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Veterans in Timor-Leste since the Crisis of 2006.

(Fundasaun Mahein: 23th March 2011)

“If we cannot handle the conflict, the conflict of war handles back” (Osorio Mau Leki, 14th January 2011)

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1. Introduction

The problem of veterans will never die if the individual veterans and veterans' organizations are not happy with the process that deals with veterans. During 24 years Timorese struggled in the mountains. After the war those who fought became war veterans. Many of them have physical and psychological disabilities. A large number are illiterate due to a lack of formal education. This makes it difficult for them to compete for employment and contribute to the development of the nation. Many of them have also been ignored, and there have been problems reintegrating them into the community to live normal lives. Since Timor-Leste restored its independence, the issue of the veteran has always been controversial.

For the time being, international mechanisms influenced Timorese decisions which enabled the creation of laws which did not properly address veteran's issues. Laws that did not recognize the contribution of child soldiers during the resistance, ignored the contribution of brave Timorese to the independence movement. During WWII, as nations were desperate to ensure the survival of their society, children were deployed on the front lines in various capacities. Timor-Leste situation could be considered worse than history's examples. It is a sad fact of life that Timorese people gained their independence unilaterally, suffering the loss of many good people, and being forced to send their youth into combat. Many of these child FALINTIL (Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste – the Armed Forces for the liberation of Timor Leste) guerrillas are not members of the Timorese military F-FDTL (FALINTIL-Forças Defensas de Timor Leste).

The government has tried hard to overcome the issues related to the reintegration of veterans, such as creating legislation which provided assistance to Veterans in the form of pensions and awarding medals. These measures are not enough but are a step in the right direction. However, these laws the government created have not been implemented properly due to a system that is plagued by a lack of human resources, and limited governance capacity.

2. Paper Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the complicated problems related to the reintegration of all veterans, based on interviews with key actors representing 5 districts in Timor Leste. Those districts are Liquica, Ermera, Manatuto, Baucau, and Dili. The end of this paper includes diagnostic recommendations to help solve the veterans' issues, both in the short and long term. It is not a fast or easy process. Strong will and consistency will be necessary for progressive improvement

3. The Civil War

Violence has existed in Timor-Leste politics for a long time. Even before the Indonesian period, there was a lot of conflict. War was how the people of Timor could resist the occupation of their lands by colonial invaders. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee) people made many attempts to free themselves of the domination of the colonials including 1910-12 and 1959 but every time they were defeated. The CAVR (Comissao de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliacao - Truth and Reconciliation Commission) report makes three conclusions about the how the colonialism of Portugal affect the Timorese people– 1) the colonisers tactics of playing ethnic groups against each other restricted the growth of Timorese political unity 2) no self-governing tradition was developed 3) democratic and human rights values were not institutionalised.¹All of these three problems would in the future be a problem for Timor because when Timor try to become a single nation then the memory of Portugal times would still be very strong. This would make it difficult to make one strong nation.

By the Timorese law a veteran is someone who resisted for independence for at least three years between 20 August 1975 and 25 October 1999. But 20 August 1975 is not the day of the Indonesian invasion but the day when the FALINTIL was formed. Before the Indonesian invasion in 1975, two different political parties were formed in Timor Leste. This occurred after the Carnation Revolution happened in Portugal as after this the Portuguese allowed Timorese people to be involved in politics. The two parties were called UDT (Uniao Democratica Timorense – Timorese Democratic Union) and FRETILIN (Frente Revolution be Timor Leste Independensia – Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor Leste). On 11 August 1975, UDT started a military operation against FRETILIN. They explained this to the Portuguese governor by saying that this is because FRETILIN has 'communist elements'. But all FRETILIN members fought against the UDT. FRETILIN retreated to its base in Aileu and on 20 August made counter-attack on Dili. This counter attack was effective and FALINTIL made a good fight against UDT, because many Timorese from the Portuguese army had joined the FALINTIL. UDT forces were then had to go into West Timor because the FALINTIL were too strong. It is important to remember that this was where FALINTIL was borne and that the government believes that the fight for liberation began on the 20 August 1975. In 2003, Xanana Gusmao made a speech about this. He said "FALINTIL, the armed forces for the National Liberation of Timor Leste were born under the umbrella of a political party, FRETILIN, to fight another political party, UDT".²However the victory of FALINTIL in the war against UDT caused a lot of worry to the governments of the US, Australia and especially Indonesia because they feel that FRETILIN is a communist party. And they think that Timor Leste will become the Cuba of the region and will become a big problem, especially for Indonesia. But Indonesia had wanted to take the land of Timor Leste for some time and had already begun planning. So because of Fretilin and the Timorese civil war, then Indonesia invaded on 7 December 1975. Though Indonesia had already been conducting operations along the border. On the 24th November 1975 they had taken Atabae in Maliana district despite great resistance from FALINTIL forces.

¹ CAVR Pg 7.

