

# PM: Their presence, sympathy for the Bosnian Our peacekeepers

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KUALA BERANG, Tues. — Malaysian peacekeepers will stay put in Bosnia despite the renunciation by the Serbs of its treaties with the United Nations and talk of troop evacuation by Western powers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Our presence there helped boost the morale of the people of Bosnia who believe no one else has shown sympathy to their plight," the Prime Minister said.

However, he said, orders have been given to 27 Malaysian military staff who are UN military observers (UNMO) to withdraw and report to the Malaysian Battalion (Malbatt) Headquarters in Konjic.

"We have given instructions that no one must allow themselves to be captured by the Serbs. We don't know if we can avoid (being captured), but instructions had been given," he added.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a news conference at the end of his half-day visit to Tasik Kenyir.

Earlier, he attended a briefing by Gadek Berhad chairman Datuk Yahya Ahmad and Central Terengganu Development Authority general manager Wan

"And when they are captured, the UN will give this as a reason for not attacking the Serb forces. Actually, it's useless. We have observers who became a problem to us.

"They (the observers) are not observing the mistakes made by the Serbs. Even when the Serbs make mistakes, they cannot do anything."

Given the recent turn of events with the Serbs taking advantage of the lightly-armed international peacekeepers as hostages, he wondered if "those running the peacekeeping operations understand their job."

He said these people failed to understand that terrorists like the Serbs cannot be handled with a "velvet glove" because "they only understand the use of force."

"But the UN still wants to negotiate and has been unwilling to fight the Serbs. If this is the case, they should just give the weapons to the Bosnians and let them defend themselves."

On a *Reuter* report today quoting the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a morning daily, that the Australian intelligence services had put several foreign missions including the Malaysian High Commission under surveillance. Dr Mahathir said this was nothing new.

## plight a morale booster will stay

Razak Ismail. Also present was Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar.

Meanwhile, all 27 military observers had arrived in Konjic, a Malbatt Headquarters spokesman told the *New Straits Times* in a telephone interview from here.

Malaysia has 1,533 Malaysian peacekeepers based in Konjic, Visoko, Pazaric, Jablanica in Bosnia Herzegovina and Split in Croatia. It has 27 military staff who are assigned as UN military observers.

Bosnian Serbs have captured more than 400 peacekeepers and military observers from several countries including Britain, Canada, and France and used them as hostages or human shields to deter the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) from bombing its ammunition depots.

Canada and France have warned they would withdraw their forces if their soldiers continued to be threatened by the Serbs, but to-date, the UN has only spoken of such evacuation as a measure of last resort while pursuing peaceful negotiations.

Dr Mahathir said one reason why the military observers were captured was because they tried to save themselves when confronted by the Serb forces.

"Australia is like that. It's all right for them to do such a thing but it's definitely wrong if we do it."

In fact, he was told by the Malaysian Ambassador during a visit to Australia some time ago not to discuss any sensitive matters in his hotel room as the former feared the premises might be bugged.

"This is the way they treat their guests. But I am not complaining," he said, adding the Government would normally conduct an electronic sweep to ensure there were no bugging devices in the Malaysian mission.

In Kota Baru, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said there was no reason for Australia to engage in such surveillance and eavesdropping operations against foreign missions in Canberra.

"Australia and Malaysia have good relations. There is no reason why such spying activities should be conducted on our embassy," he told reporters here.

"However, if the report is true, I regard it as, an unfriendly act and we will certainly lodge a strong protest. I will write to (Australian Foreign Minister) Gareth Evans demanding such acts to be stopped immediately," said Abdullah.