



Challenges and Tentative Security at the Land Borders of Timor-Leste

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Contents

Contents	2
Motivations for the Report	3
Introduction	3
Old Problems: Challenges at the Border Territory	5
1. Problem at the Integrate Post	5
2. Problems with the “Border Pass” Policy	7
3. Poor Functioning of Markets at the Border Territory	8
The New Problems: Results of FM’s Monitoring	9
1. The Real Conditions of the BPU at the Border Territory	9
2. The Security Procedure at the Integrated Posts	10
3. Community Safety at the Border Territory	11
4. Illegal Activities at the Border Territory	12
Conclusion	13
Recommendations	14
Bibliography	15



Introduction

After Timor-Leste freed itself from Indonesian occupation and become the sovereignty state known as the RDTL,¹ the land border with Indonesia was established. At some points, particularly in the province of Kupang-Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), the distance between these two countries is quite close. Timor-Leste shares at least 228 kilometers of border with Indonesia. The total geographic area covered by Timor-Leste itself is 15,007 m², including maritime boundaries.²

Activity in the border territory has demanded attention from the national government, which must address protect state sovereignty with policy and strategy.³ Such measures help to protect the country, particularly transnational threats, including organized crime, illegal migration, surveillance activity, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and theft, which all present danger to the safety and sovereignty of Timor-Leste.⁴

The government has taken action to ensure national stability by establishing bilateral cooperation policies between Timor-Leste and Indonesia. Furthermore, the government has established the integrated security unit at the border, which is led by state security institutions, such as the Border Police Unit (BPU), Migration Services, the Department of Taxes, the Department of Commerce, The Quarantine Unit, the NDTL,⁵ and other relevant institutions.

Despite these efforts, the control system at the border still faces a lack of resources, a situation shared by many institutions in Timor-Leste. Among the shortages are human resource, facilities, and equipment. Without these essential resources, it has become challenging for Timor-Leste to deter and neutralize threats at the border territory. As such, Timor-Leste needs a dynamic strategy to ensure security and combat transnational threats at the border territory.

Motivations for this Report

The main purpose of this study is to follow-up on “Border Management and Migratory Control,” a report published by Fundasaun Mahein in early 2013. This new study will analyze specific challenges and threats facing the border territory of Timor-Leste. Furthermore, the report will discuss ongoing problems that, if not addressed by government policy, will threaten human and state sovereignty in the upcoming year.

¹ Democratic Republic of Timor Leste, RDTL

² Asep. (2008). Geography. <http://asepeasttimor.wordpress.com/geografi/>

³ Mahardika, Lingga. (2011). PERBATASAN RI-RDTL Arti Penting dan Sumber Ancaman. <http://linggaakmil98.blogspot.com/2011/03/v-behaviorurldefaultvml-o.html>

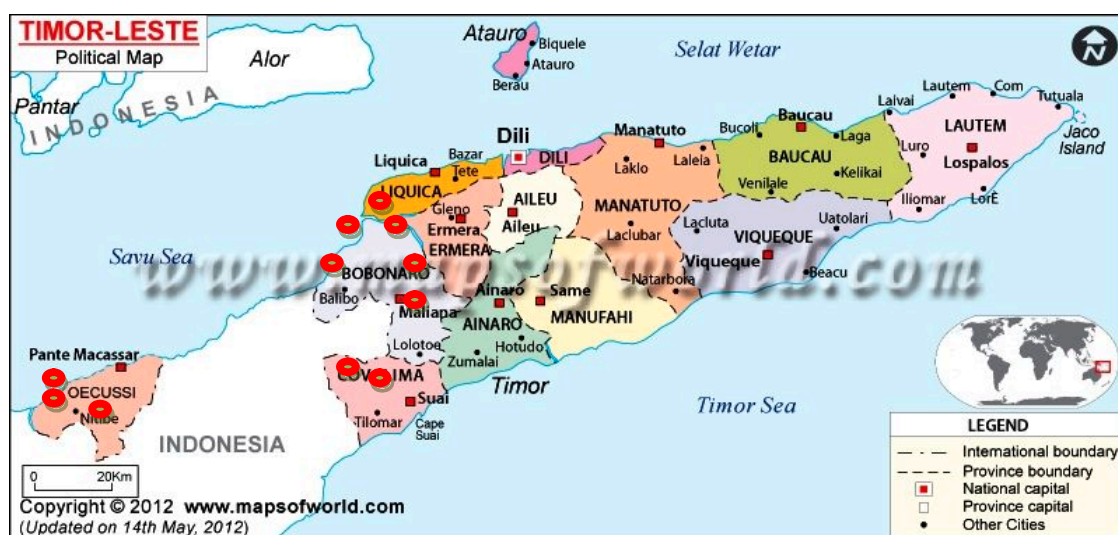
⁴ Fundasaun Mahein. (03 February 2013). Border Management and Migration Control. Mahein's Thought No.03.pdf. http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MNH_no-03_13022013Tetun.pdf..pdf

