

## Timor-Leste

The first full year of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) was completed in 2007. Authorized in August 2006, UNMIT was deployed in the aftermath of two bloody months, April and May, that year, when large parts of state security institutions collapsed and the fledgling nation lurched dangerously toward civil conflict. Instead of completing its expected drawdown in 2006, the severe downturn in events required the UN to return in greater numbers with the likelihood of staying for several years.

UNMIT is a multidimensional mission with a wide mandate including political arbitration, security and judicial sector reform, and socioeconomic development. The mission's success will be assessed by its capacity to better help build effective and sustainable

national institutions, compared to the efforts of predecessor missions. In particular, UNMIT's challenge will be to demonstrate its effectiveness in restoring public order, rebuilding trust in the police, and reforming the wider security sector.

### Background

Soon after Timor-Leste declared independence from Portugal in 1975, Indonesia invaded and then annexed the territory. A brutal twenty-four-year occupation followed, during which over 100,000 Timorese suffered conflict-related deaths.<sup>1</sup> In August 1999, the people of Timor-Leste chose autonomy in a referendum supervised by the United Nations, resulting in Indonesia agreeing to the country's independence. Pro-Indonesian militias launched a campaign of violence soon after, leading to the deaths of approximately 2,000 Timorese and the dislocation of tens of thousands more.

Following military intervention by an Australian-led coalition under UN mandate, the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was established in October 1999 as the territory's administrative authority for an intermediary period, and to ensure a peaceful transition to independence. Although UNTAET was responsible for a relatively small territory compared to other UN peacekeeping missions, its mandate was colossal: in effect, to build a state from scratch. The would-be nation had few formal accouterments of sovereignty on which to build a state: no ministries, no institutions, no police, and just a handful of courts. For reasons of occupation and dislocation, indigenous resources to animate these institutions were limited, and a



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mass exodus of Indonesian civil servants prior to and immediately following the territory-wide violence and destruction had left an enormous capacity vacuum. Two of the most credible indigenous institutions, the Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorese (CNRT) (the political umbrella), and the Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (FALINTIL), were on the one hand voluntarily disbanded, and on the other hand sidelined at the onset of the UNTAET mission.

During the three years of UN administration, Timorese politicians progressively assumed governing authority, establishing a national governing council and electing a parliament and president. On 20 May 2002, the country became independent, with resistance hero Jose Alexandre Kay Rala “Xanana” Gusmão sworn in as its first president and the government led by the Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN), one of the parties that had declared independence twenty-seven years previously. The challenges the new state would face were underscored by stark economic data released at the time: the UN’s 2002 *Human Development Report* ranked Timor-Leste as the poorest country in Asia.

Following independence, UNTAET was succeeded by the UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET), with a mandate to provide interim law enforcement and public security, and to assist in the development of a new law enforcement agency, the East Timor Police Service (later called Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste [PNTL]). UNMISET was also mandated to contribute to the maintenance of the external and internal security of Timor-Leste, and provide assistance to core administrative structures critical to the viability and political stability of the country. A new Timorese defense force (the FALINTIL–Forças Armadas de Defesa de Timor-Leste [F-FDTL]) was created, but a large number of demobilized fighters were not incorporated into it. UNMISET was followed by the UN Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL) in 2005, a much smaller mission than its predecessors, and conceived as a bridging operation to transition from peacekeeping

#### **UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT)**

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Authorization and Start Date   | 25 August 2006 (UNSC Res. 1704)   |
| • SRSG and Head of Mission       | Atul Khare (India)  |
| • Chief Military Liaison Officer | Colonel Graeme Roger Williams (New Zealand)   |
| • Police Commissioner            | Rodolfo Aser Tor (Phillipines)  |
| • Budget                         | \$153.2 million (1 July 2007–30 June 2008)  |
| • Strength as of 31 October 2007 | Military Observers: 32<br>Police: 1,464<br>International Civilian Staff: 333<br>Local Civilian Staff: 771<br>UN Volunteers: 118 |

*For detailed mission information see p. 321.*

#### **International Security Forces (ISF)**

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| • Authorization Date               | 20 June 2006 (UNSC Res. 1690)                   |
| • Start Date                       | May 2006  |
| • Force Commander                  | Brigadier John Hutcheson (Australia)            |
| • Budget                           | \$87.4 million<br>(October 2006–September 2007) |
| • Strength as of 30 September 2007 | Troops: 1,020                                   |

to coordinated development assistance. UNOTIL was scheduled to end in May 2006, a decision influenced by member states’ reluctance to fund it further.

