

= Timor Leste Defence Force =

The Timor Leste Defence Force (Tetum : Forças Defesa Timor Lorosae , Portuguese : Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste or Falintil @-@ FDTL , often F @-@ FDTL) is the military body responsible for the defence of East Timor . The F @-@ FDTL was established in February 2001 and comprised two small infantry battalions , a small naval component and several supporting units .

The F @-@ FDTL 's primary role is to protect East Timor from external threats . It also has an internal security role , which overlaps with that of the Policia Nacional de Timor Leste (PNTL) . This overlap has led to tensions between the services , which have been exacerbated by poor morale and lack of discipline within the F @-@ FDTL .

The F @-@ FDTL 's problems came to a head in 2006 when almost half the force was dismissed following protests over discrimination and poor conditions . The dismissal contributed to a general collapse of both the F @-@ FDTL and PNTL in May and forced the government to request foreign peacekeepers to restore security . The F @-@ FDTL is currently being rebuilt with foreign assistance and has drawn up a long @-@ term force development plan .

= = Role = =

The constitution of East Timor assigns the F @-@ FDTL responsibility for protecting East Timor against external attack . The constitution states that the F @-@ FDTL " shall guarantee national independence , territorial integrity and the freedom and security of the populations against any aggression or external threat , in respect for the constitutional order . " The constitution also states that the F @-@ FDTL " shall be non @-@ partisan and shall owe obedience to the competent organs of sovereignty in accordance with the Constitution and the laws , and shall not intervene in political matters . " The National Police of East Timor (or PNTL) and other civilian security forces are assigned responsibility for internal security . In practice the responsibilities of the F @-@ FDTL and PNTL were not clearly delineated , and this led to conflict between the two organisations .

The East Timorese Government has broadened the F @-@ FDTL 's role over time . As what have been designated " new missions " , the F @-@ FDTL has been given responsibility for crisis management , supporting the suppression of civil disorder , responding to humanitarian crises and facilitating co @-@ operation between different parts of the government .

= = History = =

= = = Pre @-@ independence = = =

The F @-@ FDTL was formed from the national liberation movement guerrilla army known as FALINTIL (Portuguese acronym for Forças Armadas de Libertação de Timor @-@ Leste or Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor) . During the period before 1999 some East Timorese leaders , including the current President José Ramos @-@ Horta , proposed that a future East Timorese state would not have a military . The widespread violence and destruction that followed the independence referendum in 1999 and the need to provide employment to FALINTIL veterans led to a change in policy , however . Following the end of Indonesian rule , FALINTIL proposed the establishment of a large military of about 5 @,@ 000 personnel .

In mid @-@ 2000 the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) invited a team from King 's College London to conduct a study of East Timor 's security force options . The team 's report identified three options for an East Timorese military . Option 1 was based on FALINTIL 's preference for a relatively large and heavily armed military of 3 @,@ 000 ? 5 @,@ 000 personnel , option 2 was a force of 1 @,@ 500 regulars and 1 @,@ 500 conscripts and option 3 was for a force of 1 @,@ 500 regulars and 1 @,@ 500 volunteer reservists . The study team recommended option 3 as being best suited to East Timor 's security needs and economic situation . This recommendation was accepted by UNTAET in September 2000 and formed the basis of East

Timor 's defence planning . The plan was also accepted by all the countries that had contributed peacekeeping forces to East Timor . The King 's College report has been criticised on the grounds that it led East Timor to establish a large police force and a large Army when its security needs may have been better met by a single smaller paramilitary force .

While East Timor 's decision to form a military has been criticised by some commentators , the East Timorese government has consistently believed that the force is necessary for political and security reasons . Critics of the F @-@ FDTL 's establishment argue that as East Timor does not face any external threats the government 's limited resources would be better spent on strengthening the PNTL . While East Timor 's political leadership recognises that the country does not currently face an external threat , they believe that it is necessary to maintain a military capacity to deter future aggression . The establishment of the F @-@ FDTL was also seen as an effective means of integrating FALINTIL into an independent East Timor .

