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Viewing cable 06LISBON1137, PORTUGAL: AN INTEL VIEW OF EAST TIMOR

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06LISBON1137	2006-06-12 16:01	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Lisbon

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 001137

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/09/2026
TAGS: PREL PGOV TT PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: AN INTEL VIEW OF EAST TIMOR

REF: A. CANBERRA 849
Â¶B. DILI 301

Classified By: Cari Enav, Pol/Econ Officer, State. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

Â¶1. (C/NF) In a discussion on East Timor, the Chief of Staff for the Republic of Portugal's Intelligence Services (SIRP) underscored the need to recognize the Fretilin Party's popularity and the important role Prime Minister Alkatiri played in it. He was critical of Australia's past role in East Timor but was confident that coordination problems between Portuguese and Australian forces on the ground would be worked out.

Alkatiri Still Influential

Â¶2. (C/NF) During a chance encounter on June 8, Pol/Econ DepCouns had the opportunity to solicit Chief of Staff for the Republic of Portugal's Intelligence Services (SIRP) Jorge Carvalho's viewpoint on the situation in East Timor. With regard to the political situation, Carvalho underscored the need to recognize the political reality in East Timor without favoring either President Gusmao or Prime Minister Alkatiri. He commented that although Alkatiri had undertaken questionable actions and was tainted with the mark of Communist affiliation, the fact remained that the Fretilin Party would win if elections were held today and Alkatiri would remain in a position of power. Any plans to resolve the conflict would need to take his influence into account.

Questioning Australia's Role

Â¶3. (C/NF) Carvalho commented that Australia had not played a productive role in East Timor, underscoring that Australia's motives were driven by geopolitical and commercial (e.g. oil) interests while Portugal's main interest was to maintain stability. He noted that Portugal had minimal, if any, economic ties. He explained that SIRP followed the situation on the ground very closely, stating "we even know what type of shoes the rioters wear and where they buy them," and implied that Australia had previously fomented unrest for its benefit. He cited two instances - demarcation negotiations of the maritime border between East Timor and Australia and demarcation negotiations of oil exploration boundaries off the shore of East Timor - where Australia had fomented unrest to put the pressure on the Government of East Timor.

Confident Coordination Problem would be Resolved

¶4. (C/NF) Carvalho was confident that coordination problems between the Portuguese paramilitary Republican National Guard (GNR) and the Australian forces would be resolved and downplayed any conflicts on the ground. Refuels and subsequent press reports highlight a June 8 accord in which the GNR will operate exclusively in the Comoro neighborhood until command and control issues had been resolved.

Comment

¶5. (C/NF) Carvalho, the equivalent of DNI John Negroponte's Chief of Cabinet, is an important pro-American Embassy contact who is not only knowledgeable in intelligence matters but well connected to political parties across the spectrum. His analysis of the situation in East Timor was dispassionate - even his criticism of Australia was delivered in a matter-of-fact manner. Though Carvalho emphasized Portugal's more altruistic side for sending GNR to East Timor, there is a genuine fondness for its former colony and a sense of responsibility for its welfare. It is clear that intelligence reporting informs Portugal's official position regarding the political way forward, as reflected by MFA interlocutors' reluctance to comment on particular East Timorese leaders and to instead emphasize the importance of the East Timorese themselves devising a solution to their difficult political problems.

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Hoffman