#### **The 2006 Crisis**

The violence that erupted in Timor-Leste in 2006 demonstrated that the national and international efforts over six and a half years had not succeeded in developing and nurturing new state institutions. Judged with the benefit of hindsight, many of the institutions created by the UN and bequeathed to the new state were simply not fit for their purpose. The short time-frame was not the only factor: the manner in which the UN and donor countries

approached statebuilding in Timor-Leste can be faulted in other respects. During the UN transitional administration, Timorese participation in the process was frequently sidelined by the presence of a large number of international advisers and overreliance on “off the shelf” models, with limited consideration of their appropriateness in the Timorese context.

The newly created security sector institutions were especially frail, and tensions within and between the PNTL and the F-FDTL were important factors in the renewed violence. Compared to the police, the F-FDTL was relatively neglected by the international community (including in terms of the mandates given to UNTAET and UNMISSET), and poorly funded by donors.<sup>2</sup> Alleged unfair treatment within the ranks ignited discontent. In February 2006, 400 officers (later 594) went on strike over discrimination in promotions and ill-treatment. The decision of the F-FDTL commander to dismiss these officers in March 2006 prompted demonstrations that descended into violence. The acrimony escalated in the following months, and acquired a regional character, as armed groups from Timor’s eastern and western provinces clashed. The police forces split along similar geographic lines, reflecting a perception that Timorese from the west of the country had not carried their weight during the armed resistance. Youth gangs, often politically manipulated and sparked by tensions emanating from beliefs that the easterners had usurped residential property and market stalls in the capital, clashed throughout the city. In April–May 2006, thirty-seven people died, many houses were destroyed, and 150,000 Timorese—15 percent of the entire population—were displaced from their homes amid the violence.

Within the space of a few months, many of the institutions established with the assistance of the UN appeared to be rapidly unraveling. The tensions laid bare the long-standing animosities between and within the political elite, and the sharp rivalries between the police and the defense force. The government was largely paralyzed, with a split between Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and President

Gusmão over the appropriate governmental mechanisms for power-sharing. The PNTL and the F-FDTL were at best incapable of controlling, and at worst complicit in, crime and lawlessness. Under the circumstances, the small UNOTIL mission, without any military contingent, tried its best to assist the parties to resolve the crisis peacefully. In one of the most tragic events in this harrowing time for the UN, the police chief of the UNPOL mission was fired upon as he attempted to negotiate safe passage for PNTL officers hemmed in their headquarters by F-FDTL soldiers. Eight unarmed PNTL were shot dead in the attack.<sup>3</sup>

By late May, security had largely collapsed, prompting the president, the prime minister, and the president of the national parliament to request international assistance to help stabilize the situation. Defense forces from Australia and New Zealand arrived in Dili on 26 May, calming the situation in partnership with formed police units from Portugal and Malaysia. In these circumstances, a prior decision to downsize and withdraw the UN presence seemed untimely. A multidimensional assessment team led by a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ian Martin (former Special Representative in the UN Mission in East Timor [UNAMET]), recommended a larger peacekeeping mission, one focused on security and judicial sector reform.

Security Council Resolution 1704 was passed on 25 August 2006, paving the way for the establishment of UNMIT. The mission’s broad mandate include support of the 2007 elections, institutional reform of the police and armed forces, justice sector development, relocation of displaced persons, use of good offices to assist reconciliation of a fractured polity, and a coordinating role in executing the “compact” through which Timorese national development plans, the UN, and bilateral donors are to be dovetailed in the provision of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of sustainable development. Restoring public security is a mission priority, and the UN civilian police are the mission’s most visible face. UN police will provide interim executive policing support,

