

# Timor-Leste's veterans to boost Australia ties on ANZAC Day

By PMC Editor - April 22, 2016



*Timor-Leste resistance veterans in Aileu at a briefing by the Maritime Boundary Office last December to explain the history of the Timor Sea agreements with Australia from 1972 until 2006. Image: TL govt*

Twenty-nine veterans of Timor-Leste's struggle for national liberation will be visiting Australia next week to meet with members of the local veteran community and to participate in events commemorating ANZAC Day on April 25 – next Tuesday.

Delegations will be based in Perth, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra with a small delegation travelling between key cities.

Minister of Planning and Strategic Investment, and Chief Negotiator for Maritime Boundaries, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão will lead the visit and is accompanied by the Vice-Minister for Social Solidarity.

Miguel Marques Manetelu; Francisco Guterres, former President of the National Parliament and president of FRETILIN; and Colonel Falur Rate Laek, representing the Defence Forces of Timor-Leste [F-FDTL], will also participate.

Inês de Almeida, Liaison Officer for Veterans Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, is the visit coordinator and spokesperson.

This trip will further strengthen the close friendship between the veterans of Timor-Leste and the veteran community of Australia, the Timor-Leste government said in a statement.

Interactions with Australia's Returned Services League (RSL) and the War Widows Guild of Australia have been ongoing since 2014 and have included several visits by Australian veterans to Dili.

### **Telling the story**

During this time, Timor-Leste has developed its own National Council of Combatants of National Liberation and veterans have used their meetings to consider how to tell the story of the struggle for future generations, how to honor the fallen ones and how to best serve those remaining.

In each location Timor-Leste's veterans will visit facilities that have been developed in Australia to support ex-service personnel, participate in ANZAC Day commemorations and meet with members of the Timorese Community.

This year a group led by Colonel Laek are investigating walking treks in two national parks to assist in planning the development of similar treks in the mountains of Timor-Leste.

This group will be assessing the tourism potential of this idea and the opportunities it can provide for veterans to share the story of the Resistance.

The state president of the NSW Branch of the RSL, Rod White, said it had been a privilege for their organisation to work with the veterans of Timor-Leste and emphasised that the strengthened bonds of friendship between the two veterans communities were part of what would be "an enduring relationship".

Timor-Leste veteran Jorge Alves said of the upcoming trip: "The veterans of the country were invited to take part in the Australian Veterans Day.

"It is part of the Timorese veterans solidarity to the Australian veterans as we have very strong and unforgettable history."

### **'Warm friendship'**

Government spokesman, Minister of State Agio Pereira, said: "The relationship between the veteran communities of Australia and Timor-Leste is characterised by warm friendship, mutual respect and genuine goodwill.

"The government commends this 'enduring relationship' and salutes the Timorese veteran delegation as they proudly represent the nation, develop plans to honor and care for the veterans of Timor-Leste and participate in the commemorations of ANZAC Day."