

Ramos-Horta: coma of convenience

by gan *Wednesday, Feb 13 2008, 10:13pm*

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Australia's involvement in the assassination of Major Alfredo Reinado is indicated – according to some analysts -- by the prolonged induced coma of Jose Ramos-Horta. The president of Timor-Leste is perhaps the only person able to supply crucial information regarding events leading to the death of Major Reinado and his own wounding, YET an odd reluctance to obtain accurate information is becoming evident, particularly from the Australians, America's proxy in the region!

It seems the assassination of Reinado was a planned event, as his magical appearance in the house of the president would indicate. Reinado had made fools of Australian occupation forces on a number of occasions; he evaded every attempt by Australian forces to capture or kill him. He was a proven formidable opponent who would not have placed himself in a vulnerable situation unless persons in high authority had given assurances for his personal safety.

Rumours that Ramos-Horta was arranging Reinado's return into mainstream society seem well founded. It is simply absurd to believe that a wily, Australian trained rebel soldier would willingly expose himself to danger in the way that it has been presented by the mass media.

Reports of negotiations with the president, who would have assured 'safe passage,' are far more credible than the evasive statements of Australian foreign minister, Smith and statements made by Kevin Rudd. Recent statements by known Pacific troubleshooter, former General, Peter Cosgrove, are also very telling, though not in the way intended.

Medical opinion differs on the benefits of prolonged induced coma. Unnecessarily extending the artificially induced coma of Ramos-Horta serves only to protect the guilty. Soon even stunned mullets will begin questioning the need to maintain the president in a vegetative state.

Genuine fears and concerns for the president's safety are being expressed in Dili. The planned visit by the Australian PM, Kevin Rudd serves only to heighten fears and confirm rumours that western forces are responsible for the attacks on Timor-Leste's leaders.

Those who stand to benefit most from destabilising East Timor are America and Australia. Occupation forces would then be legitimised – let the oil flow!

Following is the only sensible and credible article on the situation to date:

East Timor: Reinado buried amidst flurry of questions

by Setyo Budi – IPS

DILI, Feb 14 (IPS) - Hundreds of people gathered Thursday for the funeral of Alfredo Reinado, the rebel soldier who was slain in an alleged coup bid against the government of President Jose Ramos-Horta.

"I could not believe it when I heard about his death...in our principle death will not solve the problem. It can only be solved through discussion," said Victor Alves, Reinado's distraught uncle.

Alves called for an end to bloodshed in East Timor, now that his nephew was dead. "Alfredo is already dead and I would like to ask his supporters to remain calm."

What appeared to sadden Alves most was that Monday's incident, which resulted in serious gunshot injuries to Horta, occurred when "a dialogue had been agreed to happen again this week". Reinado's intentions for visiting the President remain unclear and circumstances suggest that he was invited for talks.

Alves' sense of grief and surprise was also reflected by Mari Alkatiri, former prime minister and secretary-general of the left-wing Fretilin party. Horta was known to have initiated moves to gather the leaders of all political parties for a national reconciliation. "On Monday, the President and Fretilin meant to meet. I still don't know who could be interested in this kind of act in this country," Alkatiri said.

There were theories floating around that Fretilin was involved in Reinado's fateful meeting with Horta. But these were dismissed by Fretilin, which formed the first government in East Timor on independence from Indonesia and ruled until 2007.

Fretilin began as a resistance movement, first against Portuguese colonial rule and then against Indonesian occupation, between 1974 and 1998.

Leon de Riedmatten from Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, a Swiss-based non-government organisation (NGO) that helped facilitate a dialogue between the Dili government and Reinado, said Monday's shootout was even a bigger surprise. He had arrived in Dili on Monday with the intention of helping with the dialogue only to hear that one of the dialogue partners was dead and the President seriously injured.

The dialogue with the rebels had begun at Maubesi on Jan. 13. Although no agreement was reached, Reinado had offered to help solve the problem of some 600 army deserters who had left their barracks in 2006, claiming ethnic and regional discrimination.

Mystery continues to surround the shootout or the motives behind it. After all, Horta, now in a medically-induced coma in an Australian hospital, had shown eagerness in opening a dialogue with Reinado.

Taur Matan Ruak, commander of East Timor's armed forces, said that an "international commission needed to be set up to investigate the incident." This statement has the support and approval of many leaders including Paulo Azis, a parliamentarian.

"A lot of international police and armed forces personnel are present here, but Reinado couldn't be detected when he went to Dili," he said questioningly.

Eduardo Soares was among the key witnesses. On Monday morning, he was out on a morning walk when he saw two cars speeding towards Horta's house. Soon afterwards, he heard gunshots from the direction of the President's house and decided to walk back to his home, 200 metres away.

"I heard more gun shots, that was when I thought that the president had been attacked," Soares, coordinator of INSIGHT, a local NGO, told IPS.

Reinado's death leaves the question of how to deal with the rebel soldiers open -- this was the immediate cause of the political crisis that has plagued the country since April 2006.

The President's initiative to build a national consensus on the issue has stalled as a result of Monday's incident. Although Reinado's death may be seen by some as a "sudden solution", the problem of the rebel 'petitioners' continues.

"We need to stop any violence and strengthen democracy and the rule of law in the country," Alkatiri said.

This is also what Alves also wants out of Reinado's death. "The burial will bury all of his good deeds and his struggle, so there are no threats against us."

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao got parliament's approval to extend a state of emergency, declared in the country on Monday, for another ten days. Essentially, this withdraws the right to assemble or demonstrate and enforces a curfew from 8pm to 6am.

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