⁵ National Directorate of Transport and Land - NDTL

In preparation for this report, FM conducted monitoring along the border territory, starting from Mota-Masin and continuing to Covalima, Batugade (Bobonaro) and Sakato (Oe-Cusse). This monitoring also included extended observation at integrated border posts for two weeks (07 September to 04 October 2014), focusing particularly on BPU, Migration Service, Tax Control, and quarantines at the border territory.

The researchers also gathered information from media publications related to security at the land border. The researchers then consulted previous publications of national and international NGOs as well as official documents of the government. Furthermore, the researcher team conducted a security sector discussion (SSD) at FM, the results of which were compiled with data from interviews with security actors, communities, and youth at the border territory.

Map of BPU Posts Visited by FM



Source: FM Research Result, 2014

Legend:

- Salele Post
- Wala-Lama Post
- Saburai Post
- Memo Post
- Tunu-Bibi Post
- Nunura Post
- Leo-Hito Post
- Mota-Ain Post
- Citrana Post
- Maha-Ata Post
- Oesilo Post

Old Problems: Challenges at the Border Territory

Since Timor-Leste became an independent nation, its shared land borders with Indonesia have been regarded as potential avenues for transnational crime.⁶ To secure people and the nation, the government has developed an integrated policy at the borders which established integrated posts, traditional markets, and legalized the “Boarder Pass” for communities along the border territory.⁷

However, the implementation of the policy faces various obstacles. The challenges facing the integrated posts along the border directly jeopardize national security. The traditional markets are not yet well established, allowing illegal commerce flow across the border territory.⁸ Furthermore, many individuals violate the “Border Pass” policy, and this poor migration control is a threat to security as well.

1. Problems at the Integrated Posts

The integrated posts at the border territory were established in the post-independence period with the intention of controlling and managing the movements of people and goods across the border of Timor-Leste.⁹ These integrated posts were placed in Covalima (Mota-Masin), Bobonaro (Batugade) and (Sakato) Oe-Cusse.¹⁰

The state institutions that comprise the referred posts are the Border Police Unit (BPU), the Migration Service, the Quarantine Unit, the Department of Taxes, and others. Together, these organizations are tasked with coordinating security services and movements across the border, based on the competencies and organic statutes of each ministry.¹¹

Each institution is charged with managing and controlling the border territory, sharing burdens with other departments, coordinating obligations, and following protocol. Coordinated efforts are based on the competencies given to each institution working at the border territory.¹²

⁶ Gus. (30 July 2014). Illegal movements increase in Batugade. Media Timor Post.

<http://www.timorhauniandoben.com/2014/07/movimentu-ilegal-buras-iha-batugade.html>

⁷ TDW. (20 August 2012). Border Pass implemented in three districts.

Media The Dili Weekly. <http://www.thediliweekly.com/news/capital/1522-border-pas-implemanta-iha-distritu-tolu>

⁸ This information FM gathered during its monitoring of integrated posts at the border territory and during its visits to BPU posts

⁹ Fundasaun Mahein. (03 February 2013). Border Management and Migration Control. Mahein’s Thought No.03.pdf. http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MNH_no-03_13022013Tetun.pdf..pdf

¹⁰ TDW. (20 August 2012). Border Pass implemented in three districts.