### Box 3.7.1 Challenges of Building National Police Structures: The UN's Portfolio of Law Enforcement Projects

The critical role of police personnel in UN peacekeeping operations was on display during the year in review, from Haitian National Police conducting a series of successful raids on gangs in the slums of Port-au-Prince alongside UN police, to the positive impacts of the deployment of an all-female Indian formed police contingent in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The presence of the all-female police contingent is reported to have had a positive impact on public perceptions, as the number of female applicants who sought to join the Liberian National Police increased significantly following the deployment of the unit. In addition to their support in maintaining law and order, UN police personnel are playing a prominent role in developing the organic police capacity in postconflict societies. Since the 2000 report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, commonly known as the Brahimi Report, which emphasized the crucial role of police personnel, the stated emphasis on the UN's Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) critical undertaking has not been

matched by the provision of adequate resources. It is against this backdrop that the Police Division of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations published *The Portfolio of Police and Law Enforcement Projects 2007*, to highlight both achievements and deficiencies of the current UN police programs.

The *Portfolio* details the administration, current funding, objectives, and challenges of seventy-three UN police projects across ten different peace operations. Most projects are given a timeline of one year for completion, including achievable benchmarks, but some projects may take up to three years to be completed. In 2007, UN police consisted of more than 9,000 officers, with an approximately \$215 million funding requirement for in-mission projects. Slightly more than half of this amount was earmarked for equipment, and nearly a third for construction and rehabilitation projects, with the remaining for capacity building and service delivery projects. MINUSTAH had the highest estimated cost, at

\$44.5 million for nine projects, with a large portion, over \$18 million, going toward equipping the Haitian National Police. The highest individual estimated figure was \$21.1 million in Burundi, for a project to develop the newly created Department of Civil Protection.

Based on ten UN-led peace operations, the *Portfolio* points to a chronic lack of human, material, and financial resources as impediments to police reform efforts in postconflict countries. Meanwhile, the challenges posed by increasing needs for larger numbers of UN police personnel, and proper training, have yet to be properly addressed. Currently, the responsibility to coordinate potential donor resources toward mission project goals falls to small in-mission committees tasked with coordinating all rebuilding projects. It is hoped that the *Portfolio* will serve as a reference tool for donors wanting to strengthen UN police efforts and support new and ongoing projects in several missions.

*Source:* United Nations, *The Portfolio of Police and Law Enforcement Projects 2007* (New York: Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Police Division, December 2006), <http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/dpko/unpolprojects.html>.

while simultaneously reconstituting the deeply politicized, institutionally weak PNTL.

The mission began in a somewhat changed political environment. José Ramos Horta acceded to the premiership after the resignation of Mari Alkatiri in June 2006, while two other ministers with direct responsibility for the police and the military resigned at the same time. Rogério Lobato, the former interior minister, was held culpable for his role in the events of April–May 2006 and sentenced to seven and a half years in jail.<sup>4</sup>

#### Key Developments

The presence of UNMIT has helped to restore relative calm to Timor-Leste, assisted in no

small measure by the presence of the 1,000 Australian and New Zealand troops operating in the International Security Forces, formerly Operation Astute. UNMIT police have played a primary role in the security efforts, with “blue beret” civilian police drawn from over forty countries. The police are currently engaged in vetting PNTL officers, removing officers implicated in the trouble of 2006, and retraining and mentoring the remainder, some of whom are already deployed.

In some respects, this police rebuilding process is something of a “do-over” opportunity for the UN police, a chance to prove that they are able to address the deficiencies that arose in the creation of the PNTL during the transitional administration period.<sup>5</sup> As the UN



AP Photo/Dita Alangkara

A Portuguese UNMIT policeman guards election workers loading ballot boxes to be distributed to the sub-districts of Dili, 8 May 2007.

Independent Commission of Inquiry discovered in probing the events of 2006, the PNTL was deeply politicized and fragmented, with many of its officers having been drawn from among those who served under the Indonesian occupation.

The question currently facing Timor-Leste is whether the “blue berets” will be any better at creating an effective police institution than their predecessors were during the transitional administration. The UN police need to provide their officers—who are often in a country with which they are not linguistically or culturally familiar—with improved tools for police training and mechanisms to better transfer knowledge about the role of the police to the local population. The day-to-day transfer of knowledge, skills, and best practices remains a substantial ongoing challenge.

Their assignment is made doubly challenging because some members of the PNTL have shown themselves resistant to reform. According to a trusted human rights monitor, “many PNTL members do not report for their training courses or turn up for duty at the designated place.”<sup>6</sup> Public trust in the PNTL remains low, and insecurity remains a prominent concern, especially in the major cities,

where a flammable mix of unemployment, youth bulge, and gang culture persists.

