
4 Armed Groups and Diplomacy: East Timor's FRETILIN Guerrillas

Gene Christy

The Red Cross Bell helicopter flew low along the south coast. It was dry season. Only a few wispy clouds hovered over the nearby mountains. Visibility was great. Several hundred feet below, tin roofs gleamed from new villages strung along the coast road. A few Timorese looked up and waved. Most kept at their daily tasks. The scene made one wonder where FRETILIN guerrillas could hide.¹ Maybe they were just a few thieves and thugs as officials in Jakarta and Dili were saying in 1983.

Our stops in Ainaro and Viqueque had been uneventful. It was after lunch, but children greeted us with cries of “*selamat pagi*” (good morning). They were going to the new Indonesian schools. Warehouses were stocked with USAID corn and cooking oil.² A few shops had Pepsi and packaged ramen noodles. Not exactly a famine, we thought. There might still be problems, but food supplies and security in the south seemed much improved. The report to Washington would be positive.

Suddenly, the helicopter lurched upward. It turned out over the water. The pilot announced we could not stop in Los Palos. Something about an attack on soldiers at a weekly market, he said. Flying higher over the mountains than before, he set course north to Baucau.

The pilot set down in a military compound. He promised to return after refueling at a nearby airfield. The Indonesian commander welcomed his two unexpected guests. He offered cups of bitter local coffee. Much sooner than expected, we heard an incoming helicopter. Then the air was full of the thump, thump, thump of helicopters. The birds

A career member of the U.S. foreign service, Ambassador Christy is currently the State Department political adviser to the combatant commander, U.S. Pacific Command. Previously, he was the State Department adviser to the president of the Naval War College and a professor in the National Security Decision Making faculty. Prior to his arrival in Newport in September 2005, Ambassador Christy served as ambassador of the United States to the Southeast Asian nation of Brunei Darussalam from 2002 to 2005. In his 35-year career with the Department of State, Ambassador Christy served in Indonesia twice (both the U.S. consulate in Surabaya and the U.S. embassy in Jakarta), in Turkey two times (both at the U.S. embassy in Ankara), and at the U.S. embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Ambassador Christy was a pioneer in establishing the U.S. embassy in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, after the fall of the Soviet Union (1992–94), and the ambassador served as political counselor at the U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, both before and during the period of the U.S.-led intervention (1994–96). The ambassador has also served on several occasions in the State Department in Washington, DC. He was director for Asia at the National Security Council 2000–01. A member of the Senior Foreign Service, he has the rank of Minister Counselor.

landed one by one. Soldiers and medics ran to meet them. On some stretchers, wounded soldiers writhed. On others, nothing moved.

The commander squirmed in his chair. He muttered to himself in Indonesian. This was not part of the American diplomats' well-scripted program. They weren't even set to stop here. What would he tell Jakarta? Reality had trumped the best of military scheduling. On that fair day, FRETILIN was not a spent force. It was a deadly one.

ARMED GROUPS AND HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING: INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR³

My presence in Baucau with a foreign service colleague was not planned, but it was no accident. "Being there" was precisely the point of the trip. An armed group, FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor), and U.S. diplomacy came together that day.

East Timor was an enigma. Most states accepted Indonesia's sovereign control of the territory. That extended to control of access. The Indonesian military managed the outward flow of people and information, but it did so incompletely. Stories of FRETILIN attacks and Indonesian counterattacks slipped out. There were claims of famine and health crises. The Indonesians countered that these were lies or exaggerations. The U.S. government required diplomats on the ground to make its own assessment. I was one of those diplomats.

The market attack happened on my second trip to Indonesian-controlled East Timor. The first took place in late November 1983. A few weeks before, during Defense Secretary Weinberger's stop in Bali, an Indonesian Navy captain interviewed me over dinner. Captain Sudiby worked for military intelligence chief General Murdani. Sudiby controlled access to Timor. He wanted to know if a year of study at Cornell's Southeast Asia Studies Program had prejudiced my views.⁴ I passed muster.

