

PM: No more negotiations with Filipino intruders
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By Mohd Farhan Darwis

PETALING JAYA, March 2 — Malaysia will be wielding an iron rod in dealing with the armed Filipino Muslim rebel group that is resisting requests for them to leave Sabah peacefully, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.

The group has broken the law and must choose to surrender or face action from national security forces, the prime minister told reporters at the military airfield in Subang Jaya today after receiving the bodies of two commandos who were killed yesterday in a shootout with a 100-strong Sulu army in a coastal village near Lahad Datu, Sabah.

“The government is taking the stand, the time to consider the group’s request is over.

“We are firm in this matter because what they had done was a serious criminal act... they trespassed and killed police officers and injured our security forces personnel... They have only two choices, give up or receive action from our security forces,” he said.

Najib also said he had informed Philippine President Benigno Aquino III of Malaysia’s stand following yesterday’s gunfire exchange.

“I phoned President Aquino last night, and told him there was a shootout earlier yesterday morning.

“According to the report I received and which was confirmed by the VAT69 Commando force, they were entrapped by this group... some had raised a white flag as a sign of surrender but another group had shot at them,” he said, the last in a reference to Malaysian policemen.

“This was this group’s trap, they carried out that tactic, that coward’s tactic,” the prime minister said.

The bodies of the two commandos killed in action in Kampung Tanduo, Insp Zulkifli Mamat, 29, and Cpl Sabaruddin Daud, 46, were flown back in a military aircraft.

It departed from Tawau airport in Sabah at 7.55am and landed at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang Jaya at 12.30pm today, where they were met by their kin and government officials who had been waiting two hours, since 10.30am.

They were accorded full police honours.

Among those present to offer their last respects were Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah, the prime minister’s wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Abu Seman Yusuf, Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Datuk Seri Noh Omar, Deputy Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar, Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim and Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

RMAF public relations officer, Major Kamarulzaman Ali was reported as saying Zulkifli’s body would be flown to the air force base in Gong Kedak, Kelantan for burial in his hometown in

Kampung Kubang Ikan, Besut, Terengganu.

The young commando's casket was accompanied by his pregnant widow, Noraziah Noor, and their two young sons.

Sabaruddin's body would be taken to his hometown in Sungai Lias, Sungai Besar, Sabak Bernam for burial.

He left his wife, Nurunisa Abu Bakar, and three children — two sons and a daughter.

A Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leader reportedly warned that the Lahad Datu gunfight could spark off a civil war in Sabah, while the Sultanate of Sulu said its group of fighters, which had set foot here about three weeks ago, will continue their fight.

Three other police commandos, Cpl Mohd Tarmizi Hashim, 32, Cpl Azman Ampong, 39, and Constable Mohamad Qaiyum'aiqal Zolkifli, 22, were also hurt in yesterday's shootout.

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