Media The Dili Weekly. <http://www.thediliweekly.com/news/capital/1522-border-pas-implemanta-iha-distritu-tolu>

¹¹ RDTL. (18 May 2009). “Strengthen the Border Management: Dynamic Strategy and Security for Timor-Leste”.pdf

¹² RDTL. (18 May 2009). “Strengthen the Border Management: Dynamic Strategy and Security for Timor-Leste”.pdf

However, many issues have persisted since the establishment of these integrated posts. Many shortages, in areas such as human resources, facilities, and equipment, threaten the efficacy of the integrated posts.¹³ The BPU, for example, has extreme resource limitations and, as a result, cannot perform its duties in the most efficient and most effective manner.¹⁴

Limitations of the other institutions within the integrated posts also threaten the control system at the border. Based on a report by the Ministry of Defense and Security in 2009, the shortage of resources at these posts contributes to the fragility of the security situation along the border territory.¹⁵ Thus far, the government has not proposed a holistic plan to address the various limitations facing the integrated posts along the border.¹⁶

Such limitations may invite transnational threats to continue invading the sovereignty of Timor-Leste. Transnational groups, such as organized crime networks and corrupt businessmen, that have exploited the vulnerability at the border to conduct the trafficking of drugs, contraband, and military equipment across the border.¹⁷ Illegal trade of precious natural resources, such as teak and magnesium, has also occurred along the border.¹⁸

These crimes are emerging because of the fragility of the integrated posts at the border territory. The BPU, for example, cannot successfully perform its patrol duties along the border without the adequate human resources to do so. Other institutions cannot readily track illegal commerce along the border,¹⁹ and, thus, it is easy for criminals to exploit Timor-Leste's natural resources and protected wildlife.²⁰

The migration, quarantine, and tax control systems services are not yet functioning at some posts, leaving these integrated posts vulnerable to continued illegal commerce across the border. FM considers such difficulties to be old problems, originating at the establishment of the

¹³ Fundasaun Mahein. (03 February 2013). Border Management and Migration Control. Mahein's Thought No.03.pdf. http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MNH_no-03_13022013Tetun.pdf..pdf

¹⁴ The commander, as well as members of the BPU in posts visited by FM, was concerned.

¹⁵ RDTL. (18 May 2009). "Strengthen the Border Management: Dynamic Strategy and Security for Timor-Leste".pdf

¹⁶ Fundasaun Mahein. (03 February 2013). Border Management and Migration Control. Mahein's Thought No.03.pdf. http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MNH_no-03_13022013Tetun.pdf..pdf

¹⁷ Fundasaun Mahein. (16 October 2014). Timor-Leste threatened by drug and weapons transactions. <http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/2014/10/16/timor-lesteha-perigu-boot-ba-transaksaun-droga-no-kilat/>

¹⁸ Dgx. (28 April 2014). Indonesian citizens take magnesium. Media Diari Nasional. <http://www.jndiario.com/2014/04/28/sidadaun-indonesia-foti-magnesium/>

¹⁹ These difficulties were presented by the commander and members of the BPU at the border territory visited by FM team while monitoring in September 2014.

²⁰ Araujo, Amato. (18 August 2013). TNI cut woods illegally and threatened the community of Tapo-Memo. Radio Liberdade. <http://www.radioliberaldadedili.com/politiku/1120-tni-tesi-ai-ilegal-no-amease-komunidade-tapo-memo>



integrated posts. Therefore, the government must improve and address existing limitations, in order to protect state sovereignty from threats at the border.²¹

2. Problems with the Border Pass Policy

The “Border Pass” policy was approved by the National Parliament in 2008, as an extension of an agreement policy signed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MFAC) of Timor-Leste and Indonesia in 2003.²²

This policy took many years to plan and was implemented in 2012. However, it applies only to districts that share boundaries with Indonesia, such as Covalima, Bobonaro and Oe-Cusse.²³ It aims to cover communities using the “border pass” for at least 5-10 kilometers distance, as when the communities come to Timor-Leste and pass over the border territory to Atambua.²⁴

Implementing the border pass has become another challenge to security at the border territory. The government has initiated this policy to facilitate certain activities at the border territory, particularly commerce, cultural exchanges, and family visits. Furthermore, this policy was meant to minimize illegal border crossings that threaten internal security.²⁵