In the embassy, I was responsible for human rights reporting. A midlevel foreign service officer, I had previous experience in Indonesia and as a political officer in Turkey. There, human rights was part of the job, too.

A graduate of State Department Indonesian-language training, I spoke the language with an East Java accent after serving from 1974 to 1976 in the U.S. consulate in Surabaya. That consulate covered all of southeastern Indonesia and Portuguese Timor. The principal officer was accredited to Lisbon. As junior officers, two of us visited the colony's capital briefly in 1974. The Portuguese were still in control. Dili had the look of a seaside Mediterranean town. There were no overt signs of the turmoil to come. That visit made a useful reference point for the visits I made between 1982 and 1985. It also proved to be an unexpected bookend to my Timor experiences when I returned 25 years later and met with the head of FRETILIN, who by that time was East Timor's acknowledged political leader as it prepared for independence.

In 1982, human rights held an important place in American diplomacy with Indonesia. Washington policy makers and analysts closely read embassy human rights reporting. The embassy prepared the first draft of the annual country human rights report, which was not just a compilation of facts. It was also a policy document, as both critics and supporters used it to back their cases for change or continuity in policy. U.S. assistance

to Indonesia was at stake. A credible human rights report needed direct, documented information.

The Carter years had been complicated for the bilateral relationship. President Carter understood that Indonesia was important. He wanted to respond to Jakarta's requests for support. Development and military aid were at the top of the Indonesians' agenda. But Suharto's military-dominated "New Order" had a checkered history. It had brutally suppressed the Indonesian Communist Party. Members and sympathizers had been jailed for years. Many never had a trial. Giving economic development and stability highest priority, the New Order de-emphasized electoral politics and restricted freedoms of speech, assembly, and the press.

Also, the takeover of Timor in 1975 had been violent. The regime stood accused of violating bilateral agreements by using American arms. Members of Congress, already clamoring for the administration to win release of political detainees, pressed Carter to take action on East Timor. They talked of restricting U.S. military assistance.⁵

The pressure carried over into the new Reagan administration. Indonesian diplomacy had eroded support for a critical UN General Assembly resolution to the point that no country would sponsor a new one after 1982. Diplomats at the UN largely accepted Indonesia's argument that its incorporation of the former Portuguese colony was a success. Hearts and minds were being won. Indonesia's military was mopping up the last remnants of FRETILIN's fighting forces. So Indonesia and its international supporters argued.

A band of African and Portuguese diplomats and human rights advocates thought otherwise. FRETILIN also had diplomats. The best known was José Ramos-Horta, a key negotiator at the UN in New York who traveled on a diplomatic passport issued by Mozambique.⁶ Their voices echoed in the halls of Congress, especially with Democratic Party members like Tony Hall (OH) and Steven Solarz (NY) and in the Senate with Paul Tsongas (MA).

The Reagan administration wanted to demonstrate renewed interest in Southeast Asia. Doing so called for stronger relations with Jakarta. The administration sought to increase security assistance levels. The Indonesians wanted to buy more American military equipment at favorable rates. U.S. officials worked to increase exchange opportunities under the International Military Education and Training program.⁷ Congressional criticism of Indonesia's human rights record and threats to curtail military aid put these goals at risk.

One response was to set up regular on-the-ground embassy reporting from Timor. Credible reporting required frequent visits and, preferably, repeated ones. It called for talking to other diplomats, humanitarian relief and aid officials, and journalists. It demanded following up on allegations from human rights activists and FRETILIN supporters. And reconciling critics' allegations with Indonesian claims was never easy.

Diplomacy and FRETILIN came together in the human rights report. That was true of armed groups throughout the world.

