



Currently released so far...
251287 / 251,287

Articles

Brazil
Sri Lanka
United Kingdom
Sweden
Global
United States
Latin America
Egypt
Jordan
Yemen
Thailand

Browse latest releases

2011/08

Browse by creation date

66 72 73 75 78 79 85 86
87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94
95 96 97 98 99 00 01 02
03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

Browse by origin

A B C D F G H I
J K L M N O P Q
R S T U V W Y Z

Browse by tag

A B C D E F G H
I J K L M N O P
Q R S T U V W X
Y Z

Browse by classification

CONFIDENTIAL

Viewing cable 06DIL463, DILI SECURITY UPDATE: GANG DISTURBANCES BECOMING ENTREN

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the structure of a cable as well as how to c with others. See also the FAQs

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification
06DIL463	2006-09-13 02:04	2011-08-30 01:44	UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

VZCZCXRO1167
PP RUEHCHI RUEHNN RUEHPB
DE RUEHDT #0463/01 2560204
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 130204Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY DILI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2967
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0684
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHXX/GENEVA IO MISSIONS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0756
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY 0671
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0509
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0535
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0609
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 0403
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 2298

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 DILI 000463

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EAP/MTS
PACOM FOR POLAD AND JOC
NSC FOR HOLLY MORROW
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KPKO PHUM ASEC CASC PREF AU PO TT

SUBJECT: DILI SECURITY UPDATE: GANG DISTURBANCES BECOMING ENTRENCHED

REF: DILI 424

DILI 00000463 001.2 OF 003

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Following a spike in gang activity in early August in the period immediately following the arrest of dissident Major Alfredo Reinado, there was a reduction in such incidents later in the month. However, gang incidents have gradually escalated during the ensuing weeks, particularly in certain neighborhoods. Loromonu versus Lorosa'e (West v East) divisions remain a dominant theme, and much of the activity appears to be aimed at terrorizing people into departing Dili permanently for their home districts, but there also appears to be an increase in robberies and other financially motivated crimes. There has been a gradual ratcheting up of the response by international forces, including increased use of non-lethal means of force and the return of an overt Australian Defense Force presence in the streets. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the effectiveness of the international forces is limited and that most gangs continue to operate with relative impunity. While private foreign citizens have generally not been targeted in these incidents, some have been caught in the crossfire. Embassy Dili has issued an updated warden message regarding the ongoing security concerns. End summary.

CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN
SECRET
SECRET//NOFORN
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED//FOR
OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Community resources

Follow us on Twitter
Check our Reddit
Twitter this
Digg this page
Contact us on IRC

courage is contagious

¶2. (U) Following a spike in gang activity in early August in the period immediately following the arrest of dissident Major Alfredo Reinado, there was a reduction in such incidents later in the month, apparently resulting from a combination of dialogue and reconciliation efforts and adjusted police tactics (RefTel). However, the assessment that underlying factors remained unchanged has been borne out over the ensuing weeks as regular gang incidents have become entrenched and have gradually escalated in Dili, especially in certain areas. There is now a fairly regular rhythm of attacks and clashes in several areas of the city. Among the sites that flare up with regularity are the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps located at the airport, the seaport, the hospital and the UN barracks. In addition, the neighborhoods of Comoro and Delta, Bebonok, and Fatuhada each see regular clashes.

¶3. (SBU) Rock throwing attacks are by far the most frequent tactic used by street gangs and it has become fairly common in Dili to see cars with smashed in windows. Other common weapons are slingshots employing "rama ambon" (small metal arrows that typically result only in injuries but can be lethal) and machetes, which are also common household agricultural tools. Typical incidents involve the gathering of a group of young men, with alcohol consumption a frequent element, who then launch an attack on the targeted IDP camp or neighborhood. However, there is often a fair amount of organization involved, especially with the use of cell phones for coordination and warning purposes. There have been numerous reports of various behind the scenes actors supporting the attacks, particularly through the provision of money and alcohol, but establishing by whom is difficult. Allegations range from dissident armed forces members from the West, such as Major Marcos Tilman, to former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri.

More sophisticated gang attacks

¶4. (SBU) In addition to the frequent rock-throwing and slingshot incidents, there have been a few attacks involving more serious weaponry as well as more sophisticated orchestration. On September 1 there was an incident at the seaport IDP camp in which the attackers, including two identified as members of the national police (PNTL), employed a pistol and a rifle, both PNTL issued, resulting in gunshot wounds to about a half dozen camp residents. (This attack was atypical in several respects. It was reportedly in retaliation for an attack the night before on the PNTL members by young men residing in the IDP camp, and it is not known whether the perpetrators of the retaliatory attack had engaged in previous violence.) On September 8, an attack on the IDP camp adjacent to the UN barracks employed riot gas launched into the camp to drive people out. (Riot gas is also a

DILI 00000463 002.2 OF 003

PNTL-issued item, used normally only by the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR).) Attackers were then staged at the points of exit to attack the panicked camp residents with stones and slingshots. This demonstrated a greater level of orchestration than previous IDP camp attacks.

