



NEWS RELEASE

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Factsheet – SAF Participation in Peacekeeping Operations in Timor-Leste

The United Nations Security Council approved an international security force for the then East Timor (now Timor-Leste) and established INTERFET on 15 Sep 99. INTERFET, led by the Australian Defence Force was to restore the peace and security of Timor-Leste in response to the widespread violence that broke out after Timor-Leste's successful referendum for independence held in Aug 99. The INTERFET operations lasted until 23 Feb 00 and transited to United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) till the Independence Day of Timor-Leste on 20 May 02. UNTAET was replaced by United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) on 21 May 02.

While Singapore has been supporting UN peacekeeping operations for many years, we only began contributing combat peacekeepers in May 2001. It started with the deployment of an augmented platoon of 70 combat peacekeepers to Timor-Leste. The deployment lasted for a period of one and a half years from May 01 to Nov 02.

On 27 Jul 02, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Dr Tony Tan, announced that Singapore had responded positively to the UN's request that Singapore nominate a SAF officer to assume the position of Force Commander, UNMISSET peacekeeping force for one year. In response to the UN's request, we also agreed to increase our contribution of peacekeepers from a platoon to a company starting from Nov 02, and to contribute a helicopter detachment comprising four helicopters together with the air crew and maintenance staff, totaling 72. The Force Commander, Major-General (MG) Tan Huck Gim, assumed his appointment on 30 Aug 02 and his tour of duty is expected to last for a year.

The company of 160 SAF peacekeepers was deployed on 3 Oct 02 to serve with the Thai battalion in the southwestern district of Kova Lima in Timor-Leste. They assumed operational duty on 26 Oct 02. The helicopter detachment of four UH-1H helicopters was also deployed on 3 Oct 02 and assumed operational duty on 15 Nov 02 in Suai to provide direct aerial support to the peacekeeping forces in the Western sector of Timor-Leste. This contingent included 17 NSmen and 10 Full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) who volunteered and were deployed for the first time on combat peacekeeping duty.

Quick Facts on SAF's participation in UN Missions in Timor-Leste

a. Dates:

- i. INTERFET - 15 Sep 99 to 23 Feb 00
- ii. UNTAET - 24 Feb 00 to 20 May 02
- iii. UNMISET - 21 May 02 to present

b. Size of current deployment in Timor-Leste: 250

c. Locations of deployment:

- i. Dili
- ii. Suai
- iii. Taroman
- iv. Belulik Leten
- v. Fohorem

d. Training. The training for the peacekeepers involves a period of preparatory, consolidation training and cohesion building, of about 3 months.

Since 1989, when Singapore first participated in UN peacekeeping operations, we have contributed over 1400 personnel for different UN peacekeeping missions including:

UNTAG (UN Transitional Authority Group) Namibia - '89,
UNIKOM (UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission) Kuwait - '91
UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia) Cambodia - '93,
UNOSMA (UN Observer Mission to South Africa) South Africa - '94,
UNSMA (UN Special Mission in Afghanistan) Afghanistan - '97
INTERFET (International Force in East Timor) East Timor - '99
UNTAET (UN Transition Authority in East Timor) East Timor - '00
UNMEE (UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea) Ethiopia - '02
UNMISET (UN Mission of Support in East Timor) Timor-Leste - '02

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