

By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office

Dili, 17 July 2002

SRSR PRAISES DEPARTING INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION UNITS

SRSR Kamallesh Sharma yesterday evening praised the UN's Portuguese and Chilean aviation units for their contributions over the past two and a half years and said their imminent departure represents a significant juncture in East Timor's development.

"[This is] yet another milestone in that process whereby civilian – and, dare I say it in front of so many people in uniform – 'normal' life returns and the military recedes," the SRSR said at a Farewell and Medal Parade held in Dili.

"The [Portuguese and Chilean] detachments are returning to their countries, and do not require to be replaced. This, surely, is the mark of a nation quickly gaining in self-reliance, particularly since its independence two months ago under the dynamic guidance of its Government led by Prime Minister Alkatiri," the SRSR added.

Another step in the process of UNMISSET's military downsizing will come on 23 July when the East Timor Defence Force (FALINTIL-FDTL) will formally assume responsibility for Lautem district from the PKF.

The PKF has been present in Lautem district since October 1999 and the current Thai company has been based there since February of this year.

The UN began reducing its military component in East Timor in November of last year. UNMISSET's military component has now been reduced to just over 5,000 from a peak authorized strength of 8,000 peacekeeping troops and military observers.

In other military related news, PKF Force Commander Lieutenant General Winai Phattiyakul today expressed satisfaction with the Inter-Command (ICM) talks held with Indonesian military officials, including Chief of the Udayana Regional Military Command Maj. Gen. Williem da Costa, in Bali earlier this week.

Lieutenant General Winai said there was a good spirit of co-operation and that the TNI had offered to assist in the training of officers of the FALINTIL-FDTL. For the first time, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak, the Commander of the East Timorese Defence Force, attended the meeting as an observer.

The ICM sessions are usually held every three months to allow participants to discuss ongoing bilateral military issues and further develop relations between the UN Peacekeeping Force in East Timor and the Indonesian military.

This was the final ICM for Lieutenant General Winai, who finishes his tour as UNMISSET's Force Commander on 31 August.



MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE

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SEMINAR HELD TO DISCUSS AMNESTY BILL BEFORE PARLIAMENT

East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CRTR) and the NGO Forum today held a seminar in Dili to discuss different viewpoints related to the draft law on amnesty currently before Parliament.

Various high-profile speakers participated in the seminar including President Xanana Gusmao's Chief of Staff, Agio Pereira; Bishop Belo; the Head of UNMISSET's Human Rights Unit, Patrick Burgess; Member of Parliament Clementino Amaral; NGO representatives; and a National Commissioner of the CRTR, Jacinto Alves.

Themes touched upon at the day-long event included the international, historical, and political context surrounding the issues of amnesty and reconciliation, with most of the speakers emphasizing the need for public involvement in the development of any national policy on amnesty.