¶5. (U) Although the causes of gang activity remain multi-faceted, Loromonu versus Lorosa'e (West v East) divisions remain a dominant theme, and much of the activity appears to be aimed at terrorizing people into abandoning their homes or, in the case of IDP camp residents, to depart Dili permanently for their home districts. For example, the IDP camp at the UN barracks is predominantly occupied by Lorosa'e residents and most observers believe the attack described in paragraph 4 was aimed at increasing the pressure on residents to depart. That gang activity is primarily aimed at driving people out of the targeted camps and neighborhoods through intimidation is underscored by the fact that despite the high volume of incidents, the rate of injuries and deaths resulting remains relatively low. International police have not yet produced a cumulative set of statistics, but an Australian Federal Police (AFP) source was anecdotally able to recall only a handful of murder cases over the last month. Despite the frequent political and/or regional dimension to gang attacks, there has also been a dramatic increase in reports of crime that appears to be

financially motivated, including robberies of taxi drivers and protection rackets targeting stores and businesses.

¶6. (U) International police have gradually increased their levels of force in response to the persistence of gang disturbances. This has included increased use of non-lethal means of force, such as riot gas and rubber pellets, by all international forces. There has also been increased use of warning shots, most frequently by the Portuguese Republican National Guard (GNR). An overt Australian Defense Force (ADF) presence has also returned to the streets of Dili. The ADF had gradually withdrawn as police took on responsibility for security, and they were mostly out of sight throughout August, but foot patrols by ADF soldiers began to return in early September and within the last week ADF armed personnel carriers have resumed regular patrolling throughout the city. ADF has deployed an additional infantry company to East Timor in response to recent security developments.

Permanent police presence needed

¶7. (SBU) While international police and military have had some success in limiting the occurrence and duration of incidents, it is becoming increasingly clear that their effectiveness is limited and that many gangs continue to operate with relative impunity. The typical cycle is: 1) gang disturbance begins; 2) police are notified; 3) police arrive with variable response times depending on other incidents needing concurrent attention; 4) gangs disperse; 5) police depart; 6) gangs reassemble and another incident occurs. Local residents often note this cycle and complain that this allows the gangs to continue activities with little deterrence and that this approach often fails to facilitate the identification and arrest of key actors by the police. Many Timorese argue that a more permanent police presence in their neighborhoods is necessary both to provide a more effective deterrent and to increase police understanding of the dynamics and players at work. As it stands, international police have no "beat" within the city, so any given officer could be called on to respond to disturbances in any part of the city, an arrangement that allows greater maneuverability to respond to incidents as they occur, but that constrains the development of area-specific knowledge.

Local perceptions of international police souring

¶8. (SBU) Beyond complaints of ineffectiveness, many local residents are increasingly likely to perceive the international

DILI 0000463 003.2 OF 003

police as lacking impartiality in their response. This is partially a result of the pattern of response described above. The result is often that police arrive as an attacking group disperses and encounter the angry members of a community that has just been attacked and proceed to focus their law enforcement efforts on that community. Emboffs recently visited the Fatuhada neighborhood in Dili, which has been subject to almost daily attacks from an adjacent neighborhood attempting to drive its Lorosa'e population out. Residents there told Emboffs the police consistently refuse to enter the attacking neighborhood, instead focusing on the area where the incident occurred and arresting members of the attacked community. They view this not as a result of misunderstandings but rather as a deliberate strategy on the part of the international police forces. Perceptions of bias have been further exacerbated by real and/or perceived problems with local translators. Complaints that the translators working with the police skew their interpretation in accordance with their own loyalties and agendas have become widespread.

¶9. (SBU) The combination of frustration with limited police effectiveness and perception of bias by the police has resulted in some deterioration of police relations with many local residents. There have been cases of police arriving at the scene of an incident and then being subject to attacks by the very people they are there to assist. Police operating in this environment have expressed their own frustration and demoralization to Emboffs and other internationals in response

both to lack of significant progress in reducing gang activity and to the negative response they are getting from some Timorese.

¶10. (U) Although international police have increasingly come under fire, this has not spilled over into noticeable targeting of other foreigners. That said, a few foreigners have been caught in crossfire or in random attacks. There has also been a notable change in how foreigners are treated since the initial emergence of widespread gang activity in May and June. Previously when foreign citizens encountered incidents in progress, gangs would typically cease their activities and step aside, even engaging in polite conversation. Now, such courtesy is rarely extended and anyone attempting to intervene in incidents runs the risk of having the attack turned on them.

¶11. (U) Taking these changed dynamics into account, Embassy Dili has issued a new warden message to American citizens reminding them of ongoing security issues and advising continued caution in their movements in Dili.
REES