

Malaysia gets into US State Department's good books

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KUALA LUMPUR, The US Department of State has applauded Malaysia for demonstrating its “political will at the highest levels of government” in confronting the threat of Islamic State (IS) and other terrorist groups, according to its Country Reports on Terrorism 2014.

According to the report available online, Malaysia’s legal system was one of the reasons why the country managed to curb terrorist threats and disrupted its plots before they were carried out.

“Malaysia has laws against conspiracy, attempt, incitement, solicitation, aiding, abetting and promoting terrorist acts, and most of the same inchoate offences that are prosecutable in the United States.

“However, as authorities were unable to file charges in roughly half of the terrorism-related arrests, a significant challenge is Malaysia’s need to strengthen proactive cooperation between police and prosecutors from the outset of an investigation,” said the report.

“Malaysia continued to participate in the Department of State’s Anti-terrorism Assistance programme, with programmes focused on strengthening law enforcement capacity to secure Malaysia’s borders from terrorist transit.”

The report, which was released today, also stressed that, despite the public’s perception that Malaysia was becoming a port for the terrorists, the country is actually “not a terrorist safe haven”.

However, the report stated that Malaysia needed to be concerned about the activities of violent extremist groups operating in isolated areas of the Sulawesi seas bordering the Sulu Archipelago and southern Philippines as these areas were listed as terrorist safe havens.

“Although Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have improved efforts to control their shared maritime boundaries — including through US-funded efforts to enhance domain awareness in the waters south and southwest of Mindanao — the expanse remained difficult to control.”

The main challenge for Malaysia, according to the report, was to strengthen the cooperation between enforcement agencies and prosecutors from the outset of an investigation since authorities were unable to file charges in nearly half of terrorism-related arrests.

“The US government conducted a three-day workshop for over 60 Malaysian police and prosecutors designed to promote greater cooperation in the proactive investigation and prosecution of terrorism cases,” the report added.

It also noted Malaysia’s well-developed framework to counter financing of terrorism, given fears that the country was becoming a terrorist finance hub.

The yearly Country Reports on Terrorism was prepared under Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f (the “Act”), which requires the Department of State to provide the Congress with a complete report on terrorism for those countries and groups meeting the criteria of the Act.

For further reading on the report please click on the link:

<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2014/index.htm>

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