

Indonesia, Philippines forge cooperation to secure Sulu Sea

JP thejakartapost.com/seasia/2016/07/01/indonesia-philippines-forge-cooperation-to-secure-sulu-sea.html

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The Jakarta Post

Jakarta | Fri, July 1, 2016 | 09:21 pm



Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi speaks during a hearing at the House of Representatives in Jakarta. (Antara/-)

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Indonesia and the Philippines have agreed to work toward realizing concrete steps to secure the increasingly dangerous waters of the Sulu Sea through the establishment of a sea lane corridor, a minister has said.

"Indonesia is ready to cooperate with the Philippines across various areas related to the issue, including defense, security and development cooperation," Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi said in a statement released on Friday.

Retno met with her Philippine counterpart Perfecto Yasay in Manila on Friday to discuss efforts to ensure the safety of vessels traveling across the southern Philippine waters, the scene of multiple instances of piracy and hijacking recently.

The meeting, which came one day after the inauguration of the new administration under President Rodrigo Duterte, also aimed to intensify coordination between both governments to release seven Indonesian crewmen taken hostage by armed Philippine militants in Sulu waters.

Retno said concrete maritime cooperation between Indonesia and the Philippines would be carried out in accordance to existing agreements between the two countries, such as the 1975 Border Patrol Agreement, the Yogyakarta trilateral declaration on maritime security on May 5, which also involves Malaysia, and defense force agreements from the bilateral meeting between the two countries' defense ministers on June 26.

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