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RDS training:

PM stresses need for discipline and respect for human rights

(Dili, 12 January) – RDTL's Prime-Minister Mari Alkatiri today stressed the need for members of PNTL's Rapid Deployment Service elite unit (RDS) to be highly disciplined as they will be more heavily armed than regular police. He added that they also need to earn the public's trust and the best way to do so is for RDS to observe human rights strictly. The Prime-Minister was speaking at the start of the RDS training programme in Suai this morning.

The first batch of aspirants [120] started the first [eliminary] stage of the 3-month training programme being run by UNPOL in cooperation with PNTL instructors. The first stage will last for 3 weeks during which the trainees will attend mostly theoretical sessions covering human rights, use of force, code of conduct, first aid, map reading and survival skills, among other topics. They will then sit a test before being allowed to move on to the second stage of the training which will have a greater focus on practical skills. Trainees will continue to be assessed throughout the second stage of the programme.

UNPOL Commissioner Sandi Peisley echoed the Prime-Minister's comments and added that only those trainees who perform well and display the highest standards of professional behaviour during the different stages of the training programme will be selected for RDS deployment.

The RDS will be the specialist unit within PNTL, supporting the Border Patrol Unit or deploying in other rural areas of Timor-Leste when there is a threat level, especially from armed groups, that cannot be met by regular police. It is expected that the RDS will deploy in the border districts of Cova Lima, Bobonaro and Oecussi.

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