

'U.S. backed invasion of E. Timor'

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, DEC. 7. Twenty-six years to the day, the Indonesian dictator, General Suharto, ordered his troops to invade East Timor with the full backing of the United States Government, declassified documents posted on the website of the National Security Archive of the George Washington University show. Operation Komodo was launched on December 7, 1975, a day after Gen. Suharto held talks with the then U.S. President, Mr. Gerald Ford, and the powerful Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, in Indonesia.

A declassified "secret" cable dated December 6, 1975, shows a confident Gen. Suharto pushing Mr. Ford and Dr. Kissinger on the East Timor issue, something which the two leaders have been quiet about. Gen. Suharto: "...It is now important to determine what we can do to establish peace and order for the present and the future in the interest of the security of the area and for Indonesia. These are some of the considerations that we are now contemplating. We want your understanding if we deem it necessary to take rapid or drastic action."

Mr. Ford: "We will understand and will not press you on the issue. We understand the problem you have and the intentions you have."

Dr. Kissinger: "It depends on how we construe it; whether it is in self-defence or it is a foreign operation. It is important that whatever you do succeeds quickly. We would be able to influence the reaction in America if whatever happens after we return....we understand your problem and the need to move quickly but I am only saying that it would be better if it were done after we returned....whatever you do, however, we will try to handle in the best way possible."

Mr. Ford: "We recognise that you have a time factor. We have merely expressed our view from our particular point of view." To a question from Dr. Kissinger whether a long guerrilla war was anticipated in the then Portuguese colonial possession, Gen. Suharto responded: "There will probably be a small guerrilla war....the UDT (Timorese Democratic

Union) represents former Government officials and Fretilin (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) represents former soldiers. They are infected the same is the Portuguese Army with communism." With those words, Gen. Suharto ended the conversation on East Timor and turned to the issue of "trade relations" between Indonesia and the United States. And, then, there was no stopping Gen. Suharto. He sent in his troops, who according to one account, killed between 60,000 to 100,000 East Timorese in the period 1975-76 alone.

Both Mr. Ford and Dr. Kissinger seemed to be smarting from the debacle of Vietnam and the fall of Saigon in April 1975. In an earlier meeting with Gen. Suharto at Camp David on July 5, 1975, Mr. Ford said: "Let me say that we are as firmly committed and interested in Southeast Asia. The events in Indochina have in no way diminished our interest or commitment in the area."

The issue of East Timor and possible Indonesian action was raised by the General at the Camp David meeting. He told Mr. Ford, as per the contents of another declassified document, "...The third point I want to raise is Portuguese decolonisation....with respect to Timor, we support carrying out decolonisation through the process of self-determination."

"In ascertaining the views of the Timor people, there are three possibilities: independence, staying with Portugal, or to join Indonesia. With such a small territory and no resources, an independent country would hardly be viable. With Portugal it would be a big burden with Portugal being so far away. If they want to integrate into Indonesia as an independent nation, that is not possible because Indonesia is a unitary State. So the only way is to integrate into Indonesia," the document, as seen on the website, said.

So, Gen. Suharto had prepared his ground well before acting as he did. He had softened the Americans up before making his move. There is little doubt that the Indonesian dictator, who ruled his country for 32 long years, comes across as a canny politician, who had no doubts about his course of action.

THE HINDU

- 8 DEC 2001

Alkatiri takes over E. Timor transitional Govt.

DILI (EAST TIMOR), SEPT. 20. Mari Alkatiri, the leader of East Timor's largest political party, was appointed on Thursday to head a new de facto Cabinet that will lead the fledgling nation to independence next year. "This is the first truly representative and democratic government in the history of East Timor," said Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, East Timor's U.N. administrator. The Acting Foreign Minister, Mr. Jose Ramos-Horta, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, will retain his portfolio in the 20-member Council of Ministers, Mr. de Mello said. The widely anticipated announcement came three weeks after elections in which the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, or Fretilin, won 55 seats in a new 88-member legislature.

The ballot was a key step in preparing East Timor for independence after centuries of Portuguese colonial rule, 24 years of Indonesian occupation, and two years of transitional U.N. government. The Assembly must now draft a constitution. The body will become the new Parliament before independ-

ence is granted, probably next year. The new Council of Ministers replaces an earlier transitional body consisting of U.N. officials and representatives hand-picked by Mr. de Mello.

