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REPORTS BY FARRAH NAZ KARIM, BEN TAN, DESMOND DAVIDSON, ROY GOH, AVILA GERALDINE, JASSMINE SHADIQE, KRISTY INUS, HARIZ MOHD, JONISTON BANGKUI, M. HAMZAH JAMALUDIN, LEE SHI-IAN, OLIVIA MIWIL, PREDEEP NAMBIAR, ADIB POVERA, KOI KYE LEE AND KANYAKUMARI DAMODARAN

Hopeless, desperate situation for terrorists

NST - 10/3/2013

NOWHERE TO RUN:
Might and magic fail to provide relief for invaders

LAHAD DATU

CORNERED, hungry and cut off from all escape routes, the terrorists in Felda Sahabat are running out of options other than to lay down their arms and surrender unconditionally.

If they were hoping for reinforcements, that too, was dashed when Malaysian security forces stopped three boats and arrested 27 men off the coast of Felda Sahabat yesterday morning.

Police are checking if the detained were indeed reinforcements whom the terrorists were waiting for.

One gunman was killed yesterday while the rest are trapped between Kampung Tanduo and Tanjung Batu as security forces rained a barrage from 81mm mortars and 105mm howitzers.

The numbers also did not look

good for the terrorists — 53 dead and 106 captured. The amulets around their necks and waists, as discovered by security forces, were of no help.

Armed Forces Chief General Tan Sri Zulkefli Mohd Zin summed it up in one sentence: "They are running out of time and place."

A delegation from the Philippine embassy in Kuala Lumpur is now here hoping to speak to the gunmen currently held by Malaysian police. They also want firsthand information from ground zero and on the progress of *Ops Daulat*.



Outside the battle zone, the clampdown against illegal immigrants has begun in Kampung Simunul, Semporna, where crack commando units raided the squatter settlement yesterday looking for sympathisers and hidden weapons.

The raiding parties left four hours later with bags filled with items they had seized from the squatter homes. But the authorities were tight-lipped about the seizures.

While the onslaught continues in Felda Sahabat, in nearby towns, two high-powered meetings will be held today and tomorrow in Kota Kinabalu to hasten the implementation of the Special Security Area (SSA)



An army truck towing a howitzer into Felda Sahabat in Lahad Datu to be used against the terrorists. Pix by Effendy Rashid

along the east coast of Sabah, stretching from Tawau to Kudat.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein reiterated that the SSA was not mere rhetoric and the government was setting it up immediately.

Sabahans were hoping that with the establishment of the SSA, which would see five extra battalions of police and soldiers stationed along the east coast of the state, the longstanding problem of illegal immigrants could be curbed.

Meanwhile, the battle on the political front here and in the Philippines intensified after Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi revealed that intelligence agencies in both countries were probing claims that the Sabah intrusion was instigated by three parties — a faction against Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, the Malaysian opposition and a small group paid by certain quarters.

The allegations, from sources within the Philippine authorities, were published by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and a Canadian news portal.



A General Operations Force personnel checking the documents of passengers in a van near the entrance of Felda Sahabat in Lahad Datu.