

**EAST TIMOR: HOW INDONESIA MIS-LED THE AUSTRALIAN
PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION**

Archivist's Note

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The document was written by me, John Waddingham, in early 1984 – essentially for the interest of Senator Gordon McIntosh who was a member of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to East Timor in July 1983 (the principle focus of the document). The original typescript may be held in the McIntosh Timor collection.

The document was also circulated privately to other interested parties but never published.

JW
CHART Archivist/Manager
16 January 2013

SUMMARY

An Australian Parliamentary Delegation visited East Timor from July 28 to August 1, 1983.

This paper assembles evidence to conclude that the Parliamentary Delegation was mis-led by its Indonesian Government hosts on key issues concerning East Timor.

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

Restrictions on ICRC access to mainland villages and detention centres were imposed by the Indonesian government in or before July. There is no indication that the Delegation was informed of these restrictions.

FRETILIN-INDONESIA TALKS

The Delegation's main sources on the talks were Governor Mario Carrascalao and Colonel Purwanto. Carrascalao claimed Fretilin was only seeking surrender; Purwanto denied he had held talks with Fretilin's Xanana. Both of these claims are demonstrably untrue.

1983 INDONESIAN OFFENSIVE

The Indonesian claim that its military operations in late 1983 were a response to a Fretilin breaking of the ceasefire is examined and shown to be dubious. There is, however, evidence that Indonesia had planned (by July at latest) for a new military offensive against Fretilin to begin in August. This would represent a gross misleading of the Parliamentary Delegation which was led to believe there was no time limit on an "amnesty" for Fretilin.

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INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

The Parliamentary Delegation did not meet with representatives of International Red Cross (ICRC) either in Jakarta or East Timor. The Delegation did meet with senior Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) officials in Jakarta and with PMI representatives on Atauro and elsewhere in East Timor. Indonesian Red Cross works with ICRC in the implementation of the ICRC East Timor program.

The Delegation reported favourably on the ICRC program on the prison island of Atauro and considered that its work, along with other agencies was "invaluable". (p.76). It also reported that "ICRC continues to provide food for special emergency needs and assistance in other humanitarian activities" (p.75). The Delegation noted that "ICRC had access to Comarca (a prison in Dili)" (p.7).

At no stage was the delegation given any hint that some parts of the ICRC program were being curtailed.

It is now clear that at the time the Parliamentary Delegation was in East Timor, restrictions were being placed on International Red Cross. I refer to ICRC's own Situation Report No.10, September 1983 (Sitrep 10).

PRISON VISITATION

ICRC has not had the regular access to Comarca prison implied in the Parliamentary Delegation's report. According to Sitrep 10, ICRC has only visited Comarca twice. These visits were in February and November 1982. In other words, ICRC had not visited Comarca for eight months prior to the Delegation's visit to Timor.

Of much greater importance, however, are ICRC's applications to visit other (unspecified) detention centres in East Timor. In January 1983, ICRC secured agreement from Jakarta to visit other centres; it proposed starting these visits in June 1983.

However, according to Sitrep 10: "The Indonesian authorities requested the ICRC to defer this series of visits until November or December 1983" (p.1)

While the Sitrep does not specify the timing of this "request", it is fair to assume that it occurred before or during June 1983 - that is at least a month prior to the Delegation's visit to Timor. (ICRC's Sitrep 9, May 1983 reported that the new visitation program was to begin in June/July, suggesting that at least up until the end of April, ICRC believed the program was to go ahead as agreed.)

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF PROGRAMS

According to its May 1983 Sitrep 9, ICRC intended to conduct, among other things, the following relief programs for the duration of 1983:

- to distribute food parcels to persons returning from Atauro to their village of origin and to monitor their condition after their transfer with the possibility of distributing relief supplies in case of urgent need;
- to distribute urgently required food to several localities on the main island;
- to continue evaluations on the island in order to keep the authorities informed of the problems encountered and to cover possible emergency needs.

This program was determined after ICRC surveys in East Timor in early 1983. Visiting nine new localities with a population of approximately 20,000 people, important nutritional needs were identified. The surveys also found distribution problems in Luro and Iliomar due to unspecified "logistical difficulties". In Iliomar these difficulties had caused a deterioration in the food situation. ICRC also found that 600 people moved from Atauro to Cailaco were not self-sufficient in food.

In July 1983, however, ICRC decided to "suspend its participation in the assistance activities on the main island". (Sitrep 10, p.2) The decision was taken because the Indonesian Government was not granting access to all villages requiring assessment.