² *Speech by President Xanana Gusmao quoted in Rees E., Under Pressure - FALINTIL Forces Falintil De Timor Leste – Three Decades of Defence Force Development, April 2004.*

4. The Invasion and the First Phase of Resistance

The resistance against the Indonesia invasion can be divided into two parts (although some would divide into more). The first part was a large conventional war against the Indonesian military in which the Timorese made bases in the Foho and fought the Indonesia army. The FALINTIL protected many of the Timorese people in these bases although they had to use many supplies and ammunition to do it. The ABRI (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia – Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia) army took control of the big towns and the important roads very quickly but FALINTIL were strong in the mountains and they made bases which they called *Bases do Apoio*. Because this fighting was conventional and because civilians were close by many people died in this phase. The Indonesian had more planes and artillery and many more soldiers than the FALINTIL. Therefore it was very difficult for the Timorese and eventually though the Timorese fought very hard, the Indonesian military began to win and defeat and destroy more and more Bases de Apoio.

During the course of the whole war with the Indonesian army, more than 100,000 Timorese died from conflict, famine or disease, most of these people died in this period from 1975-1980.³ Between 15,000 and 27,000 people were with FALINTIL in 1975, but only 900 were with FALINTIL in 1980.⁴ This time was a hard time for all the Timorese people but especially for the FALINTIL as when they were defeated at a Base do Apoio then they faced a choice - to keep fighting and die or surrender to the Indonesians. Some people were ordered to surrender.⁵ This would be important because Veterans law in Timor Leste mentions surrender. But also many of the people who surrendered then went to work for the ABRI as auxiliaries but would rejoin the resistance years later. Other veterans were and are very angry about this. They want to know why these people lived while others die and what these people did when they worked for the ABRI.⁶

5. The Second Phase of Resistance

After the Indonesians had defeated the Timorese conventionally and all the Bases de Apoio were destroyed, it took years for the Timorese people to recover. But then Xanana Gusmao in 1981 became leader of the resistance at the first major meeting of FRETILIN and FALINTIL since the defeat, which took place in Soibada. Maun Boot Xanana made then began to plan the new struggle for the independence of Timor Leste. He believed that Timor Leste must be one nation and that FALINTIL must be for all people not just for Fretilin. He also believed that FALINTIL must become a guerrilla force but a guerrilla force that would use politics and diplomacy to fight the war not just guns. Having FALINTIL represent all political parties was particularly unpopular with FRETILIN militants for whom the civil war was a bitter memory and who believed that the struggle for independence was also a revolutionary war to end exploitation and colonialism. In 1984 a split took place within the resistance army, some people say this was a coup to take over leadership of the resistance. Although no one was killed in this coup (though there are many rumours about the death of Commander Kilik Wai Gai), it led to permanent enmity between Xanana and a pro-

³ Conflict related Deaths, <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/updateFiles/english/CONFLICT-RELATED%20DEATHS.pdf>,

⁴ International Crisis Group, "Resolving Timor Leste's Crisis", October 2006. Pg 3.

⁵ Interview with Veteran Carlos Tege (False Name), Ermera, 22 January 2011.

⁶ Rees E., Op Cit., Pg 41.

FRETILIN group within FALINTIL. This development would be important in the independence period. But even the FALINTIL who did not take part in the coup were unhappy with the change, as they shared the political beliefs of FRETILIN.

6. The New Structure of FALINTIL

After some time, the new structure of the resistance began to form. FALINTIL became a force of guerrilla soldiers but much smaller than before. It is hard to find exact numbers but there were at most hundreds of FALINTIL but not thousands. These FALINTIL would make ambushes and raids against the TNI (Tentara Nasional Indonesia – Timorese National Army) but knew that they were not going to win the war by fighting. Because Indonesia was so a rich country and had so many soldiers, they know they had to win the struggle using politics. But FALINTIL were the leaders of the resistance – they controlled the politics and actions of the other fronts, led by big brother Xanana Gusmao.

7. Clandestine Front

The FALINTIL were supported in the struggle for liberation by the members of the Clandestine. The clandestine movement had no guns but they helped the FALINTIL fight by bringing the FALINTIL food, watching the Indonesians and gathering intelligence, standing guard, and sending messages to the FALINTIL in different places. They would also steal things for the FALINTIL like weapons and ammunition and later they would help to organise demonstrations against the Indonesian occupation. As FALINTIL had many supporters in Timor, so many people helped and became clandestine. But many people helped but only in a very small way. They would run a message or two, or give food as the FALINTIL would move through their area. This would considerably add to the confusion around veterans after independence. Clandestine not really exist before 1981. Many women also took part in the clandestine struggle.

8. Diplomatic Front

As well as the clandestine front there was also a diplomatic front. The diplomatic front worked outside of Timor especially in the UN to help Timor get its independence. Mr Jose Ramos Horta who is now President of Timor Leste was the leader of the diplomatic front for liberation. For a long time, the diplomatic front worked in very difficult conditions in order to have other countries recognise Timor as an independent country. Many countries including the US and Australia were not interested in this because they wanted to maintain a friendship with Indonesia. But Portugal helped Jose Ramos Horta and ⁷other members of FRETILIN party and the diplomatic front with money, advice and political support. Thus the members of the diplomatic front are veterans, and the Timorese law states that they are.. At CAVR, General Taur Matan Ruak said “There were fronts: the diplomatic front and the clandestine front who took their orders from the armed front.”

9. Complications

Because the conflict against the Indonesian occupation was so long, many people took part in the resistance for periods of time before returning to their normal lives.

