

Zahid: Esscom operation info may have been leaked
MalaysiaKini.com
Sept 28th, 2016

Ahmad Zahid Hamidi today expressed worries over the possibility that certain quarters have been leaking information on the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom) security forces' operation methods to the extent of causing kidnapping cases to be rampant in the area.

The deputy prime minister said such action would give the enemies ample time and space to carry out criminal act against the country.

"I am not accusing, but everything is possible," he said in response to the robbery and kidnapping of a Malaysian skipper of a trawler boat by the Abu Sayyaf militant group in the waters off Semporna near Pulau Gaya, last night.

Speaking to reporters after closing the Islamic Consultative Council Economic Multaqa in Putrajaya today, Ahmad Zahid said the government had always been cautious when it comes to Abu Sayyaf group, which was reported to have been active in kidnapping and collecting ransom to finance the operation of a terrorist group known as Khatibah Nusantara.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said the Khatibah Nusantara was currently making an effort to unite various terrorist groups in South-East Asia.

In the 9.30pm incident yesterday, skipper Ruslan Sarapin, 39, was kidnapped by six armed men while fishing with his 26 crew members.

Half an hour after the incident, the same armed men robbed another 19-crew fishing boat in the waters off Tungku, Lahad Datu.

Ahmad Zahid also urged the public to play their roles in curbing the kidnapping and crime incidents in the area by channelling information to the authorities if there were any suspicious incidents along the 1,700km coast.

- *Bernama*

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