

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNMISSET

United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

UNMISSET PRESS RELEASE

ROKBATT bids farewell to Timor-Leste: 'We say good-bye to friends who have given their best'

(Oecussi, 21 October) – RDTL Prime- Minister Mari Alkatiri today thanked the Republic of Korea Battalion of PKF (ROKBATT) for their contribution to Timor-Leste and to Oecussi in particular. “Since its arrival, ROKBATT played a very visible and positive role”, said the Prime-Minister. “We thank you, and say good-bye to friends who worked with us and have given their best”. Mari Alkatiri was speaking at a ceremony in Oecussi this morning when ROKBATT bade farewell to Timor-Leste as part of UNMISSET’s downsizing in the leading-up to the completion of its mandate in May next year.

The PKF Commander Lieutenant-General Khairuddin Mat Yusof praised ROKBATT’s “flawless record and admirable performance”, saying that it was due to their presence that the situation in Oecussi is calm and stable. “I thank all of you, and Lieutenant-Colonel Kim Sajin [ROKBATT’s Commander] in particular because he kept in mind that the people of Timor-Leste are at the heart of what we do and he maintained their trust and confidence”.

The Prime-Minister and the PKF Commander also recalled the five [7th] ROKBATT soldiers who died in Oecussi in March this year. “They gave their lives in the service of peace and have a special place in our hearts. We shall never forget them”, said Lt.-Gen. Khairuddin. The Prime-Minister added that their deaths strengthened the ties between the Republic of Korea and Timor-Leste.

After ROKBATT returned the UN flag to the PKF Commander, Lt.-Col. Kim thanked the people of Oecussi for their friendship. “Whenever we carried out our Blue Angel Operation [community assistance projects], you welcomed us with your heart and constant friendship”. He added that their expressions of solidarity on the occasion of the deaths of the ROKBATT soldiers “helped us relieve our pain and sorrow”.

ROKBATT also donated over US\$ 1 million worth of equipment and goods to the government of Timor-Leste. The donations include vehicles, a forklift, an ambulance, excavators, as well as medical equipment, office supplies, cooking equipment, bedding and clothing.

Oecussi schoolchildren then sang *Auld Lang Syne* and another farewell song, and both the Prime-Minister and the PKF Force Commander wished ROKBATT a safe journey home.

The ROK Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Yu Jin-Kyu, and the Commander of ROK Special Forces [Special Warfare Commanding General] Lieutenant-General Kim Yoon-Suk, who flew in from Seoul for the ceremony, both thanked the people of Timor-Leste for their support of ROKBATT. “If you really need us again, we will come back”, said Lt.-Gen. Kim.

ROKBATT returns home on Thursday [23rd October] after serving in Timor-Leste since October 1999.

- ENDS -

(photos available)

For further information contact:

Marcia Poole

Spokesperson/UNMISSET

Mobile: + 670 723 0793

Telephone: + 61 8 8946 3900 Ext. 6059