

East Timor Cases, 1970-2012
Last Updated: 13 June 2019

torg	gname	onset	min	max
T1889	REVOLUTIONARY FRONT FOR AN INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR		1974	1998
T120800	NINJAS		1993	2003
T2278	BESI MERAH PUTIH MILITIA		1998	1999
T2365	MAHIDI		1998	1999
T2237	AITARAK MILITIA		1999	1999

I. REVOLUTIONARY FRONT FOR AN INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR

Torg ID: 1889

Min. Group Date: 1974

Max. Group Date: 1998

Onset: NA

Aliases: Revolutionary Front For An Independent East Timor (Fretilin), Frente Revolucion_ria De Timor Leste Independente, Fretilin, Revolutionary Front For An Independent East Timor

Part 1. Bibliography

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Part 2. Basic Coding

Aliases: Falintil (armed wing)

Group Formation: 1974 (Schmid 1988 pg 576)

Group End: 1999 (FAS 1999)

Part 3. Narrative

Group Formation

Fretilin was established on May 20th, 1974 when it launched a rebellion against the Portuguese (Schmid and Jongman 1988 pg 576). Fretilin was a left leaning, separatist group (National Security Archive 2001). Fretilin won a civil war and took control of East Timor on September 8th, 1975 (Schmid and Jongman 1988 pg 576). Fretilin declared East Timor an independent nation in November 1975 (BBC 2017; National Security Archive 2001; Tanter 1977 pg 1; Schmid 1988 pg 576). Indonesia invaded East Timor in December 1975, and Fretilin opposed them (BBC 2017; Schmid and Jongman 1988 pg 576). The first recorded instance of violence was the Fretilin response to the UTD coup in early 1975 (FAS 1999; National Security Archive 2001).

Geography

Fretilin defeated UTD in Dilli (National Security Archive 2001). Fretilin took over all of East Timor except Atauro in 1975 (National Security Archive 2001; Tanter 1977 pg). Fretilin fought the Indonesians over these villages; Zumalai, Letefoho, Soibada, Laclubar, Alaspuelicai Vemasse, Barique, Sat Berliu, Ossu, Uatolari, Venilale, Tutuala, Turis- casi and Lospalo (Tanter 1977 pg 2).

East Timor is mountainous, which is well suited for guerilla warfare (Tanter 1977 pg 2). In 1975, Indonesian forces captured towns along the Portuguese road system, but Fretilin controlled the surrounding areas (Tanter 1977 pg 2). Fretilin retreated to the mountains after being defeated by the Indonesians (Schmid and Jongman 1988 pg 576).

Organizational Structure

Falintil is the armed wing of Fretilin (BBC 2017; FAS 1999). Xanana Gusmao became the leader of Falintil in 1981 (BBC 2017; FAS 1999). Nicolau Lobato was the President

of Fretilin (FAS 1999). Fretilin armed itself with Portugal's NATO arsenal (Tanter 1977 pg 2). Indonesian Intelligence reported Fretilin had an estimated 5,000 fighters in 1977 (Tanter 1977 pg 2). Fretilin was estimated to have 4,000 members in 1988 (Schmid 1988 pg 576). Fretilin had an estimated 200 members by the late 1990's (FAS 1999). Fretilin members are native Timorese who want independence (BBC 2017). There is no recorded evidence of how it funded itself, but Fretilin had a lot international support.

FRETILIN seems like it was an insurgency followed by a political party/movement and then it became an insurgency again when Indonesia invaded in 1975.

External Ties

Fretilin allied with the Timorese Democratic Union (UTD) in January 1975 (National Security Archive 2001). By August 1975 the alliance fell apart (National Security Archive 2001). UTD staged a coup in Dili and attacked Fretilin members (National Security Archive 2001; FAS 1999). Fretilin has support from labor, aid, student and religious organizations in Australia (Tanter 1977 pg 4). While Australia never diplomatically backed FRETILIN, the Australian government favored FRETILIN control over East Timor instead of Portugal due to the large amount of oil on the coastal shelf (Tanter 1977 pg 5). Australia felt that they could negotiate better terms regarding the oil with FRETILIN instead of Portugal (Ibid.).

Mozambique, China, Cambodia and Vietnam all supported Fretilin in name, but were unable to send supplies because of diplomatic complications (Tanter 1977 pg 5).

Group Outcome

Xanana Gusmao was arrested in 1992 (BBC 2017; FAS 1999). Gusmao was freed in 1999 after a referendum held by the UN showed the people of East Timor favored freedom (BBC 2017). The Indonesian government convinced UTD that Fretilin was planning a coup in 1975 (National Security Archive 2001).

