



## Problems with PNTL Uniform Quality

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## **Introduction**

In 2013, Fundasaun Mahein met with district commanders from districts all across Timor-Leste in order to hear their concerns. FM met nine districts commanders in all, from the districts of Aileu, Ainaro, Covalima, Lautem, Liquica, Manatuto, Manufahi, Oe-Cusse and Viqueque. The most prevalent concerns voiced by these districts commanders were about infrastructure, facilities for administration, transportation, communication and resources for the operation of services including the procurement of uniforms for PNTL officers.<sup>1</sup>

The nine district commanders that FM met with shared the same concerns regarding uniforms for the members of the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL). PNTL officers are concerned about the uniforms because they are rarely issued new uniforms, despite the fact that some uniforms are almost useless. In the beginning of 2013, the PNTL general command distributed new uniforms, but they are of very poor quality. This issue has been voiced by all PNTL officers in the 13 districts and throughout every unit.

In the middle of 2013, the quality of uniforms became a cause of tension between the Secretary State of Security (SSS), the PNTL General Command as well as the Kalbes Unipesoal Lda Company that won the contract for purchasing the uniforms. The uniform problem increased as PNTL members across all 13 districts began voicing concerns about the quality of the uniforms.<sup>2</sup> The SSS and PNTL general command each blamed the other for being responsible for the procurement of the uniforms.

This FM report will discuss the concerns presented by the nine district commanders about PNTL uniforms. Until this point PNTL officers are still wearing uniforms that they have complained about and which lack quality.

## **Complaints by PNTL Members About Uniforms**

In Manufahi district, PNTL members have voiced concerns about the quality of the uniforms distributed to them by the PNTL General Command. They also explained that they have not received new uniforms since receiving their initial uniform upon entering the PNTL. Some members explained to FM that they personally bought pants that were of a similar color to their police uniforms. They had no choice but to buy the pants for themselves because the PNTL showed no sign of replacing their old and low quality uniforms. Additionally, boots used by some PNTL members were obtained in exchanges with their colleagues from the F-FDTL.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Da Costa, João (2013) Assistant Commander of Manufahi District.  
Private Interview

<sup>2</sup> Araujo, Amto. (13 September 2013). PNTL Uniforms.  
Actual News of RTL

<sup>3</sup> Da Costa, João (2013) Assistant Commander of Manufahi District.  
Private Interview.

In Viqueque district FM received information from PNTL officers that the uniforms distributed to them by the PNTL general command in 2013 are poor quality. Furthermore, FM confirmed with the PNTL district commander of Viqueque and he recognized that the uniforms are of poor quality. PNTL members have consistently raised their concerns about the uniforms to the district commander. As of yet however, the issue is unresolved and continues to present a large challenge to the PNTL members, especially for when they participate in official ceremonies and do not have proper uniforms.<sup>4</sup>

In Manatuto district the district commander presented the same case to FM regarding the uniforms, which are poor quality and deteriorate quickly after a short span of time. This issue needs to be addressed by the command and the government because the PNTL's uniform is a major part of their identity and is an important factor in public perception.<sup>5</sup>

Other districts such as Lautem, Covalima, Liquica, Ainaro and Oe-Cusse have also raised the same complaints about old and un-wearable uniforms, but the command has yet to respond. Even the new uniforms that were recently issued to officers by the PNTL general command have no quality.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, the Special Police Unit (SPU) also faces the same problem faced by the PNTL officers regarding uniforms. This may be a problem for the SPU officers when they participate in official ceremonies, because unit and sub-unit commanders only select officers who have nice uniforms to participate in ceremonies. This problem is a concern for SPU members, and one officer explained to FM that many officers do not participate in ceremonies because of their low quality uniforms (not because they lack the desire to participate).<sup>7</sup>

