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## A budding friendship

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - One of the most important international friendships that might emerge from the war on terrorism is that between the US and Malaysia.

In his article "Emerging Friendships", which appeared in the Washington Times on Dec 11, columnist Doug Bandow said Washington was filled with advocates of expanding the war on terrorism but that America would do best working with friendly countries.

He said, for instance, Malaysian police had arrested Nur Misuari, the Filipino Muslim insurgent turned provincial Governor, who fled the Philippines after staging an uprising on the island of Jolo in which 160 people were killed.

Bandow said though Malaysia's relationship with the Clinton administration had often been difficult, it was serious about combating terrorism.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had expressed his condolences after the World Trade Center attacks and endorsed Washington's goal of eradicating terrorism.

Bandow added that at a recent conference at the School for Advanced International Studies, there was general agreement that the increased tempo of meetings and visits between the two nations suggested a warming relationship.

Such contacts could reach beyond the immediate concern of breaking international links to terrorist Osama bin Laden.

A senior fellow at the Cato Institute and a nationally syndicated columnist, Bandow said improving relations between Malaysia and America would take work.

For instance, he said, while Dr Mahathir had criticised the bombing of Afghanistan, he had to contend with Islamic radicalism at home.

He said Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor led a protest at the US embassy and Pas secretary-general Nasharudin Mat Isa had declared the bombing to be a clear act of terrorism by America against the innocent people of Afghanistan.

Bandow said ethnic tensions were evident in Malaysia as elsewhere in Southeast Asia but Dr Mahathir had managed a more successful balancing act than other leaders.

"However, he now finds it more difficult to win support from both Chinese and Malays, his traditional strategy."

Although Pas had won support from some younger and more moderate professionals, its leadership tends toward theocracy.

There had been worrisome indications of violent fundamentalist activity.

Bandow said the Government warned that the extremist organisation, Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, had been involved in assassinations, bombings and robberies. It had also apparently co-operated in violent attacks in Indonesia.

He said Malaysia's Government had yet to face a serious threat but Pas nevertheless had been seeking respectability at home and abroad.

A strong public stand by the Government - of the sort lacking in countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia - should help prevent extremists from winning over the Muslim majority.

Bandow noted that combating terrorism was not easy and that allies were essential, particularly in the Islamic world. It was better to work co-

operatively than intervene unilaterally.  
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