

# East Timor

## Arrival and initial briefing

- 1.1 On 5 August 2009, the Defence Sub Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade was met at Dili International 'Nicolau Lobato' Airport, East Timor, by the Australian Ambassador to East Timor, HE Mr Peter Heyward, the Defence Attaché Dili, Group Captain Ralph Kettle, the Assistant Defence Attaché Dili, Lieutenant Colonel Ron Morley and the military affairs adviser to President Ramos Horta, Major Michael Stone.
- 1.2 Unfortunately, owing to pre-arranged Timor Leste Government commitments, it was not possible for the Committee to pay a courtesy call to the Government. Regrettably, the visit also coincided with President Ramos-Horta's late-notice commitment to attend the state funeral of former President Aquino of the Philippines.
- 1.3 The Committee was driven to the Defence Co-operation Program Headquarters (DCP HQ) in Dili where Ambassador Heyward delivered a background briefing on East Timor's progress and challenges since independence, an explanation of its ongoing relationship and links with Australia and a detailed briefing on the many organisations, governmental and non-governmental, engaged in East Timor's ongoing development.
- 1.4 The Committee were also briefed on the Country's neighbourhood and its resource base, economy and trade.

## Defence Co-operation Program briefing

- 1.5 The Committee were briefed on the Defence Co-operation Program (DCP) by the Senior DCP Adviser to the East Timor Defence Force, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Ferndale. This briefing explained the DCP's role in assisting to create and sustain a professional military culture. A long-term goal would be to enable the East Timor Defence Force to reach a standard of training and effectiveness that could see them contributing internationally.

Figure 1: LTCOL Steve Ferndale welcomes the Committee to the Defence Co-operation Centre in Dili



Source Department of Defence

- 1.6 The Committee was briefed on the challenges faced and the methodologies being employed to overcome them. The briefing also explained how the DCP interacts with the International Stabilisation Force (ISF) and the Timor Leste Defence Force (F-FDTL).
- 1.7 The Committee were informed that the DCP's major projects included the establishment of the Specialist Training Wing, the Maritime Security Program, improvements to logistics management, communications capability and the construction of kit buildings. As an example of infrastructure development, the Committee was advised that the DCP's HQ building was constructed to Australian standard in just three months.

- 1.8 The Committee was also briefed on possibilities for future engagement and interaction between Australia and the F-FDTL that could include visits to ADF facilities, exchanges and engagement in wider Australian peacekeeping activities such as force preparation and deployments.

## International Stabilisation Force

- 1.9 The Committee were driven to the ISF Headquarters at Camp Phoenix, Dili, where they were greeted by Commander ISF, Brigadier Bill Sowry and his command team from Joint Task Force 631. The Committee received a set of briefings covering the ISF's mission, tasks, organisation, disposition and challenges.
- 1.10 The Committee was informed that the ISF is engaged in static security tasks and patrolling in Dili and the regions. The ISF's mission is to: *support the Government of Timor Leste in maintaining stability and the development of its Security Sector in order to allow the continuing growth of Timor Leste as a stable economic nation.*
- 1.11 In furtherance of its mission, the ISF has a range of authorised tasks including the ability to provide Aero Medical Evacuation and to provide a range of reactive back-up capabilities to the country's authorities. The Committee was briefed on the close co-operation between the various organisations involved in the country's security under a whole-of-Government approach.
- 1.12 The committee were advised that the ISF's was becoming more engaged in liaison and nation building, with the NGOs, through the establishment and use of liaison officers.
- 1.13 Following a light lunch with a range of ISF's personnel, the Committee were driven to the *Nicolau Lobato* F-FDTL training centre in Metinaro. This road journey afforded the committee the opportunity to witness the conspicuous poverty and poor living standards experienced by many of the people, especially those who were deemed displaced persons.

## F-FDTL Training Centre Metinaro

- 1.14 The Committee was greeted by the Officer Commanding Specialist Training Wing, Major Barry Rhodes and other centre staff who provided a tour of the facility and an opportunity for committee members to observe and meet the trainees. The Committee appreciated the opportunity to speak informally with the trainees and to discover more about their backgrounds and the events that had led them to join the Defence Force.
- 1.15 The Committee were shown the newly constructed facilities and briefed on the variety of training being conducted, including a comprehensive English Language Training Program. The Committee was advised that an expansion of this program is an integral part of the DCP strategy alongside the development of a training culture that will underpin a professional military culture.

Figure 2: The Hon Arch Bevis MP, The Hon Bob Baldwin MP, Mr Michael Danby MP and Senator Scott Ludlum receiving a briefing on the new facilities at Metinaro



Source WGCDR David Ashworth, Defence Adviser, Defence Sub-Committee, JSCFADT

- 1.16 The committee were then driven back to Dili International 'Nicolau Lobato' Airport from where they returned to Australia.



Figure 3: Defence Sub-Committee members having an informal meeting with trainees at the English Language training facility at Metinaro



Source WGCdr David Ashworth, Defence Adviser, Defence Sub-Committee, JSCFADT

## Conclusion

- 1.17 This visit was completed in a single day to minimise the overhead of hosting and providing security to a sizeable parliamentary delegation. The Committee was mindful of how busy its hosts are in assisting the new government in securing its future and continuing the task of nation building.
- 1.18 The committee were keen to visit and observe the DCP as a prime example of nation building and, while the program is not without its challenges, the progress is impressive. A stable and credible F-FDTL is an integral and critical part of Timor Leste's future and both the DCP and the ISF are key enablers.
- 1.19 In time, strengthening the F-FDTL will enable Australia and others to reduce their commitment to the ISF and other supporting infrastructure.

Figure 4: The Committee being briefed by the Commandant of the Timor Leste Defence Force Training Centre at Metinaro



Source: WGCDR David Ashworth, Defence Adviser, Defence Sub-Committee, JSCFADT