ARMED GROUPS AND THE ANNUAL COUNTRY HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

The *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* debuted in 1977.⁸ They had their origin in struggles between Congress and the executive. In response to the allegedly amoral

policies of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, Congress sought to deny U.S. assistance or loans to governments that grossly violated human rights. Congress intended the reports to provide a public, objective basis to evaluate human rights practices.

Initially, Congress limited the reports to 82 recipients of U.S. economic and military assistance, including Indonesia. Later, coverage expanded to all UN members.⁹ The reports produced significant tugs-of-war between Congress and the executive in the first years. Early disputes included which human rights criteria would be examined. Another source of contention was that “no one could agree on how to characterize a ‘consistent pattern of gross violations.’ There were no guidelines to what could be expected and no systematic way to compare human rights situations.”¹⁰

Who would write the reports was also an issue. In 1978, the Library of Congress recommended that Congress find or set up an organization to prepare them. This reflected the experiences of the previous two years when reports seemed to align analysis with the policy preferences of the State Department’s geographic bureaus. There were also tensions between State’s reporting obligations, its mission to maintain diplomatic relations, and other foreign policy objectives.¹¹ Ultimately, responsibility for preparing the reports remained with State because it had presence in almost every country and because there was no consensus on an alternative.

After his inauguration in 1981, President Ronald Reagan set out to separate his approach to human rights from President Carter’s. Realism would come before idealism. Reagan argued that the Carter approach was morally unsound, ineffective, and threatening to U.S. security interests. His policy team felt U.S. criticism seriously undermined regimes that might be authoritarian but at least were not totalitarian and communist.¹² The Reagan team wanted to focus on “quiet diplomacy” rather than punishing friends like Indonesia through restrictions on foreign assistance.

Governments’ responses to armed groups, such as FRETILIN, often lead to allegations of human rights violations. Where rule of law is weak, military accountability is rare, and the state tightly controls access to information, violations are more likely to occur. By statute and practice, “the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices cover internationally recognized individual civil, political and workers rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These rights include freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, from prolonged detention without charges, from disappearances or clandestine detention, and from other flagrant violations of the right to life, liberty, and the security of the person.”¹³

In response to rebellions or armed resistance, governments often restrict these rights. Because of a lack of transparency and accountability, authoritarian regimes are particularly subject to criticism for violations. These include torture; prolonged detention without trial; restrictions on freedoms of speech, association, and assembly; and forced displacement. Human rights report drafts I wrote while serving in both Indonesia and Turkey were laced with coverage of alleged government abuses of armed groups and their supporters.

In those early years of human rights reporting, guidelines were evolving. The State Department did not offer formal human rights training. Indeed, it was only in the mid-1980s that State started a training program for midcareer political officers. That

course included political reporting skills, such as interviewing and visit preparation, but human rights reporting skills were not singled out for special emphasis.¹⁴ Only in February 1990 did State's Foreign Service Institute open its first Human Rights in Diplomacy course.¹⁵

Few foreign service officers saw the absence of formal training about human rights and armed groups as a problem. We were bright. We were culturally aware. We usually had language skills. Our grasp of the policy environment was good. Where we followed an issue over a period of time or picked it up from a strong predecessor, we knew which questions were urgent. And State, driven by inquiries from Congress and the press, made sure embassy leaders knew what policy makers needed.

ARMED GROUPS: EAST TIMOR'S FRETILIN

For a human rights reporting officer in Indonesia, FRETILIN presented a challenge. Apart from a few diplomats at the UN in New York, U.S. officials did not knowingly engage with FRETILIN. Much of the information gathered about FRETILIN was inferential or secondhand.

FRETILIN was one of three political parties to emerge in Portuguese Timor. The others were the conservative UDT, Timorese Democratic Union, and APODETI, Timorese Popular Democratic Association, which initially called for integration with Indonesia. FRETILIN appeared a few weeks after the April 1974 Armed Forces Movement coup in Lisbon. It was the most ideological and left-leaning of the three parties. In those heady days, its founders declared the party to be based on "the universal doctrines of socialism and democracy."¹⁶ FRETILIN found itself in control of the Portuguese territory in August 1975, after a brief civil conflict and withdrawal by Portuguese officials to the nearby island of Atauro.