Again, while the ICRC does not specify the date of Indonesian restrictions or the decision to suspend activities, it is certain that ICRC relief programs on mainland East Timor were suspended before or during the Parliamentary Delegation's visit to the island.

The Delegation Report makes no mention of this. It is fair to conclude that the ICRC decision to withdraw, and the processes which led to that decision, were withheld from the Parliamentary Delegation by its hosts.

The failure of the Delegation's hosts to reveal limitations on ICRC - that is, curtailment of an agreed prison visitation program and relief assistance on the mainland - represents a misleading of the Delegation on this important issue.

FRETILIN-INDONESIA TALKS: SURRENDER OR SELF-DETERMINATION ?

The report of the Parliamentary Delegation is written in a way as to suggest that committed armed resistance to integration is no longer significant in East Timor.

The Report described the "atmosphere" in East Timor as "relatively relaxed". (p.78) It reported that there were no obvious signs of "security problems" in areas visited. The delegation instanced the fact of no military convoys being required for its road travel. It noted that Delegation helicopters travelled "directly" and "flew over saddles between mountains..." The Delegation considered this would "not have been possible if insurgency had been active in the province". (p.77)

The Report then effectively contradicts itself by noting that "the apparent absence of fighting has resulted from a series of talks which have been held between authorities and Fretilin" (p.78)

These talks, an historic development in the course of the East Timor war obviously deserved very close scrutiny, yet the Delegation reported that it was "unable to ascertain the exact nature of these talks". (p.78)

Why was this?

Having failed to take up the opportunity of obtaining an in-depth account of Fretilin views and claims (1), the Delegation had to rely, for its Report, on the claims of Indonesian authorities - in particular Governor Mario Carrascalao and the military commander, Colonel Purwanto.

What did Carrascalao and Purwanto claim? How does their testimony compare with information available before the Delegation went to East Timor or with information that has more recently emerged?

CARRASCALAO

Carrascalao claimed that Fretilin's Xanana contacted him in February 1983 seeking a meeting and guaranteeing no fighting unless it was started by the Indonesian side. They met at Ossu (the date of 23 March 1983 was identified by Bill Morrison in the Report's record of conversation. See pp 148-153). Xanana reportedly said that the Timorese had suffered sufficiently and he would like to finish the war. Xanana sought no preconditions for surrender except an assurance that they would not be killed. Carrascalao denied any knowledge of Fretilin conditions of self-determination for the East Timorese. According to Carrascalao, Fretilin had said they would come

down from the mountains within 3-4 weeks,"but he had not heard from them since".

PURWANTO

Colonel Purwanto, on the other hand made no mention whatsoever of formal talks (see the Report's record of conversation, pp 187-191) with Fretilin leaders in his account of the Indonesian military "strategy". He referred only to "various occasions when I have been in villages they have come in and wanted to see the Commander". He gave no indication that Fretilin maintained a set of political demands. There was no time limit set on the "amnesty" he said.

Purwanto implied that Fretilin wished to cease fighting. He talked in terms of the "social and psychological" problems of Fretilin who, he claimed, were isolated from the majority. They needed to be convinced that it was safe for them to return to their villages he said.

FRETILIN'S ACCOUNT

On 29 June 1983, Fretilin representatives in Lisbon described to an international press conference, their account of the origins and nature of the Fretilin-Indonesia "dialogue" inside East Timor. Based on documents and photographs smuggled out of East Timor, the Fretilin representatives said the talks were initiated by Indonesia and that preliminary talks in March 1983 had resulted in an agreed ceasefire. The next stage in the process was for Indonesia to inform the United Nations of the talks, leading to a United Nations presence for "the holding of free consultations to the people of East Timor" (see "Fretilin conquers the right to dialogue", published by Fretilin, 1983).

A week earlier, a "highly placed non-Fretilin source" told Jill Jolliffe in Lisbon that there was a ceasefire in East Timor and was the result of talks between Fretilin and Colonel Purwanto (accompanied by Carrascalao and an Indonesian intelligence officer, Major Assis). According to this source, Fretilin put a three point proposal: A ceasefire; Indonesia to contact the U.N. to say it was ready to negotiate; a U.N. supervised act of self-determination. (The Age, 24/6/83)

These accounts clearly contradict the Carrascalao/Purwanto line that Fretilin was seeking to surrender. They suggest the opposite - namely that Fretilin were making a set of political demands concerning East Timorese self-determination.