Inefficiencies in the controlling process have produced many irregularities, because many people have violated the border pass system. Many prefer to use “Jalan Tikus” to pass over the border territory, and others have traveled beyond the distances permitted by “border pass” procedure.²⁶

FM identified through monitoring that some people from Indonesia use the “border pass” to visit their families in Suai and then continue to Dili, where they stay for months.²⁷ In a similar vein, many people of Timor-Leste also use the passes to cross the border then continue to Kupang, Bali, and other parts of Indonesia.²⁸

²¹ Almost all posts of the BPU that FM visited in Mota-Masin (Suai), Batugade (Maliana) and Oe-Cusse districts were questioned about the cases.

²² MacDougall, John. (10 January 2008). TL makes later process of the Border Pass. Media STL. <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/east-timor-studies/conversations/topics/15237>

²³ TDW. (07 July 2012). Border Pass implement in three districts. Media The Dili Weekly. <http://www.thediliweekly.com/news/capital/1522-border-pas-implemanta-ih-a-distritu-tolu>

²⁴ MacDougall, John. (10 January 2008). TL makes later process of the Border Pass. Media STL. <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/east-timor-studies/conversations/topics/15237>

²⁵ THD. (30 July 2014). Illegal Movements increase in Batugade. <http://www.timorhauniandoben.com/2014/07/movimentu-ilegal-buras-ih-a-batugade.html>

²⁶ Lia. (26 June 2013). CNRT bench urges the government to control people who use the Border Pass. Media STL. <http://jornal.suara-timor-lorosae.com/bankada-cnrt-husu-governu-kontrola-komunidade-uza-border-pass/>

²⁷ Fundasaun Mahein held an informal conversation with citizens of Atambua who live in Suai district.

²⁸ Lia. (26 June 2013). CNRT bench urge the government to control people who use the Border Pass. Media STL. <http://jornal.suara-timor-lorosae.com/bankada-cnrt-husu-governu-kontrola-komunidade-uza-border-pass/>

FM also found that many people have violated the “border pass” procedure because they did not fully understand the rules. Many communities also consider that border pass procedure is simply too time-consuming and full of bureaucracy.²⁹

FM also discovered that at least 100 people at the border territory passed illegally to Indonesia then became citizens of Kalimantan and Malaysia for work purposes. In fact, the local authorities there did not know about the existence of these people. BPU received the information from Indonesia TNI that these individuals have stayed in Indonesia.³⁰ Members of National Parliament Committee B, responsible for defense and security issues, recognize this issue as well.³¹ Therefore, there must be an integrated control and socialization process for the people at the border territory, especially for those using the “border pass” system. Such efforts can help individuals better understand the rules of this system.³²

3. Poor Functioning of Markets at the Border Territory

The poor functioning of markets at the border territory is also becoming a challenge for national security. Despite efforts by the government to encourage community business and minimize illegal commerce, the markets have been largely ineffective.³³ Indeed, some of these markets have been abandoned for a long time.³⁴

This situation has remained a fundamental issue questioned by the public since the establishment of markets at the border territory, because the government does not have yet clear policy regarding regulation of these border markets.³⁵ A consequence of these poorly functioning markets has been the recent increase in the illegal transactions at the border, which has attracted national discussion within Timor-Leste.³⁶

The land border between Timor-Leste and Indonesia represents a potentially profitable place of business. Economically, Timor-Leste is still dependent upon goods and services from Indonesia.³⁷ However, authorities do not adequately regulate the business activities of markets

²⁹ Lia. (26 June 2013). CNRT bench urges the government to control people who use the Border Pass. Media STL. <http://jornal.suara-timor-lorosae.com/bankada-cnrt-husu-governu-kontrola-komunidade-uza-border-pass/>

³⁰ FM's research results during two weeks in Balibo, Leo-Hito village at the border territory

³¹ Member of NP Cesar Valente (Pilotu) questioned this issue while meeting with the FM team about the 2013 budget notes on 18 September 2014. Valente also asked for a thorough investigation, in order to justify this information.

³² Communities and security authorities at the border territory expressed concern for this issue. The government must make socialization for people using the border pass.