Unwilling to accept the emergence of an independent and "communistic" ministate on its border, Indonesia responded. On 7 December Indonesian military forces launched an assault on the capital. Jakarta claimed its fighters were not soldiers but "volunteers" responding to a call from anti-FRETILIN Timorese. My wife and I watched on a number of mornings in this period as those Indonesian "volunteers" mounted military trucks lined up outside the marine base next to our house. They were headed to Surabaya's port and on to East Timor to fight.

In response to the Indonesian assault, FRETILIN's armed component, Falintil (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor), withdrew to the mountains and began a guerrilla campaign. At that time, it had about 20,000 men. Of these, 2,500 were a professional corps of regular troops. Another 7,000 had received military training under the Portuguese, while some 10,000 had been given short military courses. FRETILIN forces lacked formally trained leaders. But those it had, such as "Xanana" Gusmão, were shrewd and inspiring. FRETILIN also began its campaign with a substantial supply of modern NATO-type light weaponry, as the Portuguese had recently replenished their arsenal. Sympathetic Portuguese officers turned those arms over to Falintil.¹⁷

Over the next year, Indonesian forces took effective control of Dili, Baucau, and other significant towns. Once in control, the Indonesian government commenced a "hearts and minds" program. It included infrastructure building, agricultural

development, and expanded educational and health services. More of Indonesia's development budget went to East Timor on a per capita basis than to any other province.

FRETILIN continued its guerrilla campaign. Numbers of fighters declined due to losses to Indonesian forces, disease and poor medical care, and exhaustion. However, a core of effective fighters remained six years after Indonesia's intervention.

FRETILIN AND EAST TIMOR: GROUND TRUTH

By 1982, Dili was stable and secure. Travel outside the capital was the only way to obtain a real sense of conditions. That presented problems. Roads were terrible. The few paved ones extended only a few kilometers beyond Dili and a handful of other towns. Most towns had no paved streets. Plus, security was an issue. Even Indonesian officials avoided road travel after dark because of concerns about FRETILIN or accidental Indonesian military assaults. Indonesian officials would not consider overnight stays for diplomats outside Dili. That policy ruled out extended road trips.

The combination of miserable roads and need to return to Dili each evening made travel by helicopter the only practical option. Initially, we hitched rides on a Bell helicopter leased by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In theory, these flights were not for our benefit. We went where the Red Cross had programs or needed to follow up. Fortunately, our needs and those of the Red Cross often overlapped.

Flight plans required military approval. Itinerary changes were not allowed. Trip planners offered limited flexibility and close oversight. But the Red Cross aircraft had only four seats, meaning room for a pilot, two diplomats, and one more passenger. An ICRC or Catholic Relief Services (CRS) staffer often took the fourth seat. Rarely was there space for an official escort from Dili, although local officials met and accompanied visitors at each stop.

When there were two diplomats, we split up whenever possible at each stop. This increased chances of unscripted conversations and observations. Also, I always carried an Olympus OM-1 camera and took many photos. Usually dressed in their best outfits, senior local officials would tire of following the shutterbug down muddy paths, providing me unguarded moments to snap photos and talk to villagers.

Travel by helicopter was the only way to go, but it had its heart-stopping moments. The diversion of the flight to Baucau described earlier was one of those. Another coincided with my final visit in this period. The Red Cross helicopter was no longer available, so we boarded an Indonesian military helo in Dili. Just as it cleared the ground, there was a tremendous roar. The helicopter shook. Two Indonesian Air Force jets made a dangerously low pass a hundred feet over the airport. Had the helicopter lifted off a few seconds earlier . . . Better not to dwell on the risks of "friendly fire," we told ourselves at dinner that evening. Besides, a much greater concern during the flight was the steady drip of a reddish, oily fluid into the cabin. It was preferable not to think too much about the maintenance history of the aircraft until it touched down in Dili at the end of the day.

