



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

ADDRESS

**BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER,
MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND SECURITY**

KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT TO THE NATIONAL
DEFENSE ACADEMY OF JAPAN**

10 March 2009

Tokyo

Your Excellency the President of the National Defense Academy
Distinguished Officers of the Armed Forces
Distinguished teachers
Dear cadets,

It is a great pleasure for me to be at this National Defense Academy, and I appreciate the invitation to address you, young cadets, who seek through advanced education to join scientific knowledge with military training, so as to best prepared to meet your responsibilities and mission as future officers of the Japanese Armed Forces.

As you are aware, I was a soldier myself, although not exactly by choice or as a result of natural ability. As a matter of fact, at the time both my colleagues and I did not care for the army, and tried for as long as we could to avoid serving in the military.

Timor was then a Portuguese colony and Portugal was at war with three African provinces – none of us wanted to be deployed somewhere in Africa, most of all to take part in a war!

However, military service was compulsory, and therefore an order was made providing that those who did not report for military service would be sought out and conscripted for war.

This way I, and many others, ended up at the Training Centre to be prepared to integrate into the Army, which oddly was the best way to avoid being conscripted to go to war.

I found many of my high school colleagues there who, despite not having finished their education, were nevertheless sergeants. Because I was only a first corporal I had to salute them.

From the memories I have of the time, of those three years of mandatory military service, I remember that we learned the meaning of organization and obedience. It was without doubt a School on Discipline!

When we completed our duty to the Portuguese Motherland, we returned to our civilian lives, and after a while we were allowed to dream of our true Motherland, Timor-Leste.

However, in December 1975, Timor-Leste was invaded by Indonesia. This meant a war we could not escape and a war in which I ended up being an active participant.

I started out as Platoon Commander and afterwards, because it was necessary to provide political assistance to our people, I left the military field and joined the political cadres for three years.

In 1977, Indonesia carried out large operations and began to destroy the resistance sectors one by one, from the west to the east. Because I was located in the eastern-most part of the country, the furthest sector from Indonesia, we were the last to be dismantled, and consequently I lived through many wartime experiences.

Dear cadets,

During the guerrilla activities we had to make many tough decisions. We had to provide for the safety of our people, and at the same time we had to fight the enemy.

We were completely cut off from the world and without military support. In situations like this, decisions must be obeyed, not discussed, since they are matters of life and death. Discipline is therefore essential.

The military superiority of Indonesia reduced our human and material resources dramatically, weakening our ability to resist. From around 30,000 armed members, we were reduced to just over 1,000 guerrilla fighters with only 700 weapons.

Most Timorese leaders were killed during the first three to five years of the occupation. In view of this situation, and with my superior officers having already fallen, I ended up being appointed as leader of the guerrillas in 1978 and given the difficult task of reorganizing the struggle.

Going from the political cadres to the leadership of the Resistance, I had the opportunity to reflect on the changes needed to lead our People to victory.

For one year we analysed the defeats we had suffered, we studied the errors we had made and we learned from these lessons - and then we changed our guerrilla strategy to make our Resistance stronger.

During that period we studied guerrilla tactics used all over the world and realized that none suited the situation we were in. We therefore worked to understand our own war and to learn to survive as guerrilla fighters.

This was the turning point for our Resistance! We reorganized the few guerrilla fighters we had left, we restructured the struggle into small mobile forces that little by little covered the entire territory, and we relied on the selfless participation of the People. This was the birth of the **Clandestine Front**.

By this time our motto was no longer “*Destroy the Enemy*” but rather for the Clandestine Front it was “*The Art of Living with the Enemy*”.

On the other hand, our **Armed Resistance** took inspiration from the motto: “*Conserving Our Strength, Destroying the Enemy*” – “*To resist is to win*”; through adopting new tactics and actions to recover weapons and reduce human losses. This was especially critical given our weapons came from the opposing army.