= = = Formation of the F @-@ FDTL = = =

FALINTIL officially became F @-@ FDTL on 1 February 2001 . The first 650 members of the F @-@ FDTL were selected from 1 @, @ 736 former FALINTIL applicants and began training on 29 March . The FDTL 's 1st Battalion was established on 29 June 2001 and reached full strength on 1 December . Most members of the battalion were from East Timor 's eastern provinces . The 2nd Battalion was established in 2002 from a cadre of the 1st Battalion and was manned mainly by new personnel under the age of 21 who had not participated in the independence struggle . Due to the force 's prestige and relatively high pay , there were 7 @, @ 000 applications for the first 267 positions in the battalion . The F @-@ FDTL 's small naval component was established in December 2001 . The Australian UNTAET contingent provided most of the F @-@ FDTL 's training , and the United States equipped the force .

Some of the problems that have affected the F @-@ FDTL throughout its existence were caused by the process used to establish the force . A key flaw in this process was that FALINTIL 's high command was allowed to select candidates for the military from members of FALINTIL without external oversight . As a result , the selection was conducted , to a large degree , on the basis of applicants ' political allegiance . This led to many FALINTIL veterans feeling that they had been unfairly excluded from the military and reduced the force 's public standing . Furthermore , UNTAET failed to establish adequate foundations for the East Timorese security sector by developing legislative and planning documents , administrative support arrangements and mechanisms for the democratic control of the military . These omissions remained uncorrected after East Timor achieved independence on 20 May 2002 .

The F @-@ FDTL gradually assumed responsibility for East Timor 's security from the UN peacekeeping force . The Lautém District was the first area to pass to the F @-@ FDTL in July 2002 . After further training the F @-@ FDTL took over responsibility for the entire country 's external security on 20 May 2004 , although some foreign peacekeepers remained in East Timor until mid @-@ 2005 . The F @-@ FDTL conducted its first operation in January 2003 when an army unit was called in to quell criminal activity caused by west Timorese militia gangs in the Ermera district . While the F @-@ FDTL operated in a " relatively disciplined and orderly fashion " during this operation , it illegally arrested nearly 100 people who were released 10 days later without being charged .

The F @-@ FDTL has suffered from serious morale and disciplinary problems since its establishment . These problems have been driven by uncertainty over the F @-@ FDTL 's role , poor conditions of service due to limited resources , tensions arising from FALINTIL 's transition from a guerrilla organisation to a regular military and political and regional rivalries . The F @-@ FDTL 's morale and disciplinary problems have resulted in large numbers of soldiers being disciplined or dismissed . The East Timorese Government was aware of these problems before the 2006 crisis but did not rectify the factors that were contributing to low morale .

Tensions between the F @-@ FDTL and PNTL have also reduced the effectiveness of East Timor 's security services . During 2003 and 2004 , members of the police and F @-@ FDTL clashed on a

number of occasions , and groups of soldiers attacked police stations in September 2003 and December 2004 . These tensions were caused by the overlapping roles of the two security services , differences of opinion between members of East Timor 's leadership and the fact that many members of the PNTL had served with the Indonesian National Police prior to East Timor 's independence while the F @-@ FDTL was based around FALINTIL . In 2003 , the East Timorese Government established three new paramilitary police forces equipped with modern weapons . The formation of these units led to dissatisfaction with the Government among some members of the F @-@ FDTL .

= = = 2006 crisis = = =

The tensions within the F @-@ FDTL came to a head in 2006 . In January , 159 soldiers from most units in the F @-@ FDTL complained in a petition to then President Xanana Gusmão that soldiers from the east of the country received better treatment than westerners . The ' petitioners ' received only a minimal response and left their barracks three weeks later , leaving their weapons behind . They were joined by hundreds of other soldiers and on 16 March the F @-@ FDTL 's commander , Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak , dismissed 594 soldiers , which was nearly half of the force . The soldiers dismissed were not limited to the petitioners , and included about 200 officers and other ranks who had been chronically absent without leave in the months and years before March 2006 .

The crisis escalated into violence in late April . On 24 April , the petitioners and some of their supporters held a four @-@ day demonstration outside the Government Palace in Dili calling for the establishment of an independent commission to address their grievances . Violence broke out on 28 April when some of the petitioners and gangs of youths who had joined the protest attacked the Government Palace . The PNTL failed to contain the protest and the Palace was badly damaged . After violence spread to other areas of Dili , Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri requested that the F @-@ FDTL help restore order . Troops with no experience in crowd control were deployed to Dili on 29 April and three deaths resulted . On 3 May Major Alfredo Reinado , the commander of the F @-@ FDTL 's military police unit , and most of his soldiers including Lt Gastão Salsinha abandoned their posts in protest at what they saw as the army 's deliberate shooting of civilians .