Indonesian special forces attempted to start evoke clashes between Fretilin and anti-Fretilin groups including UTD (National Security Archive 2001). The Indonesian Government then invaded East Timor (National Security Archive 2001). Suharto labeled Fretilin as an almost Communist group (National Security Archive 2001). In 1975, Indonesian forces captured towns along the Portuguese road system, but Fretilin controlled the surrounding areas (Tanter 1977 pg 2). Indonesian forces used napalm, heavy bombings, and defoliants against Fretilin (Schmid and Jongman 1988 pg 576). Fretilin was defeated by the Indonesian forces by 1976 (FAS 1999). Once Fretilin was defeated and retreated to the mountainous areas, the Indonesian government attempted

to starve the Fretilin forces by cutting off food supply (Schmid and Jongman 1988 pg 576).

The Indonesian Government began Operation Seroja after their victory (FAS 1999). Operation Seroja consisted of the mass surrender of Fretilin fighters and leaders, culminating with the execution of Fretilin leader Nicolau Lobato (FAS 1999). Fretilin's last guerilla activities were in 1999, though no specific instances are cited (FAS 1999). The insurgency ended in 1999 after a referendum that resulted in East Timor becoming an independent state (BBC 2017).

Notes for Iris:

- FRETILIN was originally a political movement that then declared themselves an insurgency.
- Civil war ends in 1999 and East Timor gains independence effectively ending the insurgency

II. NINJAS
Torg ID: 120800
Min. Group Date: 1993
Max. Group Date: 2003
Onset: NA

Aliases: NA

Part 1. Bibliography

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<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1535872525?accountid=14026>.

Part 2. Basic Coding

Aliases: No additional aliases.

Group Formation: What is the earliest year the group was active? 1991 (PGM 2014).

Group End: What is the last year the group was active? Why did it stop using political violence? 2010, group dispersion (Foreign Policy 2010).

Part 3. Narrative

Group Formation

The “Ninjas” emerged in 1991 as a violent, militant group, targeted towards suppressing supporters of East Timor independence from Indonesian occupation (PGM 2014). They were known as the “Indonesian Death Squad” during the East Timor war for independence (Keating 2010; Fisher 2010). The group has no politicized opposition to the Indonesian government.

The East Timor War had started when FRETILIN began to rebel against an Indonesian occupation of their island in 1975. By the time the Ninjas emerged, the war had been going on for 16 years.

During the mid 1990’s Ninja outbreak, Ninjas would beat up citizens who were opposed to Indonesian rule (South China Morning Post 1995-A). The Ninjas were supported by the Indonesian army to suppress the resistance against the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (PGM 2014; Atlantic 2010; Time 2010). Their first attack occurred probably shortly after formation, but GTD (2018) records a 1995 attack against an Australian Aid worker in Indonesia. It is unclear what the details of the event are (GTD 2018).

Geography

The “Ninjas” primarily operate within Indonesia and East Timor. Their bases and attacks range from each of those areas (GTD 2018). In 1998, the Ninjas committed a deadly attack on a bus in Los Palos, East Timor, resulting in the deaths of three civilians (GTD 2018). They also conducted attacks in Dili (GTD 2018).

Organizational Structure

There is no clear information about the founders of the “Ninjas;” however, they are supported and run as militias. The militias received support from the Indonesian government (PGM 2014; Keating 2010). A majority of their members consist of pro-government individuals, or those who support Indonesian occupation and their membership—based on data of individual members of certain militias in East Timor—is towards the thousands (PGM 2014; Time 2010).

External Ties

There are no specific external ties or alliances to specific groups. However, as militias of the “Ninjas” are supported by the Indonesian government and military a means to suppress support for independence, they have a strong base and alliance with the Indonesian government and forces (PGM 2014; South China Morning Post 1995-B).

Group Outcome

During the 1990s, the “Ninjas” continued to commit violent attacks to suppress the persistence of independence from East Timor civilians. For example, in 1998, the Ninjas committed a deadly attack on a bus in Los Palos, East Timor, resulting in the deaths of three civilians (GTD 2018). After 1999, the group had begun to fade and eventually disperse into similar, smaller militias (PGM 2014).

They would continue to commit similar attacks until 2010 when murders of a teenager and infant child were discovered and linked back to the group in December and January of that year (Foreign Policy 2010).

Notes for Iris:

- PGM was really good source for information about these groups
- after 1999, the group was still active but no longer supported by the Indonesian government. There is also unclear evidence about whether they are still using political violence or if they’ve converted to criminal violence/intimidation violence
- why 1999 fragmentation? Slightly unclear (maybe jan 99 announcement?)

