

Newspaper	The Star
Date	16/3/2013

> Reports by P.K. KATHARASON, MUGUNTAN VANAR, PHILIP GOLINGAI, SHAUN HO, STEPHANIE LEE, ZUHRIN AZAM AHMAD, NICHOLAS CHENG and EILEEN NG

# Azimuddie may be in **Tawi-Tawi**

Security forces conclude that Sulu terrorist leader abandoned men

The Star - 16/3/2013

 isnap me for more photos > <http://thestar.com.my/isnap>

Ops  
**Daulat**

Conflict in Sabah

**KOTA KINABALU:** Sulu terrorist leader Azimuddie Kiram has fled to his native southern Philippines, Armed Forces Chief Tan Sri Zulkifeli Mohd Zin said.

He said security forces had come to this conclusion after vetting through various information.

"Azimuddie has abandoned his men and fled to his homeland," Zulkifeli said in a joint media conference with Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar late yesterday.

Ismail said feedback from security forces' commanders on the ground had also indicated that Azimuddin was no longer with his men.

This comes as 35 gunmen face criminal charges after being apprehended in Tawi-Tawi waters three days ago by Filipino authorities while fleeing *Ops Daulat*.

Yesterday, Tawi-Tawi governor Sadikul Sahari said although Azzimudie was not among the 35, the armed group's leader remained a "wanted man" by the order of President Benigno Aquino.

"Our police and navy are on the



**Planning their next move:** Security forces discussing their strategy in the front lines of Ops Daulat.

lookout for him," he said, declining to comment on talks that the 72-year-old was lying low in one of the many islands in the province.

Sadikul told *The Star* that another group of 50 Filipinos had reached Taganak island and were on their way to Bongao.

"I do not know if they are from the battle area but I was told that they

are ordinary Filipinos fleeing Sabah."

There has been no sign of Azzimudie since the March 5 bombardment of Tanduo village, although his family members in Manila insisted that he was alive and was with his followers in the operations area.

Meanwhile, the Philippines' Justice Secretary Leila DeLima said among the charges brought against

the 35 members of the so-called "Royal Sulu Army" was for inciting war.

She said cases of violations against the Election Gun Ban and Article 118 of the Revised Penal Code for Inciting to War or Giving Motives for Reprisals would be filed before the Bongao, Tawi-Tawi Regional Trial Court.