Fighting broke out between the remnants of the East Timorese security forces and the rebels and gangs in late May . On 23 May Reinado 's rebel group opened fire on F @-@ FDTL and PNTL personnel in the Fatu Ahi area . On 24 May F @-@ FDTL personnel near the Force 's headquarters were attacked by a group of rebel police officers , petitioners and armed civilians . The attack was defeated when one of the F @-@ FDTL naval component 's patrol boats fired on the attackers . During the crisis the relationship between the F @-@ FDTL and PNTL had deteriorated further , and on 25 May members of the F @-@ FDTL attacked the PNTL 's headquarters , killing nine unarmed police officers .

As a result of the escalating violence the government was forced to appeal for international peacekeepers on 25 May . Peacekeepers began to arrive in Dili the next day and eventually restored order . A total of 37 people were killed in the fighting in April and May and 155 @, @ 000 fled their homes . A United Nations inquiry found that the interior and defence ministers and the commander of the F @-@ FDTL had illegally transferred weapons to civilians during the crisis and recommended that they be prosecuted .

= = = Force development plans = = =

The 2006 crisis left the F @-@ FDTL " in ruins " . The F @-@ FDTL 's strength fell from 1 @, @ 435 in January 2006 to 715 in September and the proportion of westerners in the military fell from 65 percent to 28 percent . The F @-@ FDTL started a rebuilding process with support from several nations and the United Nations , but was still not ready to resume responsibility for East Timor 's external security two years after the crisis .

In 2004 the commander of the F @-@ FDTL formed a team , which included international contractors , to develop a long @-@ term strategic vision document for the military . This study was

supported by the Australian Government . The resulting Force 2020 document was completed in 2006 and made public in 2007 . The document sets out an ' aspirational ' vision for the development of the F @-@ FDTL to 2020 and beyond and is of equivalent status to a defence white paper . It proposes expanding the military to a strength of 3 @, @ 000 regular personnel in the medium term through the introduction of conscription . It also sets longer @-@ term goals such as establishing an air component and purchasing modern weapons , such as anti @-@ armour weapons , armoured personnel carriers and missile boats , by 2020 .

The Force 2020 plan is similar to option 1 in the King 's College report . The King 's College study team strongly recommended against such a force structure , labelling it " unaffordable " and raising concerns over the impact of conscription upon East Timorese society and military readiness . The team estimated that sustaining such a force structure would cost 2 @. @ 6 to 3 @. @ 3 percent of East Timor 's annual gross domestic product and would " represent a heavy burden on the East Timor economy " . Moreover , the Force 2020 plan may not be realistic or suitable as it appears to emphasise military expansion to counter external threats over spending on other government services and internal security and outlines ideas such as the long @-@ term (~ 2075) development of space forces .

While the Force 2020 plan has proven controversial , it appears to have been adopted by the East Timorese government . The plan was criticised by the United Nations and the governments of Australia and the United States as unaffordable and in excess of East Timor 's needs . East Timorese President José Ramos @-@ Horta defended the plan , however , arguing that its adoption will transform the F @-@ FDTL into a professional force capable of defending East Timor 's sovereignty and contributing to the nation 's stability . East Timorese defence officials have also stressed that Force 2020 is a long @-@ term plan and does not propose acquiring advanced weapons for some years .