Fleshing out schedules for visits always tested our negotiating skills. Rarely did the requests we made in Jakarta for meetings or travel make it to Dili intact. Most trips began with a discussion of whom to see, where to go, and when. We always sought appointments with the governor and military commander. The former was generous with his

time; the latter was frequently away or too busy. Meetings with Apostolic Administrator Monsignor Belo shortly after his investiture in 1983 were easy to arrange. As he became more outspoken and critical of Indonesian actions against FRETILIN, local hosts were less accommodating. Seeing Monsignor Belo became a kind of game.¹⁸

On one visit in 1984, State Department Indonesia desk officer Charles "Chuck" Morris came along. On arrival, we asked about our request for a meeting with the Timorese church leader. Trip organizers claimed he was unavailable. Exactly why was murky. Either he was out of Dili or he had too many official duties to fit us in.

At the end of the second day, the escorts dropped us at the hotel and confirmed the start time for the next day. A few minutes later, Chuck and I told hotel staff we were going for a walk . . . which we did, straight to Monsignor Belo's front gate. His staff said he was there and wanted to offer coffee. When we told him how lucky it was to find him at home and able to meet, the church leader was bemused. Neither travel plans nor pastoral duties prevented his giving up more than an hour to talk.

When our escorts said Monsignor Belo was not available, we had been skeptical. We thought they might be shaving the truth. It would be better to verify. Chuck had briefings for congressional staffers scheduled on his return to Washington. For him, meeting with the church leader was essential.

We also knew our hosts would learn of the meeting, since Belo's home was closely watched.¹⁹ But up to the moment of our departure, neither they nor we said anything about the meeting.

ANY FRETILIN FIGHTERS AROUND HERE?

In all of the visits to East Timor during this time, I never knowingly saw a FRETILIN fighter. There was no doubt of their presence, however. Although allowing that FRETILIN continued to cause problems, Indonesian officials downplayed its numbers and threat. FRETILIN forces went from being described as "fighters" to "security disturbers," a catchall term also used on Java in 1984 to describe summarily executed criminals. Numbers were always vague, usually in the hundreds, and never more than 1,000 by official accounts.

Officials claimed local support for FRETILIN was dwindling. The Timorese no longer considered its members guerrillas but thieves and criminals. Farmers and herders did not want to leave the resettlement villages and return to their homes because moving back would make them vulnerable to FRETILIN pressure. Besides, they were now accustomed to the government-supplied goods and services, which would be harder to obtain in their upland villages. That was the official story. And in some places, such as the western section of the territory, it had a credible ring.²⁰

When asked about the armed group, officials outside Dili usually claimed no problems. Perhaps there had been FRETILIN activity a year ago or perhaps over the mountain in another village, but not in their immediate areas recently. Even if there had been a problem, it was under control now.

Such was the story in Los Palos when two of us arrived in 1984. The local commander took the American diplomats to his headquarters briefing room. This kind of meeting was unusual. Local army commanders had a habit of being "away." Civilian

diplomats frequently saw a subordinate who did not have much to share. Defense attachés had better luck. Their reception was warmer, if not necessarily more informative.

This instance was different. The commander ordered a soldier to open a curtain covering operational maps on the wall. No secrets here, he beamed. You are *orang kita* (one of us). While acknowledging there had been FRETILIN activity in the recent past (which is why we asked to visit Los Palos), he assured us FRETILIN was no longer a concern. The area was under control.

To prove the point, he set up travel east of town to the site of the last encounter with FRETILIN. We could see just how safe it was. As the open army vehicles plunged into a sea of tall reeds, the commander talked about the success of his local “hearts and minds” programs. More goods in the markets, more construction, more jobs, he said.