"Its challenges will be huge as we continue to face...the pains of building a new nation and its institutions from scratch with very limited means," Mr. de Mello said. Mr. Fretilin will have nine portfolios in the new Cabinet. Nine other posts have been filled by independents and experts, including Mr. Ramos-Horta. The second largest party, the Democrats, will have two representatives on the council. "We have achieved the goal to free our homeland and today we are a step closer to achieving political and economic freedom," Mr. Alkatiri said after he was sworn-in. Fretilin, which was established in 1974, played a key role in East Timor's 24-year bloody struggle for independence from Indonesia. Mr. Alkatiri, the party's secretary-general, will retain the position of Finance Minister he held in the previous Council of Ministers. — AP

THE HINDU

21 SEP 2001

1 SEP 2001

E. TIMOR / FRETELIN TAKES EARLY LEAD

*S. B. K. V. in
D. B. F. in*

First results indicate close race

*H.D. - 19
2/9*

DILI (EAST TIMOR), SEPT. 3. The party that led East Timor to independence will capture the largest slice of seats in the fledgling nation's legislature, but with a slimmer majority than party leaders had anticipated, according to initial results released on Monday.

The announcement came as a surprise for many election observers who had predicted a landslide victory for the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor — Fretelin. The U.N.'s chief electoral officer, Mr. Carlos Valenuela, said Fretelin had taken the lead after votes from three of East Timor's 13 districts had been counted. From the districts of Aileu, Covlimia and Lautem, Fretelin won the majority of votes at a local level, giving it three seats in the Constitutional Assembly. At the national level, Fretelin won most of the votes in Covlimia, but in Aileu was beaten by the Association of Social Democrats of Timor, or ASDT party. Votes on the national level from Lautem were yet to be tallied.

The Fretelin party leader, Mr. Mari Alkariri, said last week that his party expected to control 85 per cent of the seats in the 88-member Assembly. It remained unclear whether Fretelin would win a comfortable majority and

obtain a clear mandate to form the new Government when counting is completed and official results are announced next week.

Last Thursday's election for the Assembly that will draft Constitution was seen as a crucial step in the process of preparing the half-island territory for independence next year. The Assembly is likely to adopt a presidential system of Government, with elections for the new head of state expected by next April. Mr. Xanana Gusmao, a charismatic former separatist guerilla leader, is likely to become the first President.

The Assembly itself will be transformed into Parliament. Meanwhile, East Timor will remain under the U.N. transitional administration that has been running the province since it voted to break free of Indonesia exactly two years ago after more than two decades of military occupation.

The world body expects to gradually turn the running of the country to the new authorities over the next 6 to 8 months. On Sunday, the leader of a long-established party, the Timorese Democratic Union said the result would be invalid because electoral officials had allowed people who were not registered to vote to cast their ballots. — AP

THE HINDU

E. TIMOR / TURNOUT 90 P.C.

Voting peaceful in historic poll

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, AUG. 30. Tens of thousands of East Timorese voted on Thursday in the first-ever free elections to elect 88 members to a Constituent Assembly, which will draft a Constitution and take the country towards full independence.

Belying fears, the polling was peaceful — unlike the U.N.-sponsored referendum two years ago — which saw massive violence against the East Timorese by gangs linked to the Indonesian Government.

The East Timor leader, Mr. Xanana Gusmao, who has announced his candidature to run in the Presidential elections scheduled for April 2002, said about Thursday's polls: "I believe this will be very calm, very peaceful. It shows the maturity of our people. It means we have confidence in the future."

"I am happy, happy for them (the people) because I feel for them, it is the beginning of a new life," Mr. Gusmao stated. The voter turnout was high and could be around 90 per cent or more, U.N. officials were quoted as saying.

Fretilin, the party which led the fight for liberation from Indonesia, is widely expected to get a majority in the elections. A total of 16 parties and some 1,000 candidates are in the fray while the strength of the electorate is 425,000.

Thursday's polls are seen as a major step forward for democracy in the country. On August 30,

1999, despite violence and intimidation, the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia in a U.N.-sponsored referendum.

AP, AFP report:

Polls opened shortly after sunrise at 7 a.m. (local time) at 248 booths across the territory, under tight security from 1,500 U.N. police and the 850-strong east Timorese police force.