³³ RDTL. (07 February 2012). Inauguration of Integrated Post and Traditional Markets at the border territory of Batugade. <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=6462&n=1&lang=tp>

³⁴ Tolas. (29 April 2011). Border Markets in Bobometo Oe-occuse abandoned the end of construction in 2009. <http://tolas-oekusse.blogspot.com/2011/04/merkado-fronteira-bobometo-oekusi.html>

³⁵ Depadua, Antonio. (11 September 2014) Debates on TVTL: Sala Redasaun

³⁶ Alm. (13 June 2014). NP questioned many things arriving illegally because of weakness at the border. Media Diariu Nasional. <http://www.jndiario.com/2014/06/13/pn-kecionista-sasan-barak-tama-ilegal-tamba-seguransa-fronteira-fraku/>

³⁷ THD. (11 June 2013). “BPU makes illegal transaction in the “Bedroom”.

at the border,³⁸ a weakness in oversight that contributes to the overall fragility of security institutions.³⁹

Such conditions may attract criminals and organized crime syndicates to conduct illegal transactions at the border area and import illicit items to Timor-Leste. Many examples of this have taken place and have become important news in the national media.⁴⁰ The illegal transactions taking place from 2008 to the present have served to measure the overall efficacy of control systems at the border. The results have proven that the markets along the border do not yet function properly.⁴¹

According to FM, functioning markets at the border are very important in minimizing illegal transactions that pose threats to security in Timor-Leste. In the absence of such markets, Timor-Leste faces grave threats from drugs and weapons crossing the border.⁴²

The New Problems: Results of FM's Monitoring

1. The Real Conditions of the BPU at the Border Territory

The Border Police Unit (BPU) is charged with the very important mission of patrolling and operating the border territory. As part of this mandate, the BPU must coordinate and cooperate with the F-FDTL, immigration services, and other relevant institutions, in order to control movements across the border⁴³ and maintain the peace between Timor-Leste and Indonesia at along the border line.⁴⁴

The existence of BPU at the land border has contributed to national security through its daily services and coordinated efforts with the Indonesian military at the border.⁴⁵ However, since the establishment of the BPU at the border during the post-independence period, this department has faced shortages in human resources, facilities, and equipment. These remain necessary, if the BPU is to successfully carry out its operations and ensure state sovereignty.⁴⁶

<http://www.timorhauniandoben.com/2013/06/upf-halo-transaksaun-ilegal-ih-kuartu.html?m=1>

³⁸ Because of the limitations facing the integrated posts at the border, it is difficult for these institutions to carry out their duties. These concerns were received by FM during its visits to integrated posts.

³⁹ Sequera, Jacinta. (12 June 2014). Condition of BPU at the border territory does not function well. Media STL. <http://jornal.suara-timor-lorosae.com/kondisaun-upf-ih-fronteira-seidauk-diak/>

⁴⁰ Gus. (30 July 2014). Illegal movements increase in Batugade. Media Timor Post.

<http://www.timorhauniandoben.com/2014/07/movimentu-ilegal-buras-ih-batugade.html>

⁴¹ Tempo Semanal. (03 December 2010). Former militias and TNI import drugs to TL.

<http://temposemanaltimor.blogspot.com/2010/12/eis-milisia-ho-eis-tni-hatama-droga-mai.html>

⁴² Fundasaun Mahein. (16 October 2014). Timor-Leste threatened by drug and weapons transactions. <http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/2014/10/16/timor-leste-ih-perigu-boot-ba-transaksaun-droga-no-kilat/>

⁴³ RDTL. (2009). The Border Police Unit, Article 33. Organic Law of PNTL.pdf.p13.

⁴⁴ Gim & Oki. (27 November 2013). Strategy of Xanana to set up the BPU. Media Timor Post.