Suddenly, the sergeant in the following vehicle called the convoy to a stop. He was monitoring the radio. Soldiers jumped from the vehicles, set up a perimeter, and went into a defensive crouch. After a quick reconnaissance and consultation, the commander ordered a hasty exit. “Just being cautious,” he explained. We appreciated the assurances. But the looks on the soldiers’ faces told another story. And a brief exchange overheard on return to the local headquarters confirmed there had been reports of armed men moving through the reeds earlier that morning.

One of the hardest questions for a diplomat to address was the depth of local support for FRETILIN fighters. Sympathizers of FRETILIN outside Indonesia claimed it remained high. Indonesian officials argued it was in decline. There were no objective measures. Impressions were built on observation, official claims, often hasty bits of conversation, and rare, but treasured, candid exchanges with an official or individual Timorese.

In 1983, stories coming out of Timor said large numbers of villagers from Viqueque had been rounded up and abruptly deported to Atauro Island just north of Dili. Some said their relocations were a response to FRETILIN’s breaking of a cease-fire. Later, the ICRC confirmed Indonesian officials were resettling villagers from temporary facilities on Atauro to a site in a river valley near Cailaco, west of Dili. CRS told USAID it had an emergency feeding program at Cailaco, which was near an existing CRS program site.

Human rights activists accused the Indonesian military of moving the villagers to punish their support for FRETILIN. Military officials claimed the villagers asked to move to avoid FRETILIN intimidation. Some of the villagers were still on Atauro when we flew there. Even the children were reluctant to talk. An ICRC nurse was mostly tight lipped. She said conditions for detainees had improved but were still not good. She expressed special concern about detainees’ access to food and medical support at their destination.

At Cailaco, there were scores of freshly built plywood and tin-roofed houses. The settlement was remarkable for the very small number of men and boys, for the lack of private gardens, and for its sullen inhabitants. No one denied asking for resettlement, but the few who spoke said they hoped to return to their home area. This was a stop where the OM-1 camera was invaluable for a few unmonitored moments.

This particular visit began with conflicting claims from the Indonesians and their critics. We departed with a feeling that FRETILIN's appeal had not weakened, at least among these Timorese from Viqueque. Already resettled in their home area once, their loyalty was seen as so suspect that the government felt compelled to move them again without much preparation and apparently in response to a FRETILIN provocation. The challenge FRETILIN posed to Indonesia's control of the territory was significant enough to warrant a tactic that would become known and stir outsider criticism.

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS: REALISM BEFORE IDEALISM, BUT REALITY FIRST

The country reports on human rights practices for Indonesia during this period demonstrated the importance of monitoring FRETILIN and the value of access. The report for 1982, for instance, noted allegations of inhumane treatment and arbitrary arrest and imprisonment and said visitors had been unable to substantiate them.²¹ Later reports offered more detail on these issues based on increased access through embassy visits and more productive exchanges with ICRC representatives, who themselves had wider and deeper access to detainees. The level of information about the number and whereabouts of detainees, for instance, expanded significantly between the 1982 and 1984 reports.²²

By contrast, allegations of torture made by international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, were ongoing through the period. Conclusive evidence was virtually impossible to obtain. Individuals who might have been abused were, understandably, reluctant to come forward, as visitors' contacts were closely monitored and protection provided by rule of law was weak throughout Indonesia. Timorese officials were, at their most candid, circumspect. When asked in 1984 about the alleged existence of a "torture manual," for example, Governor Mario Carrascalao told two of us he was not aware of any such manual. The governor added that some unauthorized practices of the past, to include alleged physical abuse of detainees, had stopped. As a matter of policy, such treatment was unacceptable, he emphasized.

