



Interview of General Henri BENTEGEAT

Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

Released to Mrs Fransisca Romana NINIK

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DEFENCE: ASEAN-EU strengthen Military Cooperation

Jakarta, Kompas - Chairman of the EU Military Committee General Henri Bentégeat visited Indonesia on 15-16 October 2009 to strengthen ASEAN-EU military cooperation. The following is a brief interview between Kompas and General Bentégeat, Friday (16/10) in Jakarta, on the issue.

What sort of cooperation is planned between ASEAN and EU?

We would like to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN and several of its member countries in the sector of security and defence. We are pleased of the fact that ASEAN decided to establish the third pillar, i.e. security community. When I say cooperation, this means two-ways, such as dialogue, exchange of experience and concrete cooperation.

More specifically, the cooperation will be in the areas of disaster mitigation; maritime security, particularly eradicating piracy in the Malaka Straits; and operations in support of peacekeeping.

What about the issue of terrorism? Are terrorist attacks a security threat for Southeast Asia?

When I met with some ASEAN defence ministers, common external threats towards Southeast Asian countries were not discussed. Obviously there are concerns about stability due to terrorist attacks, but terrorism cannot be seen as a large threat for the region.

We largely discussed ways of confronting radicalism, extremism. According to the Indonesian Minister of Defence (Juwono Sudharsono), the issue is clear, that handling terrorism is more of a political action, and not through military approach.

The situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan can affect security anywhere in the world, not just Southeast Asia.

Does ASEAN need a model such as the ESDP?

ASEAN and the EU has some commonalities in terms of their process. Perhaps in the future, ASEAN will also have a military committee. However, UE cannot be viewed as a model as our environment and background are different.

Nevertheless, we can share our experience with ASEAN about our mistakes so as not repeat them and about our achievements through ESDP. When we established ESDP 10

years ago, we only thought of a military operation to resolve crisis. However, this approach changed quickly to a civilian and military approach.

So when a crisis occurs, we think of the civilian approach first. If this is not enough, then a military operation. In the last 6 years, we have deployed 6 military operations and 17 civilian missions. Despite this, we do not ignore the option of using military force.

What are the most difficult obstacles (of ESDP)?

The most difficult part is its implementation. Aside from political will, the largest obstacle is the ability to act together (inter-operability) when carrying out a military approach.