⁷ CAVR, “Structure and Nature of Resistance”, pg 38

The war went on for nearly twenty five years so people who had fight with the FALINTIL in the Bases do Apoio would go back to their villages, happy to be alive. Others continued to fight with FALINTIL, others started to fight. Some people would fight for a period of time with FALINTIL or become clandestine and then stop and return home but they could make some claim to be veterans nonetheless. To make things more complicated, the Indonesians captured and torture many people and put them into prison, They would force make them to become Indonesian intelligence agents.⁸ Some people did this but would inform the clandestine movement that they were a spy and pass false information to the Indonesians. But some would become actual double agents. Thus the situation and loyalties of the people who were involved in the resistance at this time is very hard to assess. The clandestine movement was very secretive and in that time misinformation, rumours, double agents and other intelligence operations were common. Some people helped in ways that did not mean joining the any of the resistance fronts but they still helped by giving money or food. Some Timorese civil servants or police man gave money and information, which was extremely dangerous⁹

10. Popularity

It should also be remembered that the resistance varied in popularity at different time periods. Many people joined FALINTIL in 1975 in order to defend their homeland. But few remained after the war between 1975 and 1979. FALINTIL only started to become popular and well known again after Xanana began to change it. Many of the old FALINTIL returned from the ABRI in the early 80s particularly after events such as the Kraras massacre. But as the resistance became more successful and as the Indonesians made big mistakes; that is events such as the Santa Cruz massacre, the giving of the Nobel prize and the formation of CNRT; so membership of the resistance grew.

As well as this, some people help out in small ways or give money. People who work with civil service give money or give information for resistance. Some people who work with police or who work with army also help by giving information. This was very dangerous and if the Indonesians find these people, then torture or kill them so these people are like clandestine people. We can see that the situation in Timor about the resistance is very complicated.¹⁰

11. CNRT and 1999

As time went on, many events happened that changed the international situation for the people of Timor Leste. The Santa Cruz massacre showed the world how the Indonesian soldiers worked in Timor. And Xanana became more famous internationally as a prisoner than he had been as a commander. Bishop Belo and Jose Ramos Horta got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. So now the struggle for Timor Leste's independence was known worldwide and, after the East Asian economic crash, Suharto was pushed out of the presidency. Timor had great hopes for independence CNRT was formed in 1998, and it now officially included parties such as UDT and others. Because of all these positive developments, more and more

⁸ Interview, Nelson Belo, 5th February 2011.

⁹ Interview, Jose Belo, Former Clandestine, 10th February 2011

¹⁰ Interview, Jose Belo, Former Clandestine, 10th February 2011

people were joining the resistance and the clandestine movement, especially as demonstrations became legal.¹¹

In the 1999 referendum, the people of Timor Leste voted overwhelmingly for independence. As a result the TNI and the militias sponsored by them carried out a campaign of killing, destruction and forced migration which was only stopped when the international community sent INTERFET (International Force for East Timor) to Timor to put a stop to the violence. During this entire period, the FALINTIL were cantoned and followed their orders not to come out, in order to ensure that the international community would respond. FALINTILs numbers in 1999 were 1,500 from a base of 300 in 1998.¹²

12. Aileu Cantonment

The Aileu cantonment was the start of a difficult time for the FALINTIL. As INTERFET and then UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) moved in and took over the country, no one did anything with FALINTIL. UNTAET was very reluctant to deal with an armed group, which they felt was against the UN charter.¹³ With nothing to do, the FALINTIL became more and more disgruntled and old splits resurfaced. The force was eventually deemed a 'security threat' and Xanana Gusmao stated that it was in "a state of revolt". Elle Settee eventually abandoned the Aileu cantonment with many of his followers in April 2000.¹⁴

13. The Formation of the F-FDTL and FRAP

Many of the FALINTIL camped in Aileu did not become members of the new Timorese defence forces, the F-FDTL. In 2001, only six hundred and fifty became F-FDTL out of a total of what had become nearly 2000. According to Rees:

"In late 2000, UNTAET and FALINTIL high command (as constituted by Gusmao loyalists) agreed that the selection process for the new defence force would remain an internal FALINTIL matter. It should be noted that FALINTIL high command almost certainly exacted this price in return for their cooperation in retiring the remainder of FALINTIL. It should be noted that very few of the high command itself was demobilised"¹⁵

Thus many of those who wanted good jobs and salary during independence were really unhappy.

Many of the FALINTIL not joining F-FDTL were on Falintil Reinsertion and Assistance Programme (FRAP). FRAP demobilised 1,308 FALINTIL personnel over the course of 2001. It gave the FALINTIL people money (\$100 for 11 months), training and some materials to a new life such as buffalo. The programme was conceived as a 'political process with a political aim: to prevent FALINTIL from

¹¹ Interview, Ricardo Ribiero, 10th January 2010

¹² CAVR, Resistance Structure and Strategy, Pg 99.

¹³ Hood L, "Missed Opportunities: The United Nations, Police Service and Defence Force Development in Timor Leste 1999-2004", Civil Wars, Volume 8, Number 4, June 2006. Pg

¹⁴ Rees E., *Under Pressure - FALINTIL Forces Falintil De Timor Leste – Three Decades of Defence Force Development*, April 2004.