Because of the structure and public nature of the reports, such carefully constructed responses rarely found their ways into the published documents. Moreover, the topical structure of the reports (respect for the integrity of the persons, respect for civil rights, etc.) meant there was no single narrative with respect to East Timor or FRETILIN. The reports covered these issues within categories. And by 1985, other concerns, such as covert summary executions of criminals on Java and Sumatra and government responses to riots in Jakarta's port area, received at least as much coverage as East Timor.²³

The reports were nevertheless important. There were very few other public sources of firsthand information about FRETILIN. Only a few journalists were able to visit East Timor. Amnesty International and advocates for the Timorese in Europe often had access to dated or indirect testimony. The U.S. human rights reports took account of a wide variety of sources, including information from the Indonesian government. They reflected direct access to the territory where FRETILIN operated. And they represented the official views of the U.S. government—which both gave them credibility and made them subject to criticism for being influenced by administration policy preferences.²⁴

FRETILIN AND EAST TIMOR: EPILOGUE

A last chapter in my personal experience of FRETILIN happened in November 2000. By that time, the Timorese had voted for independence and were making the transition to independence under a UN mandate. As a director for Asia at the National Security Council, I was in Dili for an international conference on building Timor's national security forces. Resistance leader Xanana Gusmão had become provisional president of the emerging government. He opened our meetings, and I had a chance to speak to him briefly. Neither of us could recall a previous encounter.

FRETILIN's ascent to power began in late August 1999, when the people of East Timor voted overwhelmingly for separation from Indonesia. The preference for independence came as no surprise to most Timorese. The margin of support shocked Indonesians and many outside observers.

By that time, FRETILIN had been out of business as a fighting force for more than a decade. It had transformed from a guerrilla movement to become the leading member of a broad national resistance coalition. From the late 1980s on, the "troops" of that coalition were no longer Falintil fighters but mostly young students. Their weapons were no longer military arms but petitions and protests. Because FRETILIN had borne the brunt of the resistance effort in the early years, it maintained moral leadership among Timorese. After 1999, FRETILIN organized itself as a political party preparing to govern an independent East Timor.²⁵ And that was the setting for my meeting Xanana that morning in 2000.

NOTES

The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. Government.

1. Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, or the *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente* (FRETILIN), was one of several parties that emerged in the wake of Lisbon's April 1974 "Carnation Revolution." It went on to lead the resistance movement and then reorganized as a political party after 1999. After East Timor gained its independence from Indonesia, FRETILIN became one of several parties competing for power in a multiparty system. See "Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor," Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Front_for_an_Independent_East_Timor.
2. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent federal government agency that receives overall foreign policy guidance from the secretary of state. See www.usaid.gov/.
3. Since restoration of independence on 20 May 2002, the official name of East Timor is Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. During the period under consideration, 1982–1985, the U.S. government referred to the territory as East Timor and that name will be used in this paper.
4. Cornell had one of the top two Southeast Asia studies programs in the United States when I attended in 1980–1981 under State Department sponsorship. Many Suharto government officials considered the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, headed by Professor George McT. Kahin, to be unfairly critical. Professor Kahin was my faculty adviser and mentor while at Cornell. He arranged for me to use office space in the CMIP building. Because of the quality of professors and researchers at Cornell, scholars and even Suharto government officials considered the CMIP and related Echols collection in the Cornell Library to be an academic mecca for Indonesia studies in the United States. Captain Sudibyo knew of my time at Cornell, and we discussed my course of study.
5. Bernard K. Gordon, "The United States and Asia in 1982: Year of Tenterhooks," *Asian Survey* 23, no. 1 (January 1983): 7; James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed* (Milton, Queensland: Jacaranda Press, 1983), 350–55.

Gordon provides the broad context of U.S. policy in Asia during 1982, including events and key elements in U.S.-Indonesia policy. Dunn's critical assessment takes greater account of the U.S. government policy-making environment.

