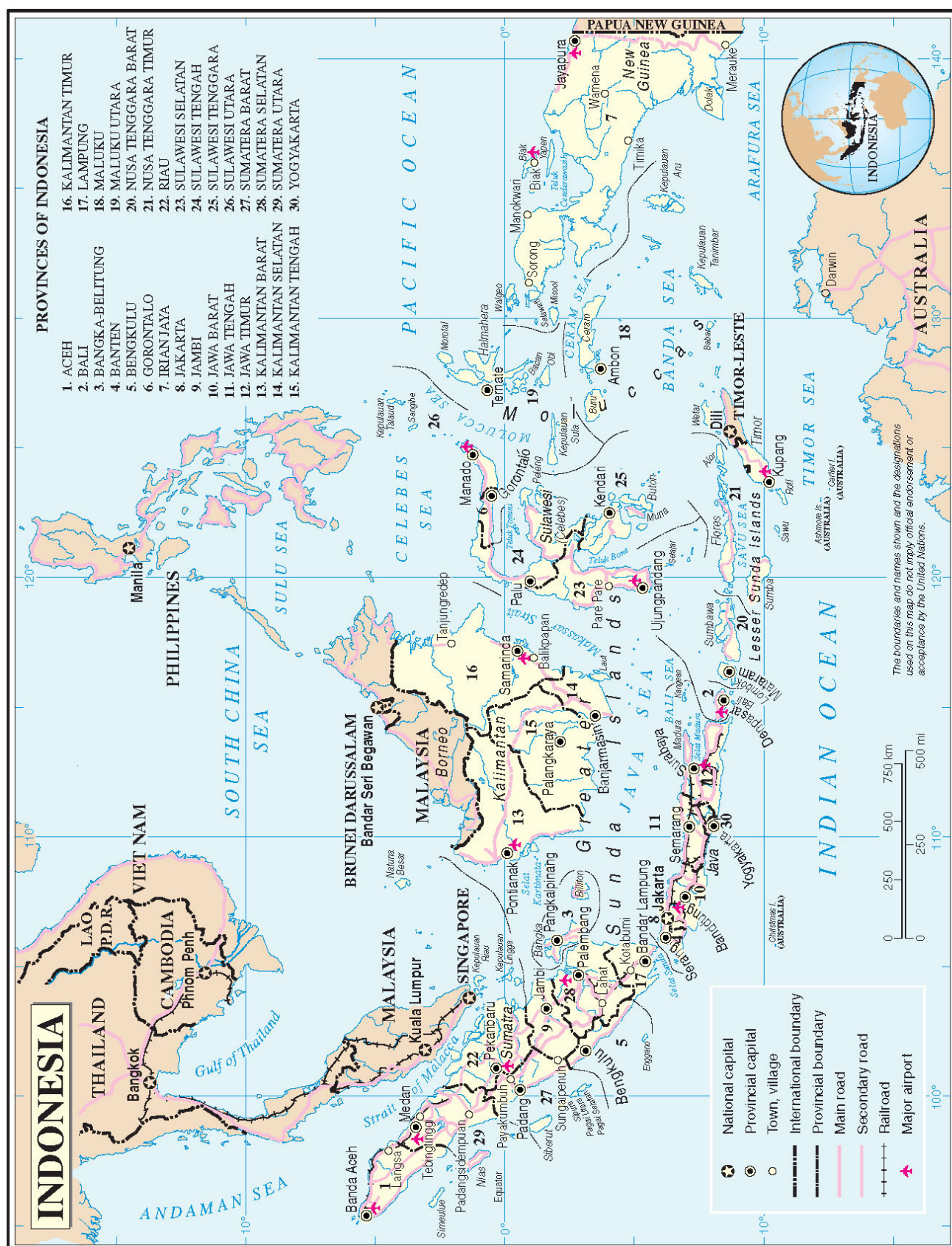
⁵³ The maximum sentence possible under the clauses of the Criminal Code applied in several cases was between five and six years.