III. BESI MERAH PUTIH MILITIA

Torg ID: 2278

Min. Group Date: 1998

Max. Group Date: 1999

Onset: NA

Aliases: None

Part 1. Bibliography

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- <https://trialinternational.org/latest-post/eurico-guterres/>
- <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/etimor/etimor.htm>

Part 2. Basic Coding

Aliases: Iron Rod for the Red-and-White

Group Formation: What is the earliest year the group was active? 1998 or 1999 (PGM 2014)

Group End: What is the last year the group was active? 1999 Why did it stop using political violence? When the government began to transition to allow East Timor to be independent from Indonesia (PGM 2014).

Part 3. Narrative

Group Formation

In 1998, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas announced a referendum that would potentially give East Timor independence or increased autonomy from Indonesia. This triggered a massive flux of new groups such as Besi Merah Putih Militia in late 1998 (HRW 1999). The militia emerged to suppress the support for independence in favor of pro-integration ideals with Indonesia and East Timor (PGM 2014; FAS 1999). They began using violence immediately. One of their most notable attacks was in May of 1999, when 800 members of the Militia attacked supporters of the pro-independence movement. They even went so far as to shoot a man and cut his head open (GTD 2018).

Geography

The Besi Merah Putih Militia operates within and commits attacks specifically only to areas and cities within Indonesia such as Maubara, Liquica, Dili (East Timor), and West Timor (HRW 1999; GTD 2018). Their domestic aims correlate with their choices to attack and focus their attention within domestic realms and landscapes in terms of their attacks and operations (PGM 2014; GTD 2018).

Organizational Structure

Joaquim dos Santos was one of the group's founders (HRW 1999). Many members of this group include individuals from rural areas, students and young people, and former rebels who all believe in one common cause: the pro-integration of Indonesia and East Timor, not its separation and independence. There is no specific data about membership details, but based on the available information and data, this group had over 2,000 members at a point, with 800 helping commit its first attack against pro-independence supporters (HRW 1999; PGM 2014).

External Ties

External Ties for this militia group include alliances with the Indonesian government and military to provide weapons and other aspects in order to deceive support for independence (PGM 2014). The group often operated alongside the Aitarak militia.

Group Outcome

After their first attack, Putih Militia committed much more violent and extreme attacks, ranging from murder, torture, and intimidation. One was in June of 1999 when a man from Indonesia was kidnapped and stabbed to death by a member of the militia. Since their founding, they were responsible for almost 1400 deaths from their attacks (GTD 2018; Trial International 2016). Their acts of intimidation, murder, and torture sought to end the people's support and vote for independence. However, these attacks would eventually lead to suspicion by the Dili District Courts and other justice systems, causing them to be taken to trial for human rights abuses in 1999, causing many prominent members in the militia to be arrested and tried and convicted (Amnesty International 2013). Additionally, in August of 1999, the East Timor people voted to be independent from Indonesia. The United Nations created the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor to exercise the vote and demand of the East Timor people. Later in 2002, leader Guterres was tried and brought to justice for his crimes and responsibilities in his role as the leader of the Militia. That same year, East Timor became an independent country (PGM 2014; Trial International 2016; Peacekeeping, N.D.).

IV. MAHIDI

Torg ID: 2365

Min. Group Date: 1998

Max. Group Date: 1999

Onset: NA

Aliases: None

Part 1. Bibliography

- GTD Perpetrator 20286. Global Terrorism Database. Study for Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. Last modified July 2018.
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Part 2. Basic Coding

Aliases: The Mahidi's are also known as "Live or Die with Indonesia" and "Dead or Alive for Integration [with Indonesia]" (PGM 2014a).

Group Formation: What is the earliest year the group was active? 1998 (PGM 2014b)

Group End: What is the last year the group was active? 1999 - the group was officially dissolved by the order of the military (PGM 2014b).

Part 3. Narrative

Group Formation

The "Mahidi" Group in East Timor emerged in December 1998 (PGM 2015b). The group's first known attack was in either 1998 or 1999 when they began attacking villages in East Timor (PGM 2014b; GTD 2018).

The group formed after the Indonesian government gave Timorese citizens the option to participate in a referendum where they could either receive independence as a new state or to be an autonomous part of Indonesia (HRW 2000a). They were created as a pro-Indonesian militia that sought to intimidate Timorese citizens and suppress support for a separate state (PGM 2014a; PGM 2014b). In the first GTD-recorded attack, Voter Registration was just beginning in July of 1999, and Mahidi forces killed one person and injured another in a clash against those who supported Indonesian rule and those who didn't (GTD 2018).

