



**REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR-LESTE
GABINETE DO PRIMEIRO-MINISTRO
PRESS RELEASE**

June 19, 2006

**Attention: International Affairs Reporter
Chief of Staff**

For immediate release

Re-hashed arms story rejected by Timor-Leste government

“One hard fact in today's reports in *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* is that the company headed by Bader Alkatiri imported 257,000 rounds of ammunition at the end of 2004 for the police force,” said Mr Antoninho Bianco, Minister in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Timor-Leste.

“The reports failed to include that this purchase was the result of an open tender, designed with the input of foreign advisers, conducted in a fully transparent manner,” said Minister Bianco. “This ammunition purchase is not the basis for any scandalous allegation against anyone in my government,” he said.

The story is a re-hash of a report by Herald writer Mark Dodd from July 7, 2005. It includes another fact that seven high-powered F2000 automatic rifles were imported by a company led by Mr Filipe Sousa-Santos, under a contract let by the United Nations Administration, UNTAET. Mr Santos-Sousa is part of the Carrascalau family, whose leading figure, Mario Carrascalao, is President of the six-member Opposition Social Democratic Party. The 30 armed members of the group led by Commander Reilos Vicente were interviewed on the night of June 8 by the ABC 4 Corners reporter Liz Jackson at Mr Carrascalao's villa outside Dili.

“This old story should not divert attention from the really important issue of identifying who distributed arms to civilians in the week of May 22 or before that,” said Minister Bianco. “Our government is fully involved in supporting this investigation”.

The SMH and Age stories seek to link the legal import of the ammunition to unsubstantiated reports that the resigned Interior Minister Rogerio Lobato secretly imported and distributed arms to civilians such as the Reilos group, which is now reported to be 20 armed people located at Liquica, on the coast west of Dili. This tenuous linkage is then used to suggest that the Prime Minister should be investigated and then dismissed by the President.

On June 14, President Xanana Gusmao declared to the Parliament that he would always uphold the Constitution, which does not allow him to dismiss the Prime Minister unless the Parliament itself declares a State of Emergency.

For further comment:

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