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Protest note for Ramsay on arrival

Carolyn Hong; Tony Emmanuel

PETALING JAYA, Wed. - United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Energy, Sanctions and Commodities William Ramsay, arrived this afternoon and was whisked away, eluding waiting protestors and journalists.

He arrived at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah International Airport in Subang, aboard a British Airways flight from Heathrow, London at 2.50pm.

Ramsay was met at the arrival hall's Gate One by US Embassy's security personnel and left the airport through a pre-arranged security route.

His arrival was awaited by about 50 protestors from the Malaysian Youth Council, led by 4B Youth Movement president Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam.

Also present was the MYC secretary-general Saifuddin Abdullah.

They gathered outside the VIP lounge with placards denouncing the US administration's move to investigate Petronas' gas deal in Iran, but Ramsay did not come through the lounge which was booked for 3pm to 4pm.

However, Mohd Ali who went into the VIP lounge, later told reporters that he did meet Ramsay and handed him a protest letter from the 4B Youth Movement.

"He looked surprised when I introduced myself and handed him the protest letter. He nodded, took the letter and continued walking," he said, adding that Ramsay did not say anything to him.

Mohd Ali said he told Ramsay that the youths objected strongly to the US Government's move to probe Petronas because US cannot impose its law on other countries.

"In the letter, we also reiterated that we object strongly to the move by the 34 Congressmen who asked our Prime Minister to make a public apology and to resign," he said.

Realising that they would not be able to voice their objections to the high-ranking US official, the protestors later "staged a show" for the media. They held up their placards, and shouted *Hidup Malaysia, Hidup Mahathir and Hidup Petronas*, several times.

Saifuddin said Ramsay was welcome to visit Malaysia as a guest but not to investigate Petronas. He said Malaysian companies cannot be told by the US where to conduct their business.

Ramsay will meet Foreign Ministry's Acting Under-Secretary for American Division Mohamed Arshad Manzoor Hussain tomorrow, to "exchange views" on the US Iran-Libya Sanctions Act 1996, which threatens sanctions against companies which invest more than US\$20 million (RM66 million) in either country.

Petronas has a 30 per cent stake in the US\$2 billion project, with Total SA of France and Gazprom of Russia, to develop the South Pars gas field.

Two others, Canada's Bow Valley and Indonesia's Bakrie Group, are also said to be under investigation by the US Government, for having signed agreements with Iran for a separate project.

The US Government had stated that Ramsay's visit was "not meant to tell Malaysia what to do but more to understand" each other's positions.

"He will be here to talk about the law (Iran-Libya Sanctions Act 1996) and how it might apply or have an impact on the corporations which are involved in this deal in Iran," US Ambassador to Malaysia John R. Malott had said on Monday.

Ramsay has also visited Paris and Moscow to discuss this law and will head for Jakarta tomorrow.

His visit has drawn strong criticisms from Malaysians against the US which is seen as undermining Malaysia's sovereignty.

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