UNMIT’s other major functions have included good office efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation among the still-fractured leadership and population, and to provide support for presidential and parliamentary elections. Achievements in this regard were tempered by the underlying fragility of politics in the country. The elections effectively resulted in the individuals serving as president and prime minister swapping jobs. José Ramos-Horta was elected president in May 2007, defeating the candidate of Timor-Leste’s governing party, FRETILIN, in a second-round run-off. FRETILIN’s electoral setback continued in the June parliamentary poll, as it slipped from fifty-five seats (of eighty-eight) to twenty-one in the now sixty-five-member parliament. Although it remained the largest party in terms of seats, FRETILIN was unable to persuade enough other parties to join it in a coalition, leading to a deadlock in the formation of a government. In August 2007, an alliance of parties led by Gusmão was requested by the president to form the new government. The new administration has put forward a platform involving, among other things, tackling poverty, strengthening security, and returning the remaining 100,000 persons who were internally displaced during the 2006 violence to their homes. FRETILIN continues to question the new government’s legitimacy.

Violence following the formation of the new government illustrates how brittle the ostensible calm in Timor remains. In protests in Dili and major cities, where FRETILIN supporters protested the results, an estimated 400 houses were torched, a UN convoy was ambushed, and hundreds of civilians were displaced in the ensuing violence.

Beyond insecurity, the new government faces profound challenges. Timor-Leste struggles with deep-seated social, economic, and governance problems: high unemployment, rapid population growth, inadequate infrastructure, a weak public sector with limited service capacity, and fragile state institutions.

### Box 3.7.2 HIV/AIDS and UN Peacekeeping

In 2007, the UN's Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, part of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), conducted its second HIV/AIDS "Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice" (KAP) survey of uniformed peacekeepers as part of its ongoing effort to measure the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS education programs for peacekeepers. Employing a model similar to that used in the first KAP, in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2005, the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit set out to survey the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in May 2007, the results of which were published in August.

DPKO's KAP survey is in line with Security Council Resolution 1308 (2000), which requested member states to initiate HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness programs for peacekeepers and offer voluntary counseling and testing. Recognizing the inherent challenges this poses in terms of standardization of training modules, the DPKO, with the support of the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), developed a standard generic training module on HIV/AIDS to supplement training from member states. The MINUSTAH survey thus assessed the performance of these programs using the generic training module developed by DPKO and UNAIDS.

The MINUSTAH survey involved 1,166 uniformed male officers in the mission. Female officers were not included in the survey, as they represented a small

percentage of staff and confidentiality could not be ensured. In carrying out the MINUSTAH survey, the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit incorporated lessons learned from the UNMIL survey in 2005. For example, the 2005 survey of uniformed UNMIL personnel was administered only in English, while the MINUSTAH survey of 2007 was conducted in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, to allow for a wider subject pool and thereby remedy some of the shortfalls from the UNMIL survey.

The MINUSTAH survey revealed that between 47 and 74 percent of respondents demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS. The predeployment section of the survey assessed that 89 percent of military personnel had received training on HIV issues in their home countries, while 65 percent had received training on the ground in Haiti. The figures for UN police were 73 percent and 83 percent, respectively. Although the UNAIDS program distributes awareness cards to mission personnel, less than half of those surveyed had received the cards, and only 17 percent of respondents were carrying their cards when they were interviewed. The variance between knowledge and training demonstrates the challenges for the latter in terms of streamlining prevention and awareness.

The survey also found that 11 percent of respondents considered themselves at

high risk for contracting HIV, with 43 percent considering themselves at low risk and 42 percent considering themselves at no risk. However, nearly 90 percent of interviewees indicated an interest in a free, confidential HIV test in the mission area. The large number of respondents interested in the latter demonstrates the need for facilities to undertake voluntary counseling and testing, and placed an enormous responsibility on MINUSTAH to provide these services. The 2007 KAP survey had two notable limitations. First, the methodology was flawed, given the discrepancy between risk and testing highlighted in the survey's interview versus self-administered style, the latter of which elicits more honest responses but results in a lower response rate. Second, MINUSTAH civilian personnel and the local community were excluded from the survey. Nonetheless, as with the previous KAP surveys, the lessons of the MINUSTAH survey will be incorporated into future research.

