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Taliban-Malaysia

M'SIANS TRAINED BY TALIBAN WERE STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN, SAYS ENVOY

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29 (Bernama) -- Most Malaysians and other Muslim nationals trained by the Taliban were students who went to Pakistan for further studies, Afghanistan ambassador to Malaysia Abdul Sattar Murad said today.

Abdul Sattar said during their stay in Pakistan, these students came in contact with Pakistan's extreme religious and political groups which later "influenced" them to go to Afghanistan for training.

According to Abdul Sattar, who represents President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government, two Malaysian groups underwent training in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation (1979-1989) and later during the rule of the Taliban which came to power in September 1996.

"They did not go directly to Afghanistan. Their intention was noble, to acquire religious knowledge in Pakistan's madrasahs (religious schools) which brought them in contact with Pakistan's extreme groups," he told Bernama in a telephone interview here.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that there were Malaysians who received training from the Taliban and returned to Malaysia to topple the government and form an Islamic state.

The Taliban, which imposed tribal laws, is recognised by only one country, Pakistan, and has been condemned by the international community for its human rights violations.

Abdul Sattar claimed these students were "influenced" by Pakistan's religious-based groups such as the Jamaate Ulama Pakistan (Fazlur Rahman faction) and Jamaate Ulama Pakistan (Samaiul-Haq faction).

Abdul Sattar said the Lashkar-Taiba group (listed as a terrorist group by the US) and the Supahe Sahaba group, both fighting for Kashmir's independence and based in Pakistan, were also involved in influencing the students for Taliban training.

"They were sent or influenced under the pretext of fighting for holy war throughout the world and to help establish Islamic governments," he said.

Abdul Sattar said although the Taliban came to power in September 1996, Malaysians had already established contacts with them as early as 1994.

The ambassador also claimed that the Pakistan military's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) was aware about Malaysians' "presence in Taliban's ranks" from the beginning.

He said most Malaysians might have had their training in the Pakistan-Afghan border provinces of Khost and Nangrahar, adding that from information he has, there were approximately 700 Malaysians currently studying in Pakistan madrasahs.

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When asked whether any of these Malaysians might have met Osama bin Laden, the United States' prime suspect in the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, or Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, Abdul Sattar said: " Well, I suppose anybody who go for training in Taliban-controlled areas may have a chance to meet Omar and even Osama."

On the training aspect, Abdul Sattar said the Taliban provides commando training which includes booby trapping and training for subversive activities.

"All the training works of Taliban are programmed, supervised and implemented by instructors from the Pakistan army and they were also sent to Kashmir for practical training," he said.

The duration is between one to three months, he said.

"On the ideological aspect, these students will be induced with ideas and thoughts to turn them into a kind of robot...they stop thinking rationally and can be easily controlled by their teachers or leaders," Abdul Sattar said.

-- BERNAMA

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