

## **Police discount rockets as supplied from Australia**

**The Southeast Asian Times**

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By John Loizou

Darwin, January 15: The Australian Federal Police do not believe anti-tank rockets in the possession of East Timor fugitive Alfredo Reinado were among those stolen from the Australian army.

An AFP spokesperson delivered the Australian national police force's verdict when The Southeast Asian Times asked if a rocket launcher displayed in a photograph of the major could be one of the stolen weapons early last week.

The spokesman did not say how the AFP had reached its decision; nor did he say if Reinado's possessing of the weapons had been investigated.

The possibility of the weapons having been stolen from Australia was raised in the weekend edition of the mass-circulation Sydney-based newspaper, The Sun Herald.

The story by an Australian Associated Press correspondent says Reinado had been photographed with a rocket launcher of the same type as those stolen from the Australian Army.

The photograph, published in previous editions of The Southeast Asian Times, was taken about the time Reinado, who escaped from a Dili jail in August, attended a Roman Catholic Church sponsored seminar in Suai, about 138 kilometres southwest of Dili in November.

Australian soldiers at the seminar made no effort to arrest him although he is wanted for murder and rebellion.

The Australians said the decision not to arrest the major followed advice from the East Timor government who wanted the fugitive to surrender without bloodshed.

The light anti-armour weapon is of the same type issued to Australian troops in East Timor.

The AAP correspondent quoted a spokesman for Defence Minister Brendan Nelson as having denied Australian troops in contact with Reinado had let him pose with an Australian anti-tank rocket. Nor had the Australian Defence Force supplied such weapons to the East Timorese Defence Force and all such weapons issued to Australian troops in Timor were accounted for.

Police have charged Taha Abdul Rahman, 28, of south western Sydney with having supplied five of the Light Anti-Armour Weapons to one of the men arrested in anti-terrorism raids in Sydney last November.

Earlier, an AFP spokesman told Fairfax newspapers it was "common sense" to assume agents were searching for the rocket launchers in Victoria because known Islamist terrorist g cells were in Melbourne and Sydney's southwest.

The AFP spokesman also discounted the likelihood that designer drugs made in Darwin had been distributed to youths promoting violence in East Timor, especially the capital Dili.

The AFP was asked about the possibility after a raid on an East Timorese-owned enterprise in the industrial suburb of Winnellie on June 30 last year.

The raid had been organised by the Northern Territory police, he said.

Forty two members of the Northern Territory Police, the AFP and Australian Customs arrested Ruy Miguel Lopes, 37, who was charged with possessing methyl amphetamine powder; liquid amphetamines and 5.8 litres of the date rape drug GHB.

Police reports say various types of unsecured firearm ammunition and about \$30 000 in cash – believed to be tainted property - was also found and seized.

Lopes is now free on \$A2000 bail but his lawyer, former Country Liberal Party member of the Legislative Assembly, Peter Maley, has twice told magistrates that his client will plead guilty at a formal lower court hearing in March.

The Lopes family is reported to have extensive investment in Suai. Northern Territory police superintendent Peter Gordon said the Winnellie premises was used as the distribution hub for the drugs that were likely to be destined for the domestic market.

A member of the Lopes family - Rui Lopes – was prominent in the demonstrations against former prime minister Mari Alkatiri.

In August, he told a reporter from the SBS Dateline programme “We are ready to die, we’re ready to defend, and ready to kill.”

Various Australian newspapers, including The Australian, have reported suspicions that members of the Dili gangs were given designer drugs and money to fuel their activities.

The source of one front-page story in the national newspaper, The Australian, was from within prime minister Jose Ramos Horta’s office.