The repercussions of the 2006 crisis continue to be felt . On 11 February 2008 , a group of rebels led by Alfredo Reinado attempted to kill or kidnap President Ramos @-@ Horta and Prime Minister Gusmão . Although Ramos @-@ Horta and one of his guards were badly wounded , these attacks were not successful and Reinado and another rebel were killed . A joint F @-@ FDTL and PNTL command was established to pursue the surviving rebels and the military and police have demonstrated a high degree of co @-@ operation during this operation . The joint command was disbanded on 19 June 2008 . While the joint command contributed to the surrender of many of Reinado 's associates , it has been alleged that members of this unit committed human rights violations . In June 2008 the Government offered to provide financial compensation to the petitioners who wished to return to civilian life . This offer was accepted , and all the petitioners returned to their homes by August that year . In May 2009 , the F @-@ FDTL accepted its first intake of recruits since the 2006 crisis . While the regional diversity of the 579 new recruits was generally much greater than that of the pre @-@ crisis intakes , 60 @. @ 3 percent of officer candidates were from the country 's eastern districts . From 2009 the F @-@ FDTL established platoon @-@ sized outposts to support the PNTL border police in the Bobonaro and Covalima border districts , and it has increasingly been deployed to undertake internal security tasks . From February to August 2010 , 200 members of the F @-@ FDTL were deployed to support PNTL operations against " Ninja " gangs . These troops undertook community engagement tasks , and were unarmed and not closely integrated with the PNTL efforts .

The F @-@ FDTL is still in the process of rebuilding from the events of 2006 . It remains under @-@ strength and is yet to reform its training and discipline standards . Tensions within the F @-@ FDTL also continue to threaten the stability of the force . However , the East Timorese government places a high priority on re @-@ establishing the F @-@ FDTL and developing it into a force capable of defending the country . In 2015 the Australian Defence Intelligence Organisation reported that little progress has been made in implementing the Force 2020 plans .

= = Command arrangements = =

The constitution of East Timor states that the president is the supreme commander of the defence

force and has the power to appoint the F @-@ FDTL 's commander and chief of staff . The Council of Ministers and National Parliament are responsible for funding the F @-@ FDTL and setting policy relating to East Timor 's security . Cirilo José Cristovão serves as the current minister of Defence and Security , and Julio Tomas Pinto is the Secretary of State for Defense . Both men were sworn into these roles on 8 August 2012 . A Superior Council for Defence and Security was established in 2005 to advise the president on defence and security policy and legislation and the appointment and dismissal of senior military personnel . The council is chaired by the president and includes the prime minister , the defence , justice , interior and foreign affairs ministers , the heads of the F @-@ FDTL and PNTL a national state security officer and three representatives from the national parliament . The council 's role is not clear , however , and neither it nor the parliament served as a check against the decision to sack large numbers of F @-@ FDTL personnel in 2006 . A parliamentary committee also provides oversight of East Timor 's security sector . Major General Lere Anan Timor is the current commander of the F @-@ FDTL , and was appointed to this position on 6 October 2011 .

A small ministry of defence (which was renamed the Ministry of Defence and Security in 2007) was established in 2002 to provide civilian oversight of the F @-@ FDTL . A lack of suitable staff for the ministry and the close political relationship between senior F @-@ FDTL officers and government figures rendered this oversight largely ineffectual and retarded the development of East Timor 's defence policy up to at least 2004 . The failure to institute effective civilian oversight of the F @-@ FDTL also limited the extent to which foreign countries are willing to provide assistance to the F @-@ FDTL and contributed to the 2006 crisis . As at early 2010 the Ministry of Defence and Security was organised into elements responsible for defence (including the F @-@ FDTL) and security (including the PNTL) , each headed by their own secretary of state . At this time the East Timorese Government was working to expand the ministry 's capacity with assistance from UNMIT , but continuing shortages of qualified staff limited the extent to which the ministry could provide civilian oversight to the security sector . Moreover , elements of the F @-@ FDTL were continuing to resist civilian control over the security forces at this time , and the force had not opened itself to international scrutiny .

= = Organisation = =

The F @-@ FDTL is organised into a headquarters , a land component , a naval component and supporting units . When Taur Matan Ruak moved into politics , the two most senior officers in the Defence Force became Major General Lere Anan Timor as CDF and Brigadier General Meno Paixao as Vice Chief of Defence Force . The supporting units include a logistics support company and a military police platoon . East Timor does not have an air force and the F @-@ FDTL does not currently operate any aircraft . Following its establishment the F @-@ FDTL also had the " largest and most sophisticated " human intelligence network in East Timor , which was based on the clandestine resistance reporting networks built up during the Indonesian occupation . However , in May 2008 the national parliament legislated to place the F @-@ FDTL 's intelligence branch under the authority of the head of the National Information Service .