Another case occurred in Batugade on the border. FM monitored the Unidade Polisia Fronteira (UPF), Timor's frontier border police, and they informed FM that their uniforms have fallen into disrepair but have not been replaced yet, and that they purchased boots from Indonesian police members (BRIMOB-POLRI) as well as from TNI at the border. These UPF members also told FM that if TNI-and POLRI uniforms are similar in appearance to UPF -PNTL uniforms, then they would buy them because their own uniforms are old and broken.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the new uniforms, which were distributed to UPF's members, have no quality and are of a different color. However, the UPF command said that they are ready to receive these uniforms in order to maintain responsibility and discipline in border operations. All unit members

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<sup>4</sup> Francino da Costa, Nicolau. (2013) Assistant Commander of Viqueque District. Private Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Saldanha, Inacio. (2013). Commander of Manatuto District. Private Interview.

<sup>6</sup> Mahein Foundation (2013). Preoccupations presented by Nine Districts Commander Over their Necessities of Service. Private Interview

<sup>7</sup> Correia, Damião da Silva (2013). Assistant Commander of the Special Police Unit-SPU. Private Interview

<sup>8</sup> B. J (2013). A PFU officer informed to Mahein Foundation in the border line Bobonaro. Private Interview.

will receive these uniforms. The improvement of uniform quality is the responsibility of the government, officers just receive the uniforms to carry out their duties.<sup>9</sup>

The UPF should not receive uniforms with different colors because the UPF is representing the national sovereignty on the border frontier. Their uniform is a reflection on Timor's dignity and competence, and should be of a high quality to reflect well on those factors. Ironically, the Secretary of State for Security last January 2014 visited the border and informed the UPF that it is better to receive and use the new uniforms, even if they are a different color.<sup>10</sup>

FM believes that this is a serious problem. Why has the uniform problem not been resolved yet, and why is it not viewed as a primary matter of importance for the government to resolve? The government, through the Secretary of State for Security, is only focused on purchasing more weapons. While it is true that weapons are necessary for the security of Timor-Leste, FM argues that proper uniforms are just as important.<sup>11</sup>

### **Responsibility for Low Quality Uniforms**

The uniforms that the PNTL general distributed to police members at the PNTL quarters and the 13 district commanders in July 2013 have no quality. Second commander of UPF superintendent Damião da Silva Correia said "these uniforms have no quality" and compared them to kitchen dish cloths. Since 2009 the PNTL has only made one purchase of new uniforms.<sup>12</sup>

The national logistic commander of PNTL superintendent assistant Basilio de Jesus, recognized the role that funding played in the poor quality of uniforms. In July the company handed over around 2,551 uniform units to the logistical unit, in accordance with the contract. One uniform unit is composed of a hat, shirt, rank, emblem, pants, belt, shoes and socks, all totaling a value of \$120. This purchase price is only sufficient for buying passable uniforms, whereas buying uniforms of good quality would cost \$250. per unit.<sup>13</sup>

Commander of the National Administration of PNTL superintendent chief Henrique da Costa expressed that Kalbes Unipessoal Lda Company was contracted by the Secretary of State for Security (SSS) and that funding allocated to buy the uniforms came from the 2012 general budget.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Pires, J. S (2014). Commander of the Patrol Frontier Unit-PFU.  
Private Interview

<sup>10</sup> An Information Source from PFU officer in the Border line informed to FM on January 2014 , when the SSS visited there in order to observe the PFU's condition off every post and companies there.

<sup>11</sup> Belo, Nelson. (2014). Executive Director of Mahein Foundation.  
Private Interview

<sup>12</sup> Tin. (2013, Agostu 26).Memburu PNTL 112 Lamenta Kualidade Fardamentu.Timor Post, Kuarta 14 Agustu 2013

