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## Military should be called in as last resort, says expert

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**PETALING JAYA:** The military should only be called in to settle the stand-off in the east coast of Sabah as a last resort, says an expert.

Principal fellow at Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM) Lt-Kol (R) Ahmad Ghazali Abu Hassan said military forces should be used as a last option for both diplomatic and safety reasons.

"Sending in the army is a totally different approach.

"There will be no negotiations and maximum force will be used," said Lt-Kol (R) Ahmad Ghazali.

He said the Sulu gunmen were likely to adopt guerilla tactics rather than confront the security forces head-on.

He added that while there may be small pockets among the local population who could act as a "fifth column", this was highly unlikely.

Assoc Prof Dr Aruna Gopinath, also from UPNM, questioned why the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was not helping to facilitate talks with the gunmen.

"I feel they should help in negotiations with the dissident group," she said in a phone interview.

She said the Sulu province was part of the Oct 15 peace framework between the Philippine government and MILF that was brokered by Malaysia.

"This group wants money from the Malaysian Government and we shouldn't bow to their demands," she said.

Meanwhile, Lt-Kol (R) Hardial Dhaliwal said the commandos in Semporna and Lahad Datu should be fully equipped.

"The General Operations Force should wear ballistic helmets, be in full uniform and carry extra ammunition," he said.

He added that a photo of a GOF commando wearing civilian clothing and pointing his weapon at the ground was "improper".

"They should practise proper protocol and take safety measures. Being in full uniform also makes them look more intimidating," he said.



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