

### Additional research 1.1

Research Australia's peacekeeping mission in East Timor and write a short essay. Some key questions students may wish to investigate include:

- What is the history to the conflict in East Timor?
- Why did Australia become involved in this conflict?
- What role did Australia play in the peacekeeping mission?
- Who were the key players in this mission?
- Was the mission a success? How do you know?

Find web references at [www.cambridge.edu.au/history10weblinks](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/history10weblinks).

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**Chapter 1: Overview: the modern world and Australia (1918–present)** – Additional research task and suggested response

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## Suggested response

Student responses will vary. However, responses might follow the example below.

The Portuguese colony of East Timor was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. After almost a quarter-century of violence in the area, a new Indonesian government under President Habibie agreed to allow the East Timorese to vote on their future.

In August 1999, a vote was organised by the United Nations (UN). This resulted in an overwhelming vote in favour of independence. Appallingly, once the result had been announced, pro-Indonesian militias, sometimes with the backing of sections of the Indonesian security forces, launched a campaign of violence, ransacking and committing arson throughout the entire region.

Many East Timorese were killed, and under the threat of violence, hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes, with about half leaving the territory.

The Australian Government feels that it is necessary to commit troops in situations where regional stability is under threat and to generally make known Australia's willingness to support the UN in its wider responses to security problems around the world. Australia's close proximity to Indonesia and East Timor made it the obvious candidate to take up the mission in the region.

Australia contributed police to the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET), which organised the East Timor independence vote. After violence erupted, Australia then organised and led the International Force for East Timor (Interfet), with the role of restoring peace and security and facilitating humanitarian assistance operations. Interfet commenced its work on 12 September 1999, with Australia contributing more than 5500 personnel. The Australian force commander was Major General Peter Cosgrove.

## TEACHER RESOURCE PACKAGE

### Chapter 1: Overview: the modern world and Australia (1918–present) – Additional research task and suggested response

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Key players in the mission included:

- President BJ Habibie
- Australian Prime Minister John Howard
- Foreign Minister Alexander Downer
- Major General Peter Cosgrove
- Xanana Gusmão, a key leader of East Timor's independence movement

The original military threat in East Timor has subsided and Interfet operations have ceased. However, the UN still has members in East Timor acting as a 'political mission', and Australian Defence personnel are still stationed in East Timor as part of the International Stabilisation Force (ISF), which aims to maintain stability and provide a secure environment in which East Timor can develop its independence.