Geography

This group, as it is targeting specifically Indonesia's occupation of East Timor, only operates within the borders of the country. Their affairs and attacks are mostly within the boundaries and limited to East Timor (GTD 2018; PGM 2014). A majority of members were based out of Suai (PGM 2014a; HRW 2000a).

Organizational Structure

Cancio Lopes de Carvalho, the founder of the Mahidi's, named his group after General Mahidin Simbolon, who had commanded Indonesian forces in the Military (HRW 2000b; CPJ 2000). The group and its leaders have claimed to have thousands of members—even so much as 1,000 in February 1999 and 7,000 in June 1999. Members of the group primarily came from younger citizens living in rural villages (PGM 2014a).

External Ties

The group had an alliance with the Aitarak militia (CPJ 2000). Additionally, the group allegedly received military training and weapons from the Indonesian government (PGM 2014).

Group Outcome

In September 1999, the East Timor people held a referendum where they decided to vote to become an independent state (PGM 2014a). As a result, the group began to lose support. The group was officially terminated in December 1999 by the military (PGM 2014b). The group's last known violent attack was in 1999 (GTD 2018; PGM 2014a,b). However, members of the group continued to operate under the auspices of the "Mahidi" name in refugee camps throughout West Timor (PGM 2014b).

Notes for Iris:

-any major difference from the Ninjas? Similar ideological ties and political aims. The formation story is slightly different.

-what happens after 1999? The group lost a lot of support which made it hard to continue -- also makes their goal obsolete which reduces incentives to use violence (similarities to group in South Korea - find name)

V. AITARAK MILITIA
Torg ID: 2237
Min. Group Date: 1999
Max. Group Date: 1999
Onset: NA

Aliases: None

Part 1. Bibliography

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Part 2. Basic Coding

Aliases No additional aliases.

Group Formation: What is the earliest year the group was active? 1999 (PGM 2014).

Group End: What is the last year the group was active? 1999 Why did it stop using political violence? The withdrawal of military support and weakening influence of leadership (PGM 2014).

Part 3. Narrative

Group Formation

The Aitarak Militia formed in 1999 as a response to the Indonesian government's decision to give Timorese citizens the option to participate in a voter referendum to decide whether they want to continue to be a territory of Indonesia or receive independence. Guterres, their leader and founder, has been an active leader in other militia such as Gardapaksi (the Youth Guard for Upholding Integration), whom also hope to suppress support for independence (HRW 1999). This group formed as a means to increase support for pro-integration and suppress support for independence (PGM 2014). Their first violent attack was in January of 1999 when leader Guterres and other forces fired at young pro-independence supporters (HRW 1999).

Geography

The Aitarak militia is based out of Dili (HRW 1999). The Aitarak Militia is located and attacks specifically only in areas and cities within Indonesia, including cities Dili, Audian, and Santa Cruz. They attack urban epicenters in order to establish a large presence in their fight for pro-integration (PGM 2014; GTD 2018).

Organizational Structure

Eurico Guterres, who formerly served as an army informant, was an important leader of the Aitarak Militia, who helped lead and was responsible for many of the militia's violent attacks (CNN 2002). The group, at its peak had as many as over one thousand members, with its supporters and members including those who supported pro-integration such as students, criminals, and others (PGM 2014).

External Ties

The Aitarak Militia was supported by the Indonesian military and government through providing assets such as weapons and other aspects. They also have alliances and close relations with groups such as the Pro-Integration Fighters umbrella, as their leader also commanded that specific militia (PGM 2014).

Group Outcome

This group officially ended and faded in December of 1999 as the military and Indonesian government gradually began to withdraw its support as the militia's attacks became more prominent and violent (most likely to protect their image). The group's last attack occurred in May of 1999 when the militia burned down three houses and began firing near areas that United Nations representatives were staying. Their leadership had also begun to crumble after their attacks as Guterres began to be investigated and put under suspicion by the UN, eventually leading to his arrest in 2001 (PGM 2014; GTD 2018).

Interesting Notes from HRW 1999:

"On February 20, Guterres and Tavares were leading speakers at a rally in Balibo, East Timor, where they vowed to fight a civil war if East Timor moved toward independence.:

Notes for Iris:

-this militia is nearly always mentioned in reference to all the other militias

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Country-Level Trends:

-these are groups that are pro-Indonesian and aim to squash rebels

-neither govt expresses politicized opposition against the state

-interesting that these all form in response to an ongoing insurgency

-what militias seem more active? The aitarak militia seems particularly significant. There is more information about this group.

-all the groups had the same organizational structure but varied in influence/size (some had a few hundred while others had thousands)

-all of them had external support from the Indonesian government

-there is also variation in group outcome. The government gradually withdrew its support for Aitarak but varied in other cases