The F @-@ FDTL has an authorised strength of 1 @, 500 regular personnel and 1 @, 500 reservists . It has never reached these totals as funding shortfalls have prevented the reserve component from being formed and the Army 's two regular battalions have remained under @-@ strength . While all the F @-@ FDTL 's personnel were initially FALINTIL veterans the force 's composition has changed over time and few soldiers from the insurgency remain due to the force 's narrow age requirement . After the F @-@ FDTL 's 1st Battalion was established in 2001 recruitment was opened to all East Timorese above the age of 18 , including women . Few women have joined the F @-@ FDTL , however , and as at February 2010 only seven percent of new recruits were female .

= = = Army = = =

When initially established , the F @-@ FDTL land force comprised two light infantry battalions , each with an authorised strength of 600 personnel . Each battalion has three rifle companies , a support company and a headquarters company . Although the army is small , the guerrilla tactics employed by FALINTIL before the departure in 1999 of the Indonesian Armed Forces were effective against overwhelming numbers and it has the potential to form a credible deterrent against invasion . The Army 's current doctrine is focused on low @-@ intensity infantry combat tactics as well as counter @-@ insurgency tasks . Most of the force 's training and operations are conducted at the section level , and company or battalion @-@ sized exercises are rare .

The army 's two battalions were located in separate bases . The 1st Battalion is based at Baucau , with a contingent in the seaside coastline village of Laga . The 2nd Battalion is stationed at the Nicolau Lobato Training Centre near Metinaro . Almost all of the 2nd Battalion 's soldiers were dismissed during the 2006 crisis . The 2011 edition of Jane 's Sentinel put the total strength of the Army at 1 @, @ 300 .

Logistics and service support is provided through Headquarters F @-@ FDTL in Dili . There is also a military police platoon that polices the F @-@ FDTL and performs traditional policing tasks , resulting in conflicting roles with the PNTL . The military police have also been responsible for presidential security since February 2007 . In 2010 the United States Embassy in Dili reported that the F @-@ FDTL also planned to raise two engineer squadrons during that year ; these two units were to have a total strength of 125 personnel .

The F @-@ FDTL is armed only with small arms and does not have any crew @-@ served weapons . The 2007 edition of Jane 's Sentinel stated that the F @-@ FDTL had the following equipment in service : 1 @, @ 560 M16 rifles and 75 M203 grenade launchers , 75 FN Minimi squad automatic weapons , 8 sniper rifles and 50 .45 M1911A1 pistols . A further 75 Minimis were to be ordered at that time . The majority of the F @-@ FDTL 's weapons were donated by other countries . An assessment of East Timor 's security forces published by the Centre for International Governance Innovation in 2010 stated that " F @-@ FDTL weapons management and control systems , while superior to that of PNTL , are underdeveloped " .

= = = Naval component = = =

The naval component of the F @-@ FDTL was established in December 2001 when Portugal transferred two small Albatroz @-@ class patrol boats from the Portuguese Navy . Its establishment was not supported by the King 's College study team , the UN , or East Timor 's other donor countries on the grounds that East Timor could not afford to operate a naval force . The role of the naval component is to conduct fishery and border protection patrols and ensure that the maritime line of communication to the Oecussi enclave remains open . All of the force 's warships are based at Hera Harbour , which is located a few kilometres east of Dili . Under the Force 2020 plan the naval component may eventually be expanded to a light patrol force equipped with corvette @-@ sized ships and landing craft .

On 12 April 2008 East Timor signed a contract for two new Chinese @-@ built 43 @-@ metre Type @-@ 62 class patrol boats . These ships were to replace the Albatroz @-@ class vessels and to be used to protect East Timor 's fisheries . The contract for the ships also involved 30 to 40 East Timorese personnel being trained in China . The two new patrol boats arrived from China in June 2010 , and were commissioned as the Jaco @-@ class on the eleventh of the month . In November 2010 it was reported that East Timor would order a further two patrol boats from South Korea . In the event , three ex @-@ Republic of Korea Navy Chamsuri class patrol boats were donated , and these entered service with the naval component on 26 September 2011 . The East Timorese government also ordered two fast patrol boats from the Indonesian company PT Pal in March 2011 for the price of \$ US40 million .

