



ALERT

Belun's Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) System

SERIOUS INCIDENT BETWEEN POLICE OFFICER AND SOLDIER IN AINARO Dili, 29 August 2016

On Friday, August 26th at 10pm, a PNTL *Ofisial Polisia Suku* (OPS, or Village Police Officer) shot and seriously injured an F-FDTL soldier at a community festival organized by the Ministry of State Administration in Ainaro Villa, Ainaro Municipality.

Earlier in the afternoon, the uniformed OPS from Mulo Village was gambling at the festival and reportedly lost approximately \$400. Later, he became heavily intoxicated and caused a disturbance among festival-goers. This angered the soldier, who was off-duty and attending the festival in civilian clothing, and the two men started arguing. Other community members circled the OPS to calm him, but he reportedly shook them off, took out his pistol and shot the soldier in the torso. He then shot again, but fell down at the same time, missing his target. Upon hearing the shots, community members fled. The OPS then surrendered himself to the Ainaro PNTL 2nd Commander, who immediately brought him to PNTL Headquarters in Dili. The soldier was taken to a nearby hospital and then to the National Hospital in Dili, where he remains in serious condition.

Shortly after the incident, armed F-FDTL soldiers stationed in Ainaro arrived at the scene and started assaulting a different PNTL officer, before stopping when nearby youth clarified that the officer that they were targeting had helped the injured soldier. Approximately three hours later, Dili-based Military Police arrived in Ainaro to prevent further incidents. Today, the situation remains calm.

On Saturday, Commanders from the PNTL and F-FDTL held a joint press conference to condemn the incident and call for calm within their institutions and the general population. The PNTL General Commander explained that this was not an incident between the PNTL and F-FDTL as institutions, but between two individuals. He then apologized to the F-FDTL, with specific reference to the victim and his family, and related that the perpetrator had been suspended, that his criminal case was being investigated, and that the PNTL expected to expel him from the institution.

Belun's Early Warning, Early Response system (EWER) has recorded three other violent incidents between members of the PNTL and F-FDTL in 2016. In the most recent incident in Bobonaro Municipality on August 20th, three intoxicated soldiers went to the Public Order Battalion (BOP) camp in Maliana to visit a friend, but ended up fighting with BOP personnel after a minor disagreement. In another incident in Ainaro Villa in June, a group of F-FDTL soldiers who were jogging on the road assaulted a PNTL police officer who had cut them off on his motorbike. The PNTL Operations Commander in Ainaro Municipality then collected a group of PNTL personnel and went to the F-FDTL post to confront the perpetrators, but there was no further physical violence. In another incident in Balibar Suku, Dili in May, members of the PNTL's Special Unit assaulted an F-FDTL soldier after a parking dispute.

Recommendations for Immediate Action:

Belun commends the quick and united response to this incident from the PNTL and F-FDTL Commands. In order to prevent future similar incidents, Belun offers the following recommendations:

1. **As a deterrent**, the PNTL and F-FDTL should immediately expel personnel who commit crimes or otherwise seriously damage the reputations of the institutions – including by being publicly intoxicated while armed and in uniform – and submit these cases to the relevant court for further judicial processing;
2. **To reassure the public**, the PNTL and F-FDTL should clearly and regularly communicate in the media about disciplinary actions that have been taken against offending PNTL and F-FDTL personnel until each case is resolved;
3. **To improve relations between the two institutions at all levels**, the PNTL and F-FDTL should provide regular opportunities for collaborative interaction between low and mid-level personnel, including through well-publicized joint community service activities, such as small construction projects, cleaning of public areas and other humanitarian service. These opportunities would present non-violent, non-competitive venues for the development of good personal relationships, as opposed to past initiatives, which have included inter-institutional sporting matches, which breed competition, and joint internal security operations.

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