¹⁵ Rees E., *Under Pressure - FALINTIL Forces Falintil De Timor Leste – Three Decades of Defence Force Development*, April 2004.

becoming a problem'. Although there were some good reports just after it finished, its benefits do not seem to have lasted a long time.¹⁶

As a result of this disappointment after their struggle, these were very disappointing outcomes for the FALINTIL veterans. As Peake says, without any special aid, many were left in the same situation as most other people in the country of Timor Leste. They lived in a country with very many needs but a country that had little money and so many ended up living hard lives with little money or assistance. It should also be noted that FRAP also only dealt with those FALINTIL who were cantoned in Aileu but not the thousands more veterans who worked for the liberation of Timor Leste with the clandestine organisations, or who had served but then stopped fighting to go back to their families or the families of the martyrs killed by the Indonesians.

14. Other Programmes

Other programs were implemented by the international community, including a program by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) – the Recovery, Employment and Etability Programme for ex Combatants in Timor Leste (RESPECT) - which, according to Peake and Lao Hamutuk, had significant problems and did not help very much.¹⁷

The government set up the office of Veterans Affairs which was hosted by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS). This office is responsible for services intended to benefit veterans.

“The aims of this office were to formally recognise the individuals who played an essential role of the resistance, focusing in particular on the clandestine movement and the armed resistance. Following a formal acknowledgement of governmental responsibility, the office would coordinate and facilitates initiatives regarding veterans and assist families of dead fighters”

15. Presidents Commissions

The President also set up a number of commissions in order to identify who was and was not a veterans. These included:

Comissao para os Assuntos dos Antigos Combatentes – This Commission was tasked to identify the veterans of the period 1975-79.

Comissao para os Assuntos dos Veteranos dos FALINTIL – This commission was tasked with identifying the remaining veterans until 1999.

Comissao para os Assuntos dos Quadros da Resistencia – This commission was tasked with identifying members of the clandestine movement.

These commissions registered 74,925 veterans of which 18,377 were dead.

16. Statute of the National Liberation Combatants

¹⁶ Peake G., “What the Timorese Veterans Say: Unpacking DDR in Timor Leste” in Security and Post Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War”.

¹⁷ <http://www.laohamutuk.org/Bulletin/2004/Dec/bulletinv5n5.html>

On 13 March 2006, the national parliament approved the Statute of the National Liberation Combatants

This is the section that defines who can be considered a veteran:

The following shall be considered National Liberation Combatants:

- a) Timorese citizens who have militated for at least three years in the struggle for national independence between 20 August 1975 and 25 October 1999 and were affiliated in the structures or organizations of the Resistance;
- b) Timorese citizens who have militated in the struggle for national independence between 20 August 1975 and 25 October 1999, were affiliated in the structures or organizations of the Resistance and perished due to their participation in the referred struggle before completing three years of militancy;
- c) National Liberation Veteran Combatants as defined in Article 7 of the present law;
- d) National Liberation Movement Founder Combatants as defined in Article 8 of the present law;
- e) National Liberation Martyrs as defined in Article 9 of the present law;
- f) Foreign citizens, as defined in Article 6 of the present law

The following shall also be considered National Liberation Combatants:

- a) Timorese citizens who were not affiliated in the structures and organizations referred to in paragraphs a) and b) of item 1 above but who performed relevant tasks at the service of those structures and organizations as assigned or recognized by the respective leading organs, namely those of a logistical, humanitarian, messaging and information nature;
- b) Timorese citizens integrated in the population clusters which have provided FALINTIL in the bush with information service, logistical support, or humanitarian and social assistance;
- c) Timorese citizens who, having participated for more than three years in the struggle for national independence as defined in paragraph a) of item 1 above, abandoned either voluntarily or involuntarily the struggle before 25 October 1999, as long as they did not collaborate with the enemy against the interest of national liberation.

The following shall be considered National Liberation Veteran Combatants:

- a) National Liberation Combatants who have militated in the struggle for at least fifteen years;
- b) National Liberation Combatants who have belonged to the superior cadres of the structures or organizations of the Resistance as listed in Article 5 above and perished or disappeared as a result of their participation in the struggle for national independence before completing fifteen years of participation in the struggle;

2. For the purposes of paragraph b) of item 1 above, the military as well as civilian posts pertaining to the superior cadres shall be determined by 6 decree of the President of the Republic after hearing the opinion of the Tribute, Registration Supervision, and Appeals Commission.

Article 8

(National Liberation Movement Founder Combatants)

For the purposes of the present law, National Liberation Movement Founder Combatants shall be the National Liberation Combatants who promoted, organized, and conducted the Resistance against foreign invasion between 15 August 1975 and 31 May 1976.

Significantly, the law also says:

The following shall not be considered National Liberation Combatants:

- a) Any individual who has voluntarily collaborated with the enemy against the interest of national liberation irrespective of whether such collaboration has taken place in their capacity as militants of the struggle or after they had abandoned the struggle;
- b) FALINTIL members and civilian militants who voluntarily surrendered to the enemy with their weapons.

And (possibly most significantly) also:

Article 21

Time dedicated to the struggle

1 – The period of time entirely dedicated by National Liberation Combatants to the National Liberation Struggle shall be counted as time at the service of the State and shall be calculated in duplicate.

2 – The period of time spent by National Liberation Combatants in prisons shall be considered as time of entire dedication to the National Liberation Struggle.

3 – Entire dedication shall mean exclusive dedication to the National Liberation Struggle as determined by the leadership of the struggle and it shall not include academic activity or ordinary and remunerated working activity.

4 – The period of time entirely dedicated to the National Liberation Struggle by a National Liberation Combatant who was, is, or becomes a civil servant or a public agent shall be taken into account for purposes of retirement and retirement pension.