Reports on the naval component 's strength are contradictory ; while the 2011 ? 2012 edition of Jane 's Fighting Ships states that 150 personnel are under training , the 2013 edition of the IISS Military Balance lists the naval component 's size as 80 personnel . The 2011 edition of Jane 's Sentinel put the strength of the naval component at 250 ; this source also stated that recruitment for

an approximately 60 @-@ person strong marine unit began in 2011 from existing naval component personnel , members of the Army and civilians . The marines will serve as a special operations force .

= = = Fleet = = =

Active

NTRL Jaco ? Jaco @-@ class patrol boat (based on Type 062 @-@ class gunboat)

NTRL Betnao ? Jaco @-@ class patrol boat (based on Type 062 @-@ class gunboat)

NTRL Kamenassa ? ex @-@ Republic of Korea Navy Chamsuri @-@ class patrol boat

NTRL Dili ? ex @-@ Republic of Korea Navy Chamsuri @-@ class patrol boat

NTRL Hera ? ex @-@ Republic of Korea Navy Chamsuri @-@ class patrol boat

Retired

NTRL Oecusse (P101) ? ex @-@ Portuguese Navy NRP Albatroz (P 1012) Albatross @-@ class patrol boats

NTRL Atauro (P102) ? ex @-@ Portuguese Navy NRP Açor (P 1163) Albatroz @-@ class patrol boats

= = Defence expenditure and procurement = =

The F @-@ FDTL 's budget for 2015 is \$ US19.9 million . The Ministry of Defence and Security and Secretariat of State for Defence are funded separately from the F @-@ FDTL , and were allocated \$ US4.6 million and \$ US7.9 million respectively in 2015 . The total expenditure on defence during 2014 was \$ US31.1 million , which was equivalent to 2 @-@ 4 percent of gross domestic product .

Most of the F @-@ FDTL 's weapons and other equipment have been provided by foreign donors , and this is likely to remain the case in the future . The East Timor government has used some of the revenue it earns from the country 's oil and gas sector to purchase military equipment , however . No military production currently takes place in East Timor .

Funding shortfalls have constrained the development of the F @-@ FDTL . The government has been forced to postpone plans to form an independent company stationed in the Oecussi enclave and two reserve infantry battalions . These units formed an important part of the King 's College report 's option 3 force structure and their absence may have impacted on East Timor 's defence policy . As of 2011 the government was yet to announce what , if any , reserve units would be formed , though provisions for such units had been included in legislation .

= = Foreign defence relations = =

While the UN was reluctant to engage with the F @-@ FDTL , several bilateral donors have assisted the force 's development . Australia has provided extensive training and logistical support to the F @-@ FDTL since it was established , and currently provides advisors who are posted to the F @-@ FDTL and Ministry of Defence and Security . Portugal also provides advisors and trains two naval officers each year in Portugal . China provided US \$ 1 @-@ 8 million in aid to the F @-@ FDTL between 2002 and 2008 and agreed to build a new US \$ 7 million headquarters for the force in late 2007 . East Timor is one of Brazil 's main destinations for aid and the Brazilian Army is responsible for training the F @-@ FDTL 's military police unit (Maubere Mission) . The United States also provides a small amount of assistance to the F @-@ FDTL through the State Department 's International Military Education and Training Program . While Malaysia has provided training courses and financial and technical aid , this assistance was suspended after the 2006 crisis . Under current arrangements Portugal provides the F @-@ FDTL with basic and advanced training while Australia and other nations provide training in specialised skills . As of 2013 the East Timorese government had posted a single member of the F @-@ FDTL to serve overseas as an observer with the United Nations Mission in Liberia . In 2015 the government was considering joining Australia 's Pacific Patrol Boat Program .

East Timor and Indonesia have sought to build friendly relations since 2002 . While movements of people and drug smuggling across their international border has caused tensions , both countries have worked with the UN to improve the security situation in the region . The East Timorese and Indonesian governments signed a defence agreement in August 2011 which aims to improve co -operation between their national militaries . The Timor Leste - Indonesia Defense Joint Committee was also established at this time to monitor the agreement 's implementation .

East Timor ratified the Nuclear Non -Proliferation Treaty , Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention in 2003 . The East Timorese Government has no plans to acquire nuclear , biological or chemical weapons . The country also became a party to the Ottawa Treaty , which bans anti -personnel mines , in 2003 .

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