The survey report made several recommendations for member states, DPKO, and MINUSTAH, including training and deployment of HIV/AIDS peer-educators by troop-contributing countries, providing guidance to troop and police contributors on testing and counseling standards, and emphasizing the importance that mission personnel carry their HIV/AIDS awareness cards at all times.

*Source:* Elisabeth Lothe and Megh Gurung, "HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice Survey: UN Uniformed Peacekeepers in Haiti" (New York: United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, August 2007).

Unemployment is approximately 50 percent, gross domestic product is \$370 per capita per year, few industries exist apart from coffee, and the birth rate is 7.8 children per woman, among the highest birth rates in the world. Half of the population still has no access to safe drinking water, and the country remains

Asia's most impoverished state. The UN's 2006 *Human Development Report* depicted a poor country getting even poorer, despite significant wealth generated by oil and natural gas exploitation in the Timor Sea.

To some extent, UNMIT's focus on public order and elections in its first year on the

ground meant that other elements of its mandate received less attention. The “compact” between the government and the international community to ensure that the new mission’s activities and resources complement the government’s own budget resources and priorities was still under negotiations as the year in review drew to a close. A large part of Timor-Leste’s future is linked with the use of revenues from oil and gas, expected to generate \$35 billion over the next decade, but parliamentary guidelines erected around the use of these revenues, coupled with the government’s lack of budgetary execution, have to date limited their effect. Only 35 percent of the 2005–2006 budget was executed, and a mere 5 percent of the capital development budget was fulfilled in 2006–2007. This chronic lack of capacity and continuing politicization within state structures results in poor service delivery to the populace, undercutting the legitimacy of public institutions.

Progress regarding security sector reform has been slow, due in part to the need to ensure the new government’s buy-in. UNMIT’s recruitment of staff for its Security Sector Support Unit was also delayed. While the planned Timorese-led comprehensive review of the security sector remains at an embryonic stage, some signs are nonetheless encouraging. Importantly, the need for reforming the security sector is accepted and embraced by the new government. Major challenges remain, not least the size, makeup, and role of the F-FDTL in any new security architecture.

Resolving the structure and function questions surrounding the F-FDTL will be a vital aspect of the ongoing reforms to the security sector.

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## Conclusion

One year into UNMIT’s timeline, it is too early to judge outcomes and attribute marks of success and failure. The challenges to the new government of Timor-Leste and to the international agencies charged to support the consolidation of peace and development are great. Discernible progress has been achieved in containing of violence, but the underlying tensions and weakness of national institutions remain an ongoing threat. The violence that followed the inauguration of the new government, and FRETILIN’s continuing contestation of the government’s legitimacy, indicate that neither political nor social stability are secure.

The ultimate test will come after Australian and New Zealand troops withdraw. Considerably more time is needed, however, before the Timorese police and defense forces will be able to replace them and economic progress lays the ground for the productive rather than disruptive engagement of Timorese youth. Given the scale of the challenge, a UN presence appears necessary for the foreseeable future. The way in which that presence is structured, and its relationship to the government and people of Timor-Leste is developed over the next several years, will determine how this essential peace operation is judged.

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## Notes

1. Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor, *Chega!* final report (Dili, October 2005), p. 44.
2. Shepard Forman, “The Failings of Security Sector Reform in Timor-Leste,” in *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations, 2007* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2007).
3. Independent Special Commission of Enquiry for Timor-Leste, “Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Enquiry on Timor Leste” (Geneva, 2 October 2006), paras. 77–85.
4. In August 2007, an ailing Lobato was allowed (by decision of an appellate court and the government) to leave his jail cell in Dili to seek medical treatment in Malaysia. It is unclear if he will return.
5. Ludovic Hood, “Missed Opportunities: The United Nations, Police Service and Defence Force Development in Timor-Leste, 1999–2004,” in Gordon Peake, Eric Scheye, and Alice Hills, eds., *Managing Insecurity: Field Experiences of Security Sector Reform* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2007).
6. “Screening PNTL Back Into Service,” *La’o Hamutuk Bulletin*, June 2007, p. 5.