<http://www.diariutimorpost.tl/berita-802-estrategia-xanana-monta-upf.html>

⁴⁵ Ferreira, Sonia. (24 January 2014). BPU, TNI and POLRI cooperate to improve security at the border territory. Media STL. <http://suara-timor-lorosae.com/upf-tni-polri-kopera-hadia-seguransa-ih-fronteira/>

⁴⁶ Sequera, Jacinta. (12 June 2014). The conditions of BPU at the border territory do not function well. Media STL. <http://jornal.suara-timor-lorosae.com/kondisaun-upf-ih-fronteira-seidauk-diak/>

FM's monitoring has identified that the limitations faced by the BPU will threaten its services and the overall control system. As it is, the distance is large from one post to another, and it is difficult for the patrol unit to ensure security along the border with such limited human resources. These limitations are adversely affecting 9 BPU posts in Covalima, 8 in Maliana and 9 in Oe-Cusse districts.⁴⁷

Another issue is that, because of essential equipment (lamps, binoculars, and GPS systems) and clean water, BPU members cannot patrol at night. For instance, the BPU post in Wala-Lama does not have clean water, so its members must travel long distances in order to bathe and cook.⁴⁸

For posts in Saburai, housing available for rental by BPU is of poor quality and has insufficient bedrooms. As a result, some members from the district decide to return to their own houses at night, taking BPU transportation and radio communication materials with them.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the areas between the posts in Memo, Saburai, and Tunu-Bibi are very vulnerable to illegal trafficking, because they lack the human resources to operate effectively.⁵⁰

Also the BPU post in Oesilo confiscated illegal petrol then carried this petrol to BPU headquarters by car, signaling the limited nature of resources for integrated posts.⁵¹ According to FM, the government should pay serious attention to this issue and search for an adequate solution.

2. The Security Procedure at the Integrated Posts

The government has established integrated posts in some districts that share the land border with Indonesia, such as Mota-Masin (Covalima), Batugade (Bobonaro) and Sakato (Oe-Cusse).⁵² Additional posts were placed in Memo (Bobonaro), Citrana, and Nitibe (Oe-Cusse), but these posts are not yet functioning effectively. The institutions working within these integrated posts include the Migration Service, the Department of Taxes, the Quarantine Unit, DNTT, and the BPU.⁵³

⁴⁷ FM immediately interviewed the responsible posts during its monitoring.

⁴⁸ Members of BPU have difficulty getting water for showers when back from patrol

⁴⁹ Interviews and direct observations of the FM team at the BPU post of Saburai

⁵⁰ At least 10 places qualify as "Dalan Tikus" between the BPU post of Memo and Tunu-Bibi, which are used for illegal drug transactions and illegal migration.

⁵¹ Almost all of the BPU posts visited by FM face a lack of facilities, equipments, human resources and transportation.

⁵² TDW. (07 July 2012). Border Passes implemented in three districts.

Media The Dili Weekly. <http://www.thediliweekly.com/news/capital/1522-border-pas-implemanta-ihadistritu-tolu>

⁵³ Results of FM's monitoring



The primary aim of these integrated posts is to monitor movements across the border territory, using the respective services and competencies of each participating institution.⁵⁴ The coordination between BPU and TNI integrated posts at the border has been deemed 'good'.⁵⁵

However, internal security is still fragile at the border territory. The services of these coordinating institutions are not yet at maximum capacity, and these posts do not always make inspect people and things along the border. During its monitoring at the border territory, FM detected that the inspection process was not rigorous in nature. As such, the National Parliament has expressed concern in regards to control processes at the border territory.⁵⁶

FM discovered at the integrated post in Mota-Masin (Covalima) that tax authorities were not performing inspections. Instead, these inspections were conducted by security members of GUARDAMOR. In doing the inspection, these members simply asked the individuals in question what was in the boxes or packages they carried.⁵⁷ After hearing these concerns, the National Parliament has made inquiries to the tax officials in relation to the referred issues.⁵⁸

A similar situation is also faced by the integrated post in Nunura, which does not perform routine of community movements, whether communities from Maliana, Aikesak, or Atambua. Even though the communities carry bags and boxes along the border, only the owner was required to meet the BPU for license verification.⁵⁹ According to FM, such conditions are quite dangerous, because it will be easy for people to import drugs and illicit items that jeopardize national stability.

