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Dean: Intrusion act of individual, no strain to bilateral ties

KUALA LUMPUR: The Lahad Datu intrusion by armed men claiming to be the 'Sulu Sultanate Army' will not strain bilateral ties between Malaysia and Philippines as the struggle of the group led by Agbimuddin Kiram is individual in nature.

Dean of College of Law and International Relations, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Assoc Prof Dr Ahmad Marthada Muhamed said the intrusion on February 9 was in the interest of the self proclaimed Sultan of Sulu, Jamalul Kiram III, who is not supported by the Philippine government.

This is evident when Philippine President Benigno Aquino III demanded that the intruders surrender unconditionally to Malaysian security forces and refused to negotiate with Jamalul Kiram.

He said the intruders were using the claim to Sabah to ensure that Sulu residing in the state are allowed to stay there.

"It's not easy for someone to claim a state that is part of a country recognised by the United Nations (UN) and the country of origin, the Philippines."

Ahmad Marthada said the intrusion happened because there was a concern among the Sulus they would be deported home for not having identification papers.

"They may be hoping for follow-up agreements from the government and may demand that the Sulus in Sabah are allowed to settle there."

He said the intruders were bold as they could count on support from Sulus in Sabah and had experience in guerrilla warfare in southern Philippines.

"They landed in an area of 20 to 25 kilometres. It is a large area and quite impossible for us to ensure it is controlled 24 hours," he added.

Psychologist Assoc Prof Dr Mariani Md Nor said the intruders had a

spirit of self belonging and willing to invade a country with better military equipment.

This spirit made them willing to kill or be killed in order to achieve their goals which are considered as a struggle for the survival of their people.

"The spirit of self belonging becomes more powerful when they know the struggle has the support of the 'Sultan's' family and foreign support," said the lecturer from the Department of Psychology & Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya.

The intruders did not hesitate to use cowardly tactics including waving the white flag but opened fire on security forces, killing Insp Zulkifli Mamat, 29, and Corporal Sahabudin Daud, 46.

"The intruders were brainwashed that they are on the true path and willing to commit kamikaze despite attempts by the Malaysian government to resolve the matter peacefully." - Bernama