

04 SEP 2001

Militant-MILF

MILF DENIES LINKS WITH MALAYSIAN MILITANT GROUPS

By: Mohd Haikal Isa

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 4 (Bernama) -- The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has no links with Malaysian fundamentalists as the group is only concentrating on solving the BangsaMoro problem, its vice-chairman, Haji Murad Ebrahim, said today.

He said, however, that Camp AbuBakar, the group's main camp in Mindanao, had received many visitors of undetermined nationalities in the past.

"As far as we are concerned, there is no link with any group in Malaysia, what more with militant groups. And I also don't remember meeting any Malaysian in Camp AbuBakar," he told Bernama in a telephone interview from Mindanao.

Murad, who is also the armed group's military chief, said the MILF would not be concerned with the problems of Muslims in other countries until the BangsaMoro problem in Mindanao was solved.

"We only give priority to solving the Moros' problem," he said in reference to the long-running dispute with the Philippine government over the MILF's armed struggle for self-determination in the southern Philippines.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's spokesman, Rigoberto Tiglao, was quoted in a foreign newswire today as saying that Manila had received intelligence reports several months ago that a fundamentalist group based in Malaysia had been trying to link up with the Philippines' own Islamic group."

Tiglao also said that the presidential palace had received reports that the MILF, the country's main Muslim rebel force, enjoyed close links with Malaysian fundamentalists.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said recently that the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM) had forged links with the Philippine and Indonesian rebels waging war with their respective governments.

The 13,000-strong MILF and the Philippine government signed a set of guidelines on Aug 7 for the cessation of hostilities in Mindanao where they agreed to normalise the situation in the conflict areas and pave the way for the successful conduct of relief, rehabilitation and development programmes.

The signing was held in Putrajaya between the Philippine government negotiating panel head, Jesus Dureza, and Murad and witnessed by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

According to a joint communique issued by both parties later, the guidelines would implement a peace agreement entered into in Tripoli, Libya, on June 22 this year.

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