5 – National Liberation Combatants who are not civil servants or a public agents shall be entitled to a Subvention for Exclusive Dedication for the period entirely dedicated to the National Liberation Struggle in accordance with the terms to be regulated by the Government.

6 – The Subvention for Exclusive Dedication shall not be cumulative with the right to time counting for purposes of retirement and retirement pension.

According to the law, National Liberation Combatant are entitled to a special identity card, a Diploma of Honour, the title of ‘National Liberation Combatant’ or “National Liberation Veteran Combatant”, an outstanding place at ceremonies commemorating historical dates, the right to use uniforms in ceremonies commemorating independence, funeral honours, a special subsistence pension, a Special Retirement Pension, free medical benefits, free prosthetics and access to courses and teaching.

17. Veterans and the Petitioners

According to the Commission of Inquiry about the events of the crisis of 2006, on 9 January 159 officers and other ranks in the F-FDTL signed a petition which said that they had been discriminated against by other people in F-FDTL especially the senior leaders. On 1st March, 594 soldiers were dismissed from the F-FDTL (200 of which were not associated with the petition).¹⁸

Although there complaints were about discrimination, they also were to do with the grievances of the veterans. The discrimination against westerners was because people said they did not fight well against the Indonesians. And this was related to the way F-FDTL was made and how it came to be and who was left out of that. So the issue of East West can be said to come from the F-FDTL and the veterans issues, and the COI report says this.¹⁹

Reinado was also a veteran and was reported to have been supported by veterans in 2006-08. By early 2008, the new AMP government was making some progress on the Petitioner issue when the attacks of February 11th occurred. After the attacks, the petitioners each got \$8,500 in compensation for what had happened (although no responsibility or apology came from the government.²⁰ Many of the members of Reinado’s group, both F-FDTL and Policia Nacional de Timor Leste (PNTL) reportedly also got payments.²¹ Since then the petitioners group has made statements in which they say that their grievances have still not been properly dealt with.²²

18. The Crisis and Veterans

According to De Sousa Santos, much of the violence that occurred during the crisis was as a result of a ‘lost generation’, ‘the last resistance generation’.

“Many of the youth who fought or were actively engaged in the struggle for independence – the last resistance generation– remain unacknowledged and are not included or able to fully participate in the economic, educational and state development accessible to many..... Former key elements of the independence movement such as formal and informal clandestine groups; ritual art groups; cells and elements within martial arts groups are at risk of morphing into disenfranchised and violent armed groups, organised criminal elements, and / or guns for hire.”

¹⁸ UN Commission of Inquiry 2006, pg 20-21.

¹⁹ UN Commission of Inquiry 2006, Pg 54

²⁰ International Crisis Group. Timor Leste: No Time for Complacency, 9 February 2009.

²¹ Email Correspondence, Edward Rees, 13 February 2011.

²² “Gustao Salsinha: Insists that Petitioners are still Military Personnel and Accuses Political Leaders of Using Petitioners”, Tempo Semanal, 30 December 2010.

De Sousa Santos²³

Scambury considers however that this violence was not only a result of veterans' issues but that there were also problems of youth bulge, militarised culture and socio-economic deprivation. Scambury does however acknowledge the membership and often leadership of veterans.²⁴

After the crisis though people became concerned that those who fought in the crisis of 2006 now consider themselves veterans. This could create a very difficult social problem as it would be difficult for the government to pay or honour what these people have done as it was not for the good of the country but in fact hurt the country.

19. Veterans Organisations

A number of veteran's organisations have been set up since 1999. However many of these associations are reported to be politicised with some reports of involvement in the events that took place during the crisis. They have certainly not been effective in acting as advocates for veteran's issues.²⁵ Many veterans complain that these organisations have been sometimes ineffective and often politicised; they feel that a different approach needs to be taken to veterans groups.²⁶

These groups include:

- Associação dos Veteranos da Resistência (for the Diplomatic and Clandestine front)
- Fundação dos Veteranos das FALINTIL (Armed Front)
- Women's of Resistance Organization (OPMT e OMT)
- Youth's Organization (OPJT, OPJTIL)
- ASSEPOL, The Ex-Political Prisoners Association

20. What is Being Done for the Veterans Now

By end of 2010, there were 12, 540 veterans registered to receive pensions and 9, 102 of those (or their families) were receiving payments.

For the purposes of title and pension rights, there are different classes of veteran:

National Liberation Movement Founder Combatants	Promoted, organized, and conducted the Resistance against foreign invasion between 15 August 1975 and 31 May 1976.
National Liberation Veteran Combatants (1)	Those who militated in the struggle for more than twenty years
National Liberation	Those who militated in the struggle for 15-19 years

²³ De Sousa Santos J., "The Last Resistance Generation: The Reintegration and Transformation of Freedom Fighters to Civilians in Timor Leste", <http://easttimorlegal.blogspot.com/2009/07/last-resistance-generation.html>

²⁴ Scambury J., "Groups, Gangs, and Armed Violence in Timor Leste", TLAVA Issue Brief Number 2, April 2009.

