

Outline of the Visit

{A detailed itinerary of the visit is contained at Appendix A to this report}

Arrival

- 2.1 The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) arrived at Komoro Airfield at 7.30 am on Thursday 2 December 1999 after a 1.5 hour flight from Darwin.¹ During the approach to Komoro Airfield the Committee was provided with an opportunity to view the mountainous nature of the terrain in East Timor.
- 2.2 Committee members were greeted at Komoro Airfield by the Australian Head of Mission, Mr James Batley, and the Chief of Staff INTERFET, Colonel Mark Kelly. The Committee was then provided with a brief tour of the coastline as members were transported by Bushmaster² to Headquarters INTERFET.

Meeting with Commander INTERFET

- 2.3 At Headquarters INTERFET the Committee met with and was briefed by the force commander, Major General Peter Cosgrove AM MC. In his brief, Major General Cosgrove:

1 Dili is 1.5 hours behind Central Standard Time

2 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (Trial)

- a) provided the Committee with an update on the activities of INTERFET since 20 September 1999;
- b) detailed the current disposition of INTERFET forces;
- c) discussed the current security situation in East Timor; and
- d) outlined the timetable for the transition to UNTAET.

Civil Military Operations Centre

- 2.4 Following the meeting with Major General Cosgrove the Committee walked, through the streets of Dili, to the Civil Military Operations Centre (CMOC) for INTERFET. The role of the CMOC is to coordinate and facilitate the relationship between INTERFET, Non Government Organisations (NGO), and international and humanitarian agencies.
- 2.5 While at the CMOC, the Committee was briefed by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Joe Uson (United States Army), the Executive Officer, Major Ian Stoddart, and the Operations Officer, Major Mark Mackay. The brief entailed:
- a) the role, structure and tasks of the CMOC;
 - b) CMOC activities since the establishment of INTERFET; and
 - c) major issues affecting CMOC activities.

Field Surgical Team (Heavy)

- 2.6 The Committee moved from the CMOC, to the INTERFET medical facility – the Field Surgical Team (Heavy) (FST (Hvy)). The role of the FST (Hvy) is to provide medical support to INTERFET personnel deployed to East Timor and high priority cases from the East Timorese population.³ The FST (Hvy) is comprised of both Australian and Singaporean medical staff.

3 In all other cases medical support to the local population is provided by existing civilian medical facilities

- 2.7 During the visit to the FST (Hvy) the Committee was hosted and briefed by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Darren Keating. During the visit the Committee was:
- a) briefed on the role, structure and tasks of the FST (Hvy);
 - b) provided with a tour of the FST (Hvy) facilities; and
 - c) given an opportunity to meet with current in-patients.

Suai

- 2.8 The Committee moved from the FST (Hvy) to the military heliport in Dili where after a safety brief members embarked in S-70A-9 Black Hawk helicopters for transit to Suai. Enroute the Committee was provided with an overflight of Dili that provided an excellent opportunity to view the extent of devastation to the city. The flight to Suai followed a route through the central, mountainous region.
- 2.9 On arrival in Suai, the Committee was met by the Commander 3rd Brigade, Brigadier Mark Evans. The party moved from the landing field, via light vehicle, to the INTERFET headquarters in Suai. During this trip the vehicles travelled through what remained of the town of Suai.
- 2.10 During the visit the Committee was briefed by the Commander 3rd Brigade. In his brief Brigadier Evans:
- a) outlined on the role, structure and tasks of the 3rd Brigade;
 - b) detailed the current disposition of 3rd Brigade forces;
 - c) discussed the current security situation in Suai; and
 - d) provided an overview of personnel and logistic issues faced by the brigade.
- 2.11 Following the brief by Brigadier Evans, the Committee was provided with a short tour of the 3rd Brigade facilities before lunching with members of the brigade staff. The Committee then returned by light vehicle to the landing field before embarking in S-70A-9 Black Hawk helicopters for transit to Dili.

‘Smiling’ Don Bosco Refugee Centre

- 2.12 On return to Dili the Committee moved by Bushmaster to the ‘Smiling’ Don Bosco Refugee Centre where refugees are processed on their repatriation. During the brief visit to the Centre, some members of the Committee had the opportunity to speak through an interpreter with the refugees.

UN Commission of Inquiry into East Timor

- 2.13 The Committee moved directly from the ‘Smiling’ Don Bosco Refugee Centre to the Governor’s Offices to meet with the United Nation’s Commission of Inquiry into East Timor (CIET). The CIET, comprising representatives from Costa Rica, Germany, Nigeria, India and Papua New Guinea, is charged with the task of investigating alleged human rights violations in East Timor. During the meeting discussions covered a wide range of issues including:
- a) the role and objectives of the CIET;
 - b) the progress of the CIET’s investigation; and
 - c) the timetable for the CIET’s activities and report to the Secretary-General.

5th/7th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment

- 2.14 At the conclusion of the meeting with the UNHRC, the Committee moved by Bushmaster to meet with elements of the 5th/7th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. A mechanised unit, the Battalion operates the M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) as its principal weapon platform. Although based in Dili, the Battalion has elements operating throughout the western regencies of East Timor.
- 2.15 During the visit to the 5th/7th Battalion the Committee was hosted and briefed by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Simon Gould. In his brief Lieutenant Colonel Gould:
- a) outlined the role, structure and tasks of the 5th/7th Battalion;

- b) detailed the current disposition of 5th/7th Battalion; and
 - c) provided an overview of personnel and logistic issues faced by the Battalion.
- 2.16 Following the brief, members of the Committee were provided with a static demonstration of some of the items of equipment operated by the 5th/7th Battalion. Members also had an opportunity to meet officers and soldiers of the unit. The Committee then moved by APC through the streets of Dili to Komoro Airfield.

Departure

- 2.17 The Committee was met at Komoro Airfield by Commander INTERFET, Major General Cosgrove, and the Head of Mission, Mr James Batley. In the ensuing discussions members of the Committee outlined their observations of the situation in East Timor. Major General Cosgrove thanked the Committee for its interest and stressed the importance of Australian based support for INTERFET to the morale of Australian troops in East Timor.
- 2.18 The JSCFADT departed Komoro Airfield for Darwin at 5.10 pm on Thursday 2 December 1999.

