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Viewing cable 07STATE132248, TIMOR-LESTE FM DA COSTA'S SEPT. 12-13 WASHINGTON

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VZCZCXRO2514 RR RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM DE RUEHC #2248/01 2622054 ZNY CCCCC ZZH R 192040Z SEP 07 FM SECSTATE WASHDC TO RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 4251 INFO ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS COLLECTIVE RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 8983 RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 7366 RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 4510 RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 4286 RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8794

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2017 TAGS: PREL PGOV TT SUBJECT: TIMOR-LESTE FM DA COSTA'S SEPT. 12-13 WASHINGTON VISIT

Classified By: EAP A/S Christopher R. Hill, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: New Timor-Leste Foreign Minister Zacarias Albano da Costa met separately with Under Secretary Burns, Under Secretary Dobriansky, and EAP Assistant Secretary Hill September 12-13 to discuss the new Timorese government's policy priorities and challenges. The Timorese government will tackle immediate problems first, including the budget and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the longer-term, it seeks to strengthen state institutions and pursue economic development. U/S Burns, U/S Dobriansky, and A/S Hill reaffirmed U.S. support for Timor-Leste's continued development and for maintaining a UN peacekeeping mission in the country. End summary.

¶2. (C) GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES: FM Da Costa briefed U/S Burns on the coalition government's commitment to stabilizing Timor-Leste through resolving urgent problems and strengthening state institutions. Initial priorities are passage of a transitional budget (through December 2007), finding homes for the IDPs, expanding youth employment, and reform of public sector institutions such as the police. The Government of Timor-Leste (GOTL) plans to name an ambassador to the United States soon and add two new positions to its embassy in Washington. U/S Burns reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to our close friendship with Timor-Leste and pledged U.S. government support for Timor-Leste as the government addresses the challenges ahead.

¶3. (C) INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE: Da Costa praised the Australian-led International Stabilization Force (ISF) for playing a critical role in maintaining public security. (Note: the GOTL asked that the ISF remain for two more years during Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer's visit on August 30. End note.) Amending his September 10 remarks at the UN Security Council requesting a five-year extension of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), FM Da Costa said the country needed the UN peacekeeping mission to continue for at least another two years. He acknowledged a Japanese proposal to include Timor-Leste in the work of the new UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), but emphasized that the GOTL desired any PBC operations supplement rather than replace UNMIT. U/S Burns underscored U.S. government support for maintaining a UN peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste.

¶4. (U) ECONOMIC POLICY: One of the new government's biggest concerns is how to improve conditions for the poor, Da Costa said. He praised U.S. assistance to date, particularly programs to strengthen the private sector, to strengthen property rights, and to promote production of cash crops such as coffee. The new government seeks to enact a land title law and to simplify procedures to start a business. It also seeks to re-engage with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to negotiate a Compact Agreement. U/S Burns indicated the U.S. desire to assist the GOTL in implementing economic reforms.

¶5. (C) RELATIONS WITH INDONESIA: The FM described relations with Indonesia as good and expanding. He said that he hoped to meet FM Hassan Wirajuda in October to discuss outstanding

issues to conclude an agreement by December, when PM Gusmao visits Jakarta. The issues concern the border, visas, Timorese students in Indonesia, access to Timor-Leste for business travelers from West Timor, and pensions for former civil servants. Indonesia planned to open a cultural center in Dili. Da Costa also noted that President Jose Ramos-Horta hoped to meet with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

¶6. (C) POLITICAL SITUATION: In a separate meetings with U/S Dobriansky and A/S Hill on September 13, FM Da Costa noted the fragile domestic political situation, emphasizing that the FRETILIN Party had found it hard to accept the loss of its parliamentary majority. He explained that the coalition government is also working to find a way to include the opposition in the decision-making process such as through membership in specialized parliamentary committees and participation in other organs of government. U/S Dobriansky and A/S Hill welcomed FRETILIN's participation in the Parliament as a positive development and urged that the government act promptly on urgent problems such as the IDPs. A/S Hill also agreed to meet with President Ramos-Horta at

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UNGA.

¶7. (C) 1999 ACCOUNTABILITY: In his meeting with U/S Dobriansky, FM Da Costa also discussed justice and human rights issues. He defended the ongoing inquiry by the bilateral Commission on Truth and Friendship (CTF) into accountability for the crimes against humanity committed in ¶1999. Noting that the body's Terms of Reference hypothetically allow for it to recommend amnesty, the FM dismissed amnesty as politically impossible. On the question of prosecuting suspects, he emphasized that Timor-Leste and Indonesia should be allowed to find their own way to deal with the issue on a bilateral basis. "A new generation whom we know well is taking over in Indonesia and we wish to put the past behind us," Da Costa concluded.
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