Villagers dressed in their best sarongs were already queuing outside polling centres before gates had opened while others could be seen walking along highways to polling booths in darkness hours ahead of the voting.

Local election staff and police personnel were the first to vote in the northern coastal town of Manatuto, 35 km east of the capital Dili, where Mr. Gusmao grew up.

Mr. Gusmao voted soon afterwards, waiting patiently in a queue accompanied by his Australian wife Kirsty and their 11-month-old son.

The half-island territory — the other half is still Indonesian — has been a sea of colour as party faithful joined parades and rock concerts until the U.N. Administration's ban on political activity came into force on Tuesday.

The 88-member Assembly will draw up a Constitution, paving the way for choosing a President, most likely in another election by April, and ultimately independence for the former Portuguese colony. Informal results are expected by about Sept. 5 and a formal tally on Sept. 10. — Reuters

THE TELEGRAPH

31 AUG 2001

Goan lawyer in team to review East Timor law

World group to improve island's justice system

BY PAMELA D'MELLO

Panaji, Nov. 25: An Indian lawyer from Goa is part of a three-member team headed for the beleaguered former Portuguese colony and island-nation of East Timor.

The team is off to review the justice administration system there. Goa-based lawyer Francisco de Braganca, Australian Legal Resources International vice-president Peter Shore and Swedish lawyer Christian Ahlund are part of the mission, being sent by the International Legal Assistance Consortium.

This international team, which will visit East Timor from November 26 to December 1, is expected to review priority areas and make suggestions to improve East Timor's collapsed justice system.

Decades of repression by the Indonesian militia on the Maubere people of East Timor has devastated the small country of under one million. It is being administered by the UN since October 1999, after a popular consultation voted overwhelmingly in support of independence.

One of the world's biggest trouble spots, the volcanic island of East Timor, that lies between Indonesia and Australia, was a former Portuguese colony until 1975, when it gained independence.

Under colonialism, it bore close ties with Goa, where judicial appeals were made before the high court under the 1927 Regulamento de Organizacao do Ultramar.

East Timor shares a centuries-old Portuguese colonial legacy with Goa and is now being governed by the United Nations Transitional

Administration in East Timor. UNTAET is responsible for establishing "non-discriminatory and impartial" institutions, including a judiciary and civilian police force to ensure the establishment of the rule of law and to protect human rights.

Amnesty International, however, found that UNTAET has not yet accomplished this, though its current mandate expires on January 31, 2002. According to Amnesty: "(East Timor's) Law and order is barely being maintained, justice is not being administered and human rights cannot be guaranteed. Courts lack basic facilities and members of the judiciary lack the necessary training and support and are vulnerable to police pressure."

The report adds that the UN civilian police force — CivPol — has not "responded efficiently to civil disturbances, thereby creating an opportunity for unofficial security groups to operate."

Investigations are slow and of the four district courts in capital Dili, Baucau, Suai and Oecusse, only the one in Dili is functioning. Two international and one East Timorese judge sit on a Serious Crimes Panel in a country where the rule of law is seriously undermined. ILAC's mission team, sponsored by the Human Rights Institute of the International Bar Association, will meet with the minister for justice, UNTAET special representative, principal legal advisor, Council of Ministers, attorney general for serious crimes and others. The team will then participate in review sessions with officials and key players and will travel across East Timor.

EAST TIMOR / ELECTION FOR CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY ON AUG. 30

Gusmao says he will run for President

of Timor - East Timor

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DILI (EAST TIMOR), Aug. 25. The East Timorese freedom fighter, Mr. Jose Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmao, ended months of speculation on Saturday by announcing that he would run for the presidency of the new nation when it gains full independence next year. "I will accept the candidacy for President," Mr. Gusmao said immediately after a political debate at an indoor sports centre in the capital, Dili. Hundreds of people clapped and cheered when he made the announcement.

Mr. Gusmao, a former guerilla commander, is wildly popular in the homeland that he helped liberate from 24 years of repressive Indonesian occupation. He was captured by Indonesian forces in 1992 and remained a political prisoner in Jakarta until after East Timor's people voted overwhelmingly to break free from Indonesian rule in a U.N. ballot on Aug. 30, 1999. Behind bars, he was a potent symbol for East Timor's resistance and since his release he has been a strong advocate of peace and democracy.

