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## Timor protest over digger

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EAST Timor's ruling Fretilin party will today lodge a protest over an alleged incident during which an Australian soldier is said to have pulled a Timorese driver out of a vehicle, trod on him, put a gun to his head and yelled: "f ... you. I'll kill you."

A Fretilin spokesman in Dili said last night that former East Timorese prime minister Mari Alkatiri was among a group who saw the incident in the coffee-growing town of Gleno after a Fretilin political rally.

He said Mr Alkatiri, Fretilin's secretary-general, will lodge the protest today with Mal Rerden, commander of Australia's 800-strong military force in East Timor.

Fretilin officials say the incident occurred when an Australian armoured personnel carrier pushed into a convoy of cars accompanying Fretilin members who went to Gleno for a rally in support of the party's presidential candidate, Francisco Guterres, on Monday.

There was reportedly an apparent stand-off between a Fretilin driver and Australian soldiers. Fretilin officials said after the Timorese man was assaulted, Mr Alkatiri's bodyguard tried to intervene but an Australian soldier pointed a gun at his head.

Officials said the soldier retreated on the orders of an Australian commander.

Anti-Australian sentiment is strong in the mountains around Gleno after Australian soldiers killed five men from the area during a botched attack on the base of rebel leader Alfredo Reinado on March 4.

Brigadier Rerden's media officer in Dili could not be reached for comment last night.

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