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Press Release

Drugs: Timor-Leste as a Transit country

Transnational organized crime is a global concern, with detrimental affects people's lives in the countries where their networks operate. Timor-Leste may be at risk of such impacts, due to a number of drug shipments that have been seized over the last few years, and which have involved both civilians and individuals working in the security sector.

Fundasaun Mahein's (FM) monitoring concludes that Timor-Leste is a transit destination for transnational organized crime groups (OC) smuggling narcotics into neighboring countries, notably Indonesia. Due to Timor-Leste's porous borders and security sector capacity shortfalls to monitor and protect these borders, the nations air and sea access points provide opportunities for OC engaging in such activities.

In 2014, an individual involved with OC was arrested at a house in Dili on possession of 1595kg of Methamphetamine (Sabu-sabu) with a street value of US \$478 5000. He was later convicted to 10 years in prison. This amount of illegal narcotics was able to be brought into Timor-Leste due to weakness of customs systems in place.

In 2015, two Indonesian citizens were arrested by the PNTL at the Nicolau Lobato International Airport in possession of 1192kg of Methamphetamine (Sabu-sabu) bound for Denpasar, Indonesia, with a street value of US \$356 100. These two individuals were convicted in 2015 for 13 and 15 years respectively in prison. The Pubic Prosecutor indicates that this is due to weak customs process in some of the source countries for these drug shipments such as Singapore, which drug traffickers take advantage of knowing that Timor-Leste as a transit point also has weak customs enforcement.

A case which is still fresh in our minds is the recent case at the Dili Port, where the police seized two containers on January 23rd 2018. These contained 162 tons of precursor chemicals for the production of the drug known as PCC (*Paracetamol, Caffein*

and Corrosprodol), which is banned under Indonesian law, and which were believed to be bound for Indonesia. The suspects in the case were 1 Timorese and 2 Indonesian citizens, who are now under investigation by the Public Prosecutor. What is of more concern is that 1 of the Indonesian suspects has escaped from Timor-Leste during the investigation process.

Recommendations

FM recommends that the Government focus attention on reinforcing Customs control processes, human resource capacities and regional coordination and cooperation to counter infiltration by transnational organized crime groups that may be taking advantage of Timor-Leste's vulnerable borders.

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