

# Ground attacks after airstrikes

**LAHAD DATU:** Security forces went on a second round of ground attacks as they struck the hideout of the terrorists in Kampung Tanduo yesterday afternoon.

Explosions were heard again, some six hours after jet fighters dropped bombs on the coastal village.

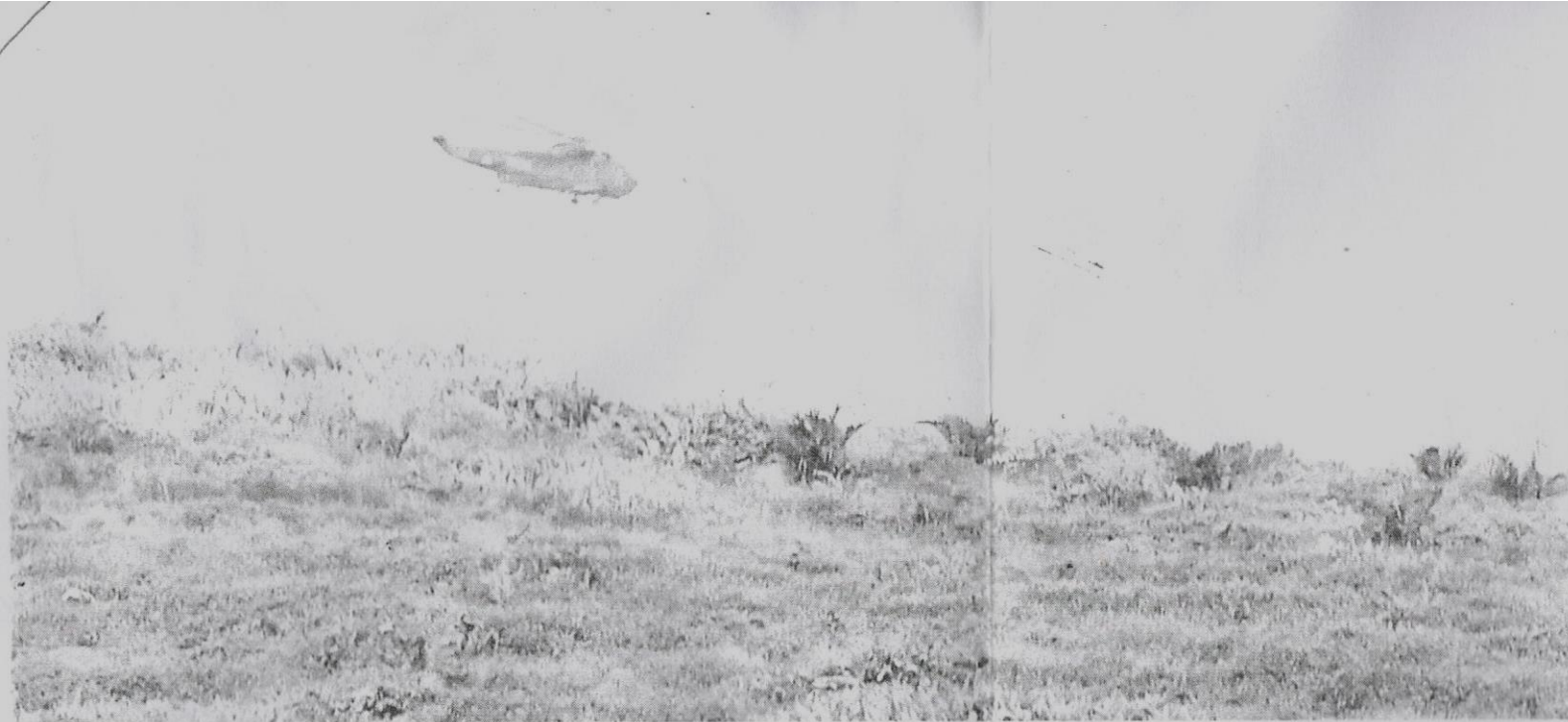
The explosions were heard 10km away.

However, there were no airstrikes in the second attack which began at about 4.30pm.

Most roads leading in and out of Felda Sahabat, which is twice the size of Singapore, remained heavily guarded.

Just after the second attack, the *New Straits Time* team took a boat out to sea to have a closer look at ground zero from a safe distance.

From about 1km away, the explosions, which rang out every five to 10 minutes, could be clearly heard.



A helicopter hovering above the area where the terrorists are holed up in **Felda Sahabat 17**, yesterday.

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# Ground troops move in for mopping-up operations

## HEAVY ATTACKS:

# Security forces looking for bodies of terrorists

### LAHAD DATU

THE offensive against the Sulu terrorists continued yesterday evening as the Malaysian security forces inched their way into a 4km-radius area within Kampung Tanduo where the enemies are believed to be holed up.

As of yesterday evening, security forces who were on a mopping

exercise did not locate any bodies.

This was following two rounds of heavy attacks which took place about nine hours apart.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar said the security forces who went into the enemy stronghold had to be extra cautious as the Sulu terrorists could be still hiding in the Sahabat 17 oil palm plantation which has rugged terrain.

"I have instructed my ground commanders to be extra cautious as they sweep the area," he told reporters at the Felda Residence Sahabat. Also present was Sabah police commissioner

Datuk Hamza Taib.

"We want to ensure the safety of our troops as this operation is still going on."

Ismail also brushed off reports by a spokesman of the Sulu Sultanate who claimed that the security forces had suffered fatalities.

"This is not true. None of our personnel were injured or killed."

On whether the terrorists had escaped to nearby villages such as Tanjung Batu, Ismail said he hoped that was not the case, but stressed the ground operations will continue to weed them out.

On Sunday, villagers in Tanjung



Batu and Tanjung Labian began to leave their homes after noticing the presence of armed men near the coastal villages.

The gunmen were seen coming out from a plantation area. Some of them were clad in army fatigues.

Meanwhile, security personnel told the *New Straits Times* team it may take time before the bodies of the terrorists were found.

They said in operations such as this, men on the ground would not immediately go into an area which had been levelled by bombs.

The ground forces would have to go in first to ensure that the area was clear of enemies.

Sweeping of the area would only be done after this, they said.

The sky above Kampung Tanduo was overcast by thick smoke.

With a helicopter hovering above the village which was under heavy attack, the team saw navy vessels lining up on the shores of Kampung Tanduo.

When the team left the point where we were anchored for over an hour, at about 6pm, explosions could still be heard.

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