However, the difference in military power between us and the Indonesian army was still enormous. As we lacked the capacity to drive the enemy from our country, we started trying to destroy it psychologically, morally and militarily, through small but incisive actions.

The success of these actions depended a great deal on our collective efforts with greater participation by the people, especially in terms of donations: money, food, clothing, intelligence and even war material.

Finally we joined our strategy with a greater coordination with the **Diplomatic Front**, which maintained the case of Timor-Leste in the International Community as a cause that was not a lost one.

With my arrest in 1992 by the Indonesians, a new leader of the Resistance was chosen, Commander Taur Matan Ruak, who is here today and who is now the Chief of the Defense Forces of Timor-Leste.

Commander Ruak continued the effort to give our actions greater operational capacity and efficiency, keeping “the flame lit” - so that we would not despair or give up as a result of the losses we suffered at the hands of the opposing army - until we gained our freedom.

Dear cadets,

Today we are an Independent Nation!

Our Armed Forces come mostly from the guerrilla forces, but also include the younger generation. Nevertheless, we are still some way from having a fully professional and disciplined Force.

In 2004/2005 the new generation of soldiers were shown to lack military discipline, and in the following year they started a “rebellion” within the Institution, which resulted in about 600 soldiers abandoning their barracks.

This situation caused an environment of insecurity in the country and a series of difficult problems, which ended up leading to confrontation between police forces and military forces.

The lack of resolution of the crisis culminated in 2008, when an armed rebel group, led by a former officer who could never understand the concept of discipline and military responsibility, conducted attacks against the lives of the Head of State and myself as Head of Government.

If on the one hand this act was unacceptable, on the other hand it turned out to be a “necessary evil”, as it contributed to the restoration of normality to the Military Institution, as well as to the Police which also suffered with the events that led to the crisis, and to society in general.

The attacks of last year were ultimately a final warning on the need to correct and reform our national policies.

In this sense we reorganized and, in a more coordinated manner, looked for the right model for Timor-Leste, gaining the consensus of the Timorese and respecting the steps and time needed given our reality.

As a result we have managed to solve the problems that resulted from the 2006 crisis, namely that of the so-called petitioners who left their barracks, the internally displaced persons and the armed rebel groups.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are strongly committed to reforming the security sector, which includes internal security, national defense, intelligence and civil protection.

We have a project called Force 2020 that sets the guidelines for our national defense strategy, which includes the construction of a naval component. This force shall be created not so much for protection against a foreign military threat, but rather to defend our national resources, such as our maritime fauna and fisheries.

We will also be setting up a Maritime Authority, through which the coordination of work by the people, the Police and the Armed Forces will enhance our country's security, as well as combat the transnational threats of today's globalized world.

In order for these goals to be realized it is essential that our Armed Forces have access to more and improved education and training – vital components for our reform.

The challenges of our Military Institution require the presence of professionals with not only scientific, technical and military skills, but also with capacity for critical thought, leadership ability, tolerance and respect for human rights.

The dreams of better opportunities through education, which were denied to my generation due to our historical circumstances, now belong to our new and future generations.

Dear cadets,

Addressing this National Defense Academy of Japan, I am pleased to see students of several nationalities.

The opening of this Academy to foreign students gives me great pleasure. I hope that, with the scholarship support to young Timorese already agreed between our two countries, it will be possible to improve our Armed Forces.

If we learned something from those 24 years of fighting for our freedom, it was that with cooperation, with cohesion and with a collective vision, we can look forward to a better future for our Nation.

The current “struggle” that Timor-Leste faces is different from that of the past, but it is not necessarily easier, and once more requires the engagement of all Timorese.

The barriers to sustainable development and national stability are not “enemies” that can be overcome without the creation of strong and organized Institutions, including the Defense Force of Timor-Leste.

Finally, I would like to conclude by sharing with you one of the noblest lessons that we learnt from our war experience – the value of gratitude and friendship.

Japan has been providing invaluable support to Timor-Leste, and for this I would like to say “arigato” to our Japanese friends, from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you very much!

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

10 March 2009