



**P R I M E
M I N I S T E R**

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL CEREMONY MARKING THE
END OF THE OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY OF THE ISF AND UNPOL**

**31 October 2012
Government Palace
Dili**



Palácio do Governo,
Avenida Presidente Nicolau Lobato,
Dili, Timor-Leste

Excellency, President of the Republic,
Excellency, President of the National Parliament,
Excellency, President of the Court of Appeal
Excellency, Prosecutor-General of the Republic
Excellency, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations
Excellency, Commander of UNPOL
Excellency, Commander of ISF
Excellencies, Members of Parliament
Excellencies, Members of Government
Excellency, Chief of the Defence Force
Excellency, Commander-General of PNTL
Excellencies, Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps accredited in Dili,
Distinguished Guests,

The building of a State involves a process that cannot be free from error. This is even more the case when the task begins following a conflict resulting from a struggle for liberation. In fact, there has been no part of the world in which a State has been built in a short period of time.

In light of this, our first decade of sovereignty did not bring us only happiness. We faced many of the difficulties that are common to those who take the first steps in leading a young Nation.

We all knew that one of the most demanding challenges would be to transform a guerrilla force into modern and professional armed forces, along with creating from scratch a police force able to secure by itself internal security and peace among our people.

In hindsight, we must acknowledge that there were key gaps, which included the quality of basic training of the police officers that were recruited for the PNTL. This contributed to PNTL growing with serious weaknesses, which became evident when the institution failed to maintain public order in 2006 at a time when our nation needed it most. Instead, the PNTL almost ceased to operate.

And as a result of internal problems, the F-FDTL experienced nearly a third of its personnel leaving their ranks. Many of these then went on to challenge the authority of the State, which led to serious conflict throughout the country and in particular in Dili.

In 2006, recognising that we were unable to restore public order by ourselves, and with the survival of our democratic and independent State operating under the rule of law in jeopardy, we were forced to call for international assistance. This decision was shared by our bodies of sovereignty.

We were fortunate to be able to rely on the great solidarity and the operational readiness of four friendly countries, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Portugal, which did not hesitate to send military and security forces to Timor-Leste. Step by step, these forces helped us to return to normality.

Meanwhile the United Nations Security Council also responded to our request and sent a mission to become the sole institution responsible for internal security in Timor-Leste. This force was UNPOL.

Over the past six years, the Timorese State was not in a position to exert its exclusive competence for providing security for people and their property. We must recognise, however, that this was necessary to allow us to mend the errors of the past, which included addressing the quality of the training of the various units of the PNTL, and especially those dedicated to handling more complex criminal matters.

At the same time, and working together with UNPOL, we undertook thorough reform of the PNTL, correcting its deficiencies and organising its operation.

It was with persistence and determination that we managed to solve problems caused by the crisis, which threatened the stability and wellbeing of the people, such as the IDPs and the issue of the petitioners.

In 2008, following attacks against the heads of bodies of sovereignty, Operation Halibur became an opportunity to demonstrate the ability of soldiers and police officers to work in close coordination and cooperation towards a common goal. This operation was a significant success in terms of peace, stability and security in the country, and gave the Defence and Security Forces a desire to work harder in order to succeed in their missions.

We started the gradual process of handing over to PNTL the responsibility for police operations in the various districts of the country. This process was completed on 27 March 2011, with the handing over of the General Command.

We witnessed with satisfaction how the Defence and Security Forces proved, in an increasingly confident and effective way, to be able to ensure internal security and the defence of the people. Nevertheless, we continued to rely on the generous support of the ISF and UNPOL.

Since the F-FDTL and PNTL proved to be able to perform the tasks given to them by the Constitution with professionalism and competence, it was clear that they could not continue to receive foreign assistance indefinitely. We all agreed, therefore, that by the end of this year the United Nations would permanently end their mission in Timor-Leste and that ISF would withdraw their troops from our national territory.

As such, today signals a landmark for the recent but wonderful history of our homeland. It is a cause for joy and pride for all Timorese, but not because the police officers and soldiers who generously volunteered to assist us are now leaving Timor-Leste. Instead, it is because their assistance enabled us to correct our errors and to improve our technical and professional skills.

This is precisely the reason we are here today at this ceremony that seeks first to acknowledge the important role that UNPOL and the ISF played in making Timorese

society safer and more just. The awarding of the Order of Timor-Leste to both these institutions represents our genuine gratitude to all those who, for the past six years, have served UNPOL and the ISF, and consequently, Timor-Leste and its people.

In my name, and on behalf of the Government that I lead, I thank and congratulate the Commanders of UNPOL and the ISF for their good work in Timor-Leste. I also want to thank the United Nations, represented by the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, for providing the assistance that comes to an end today.

We are aware that there will be new challenges in the future. Having rebuilt our security forces, we must now strive to train their members, so that the recent past is never repeated and that our police force is always up to the task.

The future cooperation with police forces from friendly countries, with models similar to that of PNTL, will now be undertaken bilaterally. This will also be the model by which we will undertake international military cooperation.

I thank all the international police officers and soldiers and wish you all the best in the future. I hope that your trip back home is a pleasant one.

Thank you very much.