



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

ADDRESS

**BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE
NATIONAL BANNERS TO THE F-FDTL**

6 October 2009

Naval Base of Hera

Your Excellency the Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Júlio Tomás Pinto,
Your Excellency the Chief of the Defence Force, Brigadier Taur Matan Ruak,
Your Excellency the Commander of the Naval Component, Commander Pedro
Klamar Fuik,
Distinguished guests,

Officers, NCOs and soldiers of the F-FDTL,

The Armed Forces represent the last defender of territorial integrity and national sovereignty, and as such the State must provide them with the essential resources that enable the Armed Forces to meet their mission in full.

To neglect providing such human and material resources would be tantamount to weakening the Nation, as it would be left vulnerable and at the mercy of those seeking to deprive it of its wealth.

Therefore, this Government that I am honoured to lead has been tireless in re-organising, re-equipping and modernising the F-FDTL, so as to provide it with the operational capability to be able to defend, if needed, the national independence that we struggled so much to achieve.

One area where the State has been vulnerable is in regard to costal patrolling, particularly within the Exclusive Economic Zone, which is subject to crimes ranging from illegal fishing to drug trafficking, smuggling and even human trafficking.

This situation has arisen because of a lack of naval strength to patrol the coastal area of our country and in particular the southern coast which has been most affected by the criminal activities of groups that so far have been acting

with relative impunity.

Indeed, the two Oecussi Class patrol boats that the F-FDTL Naval Component currently operates, and which were provided by Portugal within the scope of our bilateral cooperation, cannot protect the Timorese geographic territory, which is why the Government has taken measures that are necessary in order to address this vulnerability.

And so the Government is acquiring from the People's Republic of China two Shangai III Class patrol boats, which will have a range of 700 miles and be capable of operating for extended periods in high seas with the need for land support.

With these boats we will finally be able to patrol all our coastal area and ensure the defence of our maritime wealth as well as prevent criminal groups from entering the Country through our maritime borders.

Therefore, today's ceremony is particularly symbolic. Presenting the National Banners to the Garrisons that will be responsible for operating the patrol boats, which should be available to us within the first months of 2010, represents an important step in the modernisation of our Armed Forces.

Next year, we are going also start the construction of a new modern Naval Base here in Hera.

On October 9 these two Garrisons, which are constituted by 36 soldiers from the Naval Component, will depart for China to receive training for three months. In China the soldiers will receive 'hands-on' training which will enable them to make the most of what these two patrol boats can offer.

I urge our seamen to apply yourselves with the utmost dedication and determination during the following months, so that the time they are spending now studying does not prove to be lost time.

The knowledge that you will acquire in China will be essential to the success of the fight we will bring to those who seek to challenge the authority of the State by availing themselves of the weaknesses in our borders along the coast.

Be proud of the uniform that you wear, respect the trust that we have placed in you and abstain from committing any acts that might tarnish the name of your Fatherland.

May God be with you in this next journey.

Thank you very much!

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

6 October 2009