²⁵ Interview, Jose Belo, Former Clandestine, 10th February 2011

²⁶ Interview, Jose Belo, Former Clandestine, 10th February 2011

Veteran Combatants Class (2)	
National Liberation Combatants (1)	Those who militated in the struggle for 8-15 years
National Liberation Combatants (2)	Those who militated in the struggle for 3-8 years

Pension payments are as follows:

- Veterans who completed 4-7 years of service receive a one-time cash payment equivalent to 12 months of the minimum wage (\$115 per month).
- There is a special subsistence pension for those who have completed 8-14 years of service
- A special retirement pension for 15-19 and 20-24 years of service
- A Survival pension for Veteran's legitimate heir

Veterans are also entitled to special positions at national ceremonies and military honours at funerals but adherence to this is haphazard and there is no policy on what military honours might be. While relatively minor, such things are symbolically important and the law of the land. There is a cemetery for heroes of the resistance in Dili.

21. Corruption

Regarding corruption and veterans, it is worth quoting from the 2009 USAID Corruption Assessment of Timor Leste:

“In brief, the drivers of politics and economics in Timor-Leste are strongly characterized by powerful competing patronage networks countered by only very weak governance institutions and regulatory structures. The concentration of power in these networks revolves around their access to and distribution of state resources related largely to government jobs and public procurements. This occurs in an environment where unclear boundaries between an underdeveloped business sector and the ruling elite can lead to abuses. Moreover, patronage in filling government positions can lead to a highly politicized and captured bureaucracy. With weak loyalty to the state, but strong social bonds to rival patronage networks, political legitimacy and stability of government are precarious, especially given the continuing potential for violence as a means of problem resolution.”²⁷

As a result of the resistance and the nature of independence, many of the most powerful men in the country are veterans and at the top of patronage network. Thus it makes sense that other veterans would be the beneficiaries of these networks. It is notable that many of the most senior veterans in the country have recently been awarded significant contracts.²⁸

²⁷ USAID Corruption Assessment Timor Leste 2009.

²⁸ Interview, Jose Belo, Former Clandestine, 10th February 2011

22. Words of the Veterans....

About the Role of Veterans in Society

One of the most important roles of veterans is to defend the stability of the country. They have to make sure that the country is secure. In order to do so, they have to be united in fighting for development, stability and to fight against any attempts to plunge the country back into a series of crises. We have to learn from our past so that we cannot repeat our past mistakes. The veteran's associations are established everywhere to defend the rights of the people and security of this country.

Caetano De Sousa Guturres, Veteran, Head Of Department For Legal Affairs Of Ministry Of Foreign Affairs And Cooperation) on 10 January 2011.

About the Registration Process

Recently we start collecting all the data, to implement together with the veterans, because some people declared themselves as fighter or warrior, even at the time just helping with a piece of cassava to Falintil. Despite we organize ourselves to support more hardy veterans. There are some disadvantages issues where some people have mismanaged the data which is not according with their participations. Therefore before collecting the data it should be equal to their contribution. But in the in the meaning time we are just to help to register all veterans.

Leonardo (False Name), Veteran and Member of 5-5, 22/1/2011

I started involve in the resistance exactly was in the 1980, but I didn't joint the organization yet, its mean I straight forward have relation with resistance where I was accountable for security section inside the town. So I got badge as gade 3. Where my performance was actual for collecting data, and everyone has own interpretation what they had/or not done. Despite Investigation Commissioner must take profound investigation. Such as some of them had involved but since the information didn't reach them due to time run out.

Mau Felix (False Name) – Veteran (Ermera), Interview, 22/1/2011

I actively involved in the resistance as a clandestine almost 16 years, therefore I had badge grade 3. We actually worked together with the group of Gabriel Ximenes (Fitun) and Domingos Madeira (Rumbatak). But before that it wasn't that easy to joint in the clandestine. Thereof some people were not very happy because the data base that was collected was really complicated so didn't had clear explanation. Therefore we also didn't know why the CNRT structures after reformation were invalid and has no value.

Before that we gave them our contribution and participation, but some didn't. We still claim to commission, but until now has no response yet. I think inside there is a neopotisme.

Fernando Old Steel, Coordinator CNRT Party, Ermera, 21/1/2011

Most of the organizations are very old. They fought for this nation to be independence, but the government didn't yet recognise and give appraisals to these organizations. No law to this aspect yet. However the government had offer the appraisals to foreigners, but it's sad because none of the national organization got it, beside as an alternative to the youth, they are also part of the culture. Indeed people that just coming into organization they got decoration.

In meantime the criteria to get organization recognition/register it's very hard, because it's requires a desposit of US\$50.000 in the bank. But these organizations founded not with the interest to be reach but it's actually to defend the their culture

Therefore the appraisals to the veteran, some people where before contribute to the enemy, but now they had godfather they can get badge grade 1. If he doesn't have godfather he won't get it. That makes people unhappy. Beside if we help them with money they can quickly fix all our documents. This is most happen and also devaluate for the veteran. In fact the veteran process could end up within two years only. People where from front armed, front clandestine all line up, before they register with quick witness presented. If with this people scare of and won't coming anymore. We select but himself ask to the trainer so it's not right. Commission has manipulated that just to get tips, then if documentation mistakes, they get more tips.

Right now the veteran's didn't have a condition to against. Commission only requires for documents to hand in by written, but it's hard because they could present with false witness. When they put the badge on it's not agreeable with our contribution, we feel shameful even the young people also didn't give us continence.

