

Gates praises Indonesian military

by UPI

JAKARTA -- The United States is willing to sell weaponry to Indonesia but the country must pursue abuse cases against its military, the U.S. defense secretary said. During a visit to Jakarta, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates praised Indonesian officials for professionalizing its military after years of operating under former Indonesian President Suharto, who ruled the country with a iron fist, the Los Angeles Times reported Tuesday. While not criticizing the current armed forces, Gates said democratic countries have the duty to investigate and prosecute allegations of corruption or abuse within their armed forces. "In addition to the importance of civilian control of the military, there cannot be even a taint of corruption or a hint of tolerance for human rights abuses," said Gates, who spoke Monday before the Indonesian Council on World Affairs. The Bush administration for the last three years moved to lift restrictions on the two countries' military ties, severed after the Indonesian military committed atrocities in Timor-Leste in 1991. Indonesia is the second-largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the region, receiving about \$15.7 million this year, yet officials have expressed frustration with sluggish sales of U.S. military equipment. Indonesia has discussed acquiring weapons from China and Russia.

Copyright © 2008, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Gates praises Indonesian military by UPI