

**Jakarta mulls joint patrols in disputed waters**  
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JAKARTA - Indonesia is looking into the possibility of temporarily turning disputed border areas with Malaysia into a jointly managed territory to avoid more border incidents.

Joint patrols in disputed waters is one of the ideas mooted, a move hailed by some experts, according to Jakarta Post.

Arief Havas Oegroseno, director general for international treaties and legal affairs at the Foreign Ministry, said the government would hold talks with Malaysia about possible options to manage the disputed territory before both countries could settle their sovereignty claims.

Ties between Indonesia and Malaysia frayed recently after three Indonesian officials from the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry were arrested by Malaysian authorities in waters off Riau Islands province, sparking public anger in Indonesia.

The waters are part of an area claimed by Malaysia after it issued its new map in 1979. Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur have pending maritime border settlements, covering the Malacca Strait, Singapore Strait, the South China Sea and the Sulawesi Sea.

Border negotiations have not started because Malaysia said it would have to clear up similar issues with Singapore before starting talks with Jakarta.

Havas reportedly said Jakarta was open to proposals for special operational arrangements in the territory that might see authorities from both sides engaged in joint patrols similar to the situation in the Malacca Strait.

"In the Malacca Strait, which is a more complex issue and covers also a large area, we managed to arrange a coordinated patrol with the Malaysian navy," said Havas, who has recently been installed as the new Indonesian ambassador to the European Union (EU).

"However, I have no details of the proposal and it is just one of the options we can explore [pending a decision on sovereignty claims]."

He said the area would have to be managed together and should not become a "no-go zone" because issues of navigation safety and environment in the area had to be addressed.

"We have to control the traffic of third-party vessels in the area and a 'no-go zone' would not be an option," he said, adding that another issues was how to manage fishing vessels from both countries in the disputed area.

"We have had a similar agreement with Malaysia on fishing vessel management since 1982 in certain areas where traditional fishermen from both countries are allowed to operate. It can be a model we can use," he said, according to Jakarta Post.

As border negotiations may take decades, experts have supported the idea, citing a similar case in which Indonesia and Australia jointly managed the Palung Timor area before the independence of Timor Leste.

"In spite of the dispute, both countries have to work out ways to arrange joint patrols because it is a vast area with important resources," University of Indonesia international law

lecturer Hikmahanto Juwana said. "It has to be managed together, because without it, we would only allow fishing vessels from third countries to take benefits."

He said the joint patrol proposal would not weaken Indonesia's claims over the territory, adding that, much like Palung Timor, it was common practice.

Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) security researcher Riefqi Muna said the idea was workable, but added that a joint patrol in the disputed area had to be well managed because it was a sensitive issue.

"The arrangements have to be clear because any loophole can turn into possible conflict," he said.

According to Jakarta Post, Defense Ministry spokesman I Wayan Midhio said activities in the disputed area could be managed by the General Border Committee between Indonesia and Malaysia, which was established since 1972 and undertakes joint operations in the border under the command of the defense ministry of each country.

"The arrangement of activities or operations allowed in the area can be discussed by the committee, which meets twice a year," he said. "The last meeting was in April and the next may be around November," he said.

Meanwhile, Malaysian news agency Bernama reported that Kuala Lumpur warned its citizens in Indonesia to be extra vigilant following demonstrations in front of the Malaysian ambassador's residence and rumors of raids on Malaysian nationals working in Malaysian-owned companies in Jakarta.

Angry crowds staged another protest Thursday in front of the Malaysian Embassy, demanding an apology for the arrest of the three Indonesian officials, who were arrested on charges of "kidnapping" seven Malaysian fishermen in the disputed area. — Jakarta Post

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