3. Community Safety at the Border Territory

In order to maintain sovereignty from external and internal threats, the government must define an integrated security policy at the border territory. The fundamental purpose of this measure would be to protect Timor-Leste from global threats that may jeopardize national stability and human security. This protection would be carried out primarily by the BPU and other institutions within the integrated units in the border area.⁶⁰

Because of the many problems discussed above, people living near the border territory sometimes feel unsafe. People are often losing confidence in the security institutions, because

⁵⁴ RDTL. (18 May 2009). "Strengthen the Border Management: Dynamic Strategy and Security for Timor-Leste".pdf

⁵⁵ Ferreira, Sonia. (24 January 2014). BPU, TNI and POLRI cooperate to improve security at the border territory. Media STL. <http://suara-timor-lorosae.com/upf-tni-polri-kopera-hadia-seguransa-ih-fronteira/>

⁵⁶ Alm. (25 June 2014). NP questions services of tax officials at the border territory. Media Diari Nasional. <http://www.jndiario.com/2014/06/25/pn-kestiona-servis-alfandega-fronteira/>

⁵⁷ According to a GUARDAMOR security member, his daily responsibility is to inspect goods of Indonesian people crossing the border in either direction.

⁵⁸ Alm. (25 June 2014). NP questions the services of tax authorities at the border territory. Media Diari Nasional. <http://www.jndiario.com/2014/06/25/pn-kestiona-servis-alfandega-fronteira/>

⁵⁹ Fundasaun Mahein's direct observations of the integrated post at Mota-Masin (Suai)

⁶⁰ Dgx. (2014, Maiu 25). Monta UPF Laos Atu Tiru Malu. Media Diari Nasional.

<http://opinitimor.blogspot.com/2014/05/monta-upf-laos-atu-tiru-malu.html>

they have proven unable to improve general security.⁶¹ Many times, the communities have urged the government to establish more BPU posts at the border territory, in order to ensure safety in this volatile area.⁶²

FM also identified that communities along the border, particularly Naktuka and Oe-Cusse, feel insecure in regards to the border disputes that continuing in the present. The security authorities that met with FM also recognized that the communities are sometimes afraid of the TNI, who patrol the land border in full military attire and with heavy arms.⁶³

According to a prior agreement, the TNI should not patrol in the vicinity of Naktuka. However, the TNI sometimes conducts silent patrolling of the referred area, without the acknowledgment of the BPU in Oe-Cusse. Therefore, the BPU urges the government to resolve, as soon as possible, the ongoing land disputes with Indonesia and to clearly define the border territory for security detail.⁶⁴

Another problem discovered by FM is that people of Oe-Cusse (Hale Coast village with Kefa) have turned upon each other. During a conflict in 2013, three houses of Hale people were burned. Even though this problem has been resolved, FM has discovered that people in that area continue to feel insecure. As such, the BPU should increase its posts and operations in the referred area.⁶⁵

4. Illegal Activities at the Border Territory

Timor-Leste possesses a very large of the land border, but its security institutions cannot sufficiently cover all areas suspected of illegal activity. FM has attempted to identify places that have become centers for the movement of citizens as well as illicit items, such as wine, petrol, drugs, and other contraband.⁶⁶

In Suai district, where the BPU has established nine posts (Salele, Wala-Lama, Foho Lulik Ailkakar, Fatu-Mea, Be Lulik Kraik, Fatululik, Lela and Alto Lebos), at least 2 to 3 areas were used for illegal transactions. FM has received word from the security authorities and community

⁶¹ TVTL. (01 November 2013). Indonesian people burned three houses at the border territory in Oecusse district". Telejornal Tetun. Can be access in this link; <http://www.timorhauniandoben.com/2013/11/komunidade-indonesia-sunu-uma-3-iha.html>

⁶² Tempo Semanal. (10 November 2012). People of Bobonaro urge the government to increase security at the border territory. <http://temposemanaltimor.blogspot.com/2012/11/komunidade-bobonaro-husu-aumenta.html>

⁶³ The TNI continues to violate its agreement with the BPU by patrolling with big weapon and crossing into the disputed area, causing communities to feel afraid.

⁶⁴ Issues have not yet been resolved in Naktuka of Bene-Ufe village, sub-district of Nitibe, in Welnase, and in Neuksesu in Abani village, sub-district Passabe, Oe-Cusse.

