

Team Alpha militia members testify to Kopassus links

Judicial System Monitoring Programme, Dili 13/7/01

In the first trial involving crimes against humanity being heard by the Special Panel for Serious Crimes of the Dili District Court, several Team Alpha militia members have testified this week to their strong links with KOPASSUS, the Indonesian military special forces. They confirmed that as militia members they were trained and armed by KOPASSUS to fight FALINTIL.

On 10/7/01, the second day of the trial, Joni Marques made an initial statement to the Court in which he accepted responsibility for several of the charges he faces, including torture, three individual murders and the murder of a group of clergy in September 1999 throughout Lautem district. However, the Special Panel declined to accept the statements of the alleged commander of Team Alpha militia as admissions of guilt and the trial is proceeding.

Marques, together with Joao da Costa (also known as Lemorai), Mautersa Monis and Gilberto Fernandes, testified that the notorious Team Alpha militia was created by the Indonesian armed forces in the mid 1980s and shared a base with Kopassus at the headquarters of Battalion 745 in Los Palos, Lautem district. Several claimed that they were given orders to guard the base and to accompany Kopassus on patrols to search for FALINTIL in the area. Each also testified that they witnesses 1st Lieutenant Syaful Anwar, Deputy Commander of KOPASSUS, torture and beat to death a FALINTIL supporter in April 1999.

Joni Marques also told the Court that he had accompanied KOPASSUS on a joint training exercise with Australian troops in Malaysia in the early 1990s, during which he played the "enemy" role of FRETILIN during guerilla warfare exercises.

Gonsalo dos Santos, Alarico Fernandes and Paolo da Costa also testified that they were ordered by Marques to burn houses in several villages around Leuro, near Los Palos, in September 1999. They claimed that villagers from this area were transferred first to the Battalion 745 base and from there to the port of Kom, so they could be transported to Kupang, West Timor.

The trial continues on Monday 16/7/01.