

IN BRIEF: POLITICAL

All the president's men

On April 3, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono announced the composition of a new presidential advisory unit formerly known as the *Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden*, but lately renamed *Watimpres*. The significance of the new unit does not depend on its powers or even the people who have been chosen to sit on it, but on an ostensibly minor clause in the law that set it up.

That law was originally submitted to the House of Representatives (DPR) by a Golkar legislator in 2002 when Megawati Soekarnoputri was still president. At the time, Golkar politicians were unhappy with the party's low level of representation in Megawati's cabinet and were seeking a new avenue of influence. The bill then languished in the DPR as legislators focused on other priorities, principally the suite of bills that would usher in the direct election of the next president.

Fast-forward to the end of 2006, and legislators suddenly showed a renewed enthusiasm for reviving the bill, at about the same time as another presidential think-tank, the controversial UKP3R, was established by President Yudhoyono. *Report* readers may remember the controversy which surrounded the UKP3R, otherwise known as the Presidential Working Unit for Reform Programs, when it was first announced in November. Golkar members in particular were incensed that a body that would have the ear of the president was to be headed by Marsillam Simandjuntak, a well-known critic of the party. Just weeks after the establishment of the UKP3R, it seems that DPR legislators awoke to the possibilities of reviving the *Watimpres* bill, and they duly passed it into law on December 6.

In the past few years it has become *de rigueur* for presidents to establish their own advisory boards, partly to bypass the influence of cabinets that are the result of political horse-trading and are therefore of limited use for sound policy-making. But it is unusual for an advisory board to be based on such a strong legal instrument as a law – in the past they have nearly always been grounded on legally weaker presidential decrees (*keppres*).

The UKP3R was created by a presidential decree, while the *Watimpres* is based on a law, and this has provided Golkar legislators with ammunition in their ongoing effort to usurp the powers of the older working unit.

Golkar's Agun Gunandjar headed the committee that deliberated the bill. He told the *Report* that “the establishment of *Watimpres* has consequences for other presidential units – they should be dismissed.”

So far, however, such an argument seems to have had little sway and it is unlikely that the existence of *Watimpres* will threaten the UKP3R.

The new body has turned out to be something of a disappointment for disgruntled legislators. During the deliberation of the bill, the most contentious issue was whether members of the unit would be allowed to retain their existing jobs. The final version of the bill passed stipulated that *Watimpres* candidates would have to give them up. This, in effect, blocked

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the potential for *Watimpres* to be used as a channel for political influence.

According to Gunanjar, Golkar executives were upset with this article in the law. “I have faced strong criticism from all sides, including my own party,” Gunanjar told the *Report*. “Golkar executives held a meeting just days after Yudhoyono announced the establishment of the body, and they questioned me on why I had deliberated a law with such strict criterion,” he said.

Report sources have said that Surya Palloh, a Golkar executive and media baron, had wanted to be a member of *Watimpres*, but had not pushed his candidacy because he had no desire to give up his post within Golkar or his businesses.

If the motivation to establish *Watimpres* was to give political parties—Golkar in particular—more access to the president, then such a power play seems to have failed.

President Yudhoyono has neutralized the politics around the establishment of *Watimpres* even further by filling it with his own loyalists. Political analyst J. Kristiadi from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) told the *Report* that the members of the advisory body were chosen “in appreciation of their significant contributions to Yudhoyono’s victory in the 2004 presidential campaign.”

According to *Report* sources, only one member of the team, Rady Abdul Gani, is considered an outsider to Yudhoyono’s inner circle. “He is Kalla’s man,” the source claimed. Another member, Ma’ruf Amien, is believed to have been chosen to accommodate the interests of political Islam. (See box below).

Member	Biographical Details
Rachmawati Soekarnoputri	Politically ambitious daughter of Soekarno who is known for her disparaging attitude towards older sister Megawati. She heads a small political party called Partai Pelopor, but is recognized as a confidant of President Yudhoyono.
Adnan Buyung Nasution	Head and founder member of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI). Lawyer and legal commentator.
Emil Salim	Long-serving member of Soeharto’s economic team, he was credited with pushing a liberal economic agenda. Also known for his environmental campaigning, he served on president Abdurrahman Wahid’s advisory team (DEN).
Ali Alatas	After a long career as a foreign diplomat, Alatas served as foreign minister for 12 years under Soeharto. He was later a presidential advisor on foreign affairs from 2001-2004.
Subur Budisantoso	Following a long academic career in anthropology, he became the head of President Yudhoyono’s Democratic Party from 2001-2005 when he lost the position after internal politicking within the party.
Sjahrir	A well-known economist and prolific writer on the Indonesian economy, he has already served as a special economic advisor to President Yudhoyono.
Radi Abdul Gani	Former rector of Hasanuddin University in Makassar, Sulawesi, he has been brought into the team to advise on the agricultural sector.
T.B.Silalahi	A retired general and former minister for administrative reforms (1993-1998), he was an integral part of President Yudhoyono’s success team in the 2004 elections.
Ma’ruf Amien	Senior leader of the ultra-conservative Islamic organisation Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI).

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The level of influence which the members of *Watimpres* will have on the president is in some ways unknowable. This is especially the case given that the law that established the team prohibits its members from making their advice public. However, it now seems certain that the president will be able to control the parameters of the team's influence and will continue to rely on his own trusted advisors. *Watimpres* has proved to be a rare success for President Yudhoyono in the cutthroat world of Indonesian politics.

The plot thickens

Under pressure from his courageous widow and members of the international community, the investigation into the assassination of rights activist Munir has sprung back to life. The April 14 arrests of two high-level Garuda officials have given some hope that police could be drawing closer to the mastermind of the 2004 murder. But uncovering the motive for the crime, rights activists say, will be key to finding who ordered the killing.

Speculation about who killed Munir is again rife in the Indonesian media after police arrested former Garuda president Indra Setiawan and senior airline administrator Rohainil Aini. The investigators accuse the officials of falsifying documents to enable an off-duty pilot, Polycarpus Budihari Priyanto, to board Munir's plane to the Netherlands. They charge that Munir was later poisoned by arsenic—possibly by Polycarpus—and died an hour before his aircraft landed in Amsterdam.

These latest developments indicate the police are slowly ascending the chain of command that led to the murder. The Garuda pair was initially the focus of the first police investigation in a trail that first connected them with Polycarpus and then reached close to the top of the feared State Intelligence Agency (BIN). However, the earlier investigation into the pair stalled before they were charged. Meanwhile, former BIN deputy chief Maj. Gen. Muchdi Purwoprandjono has also escaped trial, despite a suspicious mobile phone record connecting him to Polycarpus. His boss, ex-BIN head Hendriopriyono, has repeatedly denied any involvement in the crime.

The National Police are also planning to question new witnesses in the case, including a mysterious individual known as Raymond "Ongen" Latuhamalo. This unknown, who police describe as a "pop singer and actor," is believed to have seen Munir having a drink with Polycarpus at a cafe in Singapore's Changi Airport. While police previously thought Munir was poisoned on board a flight from Jakarta to Singapore, they now believe it could have been given to him in the Singapore terminal.

This detail could provide important new proof against the only man ever found guilty of Munir's murder. Although jailed in 2005, Polycarpus was later acquitted when the Supreme Court ruled there was a lack of physical evidence connecting him to the poisoning.

The pilot, however, was found guilty of a minor crime—presenting a forged document to board the plane. Without substantial new information coming