

MAHATHIR-ISLAND

33 (P)  
KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT. 15 (BERNAMA) -- (DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY OFFICIAL PROTEST FROM CHINA OVER THE PRESENCE OF MALAYSIAN TROOPS IN TERUMBU LAYANG-LAYANG.

HE WAS SPEAKING TO NEWSMEN AFTER MEETING THE COMMANDER OF THE INDONESIAN ARMED FORCES, GENERAL TAN SRI BENNY MOERDANI, HERE.

THE CHIEF OF MALAYSIA'S DEFENCE FORCES JEN. TAN SRI MOHAMED GHAZALI SETH, HAD RECENTLY SAID THAT 10 TO 20 SOLDIERS HAD BEEN SENT TO THE TINY CORAL ATOLL LAYANG-LAYANG, ABOUT 60 KM SOUTHEAST OF VIETNAMESE-HELD PULAU KECIL AMBOYNA.

MALAYSIA HAD RECEIVED A PROTEST NOTE FROM VIETNAM DEMANDING MALAYSIA TO WITHDRAW FROM LAYANG-LAYANG RECENTLY BUT DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KADIR SHEIKH FADZIR WHILE STATING THAT THE ATOLL HAD ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE MALAYSIAN TERRITORY, REMINDED HANOI OF THE MALAYSIAN PROTEST AGAINST THE OCCUPATION OF PULAU KECIL AMBOYNA. -- MORE 1815/OM

ZCZC NO85:

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BOTH THE MALAYSIAN AND VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENTS HAD, SINCE PULAU KECIL AMBOYNA CAME INTO DISPUTE A FEW YEARS AGO, AGREED TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE.

YESTERDAY, AN AGENCY REPORT FROM PEKING SAID CHINA HAD PROTESTED AGAINST MALAYSIA'S RECENT OCCUPATION OF THE LAYANG-LAYANG ATOLL IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA SPRATLY ISLANDS CHAIN.

IT SAID THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION OF THE CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY, QI HUAIYUAN, IN VOICING THE PROTEST, DID NOT SPECIFICALLY NAME MALAYSIA AS THE COUNTRY WHOSE TROOPS HAD OCCUPIED THE ATOLL.

IT SAID QI HUAIYUAN REAFFIRMED CHINA'S CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SPRATLY ISLANDS AND ADDED THAT ONE OF THE ATOLLS HAD JUST BEEN +ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED.+

THESE SPRATLY ISLANDS AND ATOLLS ARE BELIEVED TO BE RICH IN OFFSHORE OIL. -- BERNAMA 1819/OM