

Kampung Tandu remains a 'red zone'

NST 7/3/13
MS 3

FIGHT STILL GOING ON: Gunfire and mortar blasts heard as forces extend search

Flashpoints: situation in the east coast of Sabah

INFOGRAPHIC: NST



KAMPUNG Tanduo yesterday remained a "red zone" area despite the area being bombarded twice by the armed forces and police on Tuesday.

Authorities revealed there were at least three exchanges of gunfire, two within Kampung Tanduo and another near Tanjung Batu about 4pm. Mortar blasts were also heard. The security forces have also extended their search as they make their way into the area where the band of terrorists is still believed to be lurking.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar said several terrorists were shot but he could not confirm their number or if they were killed.

The authorities have also not discounted the possibility that the terrorists have broken through the earlier security cordon and may have gone into nearby villages where they could have blended in with the villagers or plantation workers.

Ismail urged the public to remain

calm despite the cordon being extended as the security forces "are in a good position".

Earlier in the afternoon, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said security forces, who were carrying out their mopping-up exercise at Kampung Tanduo, discovered 13 bodies in two shallow graves.

He said several weapons were also found.

Twelve of the 13 terrorists were believed to have been killed in the shootout with security forces on Friday.

The 13th man was killed in an exchange early yesterday in Kampung Tanduo.

The discovery of the shallow graves by personnel from the criminal investigations and forensic departments was interrupted when shooting broke out between the security forces and the terrorists.

Both sides retreated and no one was hurt.

Zahid said the operation remained dangerous and difficult due to the challenging landscape and the threat posed by the ter-

"Do not belittle the ability of the police and the armed forces. They are the best and our spirits remain high. The cooperation between the two has brought encouraging results."

Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi
defence minister



SEMPORNA

Police arrest four men suspected of being informers for the terrorists as the hunt for those involved in the Simunul shooting continues.

KUNAK

An uneasy calm has settled on this town. Residents came out yesterday to stock up on food supplies and get medical treatment. The hunt for terrorists here is still on.

LAHAD DATU

Kampung Tanduo is still a red zone. Security forces clashed with terrorists on three occasions yesterday.

rorists lurking in the area.

He denied allegations that the security forces were slow and inefficient.

"Whatever is happening here is something that must be accepted and we cannot have different opinions over this.

"These are the realities on the ground, the frontline.

"Do not belittle the ability of the police and the armed forces.

"They are the best and our spirits remain high.

"The cooperation between the two has brought encour-

aging results."

Present at the press conference was Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

Zahid then showed photographs of the dead terrorists taken at the scene.

The photographs of the two mass graves indicated there were nine bodies in one and three in the other.

The other body was that of the man killed in the exchange of fire yesterday morning.

"We will continue providing the media alerts, updates and breaking

news to show the people what we have done," said Hishammuddin.

This was to convince people that security forces were trying their best, he added.

Hishammuddin reiterated that the mopping-up and search operation was not easy and pointed out that even when the area was cleared, there were attacks when the forensics and criminal investigation departments teams went in.

"This shows there were those who managed to escape after the strike," Hishammuddin said.

Suspected informer among 4 held in Semporna

SEMPORNA: Police nabbed four men, including one who was suspected to be an informer for the terrorists involved in Saturday's shoot-out here, in an operation yesterday.

The operation began at noon when two teams of policemen, armed with automatic rifles and sub-machine guns, entered a village, located next to an oil palm plantation.

Another team surrounded an ad-

jacent village called Kampung Airport.

It was learnt that police were acting on information that several men were acting suspiciously in the area.

One of them was picked up on the road leading to Kampung Airport, about 500m from the Sri Wangsa army camp there.

The police teams went in and raided two houses. They nabbed two men in one of the houses. Two women and four children in the

house were not taken.

After the operation, police stopped an illegal taxi which was entering Kampung Airport, before checking its passenger. A man, who was a refugee from the Philippines, was detained for questioning.

One of the suspects had methamphetamine in his pocket while two others were illegals from southern Philippines. The fourth man was a Malaysian.

Scores of operations and raids

have been conducted in the villages and plantations here to track down the terrorists involved in the shoot-out in Simunul where six security personnel and six terrorists were killed.

A police officer said they received nearly 50 tip-offs on suspicious men lurking in the district daily.

Among the information police received was about armed men going to a village in Batu 3 here to ask for food before disappearing into a

nearby oil palm plantation. There was also a tip-off that armed men had killed a taxi driver.

Later in the afternoon, in Tanjung Labian, Lahad Datu, two men who walked out of a plantation were nabbed by security forces.

A witness said the two men, wearing T-shirts and shorts, walked with their arms raised towards the security forces who ordered them to lie face down on the ground before arresting them.