Which of these claims were true?

INDONESIAN DENIALS - THEN ADMISSIONS

The first Indonesian response to the reports of ceasefire talks was to deny them. A spokesman for the Indonesian Defence and Security ministry, Colonel Sunarso, denied Indonesia had agreed to a ceasefire. "If the Fretilin people want to surrender, we will accept them". (Canberra Times, 28/6/83) This was followed by Foreign Minister Mochtar's admission that there had been talks, but he described them in the same way that Carrascalao did for the Parliamentary Delegation. The Fretilin "remnants", said Mochtar, were being offered "amnesty and reconciliation" (The Age, 30/6/83).

However, it was left to the ubiquitous Peter Hastings - definitely no friend of Fretilin - to offer the most detailed account from an Indonesian source.

Citing an un-named senior Indonesian Government official, Hastings wrote of Jakarta ordering formal talks following informal Fretilin-Indonesian military contacts in East Timor in January 1983. In the formal talks, Indonesia put terms for an amnesty while "hard-line Fretilin" put three conditions for a "negotiated ceasefire": an immediate ceasefire; Fretilin contact with the United Nations as a sovereign entity; U.N. act of self-determination. The official identified Purwanto and Carrascalao as being part of the Indonesian side in the talks. (Sydney Morning Herald, 27/6/83)

While not word-for-word, this account confirms that Fretilin were not offering to surrender. Rather, they were seeking an internationally supervised process of self-determination.

PURWANTO'S LIE

Unfortunately for Colonel Purwanto, he chose to tell a demonstrable lie to the Parliamentary Delegation.

In the context of discussion about talks with Fretilin and amnesty time limits, Colonel Purwanto was asked if he had "had any words with Xanana". The Colonel replied: "None." . (See Delegation Report, p.190)

Not only had Peter Hastings' official identified Purwanto as a participant in the talks, but Fretilin had taken photographs of Purwanto in talks with Xanana. These photographs have been widely published.

Carrascalao denied Purwanto accompanied him in his talks with Xanana. Even if this

was literally true, Carrascalao had the opportunity to say that Purwanto had had separate meetings with Xanana on the same day or on different days - but he chose to say nothing of this.

The Delegation's report contains an interesting line at this point. Following Carrascalao's denial of Purwanto's presence, the Report notes: "... but Mr Morrison recalled that the Foreign Minister Mochtar had recounted the story about the Military Commander having landed in the meeting area in a helicopter". (p152) (Mr Morrison had a private meeting with Mochtar in mid-July.)

CONCLUSION

It is clear that Colonel Purwanto was lying to the Parliamentary Delegation in his denial of talks with Xanana. His failure to even refer to formal talks suggests he was not saying all that could have been said.

Mario Carrascalao, likewise was clearly withholding information on the specifics of the Fretilin-Indonesia talks. His responses to the question of the involvement of Purwanto were clearly evasive.

It can be fairly concluded that both Carrascalao and Purwanto were less than honest and certainly not "frank", as the Delegation Report suggests, in their accounts of the Fretilin-Indonesia talks in East Timor.

And if they were demonstrably evasive or dishonest in their account of such an important issue, then their claims about other key issues, such as the degree of support for self-determination or the size of Fretilin, must be open to serious question.

It remains to be observed that the body of information used here to disprove the Carrascalao/Purwanto claims was available to the Parliamentary Delegation a full month before it visited East Timor. The records of conversation reveal a hint of doubt on the part of the delegation as to the claims being made. Why the Delegation Report made no mention of these inconsistencies in the body of this report, and in particular, Purwanto's lie, is altogether another question.

1983 INDONESIAN OFFENSIVE: WAS IT PLANNED PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION ?

In his account of Indonesian military strategy, Colonel Purwanto told the Delegation on 1 August 1983 that he had set no time limit on an "amnesty" for Fretilin. Yet, two weeks later, the real military authority over East Timor, General Benny Murdani, was saying the Indonesian government would "use its armed forces and all its arsenal" against Fretilin if it didn't surrender. "We are going to hit them without mercy" he said. (Canberra Times, 18/8/83)

So was Colonel Purwanto telling the truth? Information has emerged which suggests the 1983 military operations had already been scheduled for the last months of that year by the time the Parliamentary Delegation was in East Timor:

- The Australian Council for Overseas Aid heard of Church sources in Baucau in June and July claiming that both the Indonesian military and civilians in the area were talking openly of an impending military build-up in preparation for an August offensive. (ACFOA East Timor Report, No.5, 5/9/83)
- Fretilin was reportedly informed by Colonel Purwanto that a new offensive would be launched in August if they didn't accept an amnesty offer. (ACFOA East Timor Report, 5/9/83)
- In a letter to the Australia East Timor Association dated 25 July 1983, Fretilin's Xanana referred to the "forecasted arrival of the reinforcement of more 10 (ten) batalyons" of Indonesian troops to begin a military offensive against Fretilin. (See The Age, 6/2/83)
- Fretilin representative at the United Nations, Jose Ramos Horta, claimed in late July that General Murdani had written to Xanana on June 25 threatening to launch a new offensive on August 17. (See Canberra Times, 3/8/83)
- Peter Hastings has written that "while (Murdani) agreed to permit Purwanto to seek a negotiated surrender of Fretilin leaders, he set an amnesty deadline of August 31". (Sydney Morning Herald, 21/9/83)
- An East Timorese refugee in Lisbon, who left East Timor on 9 September, said Governor Mario Carrascalao had called a meeting of government department heads in late July. He reportedly told the them that Fretilin fighters would have from August 1st to the 15th to surrender and that if not, he would call in

Indonesian troops to eliminate them. (The Age, 17/9/83)

These reports suggest there was indeed a time limit on the "amnesty" - sometime in August. They also suggest the decision to launch a military offensive at this time had been made.

In the absence of definitive documentary evidence to support most of the above reports, they are not by themselves concrete proof that an offensive had been planned. However, there was one important and verifiable event in June/July 1983 which greatly strengthens the claims - namely the restrictions placed on International Red Cross.

RED CROSS RESTRICTIONS THE KEY

As shown above, ICRC decided in July 1983 to "suspend its participation in assistance activities on the main island" because the Indonesian Government was not granting access to all villages. "The Indonesian authorities have stated that this access will again be granted at a later stage". (Sitrep 10, emphasis added)

Likewise, Jakarta "requested" ICRC to postpone implementation of a previously agreed prison visitation scheme which was to have begun in June 1983. Jakarta wanted it to be deferred "until November or December 1983." This request was probably made in June.

Why was Jakarta seeking to keep ICRC personnel out of mainland East Timor villages from July to November or December?

It is worth remembering at this point that ICRC was prevented by Jakarta from entering East Timor from the day of the invasion (7 December 1975) until 1979. That is, for the whole period of Indonesia's major military operations to gain control of the bulk of the Timorese population. The next major Indonesian offensive was the "fence of legs" operation in July/August/September 1981. There was no ICRC presence on East Timor from 24 June to 20 October of that year.

Given ICRC's clear desire to implement its program, the only obvious explanation for Indonesian Government restrictions on ICRC is that the Government knew in July, if not June, that there were to be military operations in East Timor in the latter months of 1983.

OFFENSIVE - A RESPONSE TO THE 'AUGUST 8 INCIDENT' ?

Opponents of East Timorese self determination allege however that the 1983 Indon-

esian offensive was an unpremeditated response to Fretilin's breaking of the ceasefire. This occurred, they claim, when Fretilin killed some Indonesian soldiers in the Viqueque district on 8 August 1983.

But how definitive is this claim?

WHO DID WHAT?

There seems no disputing that about 15 Indonesian military personnel were killed in the district on that date. However, the first thing that is striking about the various Indonesian-sourced reports is the variety of claims as to who did the killing.

The very first Australian media report was simply unsourced. It claimed "villagers" were responsible (Herald (Melb.) 18/8/83). Peter Hastings described the perpetrators as "Fretilin sympathisers" (Sydney Morning Herald, 3/9/83) and later as "former Fretilin". (S.M.H., 21/9/83). An AAP-Reuter report from Jakarta also described them as "former Fretilin members" (Canberra Times, 5/9/83). Indonesia's United Nation's representative called the attackers "Fretilin die-hards" (Letter to Security Council, 9/11/83).

In its September 15 report on the incident, the Far Eastern Economic Review wrote: "Some say it was a spontaneous uprising of villagers and civil guards, while others insist it was Fretilin inspired" (emphasis added). Two weeks later, F.E.E.R. said a "high army official confirmed that .. about 50 members of the civil guard (Hansip)" were responsible. They had, he said, "belonged to Fretilin in the past" (29/9/83).

