

**'ESSCOM failed, DG must go'**  
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**Oleh P Ramani**

KUALA LUMPUR: Sabah opposition members of parliament today condemned the government for the Eastern Sabah Command Area's (ESSCOM) failure to provide security on the east coast of Sabah.

This follows abduction of a Chinese tourist and a female hotel employee from a resort in Sabah last night.

Kota Kinabalu MP Jimmy Wong Sze Phin and Sandakan MP Stephen Wong Tien Fatt in a joint statement issued at parliament said the episode was "a disgrace to the nation and shows the world that Sabah's water border protection is vulnerable".

Hong Kong-based daily South China Morning Post today reported that the incident occurred at 10.30pm, at the Singamata Reef Resort, Semporna located in eastern Sabah.

According to Jimmy, almost RM286 million had been allocated to strengthen ESSCOM and his question to the government was: "with such a huge allocation how come ESSCOM failed, again?".

"How can armed men easily enter Sabah borders, kidnap hostages and leave without being noticed?

"How come Malaysian security units did not notice the offensive approach of these armed men?" asked Jimmy.

Stephen said, "If the sovereignty of Sabah is easily challenged and offended despite the existence of ESSCOM then it means ESSCOM's entire security has failed."

"We cannot accept these repeated kidnapping incidents and it clearly shows the credibility of ESSCOM is highly doubtful."

ESSCOM was established after the Sulu incursion at Lahad Datu in early February last year.

In November last year, a Taiwanese tourist was kidnapped and her husband shot dead at Pom Pom island near Semporna.

**DG should apologise and resign**

Stephen also urged ESSCOM director-general Mohammad Mentek to make a public apology, step down and claim responsibility for ESSCOM's failure.

The MP's said they believe in the possibility of the 'armed men' being illegal immigrants who have been allowed to stay in Sabah for decades.

Both MP's also urged Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein to visit Sabah to monitor the

situation and to take a leading role in the hostage rescue operation.

Meanwhile Sabah state assembly speaker Salleh Said Keruak said the incident was regrettable.

“Let the police investigate it and we hope that they (the kidnappers) are not using this to further strain relations between Malaysia and China,” he told FMT in a brief SMS.

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