Until now, he has often said that he had no ambition to become its first head of state. He had claimed that he would rather be a farmer or a photographer and that former rebel fighters usually do not make good presidents. However, at Saturday's news conference he said other Timorese political leaders had pressured him into running for the top job. They have said that only Mr. Gusmao (55), has the universal respect to unite the nascent nation that had been a Portuguese colony for about 400 years until it was invaded by Indonesia in 1975.

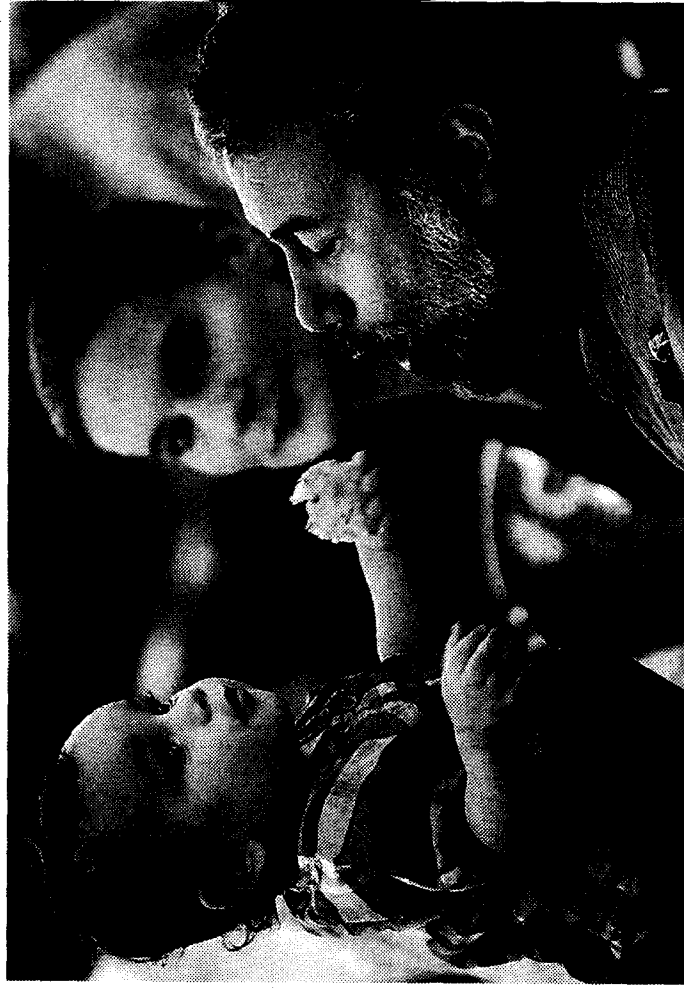
But even as he announced his candidacy, Mr. Gusmao protested that he "was conscious that I am not the best

person for the job." "I had nurtured the dream that after independence I would have time to cultivate pumpkins and animals," he said.

His announcement comes five days before East Timor holds its first democratic election for an 88-member Assembly that will draft a constitution — a major step toward self-rule. The Assembly will decide on what kind of system is used to govern the half-island nation of 800,000 people and how it will elect its President and Parliament.

East Timor has been under temporary U.N. administration since it was ravaged by Indonesian soldiers and their militia allies after the 1999 independence ballot. Mr. Gusmao said his pursuit of the presidency was conditional on a peaceful outcome to Thursday's U.N.-supervised ballot. He insisted the election results must be accepted by all political groups and that violence among rivals, which has wracked the country for generations, must not erupt again. He also said an independent East Timor must now follow policies of "reconciliation and amnesty" for those who fought or backed Indonesian rule. He said if elected, he would head a government based on "competency and professionalism" rather than one that pursued only political interests.

Mr. Gusmao's decision to stand for office was welcomed immediately. "This is an extraordinary moment in the history of the country and it does require the good people to continue to make sacrifices," said Mr. Peter Galbraith, a former senior official with Timor's U.N. administration. "Xanana has to be President. That is what the people want," said Mr. Paulo Soares, a 38-year-old fisherman from Dili. — AP



East Timor's independence leader, Mr. Xanana Gusmao, plays with his son Alexandre as his wife, Ms Kirsty Sword, looks on during a political debate in Dili, East Timor, on Saturday. — AP

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24 AUG 2001