Abilio Xavier, Fretilin party, Ermera, Date 21/1/2011

During the Portuguese Time, when the golpe was happened at the time I was as an army joined with Fretilin to fight against Golpe. Provide that we are as Timorese senior military in charge as Force of Falintil in the jungle during 4 years. After that we had an order from Meno Paixao to give up in the year of 1979. Following trough situation were oprimid by Indonesian, we realize that the war going to be end. The connection also most them break apart, where at that time we belived tha 100% for Indonesians the war will end. Following in the year of 1982 after assault in Marabia we knew in the other way around that Fretilin still exist; even we don't have direct contact.

While in the year 1982 Priest Mario Belo came, that time I was a religious guider and he wants to test us, if we could joint with resistance or not? Through him we found out that war still exist in the eastern, including the name of Xanana. We didn't know who was him? At the same time priest Mario Belo explain that him as new commander. In the year of 1983, Xanana came, we provided Eusebio Salsinha's house in MIRTUTU and the security for him. In there the commander issued an order to ask for anyone is ready to go back to jungle. But everyone was rejects because most of them already got wife. Even that moment because DUDU was one the still young, so he went to jungle with almost 10 weapon of AR15. Beside we are the one to support the food for him. After that Xanana captured, Mauhuno also got captured then in 1993 Konis come all the way here. Before that I already had contacted through letter with Konis in the year of 1986, when he was still in Atauro.

For us the actual independence, we aren't see peacefully. Because before the promised were only independence. With the Veteran now we must clearly find out well before provide the name for veteran. Nowadays veteran just so much made up. Who ever were against Fretilin now they more chances? We do need to find out clearly if the person as a clandestine or not.....wasn't KKN are the most again now. Commission of homagen must find out with transparency. As sated that in the region 4 were almost one thousand people received homagen, if so many people like that were struggling before then we should independence awhile ago. Some family before dead because of sickness, and now received they received the veteran benefit. In other hand the people who in charge with the commission should neutral don't incline to one or another party, besides considering us traitor. Therefore some people were known as intelligence/spier as Mr Abilio Lima now become authority to govern this country (he was the one burned the houses with militia), Gil Alves ... now in charge as authority. This hurts to much the veteran people. If AMP wants to be powerful, must recognised the veterans in the good fear otherwise will be dangerous.

Carlos Tege (Veteran), Ermera, 22/1/2011

Now everybody become warrior. The reality only people over age involve in this war. Now some people had claim, because some of them before got disable due to grenade explosion for fishing, but now they appears to be one of to be entitled medallion. In the reality people that done the job as cooker only for the Falintil, need to find out their record. Which is I saw many authorities that had good income many of the made a discrimination.

Government itself coming here all over the places saying that they will setup the veteran office, veteran hospital, but its only promises until now none of the get done, Money for the veteran also until now we didnt get pay. Before they said 2009 will get it, then again 2010 but extend trough 2012, then it's never. Also they promise to provide the scholarship for my kids, but iam so doubt maybe one day will deduct the money from veteran income.

Pedro (False Name), Former Resistance/Member of ASDT Party, 23/1/2011

Through my point of view maybe there some unhappy people that not satisfied with Veteran award that they had received. But that is everyone's own interpretation. But I myself didn't satisfy because officially reconised by Governement. There are small missadministration, such as technical issue, because the reality who ever was invole on that mission should classify as grade 3 but they actually got grade1. Therefore we should get the right infomtion fom the council again to identify exactly the veteran nomination is right or not?

Some people before involve in the clandestine then after the base of support dissolved, but just because they join on different political party they didn't get accepted. Therefore the some people were involve as a Indonesia militia force (Hansip) shooting against the guerillan people, in these days they got medallion just because they had family relationship

Therefore we are from Liquiça we couldn't do anything, everyone with own individuality that not same. So due to that reason right now we couldn't form the

association of Veteran. It's only been said the name of resistance but we actually falling apart into own political party

Manuel Luis Fortunata de Silva, President of National Development Party, Liquica, 23/01/2011

When we talk about pension and medallion in the reality exist discrimination and injustice in to the process of attending which refering to homage/tribute in fact the government would like spread out to veterans. Discrimination and injustice that we would like to talk is in relation to the indication of participation fighting toward independence. In fact there are some people didn't fully involving received better pay and people that involve in the long participation received less.

Ana da Conceicao Ribeiro, Coordinator of OPMT Baucau District, 22 January 2011

Establishment of law no.3/2006 in the some process has not clear yet, then again another law no.9 process in concern to former combatants also not easy according to the family sacred's idea, therefore this matter not only for one or two people, but it is for whole Timorese people were fought voluntarily for this nation. But in concern with appraisals/codecorations where implemented toward former combatants and veterans or militants it's necessarily to administrating throughout a long process. Despite on this kind of process could happen some thing to accommodate the veteran's life and also the other way around won't accommodate as refering. Something exist for exmample, people that had less contribution/participation got received more money and people that during 24 years, in fact here could happen some big problem in between veteran, and leaders. According to the issue of veteran and combatant most had received pension and medallion.

Albino Da Silva Xavier alias Sakako,, Member of Sacred Heart Family District

Veteran actually as a large institution in this nation Timor leste to recognize again all the people where in that period they voluntarily offer their participation to this independence, but I would like to recommend most of the authority where represent as veteran in the veteran department/duty didn't indentify exactly who was finally as a veteran and who wasn't as a veteran, therefore untill now we still come across with a massive complications within veteran, yet most of then already got their pension in fact the numbers still increase , because they didn't identifying exactly who was real veteran. We would like to recommend only that it's necessary to recognize from the top to the botton Not of recognize from btton to top but recognize from top to botton, because the first ones are the begineers of veteran together with other who the last.

