

FACT SHEET 16

April 2002

By UNTAET Press Office

EAST TIMOR DEFENCE FORCE

- The East Timor Transitional Cabinet approved the establishment of an **East Timor Defence Force (ETDF)** in September 2000. The new Defence Force will consist of a **light infantry force of 1,500 regulars** to be recruited and trained over a three-year period and **1,500 reservists**. **Ex-FALINTIL** soldiers represent the core of the force.
- The recruitment and selection process for **the first 600-member battalion** was completed in January 2001, and 250 of these recruits completed their basic training at Aileu the following June. The 12-week basic training was conducted by Portugal, with specialist training provided by Australia. The remaining 350 battalion recruits finished their basic training at an Australian-built training facility at Metinaro, near Dili, on 1 December 2001. Thirty-two of the first class of graduates served as instructors for the second basic training course, alongside ten Portuguese specialists. The battalion has been deployed to the former base of Republic of Korea peacekeepers in Lospalos and should be ready for active duty by mid-2002.
- A group of 261 young recruits was selected in January 2002 to form a **second ETDF battalion**. The recruits – of whom 30 are female – were chosen from among 428 candidates after undergoing a range of physical, medical and psychometric tests. Basic training began at Metinaro in mid February.
- The **mission of the ETDF** is to provide for the military defence of East Timor, its people and territory, by stopping militia incursions and deterring aggressors. In addition, it will provide assistance during natural disasters and other emergencies. The ETDF is subordinated to civil authority. For the duration of UNTAET's mandate, the Transitional Administrator will have command and control of the defence force, including the authority to appoint and dismiss its members.
- The **United Nations Peacekeeping Force** (see Fact Sheet 17) will be responsible for the defence and security of East Timor until independence, after which arrangements will be made by the new Government and the UN for safeguarding the country's security until the ETDF is in a position to do so.
- Representatives of Australia, Brazil, Japan, Malaysia, Mozambique, New Zealand, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States met in Dili in June 2001 to discuss the ongoing development of the ETDF. Each country present indicated support for one or more of the functions in the areas of personnel support, training, logistics and equipment and material. Portugal reaffirmed its previous commitment to provide two Albatross patrol craft and associated support to form the basis of a maritime wing of the ETDF, while ASEAN countries showed great willingness to assist in training the ETDF and supporting its organisational efforts.