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RMAF aircraft on evacuation mission to Solomons

PETALING JAYA, Tues. - Malaysia is sending two military aircraft to the strife-torn Solomon Islands to evacuate some 200 Malaysians.

The Royal Malaysian Air Force C-130s would leave tomorrow. They were expected to make a stop in Papua New Guinea.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the aircraft would also bring home some Philippine nationals.

The Philippine Government had asked for assistance to bring back its citizens who were stranded on the island nation, he said at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah airport in Subang.

Syed Hamid was among several Cabinet Ministers who were at the airport to welcome Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who returned from a one-week visit to Japan.

Syed Hamid said earlier plans to bring the Malaysians home using Australian ships could not be carried out due to the large number of people involved.

"It is better to evacuate them now due to the uncertain situation in that country. They can go back when everything is back to normal."

He said the aircraft were being sent after the Malaysians requested for assistance to get out of the country.

This followed a directive from the authorities there to foreign nationals to leave.

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