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Tanduo strike a success

NO CHOICE: Police, military unleash massive offensive against terrorists

LAHAT DATU

SECURITY forces successfully launched a major offensive at daybreak yesterday on Sulu terrorists following a 21-day stand-off that had left eight policemen dead and triggered panic in Sabah's east coast.

In a never-before-seen offensive, security forces yesterday unleashed a massive strike involving the police and the military on Kampung Tanduo near here, where the terrorists were holed up.

While the number of deaths among the terrorists following the strike, codenamed Ops Daulat, was not immediately known, what was obvious was the tremendous support shown by Malaysians for this course of action.

Malaysians had run out of compassion for this band of terrorists as numerous efforts undertaken by the governments of Malaysia and the Philippines to end the stand-off peacefully, were ignored.

Some 2,000 security personnel from the armed forces and police were deployed yesterday in a 2km area in Kampung Tanduo after airstrikes. There were no reports of casualties from the Malaysian side.

Morale among the security forces was high, despite the fact that they lost eight of their comrades in clashes with terrorists several days ago.

Just after the strike, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, de-



A Nuri helicopter departing for Kampung Tanduo to take part in an offensive against the terrorists holed up there. Bernama pic



OPS DAULAT
Blitz on terror
in Tanduo

livering an emotionally-packed speech at a gathering of Islamic scholars in Bukit Jalil, was firm when he spoke of their resoluteness in protecting Malaysia's sovereignty.

Najib, with a pained look as he narrated the grief he felt when meeting the widows of the policemen, also expressed his frustration that the terrorists had not heeded calls to withdraw and avoid bloodshed.

It was a tough call, but one that "as the leader of the government", Najib had to make.

The 16,000-odd crowd applaud-

ing in approval when Najib said the time for diplomacy had ended.

Nobody could have mistaken that as a show of arrogance. It was simply an endorsement that as the leader of the country, he was doing what needed to be done.

While some opposition leaders had politicised the issue, there were those who also threw their support behind yesterday's action.

Even Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, an ardent critic of the government, supported the move, urging Sabah folk to remain loyal to the country and not help the terrorists.

Yesterday, three weeks after the Sulu gunmen landed on our shores,

Malaysia and the Philippines agreed that they be labelled "terrorists".

This was decided at a meeting between Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman and his Philippine counterpart, Senator Albert F. del Rosario.

Anifah also asked that action be taken against the self-proclaimed Sultan of Sulu, Jamalul Kiram III, for inciting hatred and violence against Malaysians.

Yesterday's strike, however, is not the end of the issue.

Residents are afraid of reprisals by the terrorists but in a joint media briefing, the defence and home ministers assured Sabahans that they would always be protected.