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Viewing cable 08JAKARTA878, TIMOR-LESTE -- PM GUSMAO STRESSES RECONCILIATION

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/02/2018
TAGS: PREL PGOV ID TT
SUBJECT: TIMOR-LESTE -- PM GUSMAO STRESSES RECONCILIATION
IN JAKARTA

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Visiting Timor-Leste PM Gusmao stressed reconciliation on a recent visit to Jakarta. In a speech, Gusmao said the Timorese could never forget the human rights violations that accompanied the country's birth, but they did need to forgive. During the visit, President Yudhoyono and Gusmao signed several economic and health cooperation agreements. Gusmao's visit seems to have gone some way in smoothing out relations between the two countries which were bruised when President Ramos-Horta seemed almost to all but blame Indonesia for the February turbulence in Dili. END SUMMARY.

A PRODUCTIVE VISIT

¶2. (U) Timor-Leste Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao visited Jakarta April 29-May 1. He met President Yudhoyono, senior foreign affairs, defense and economic officials, members of the Indonesian legislature and Islamic leaders. He also met business leaders, members of the Timorese community in Jakarta and delivered a public speech.

¶3. (C) Gusmao and Yudhoyono signed three MOUs covering trade and health cooperation. They did not finalize an agreement for joint military training between the two countries, however. Timor-Leste DCM Roberto Soares told poloff that the Indonesian side was being "very careful" with the language of the mil-mil agreement. The GOI wanted to avoid any possible appearance of inappropriate military interference in Timor-Leste, according to Soares. The Timor-Leste side was more relaxed over the matter. Officials from both countries will continue to meet to try to reach a defense-related agreement, Soares said.

BACKTRACKING FROM RAMOS-HORTA

¶4. (U) In public and private, Gusmao sought to calm the furor sparked by President Jose Ramos-Horta's recent remarks. He said Ramos-Horta regretted having said that a prominent journalist and other Indonesians helped the rebels who attempted to assassinate him (and Gusmao) during the February turbulence in Dili. Speaking after a meeting with Yudhoyono, Gusmao asked Indonesians to understand Ramos-Horta's condition after being shot and remaining in a coma for two weeks. He also thanked Yudhoyono for the Indonesian authorities' swift arrest of fugitive Timorese soldiers implicated in the February attacks. (Note: The GOI is investigating the situation and reportedly plans to transfer those arrested into Timorese custody soon.)

STRESSING RECONCILIATION

¶5. (U) In a public speech at a local hotel on April 30, Gusmao delivered a strong message that the joint Indonesia-Timor-leste Commission on Truth and Friendship (CTF) should close the chapter on past human rights abuses and that the two countries should move on the basis of forgiveness. The CTF "will be adopted by two countries within the year and should be implemented as far as possible," he told a large audience of diplomats, officials and other interested persons. Both countries suffered under the same repressive regime, he said. The countries should stress reconciliation "instead of starting legal cases" against each other.

¶6. (U) In response to a question, Gusmao said the key point is that "this report is for us a closure of a chapter. If we to continue to live in the mistakes of the past, we will not have the time to make our peoples' lives better today." He added, "We will ask the international community to understand that we chose our own way." Then, switching to broken Bahasa Indonesia for the next 20 minutes, he continued, "We cannot ever forget but we can forgive. What needs to be done? The CTF report is a political gesture." He then compared the ugly history to a children's book, saying that like a child who get bored with reading the same book over and over again,

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and already knows the story, it's time to move on to a new book.

¶7. (C) After the speech, CTF member Wisber Loeis told DepPol/C that the two Presidents have received the CTF report informally. The formal version is still being printed and collated, and will need to be translated into Tetun and Portuguese (Indonesian and English translations are done) before it can be officially presented. He said this will probably happen around the end of May, but seemed to fudge on that. There will be a public announcement when this happens, he said. (Note: Separately, CTF member Agus Widjoyo told the media that the Commission would release the report on May 26.)

¶8. (C) DepPol/C told Wisber that senior human rights activist Usman Hamid of Kontras (an Indonesian NGO) seemed to know a lot about the CTF report, and that he said the report can be used as a basis to prosecute human right violators. Wisber said he has heard the same and that some in the GOI are worried the report could open up this avenue.

¶9. (C) In a brief chat, Presidential Spokesman Dino Djalal told DepPol/C that the presidential staff were still studying the CTF report and have no reaction yet, even unofficially.

A CONSTRUCTIVE VISIT

¶10. (C) Gusmao's visit seems to have gone some way in smoothing out relations between the two countries which were bruised when President Ramos-Horta appeared almost to all but blame Indonesia for the February turbulence in Dili. Gusmao seemed to go out of his way to try to build up relations and to be amiable to his Indonesian hosts. The GOI seemed to appreciate it and he was able to just about touch base with all of the key movers-and-shakers in Jakarta. His comments re the CTF accentuate his view that that process is key mainly from the reconciliation standpoint. That view is no doubt shared by many in Jakarta.

HUME