<sup>13</sup> Timor Post, Wednesday 14 August 2013

<sup>14</sup> Timor Post, Wednesday 14 August 2013

Kalbes Unipesoal Lda Company recognized its failure. The first mistake was that the company showed the uniforms to the PNTL, before bring them back to Indonesia. In the second phase the company handed over the uniforms to the PNTL. The uniforms were approved by a PNTL general inspection as well as by inspection by the SSS, and both bodies agreed to distribute the uniforms to the 13 districts and departments including all units at the PNTL general quarter. Document of the distribution process has finished as well, however the SSS has since said that the uniforms have no quality.<sup>15</sup>

Director of Kalbes Unipesoal Lda Dircia Maria da Conceicao Guterres de Andrade said she was ready to face the Commission of ANTI Corruption (CAC) and was threatened by the SSS regarding the poor quality of the PNTL uniforms. Dircia added that the contract that the company signed was based on the agreement that every uniform would cost \$120.00. In order to purchase good quality uniforms the government would need to pay at least \$250.00 for every unit.<sup>16</sup>

At least 6, and probably more then 10 companies had competed for the uniform contract. The company should fulfill the criteria set out by the government beforehand, and the company should meet all of the PNTL's wishes in carrying out the contract. The PNTL uniforms were bought in Bandung-Indonesia and were made based on the funding allocated in the contract. Based on the contract the funding allocated for each uniform unit was \$120.00. The PNTL purchased 478 units for women and 2,551 units for men, costing a total of around \$358,000.00. The second commander of the PNTL, the commissioner Afonso de Jesus, approved these uniforms. The company then handed over the uniforms to the National PNTL logistical unit for further distribution.<sup>17</sup>

The commander of the general PNTL inspection, superintendent chief Julio Hornai, explained that an inspection is ongoing and there is an ongoing audit being conducted by departments within the PNTL. The SSS informed the public via the national media that the investigation for this case is ongoing.<sup>18</sup> However, the investigation process and what it entails has not yet been publicized, nor has the report from the inspection cabinet of the PNTL general command, which was presented to the SSS.<sup>19</sup>

The SSS and PNTL general commander have blamed each other over responsibility for purchasing the bad uniforms. This contention includes the responsibility for awarding the initial contract to Kalbes Unipesoal Lda. Fransisco Guterres of the SSS has said that the company that procured the low quality uniforms was recommended by the PNTL command. The PNTL

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<sup>15</sup> Timor Post, Thursday 16 August 2013

<sup>16</sup> Maria da Conceição Guterres de Andrade, Dircia. (2014) Director of Kalbes Company Unipesoal Lda. Private Interview

<sup>17</sup> Timor Post, Thursday 16 August 2013

<sup>18</sup> STL, Friday 23 August 2013

<sup>19</sup> A confirmed source of the PNTL Cabinet General Inspection about the investigation for the uniforms which have no quality where the final report has been presented to the Secretary State of Security. Wednesday 29 January 2014

commissioner Afonso de Jesus said the uniforms have no quality because there was no oversight of their manufacturing.<sup>20</sup>

FM is has many questions regarding the purchasing of these uniforms. Why has responsibility for the uniform purchasing process become such a contested debate between the SSS and PNTL general command? This is a sign that there is a lack of communication between the SSS and PNTL general command. Technically, responsibility should lie with the SSS under its service procurement obligations. Blame should not fall on the PNTL general command for simply recommending a company to purchase the uniforms. FM believes that there was a serious mal-administration in the process to purchase the new PNTL uniforms. The process was not based on an established procurement system, and the uniforms were of very poor quality as a result.<sup>21</sup>

### **Summary Recommendations**

1. Recommend to the Commission of ANTI Corruption (CAC) to open an investigation into the process of purchasing uniforms for the PNTL to resolve whether it was the SSS or the PNTL general command who was ultimately responsible for the purchase of bad uniforms.
2. Recommend to the SSS and PNTL general command to improve the procurement system for all materials for security sector institutions.

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<sup>20</sup> Araujo, Amato. (13 September 2013). PNTL Uniforms.  
Actual News of RTL

<sup>21</sup> Belo, Nelson. (2014). Executive Director of Mahein Foundation. Private Interview.

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