6. Dunn, *Timor*, 367. Support to FRETILIN from Mozambique and Angola was modest but important. In 1984, the embassy in Jakarta received a request from the U.S. embassy in Mozambique to comment on an application from Ramos-Horta for renewal of the diplomatic visa in his Mozambique passport. Notwithstanding U.S. acknowledgment of Indonesia's control of East Timor, Embassy Jakarta offered no objection, and Ramos-Horta received the new visa.
7. W. Scott Butcher, e-mail exchange with author, 4 April 2007. A retired foreign service officer, Scott was political counselor at the U.S. embassy in Jakarta 1981–1984; he traveled with a multinational diplomatic delegation to Timor in August 1981. Dunn, *Timor*, 354.
8. *International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act*, Public Law 94-329, U.S. *Statutes at Large* 90 (1976): 729, codified at U.S. *Code* 22, sec. 2151n.
9. Judith Innes de Neufville, "Human Rights Reporting as a Policy Tool: An Examination of the State Department *Country Reports*," *Human Rights Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (November 1986): 683.
10. *Ibid.*, 684.
11. *Ibid.*, 685.
12. David Carleton and Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (May 1985): 205.
13. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, overview and acknowledgments of *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 2006, available at www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78716.htm.
14. Barbara S. Harvey, e-mail exchange with author, 19 March 2007. A retired FSO, Barbara directed the Foreign Service Institute's political officer training program, including for midlevel officers, from 1987 to 1989.
15. Pat Coyne, Office of the Registrar, Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, Washington, DC, telephone conversation with author, 14 March 2007.
16. Dunn, *Timor*, 63.
17. *Ibid.*, 291.
18. After being elevated to bishop of East Timor in 1988, Belo shared the Nobel Peace Prize with José Ramos-Horta in 1996 for his role as "the foremost leader of the people of East Timor."
19. Arnold S. Kohen, *From the Place of the Dead: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), 138.
20. By the end of the 1980s, it became evident that FRETILIN's fighting days were ending. A combination of Indonesian civil and military programs, including offers of amnesty, separation from supporters in rural areas, and secret negotiations with Xanana Gusmão, ate away at FRETILIN's capabilities. This historic trend, however, was ambiguous in the first half of the 1980s.
21. Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, and Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982*, report submitted by the Department of State in accordance with sections 116(d) and 502(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 98th Cong., 1st sess., 1983, Joint Committee Print; Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, and Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1983*, submitted by the Department of State in accordance with sections 116(d) and 502(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 98th Cong., 2nd sess., 1984, Joint Committee Print; Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, and Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1984*, submitted by the Department of State in accordance with sections 116(d) and 502(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 99th Cong., 1st sess., 1985, Joint Committee Print; Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, and Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, *Country Reports*

on *Human Rights Practices for 1985*, submitted by the Department of State in accordance with sections 116(d) and 502(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 99th Cong., 2nd sess., 1986, Joint Committee Print.

22. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982*, 707–19; and *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1984*, 771–83.
23. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1985*, 773–85.
24. The reports' importance to both the government of Indonesia and its critics was evident in their respective reactions. After issuance of the annual report each February, the Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs registered Indonesia's objection to the U.S. presumption in assessing its human rights performance, as well as specifics of the report, in diplomatic exchanges with the embassy in Jakarta and/or at the State Department in Washington. Similarly, Amnesty International (AI), which had a long record of monitoring and criticizing Indonesian human rights practices, published its own annual human rights assessment that took issue with specifics in the State Department reports for Indonesia. Subsequent reports would then take account of AI's criticisms. As part of its information-gathering efforts, AI maintained contacts with FRETILIN representatives outside the territory, and it is my impression that FRETILIN viewed its association with AI, among other things, as a way to influence the content of the State Department reports. Beyond impressions gained from conversations with AI officials in this period and up to 1989 (I joined the Indonesia "desk" at State in 1985), the importance of AI to Timorese dissidents is evident in Kohen's biography of Bishop Belo (*From the Place of the Dead*, 169).
25. James Cotton, *East Timor, Australia and Regional Order: Intervention and Its Aftermath in Southeast Asia* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 152.