

US posts reward for Malaysian terror suspect
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The United States has posted a five-million dollar (RM17.5 million) reward for the capture of a Malaysian terror suspect wanted for several bombings in the Philippines, the State Department said on Tuesday.

"Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has authorized a new reward of up to five million dollars for information leading to the arrest or conviction of Zulkifli bin Hir (a.k.a. Marwan)," the State Department said in a statement.

Zulkifli, described as "a terrorist believed to be involved in multiple deadly bomb attacks in the Philippines," has also been added to the US most-wanted list.

He joins the United States' public enemy number one, Osama Bin Laden, mastermind of the Al-Qaeda network, who has a US\$25-million bounty on his head.

Zulkifli is believed to have been in hiding in the Philippines since August 2003 where he is involved in making bombs with the Abu Sayyaf group, which is linked to Al-Qaeda.

Born in 1966 in Muar, Johor, Zulkifli, a Malaysian citizen, allegedly heads the Kumpulun Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) terrorist organization and is a member of Jemaah Islamiyah's central command, the State Department said.

Jemaah Islamiyah remains Southeast Asia's most potent extremist group and is believed to have been behind a number of bombings in Indonesia, including attacks on the resort island of Bali in 2002 and 2005 in which more than 200 people were killed.

"Anyone with information on Zulkifli bin Hir, or on any past or planned act of international terrorism against United States persons or property anywhere in the world, is urged to contact the Rewards for Justice program," the State Department added.

Ferry bombing

The Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah groups have been blamed for the worst terror attacks in the Philippines including the bombing of a ferry off Manila Bay in 2004 which killed more than 200 people.

The Abu Sayyaf group was founded by Afghan-trained firebrand Abubakar Abdurajak Janjalani in the early 1990s to fight for an independent Islamic state in the southern Philippines.

Based in the southern state of Mindanao, it gained global notoriety following its kidnapping of foreign tourists on a remote Malaysian resort island for ransom in 2000.

Zulkifli's younger brother "Taufik bin Abdul Halim, a.k.a. Dany, was involved in the 2001 Jakarta Atrium Mall bombing, and currently is in detention in Indonesia," the statement added.

Since it was created in 1984, the US Rewards for Justice program has paid out some 62

millions dollars to more than 40 people who have fed US officials vital information leading to the arrest of wanted persons.

Some 36 names are currently on the list, including bin Laden, who has eluded capture since openly claiming responsibility for bringing down New York's World Trade Center in 2001.

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