⁶⁵ TVTL. (01 November 2013). Indonesian people burned three houses at the border territory in Oecusse district". Telejornal Tetun. Bele asesu iha link ne'e; <http://www.timorhauniandoben.com/2013/11/komunidade-indonesia-sunu-uma-3-iha.html>

⁶⁶ Result of FM's monitoring during two weeks at the border territory.



members that the areas between posts of Salele, Fatumea, and Aikakal have become crowded and vulnerable to illegal drug transactions.⁶⁷

In Bobonaro district, the posts in Memo, Saburai, Tunu-bibi, Nunura, Leo-Hitu, Derok-Ren, Badut-Mean, and Mota-Ain are composed of many hotbeds for illegal activity, in comparison to Covalima district. The distance between posts in Memo and Tunu-bibi is only 7 kilometers, but there are at least 10 places used by communities for illegal business and illegal immigration.⁶⁸

A concrete fact is that, during 2014, security authorities have confiscated illegal things, such as petrol (250 liters) with wine, and captured foreign citizens who had passed over the border illegally. These breaches are happening because of the weakness of the control system and human resources at the border territory. These weaknesses have rendered the BPU unable to conduct intensive patrolling at night, the time during which the majority of illegal transactions and migrations take place.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, in Oe-Cusse district, there are centers for illegal business, but there is not yet a concrete solution for this issue. Some areas identified as potential zones for illegal activities are Noe-Ekat, Kiubola, and Sesu between the Oesilo and Kiubiselo posts. According to information received by FM, illegal transactions are occurring at these places at night, when BPU has ceased its patrolling.⁷⁰

These high-crime areas are becoming concerns for BPU members at the border territory, so they have urged the government to pay attention and to create an adequate response. The government must respond to the situation by taking the perspectives of relevant security actors into account. For example, the PNTL commander has requested more posts in Oe-Cusse.⁷¹

Conclusion

Timor-Leste's land border with Indonesia has become an important issue to consider when drafting a national security strategy. Border authorities are charged with the important task of protecting the people from transnational threats. The government has attempted to establish integrated posts for the management and administration of the border territory. In particular, these integrated units are tasked with monitoring the movement of people and goods along the border.

⁶⁷ FM's team interviewed the communities and the security authorities of the of BPU in Covalima district

⁶⁸ FM got this data via its observation and interviews with important personnel at the BPU posts as well as publications from national media.

⁶⁹ The security authorities could not detect these transactions because the agents are aware of BPU's patrolling hours and select the times when the BPU personnel have retired from their patrol.

⁷⁰ Between June and August of 2014, the BPU posts in Oesilo arrested illegal objects, such as petrol, but were forced to carry these objects by car back to headquarters.

⁷¹ Oliveira, Venidora. (25 February 2014) PNTL will set up a BPU post in Lelobata village. Media The Dili Weekly. <http://www.thediliweekly.com/tl/news/security-defencejustice/12088-pntl-to-set-upf-post-in-lelobata-village>

However, institutions working at the border territory still face immense obstacles in carrying out their duties. Among these challenges are shortages in human resources, facilities, and equipment, all of which remain essential to the core functioning of border authorities. These shortages are felt by all border institutions, particularly the BPU.

Old problems still exist today and have not yet been comprehensively addressed. Meanwhile, new threats continue to invade in the border territory, threatening national stability. Such matters beg for maximum attention by the government, which must provide sound policy and finances to support the BPU and the other institution. With the proper resources and strategy, these institutions can help secure the people and the state from oncoming global threats.

Recommendations

1. The government should establish more BPU posts in the border territory, especially areas identified as “Jalan Tikus” for illegal transactions and activities. It should also increase the human resources, improve the facilities, and modernize the equipment of border posts, in order to better protect Timor-Leste from threats coming over the border.
2. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry should accelerate coordination with the Indonesian government in its effort to facilitate the functioning of markets at the border territory. The poor function of these traditional markets thus far has contributed to an increase in illegal business at the border, which threatens national security.
3. The government should provide *screening* equipment at the integrated posts along the border, in order to enable the authorities to inspect vehicles and parcels that come over the border.
4. National Parliament Committee B should supervise the conditions of the BPU at the border territory and then approve an SGB that addresses any shortages.
5. The Ministry of Justice must continue conducting socialization meetings for the use of “Border Passes” by communities along the border, in order to increase adherence to “Border Pass” procedure.

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