Joaquina da Cunha, Secretary OPMT, Manatuto District

The government of Timor leste has allocated the pension to veteran with objective to ensure the better life for the veteran people and be able to build the house and able to get the needs for family, educate their family and kids to acess the skills and other things.

Luis DaSilva alias Siuk, Veteran, Manatuto 24 January 2011-02-11

All social and political problems have economic problems as well. Veterans, in this context, do not come out of nowhere. The concept of veterans is that they fought for the independence of this country and that they sacrificed everything from time, limbs, family, even their lives. Because of this, they are called veterans. The definition is clear under the current law. However, there are differing practices and technical definitions of the term. During the resistance time, many people contributed what they could such as money, food, equipment etc. Some had to work and others had to do something different. The law defines who are veterans, and who are not. After the promulgation of the law, some people claimed that they were veterans, who had not contributed to the struggle. This is the problem. Because there is money involved to improve people's lives. It became a situation where one group is privileged over another group and certain veterans' children have access to education and other state resources that are better than those who are not veterans' children. This is a class which is more privileged than others and this situation will continue. It is negatively impacting the future development of the country. So, it is important to review the issue of veterans. It has to be proportionally considered in that it cannot bring about a new classism in the sense that one group has more privileges than others.

Fernando Da Costa, President of Advisory Board of RENETIL, 14 January 2011

On the Law for Time for Time Dedicated to the Struggle

I feel sad when I see these organizations. Most of the head of organizations now become authorities but they are not looking after their organization's members. Such as Mariano Sabino Asanami, Joaquin Fonseca, Domingos Cairo, Nino Pereira, Manitelu, Vergilio Guterres, Joao Travolta etc. In 1999 we had not yet finished our studies due to persuasion, thereof they sent us back. But after that we continued our study, the organization didn't care even though they had a lot of supports such as scholarships from Bishop Belo Scholarship program. But they said that we needed to present a lot of criteria, but in fact much of the documentation was lost because of the war situation. Thereof they told me that my criteria did not match my study. But I saw that the system is very weak because they created a situation where those who were friends and family benefitted the most. Therefore the organization of Renetil became a car for to the Democratic Party.

The Future

As a Timorese we have to think positive that the country will be better off. The country is going to be better because we have a good bunch of people. There are possibilities for changes to be made to better this country. Though there have been criticisms, the country will be better off. But we have to be aware of the challenges we have in nation-state building. Timor will be better off if Timorese can use their imagination to see its modernity. We have to contribute positively to the community and society where we live.

Fernando Da Costa (President of the Advisory Board Of Renetil) On 14 January 2011

23. Conclusions and Recommendations

Suggestions for Recommendations

“This is a complicated issue requiring a complicated solution” (Jose Belo 10.1.2011)

1. Rather than create a new top down body for veterans, FM recommends establishing veteran councils in each district. It is understood that the government is in the process of doing this. Our vision for these councils would be the following. These councils should be elected by the registered veterans of the district. They would have support from the Secretariat for Veterans Affairs in the form of a small number of administrative staff and be assisted by veterans who are receiving a pension but are not employed. These councils could:

1. Socialise new and existing policies regarding veterans to the veterans within that district.
2. Conduct investigations into alleged false claims to veteran status within their district.
3. Advocate to Dili on behalf of individual or groups of veterans.
4. Assistance with Administration; become the link between veterans in the Districts and the State Secretary for Veterans in Dili.

2. FM recommends that each district council nominate a single representative who will represent that district on a National Veterans Council. This council will meet as required and should be used to advocate to government on veterans issues. FM recommends the disbandment of any umbrella organizations for veterans. This will encourage behaviour that will not help the nation. Organizations should be district based, with the Veterans council as a link to the government.

3. FM recommends that the government formally recognize the role of child soldiers. Based on international law it violates the international convention that Timor- Leste has ratified, but in Timorese history the children of the country contributed in a very significant way, therefore, the recognition of child soldiers is complicated, but it is necessary.

4. FM recommends that the government develop and implement a policy for on state funerals for veterans including:

1. Parade and Honour Guard ceremony for funerals
2. Build a Cemetery for Veterans of the Resistance in all the districts.

It is suggested that a small group of F-FDTL soldiers lead the honor guard for veterans to participate in funeral ceremonies in the cemeteries.

5. FM recommends that the government implement and enforce the existing law to allow for a special seating area for Veterans during National Holiday ceremonies.

6. FM also recommends that those veterans who surrendered and those who served as double agents also be formally recognized. They too contributed to independence in their own way. War is complicated, and their roles should be recognized.

7. FM recommends the post of State Secretary for Veterans issues should be promoted to Minister, in order to focus and pay greater attention to the issues of the veterans.

8. FM recommends that the government design and distribute at its own expense a special Tais for veterans which they can wear on special occasions.

9. FM recommends that all media outlets ensure the accuracy of their stories on this very sensitive topic, especially about the number of veterans in Timor- Leste.²⁹

²⁹ "Veteranu-kombatente Hamutuk 63.000" Timor-Post newspaper 16 February 2011

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