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LEAD Misuari-Arrested

NUR MISUARI ARRESTED ON SABAH ISLAND- IGP

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 24 (Bernama) -- Former Governor of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao, Nur Misuari, was arrested along with six of his followers on Pulau Jampiras, in Sabah waters early today, Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said.

He is wanted by the Philippine Government for declaring war against it.

Tan Sri Norian told a news conference at Bukit Aman National Police Headquarters that Misuari and his followers were arrested at 3.30am for entering Malaysia illegally.

Pulau Jampiras is the closest island to the Philippine-Malaysia international boundary, about 30 minutes by boat from Sandakan.

Norian said Misuari and his followers were believed to have entered Malaysia illegally via Jolo Island in Southern Philippines.

He however declined to say where the group was being held.

"We will inform the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur as soon as possible as we have to consider that he is wanted by the Philippine Government," he said.

He said police would make efforts to hand over Misuari to the Philippine Government as soon as possible.

"If the Philippine Embassy can make the arrangements, we will hand them over to the embassy authorities here so that they can bring him and the others back to their country," he said.

He said no weapons were found on them when they were arrested.

Norian said police believe that Misuari's presence here will be prejudicial to national security in view of the news that a revolt had taken place in the Southern Philippines and Nur Misuari was wanted in his country.

"We have cause for concern over the danger posed to national security for from news that had been received there is cooperation between the Misuari group and the Abu Sayyaf," he said.

The Inspector General of Police said the position of the Abu Sayyaf was clear-- they were involved in terrorism such as kidnapping Malaysians and others several months ago.

Norian said security personnel including military personnel had been increased on the Island of Jampiras.

Misuari and his followers were believed to have sneaked into Malaysia in an effort to secure political asylum.

However the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when asked by reporters this morning, said Malaysia was not prepared to grant political asylum to Misuari.

The Prime Minister had said that Misuari's dispute with the Philippine Government was an internal matter of the Philippines and Malaysia should not interfere by providing asylum to rebels from other countries.

Misuari, a former separatist guerilla leader in the 1970s, launched a rebellion last week following President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's support for a rival MNLF faction.

-- BERNAMA

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