⁵⁴ Under the new Local Government Law (32/2004), governors and *bupati* are now elected directly. The first round of elections is scheduled for June 2005, in those provinces and districts where the five-year term of the incumbent expired between

the law's passage in October 2004 and June. In other districts, the election will be held not more than one month after the incumbent's term expires. Due to obstacles presented by the late finalisation of the law and issuance of implementing regulations, the government has introduced a new regulation allowing the elections to be delayed. Neither Mamasa nor Polewali are scheduled to hold an election in 2005 but West Sulawesi is to elect a governor in October.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF INDONESIA



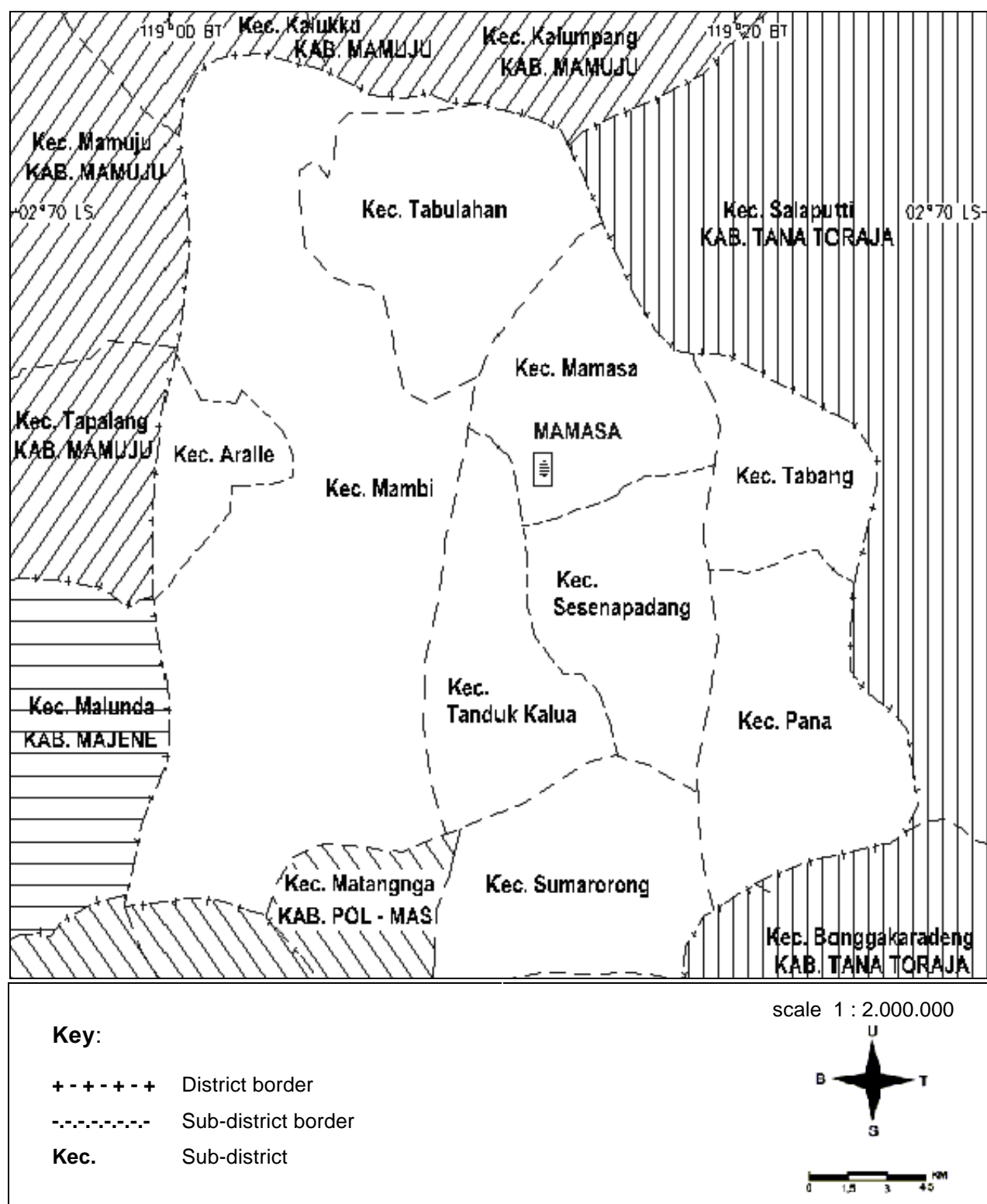
APPENDIX B

MAP OF SULAWESI



APPENDIX C

MAP OF MAMASA





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