The Australian Government seemed unable to be definitive about who was responsible. In the Senate on September 27, Gareth Evans referred to "Fretilin's breaking of the unofficial ceasefire". Foreign Affairs Minister Hayden, in answer to a question from Senator Coleman, referred to "ex-Fretilin villagers" (Answers to Questions, Senate, 30/11/83). A week later, Mr Hayden was suggesting the attack was part of Fretilin's strategy (Answer to question 878, H. of Reps, 8/12/83).

The reports overwhelmingly suggest that the attackers were not currently active Fretilin but farmers and/or Timorese in the Indonesian civil guard living in Indonesian-controlled areas. They may have been formerly Fretilin members or "sympathisers".

WHY DID THEY DO IT ?

Even more striking, is the number of theories as to why this attack occurred. The

variations are endless:

- "... the villagers were incited by Fretilin guerillas leading up to Indonesia's Independence Day". (No source; Melb. Herald, 18/8/83)
- "... Fretilin's motive .. is to show to the world that Fretilin is a viable force" (Bill Morrison, Sydney Morning Herald, 3/9/83)
- "... instigated by Fretilin .. to attract world attention (for the) United Nations vote". (No source, The Age, 3/9/83)
- Senior Indonesian officials claim Fretilin was "highly frustrated" when the Parliamentary Delegation decided not to accept an invitation to a guerilla camp. The Delegation's visit produced no benefits for Fretilin. This "led to the August 8 uprising by former Fretilin rebels" (Canberra Times, 16/9/83, emphasis added).
- "... part of the Fretilin campaign to destabilise the area". (Bill Morrison on the ABC's "A.M." program, 3/11/83)
- "Fretilin.... by disrupting the recent period of calm... has demonstrated that there is no peace in East Timor" . (F.E.E.R., 15/9/83)
- The killings resulted from the dismissal of a Police Chief in East Timor who was blamed by Jakarta for allowing 4 Fretilin guerillas to contact the Parliamentary Delegation. His subordinates and followers were angry at his dismissal. "As a reprisal, the theory goes, they attacked the Indonesian soldiers". (FEER, 15/9/83)

All but the last of these theories - and that is all they are - assume that Fretilin was responsible for the incident. As we have seen, that is doubtful. There can be no definitive claim on the reason for the attack until some of those responsible can be interviewed.

To underline the questionable nature of all claims that have been made by Indonesian sources about who was responsible and as to why it occurred, consider this account:

"The version that I heard .. about the Viqueque affair is that there was a big party there to which none of the Indonesians had been invited. They did turn up at it and had something to eat and drink, but were asked to leave, as they had

not been invited. They left, but crept back later in the evening and waylaid a few of the girls who had wandered off to the edge of the party. When the people missed the girls and found out what had happened, they killed the soldiers.

"Purwanto was furious when he heard the news, and threatened to wipe out everybody around Viqueque. Mario Carrascalao told him that it wouldn't have happened if the soldiers had obeyed Suharto's instructions that there was to be no interference with local women. Purwanto ordered the troops in anyway, and a couple of hundred people were killed. Carrascalao flew off immediately to see Suharto to protest about Purwanto's actions, and Purwanto was transferred from East Timor". (Timor Newsletter, 3/10/83)

CONCLUSIONS

Whatever the real story there is no clear evidence that the 'August 8 incident' was a calculated Fretilin disruption of the ceasefire. It seems certain that the attackers were not currently active Fretilin members and there is no proof that the event was "Fretilin-inspired". Therefore, the claim that the Indonesian military offensive was simply a response to Fretilin attacks is highly dubious.

On the other hand, there is a body of evidence suggesting that a new Indonesian offensive was being planned for August 1983. This evidence is strongly supported by the fact of Indonesian restrictions being placed on International Red Cross access to mainland villages from July 1983.

If this was the case - that a military offensive had been planned to begin in August - then the Australian Parliamentary Delegation was grossly mis-led by its Indonesian hosts.

ENDS

FOOTNOTE (see page 4)

The clear aim of the Fretilin member (Gama) who spoke to Bill Morrison at Soba was to have him, if not the delegation, meet Gama's senior officer. While the errors in interpreting garbled Gama's message (and probably, therefore, Morrison's questions), the invitation to the delegation did register with Morrison. Given that the Indonesian authorities were not going to arrange for the delegation to meet with Fretilin, the roadside meeting was the one clear opportunity for the Delegation to meet Fretilin leaders and assess in detail their claims. The Delegation failed to take this opportunity.
