

## **Old threats, new approach and national security in Malaysia: issues and challenges in dealing with cross-border crime in east coast of Sabah**

### **Abstract**

For centuries there has been the free movement of people and goods across North Borneo to its neighbouring countries, primarily Indonesia and Philippines. However, when Sabah gained independence through the formation of Malaysian in 1963, such activities which were previously considered legal, are now labeled as smuggling and illegal entry, and are thus an existential security threat to Malaysia. Porous and an extremely long border have made it difficult for the state to address the rise of these incidents. The intrusion of Sabah by members of so-called the Royal Sulu Army in 2013 was the last straw. The incident drove the government to establish a civil-military command known as Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM). It was an organization under which all enforcement agencies such as police, army, immigration, marine, coast guard etc, will be coordinated under one command system. The objective of this study is to identify the measures and challenges for ESSCOM and Malaysian government in dealing with Sabah's East Coast of maritime security. The review will be mainly focused on the nature of the threat, the reasons for the ESSCOM establishment and policy measures taken to strengthen Sabah's maritime security