

11 JAN 2001

Hamid-US

NO TALKS TO SET UP PERMANENT US MILITARY PERMANENT BASE IN M'SIA

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 11 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today Malaysia will continue to allow United States military ships to call at its ports.

However, he said, there was no request by the US to have a permanent military base in the country, he told reporters after a luncheon meeting with visiting US Pacific Command Admiral Dennis Cutler Blair, here.

"No, we are not talking about permanent base at all...and they didn't even mention a permanent base anywhere," he said when asked if Blair's visit and his meetings with the country's top leadership had anything to do with requests to set up such bases here.

Blair, who is here on a three-day visit, met separately with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, at the Prime Minister's Department today.

Syed Hamid said the US military could make stops at ports in the country for whatever necessary purpose and added that normally they would go through the Foreign Ministry to get its agreement.

"We have even cooperated with them during their stop here, for them to do some of their exercises in our airspace...I think they are quite happy (with the arrangement)," he said.

Present was US ambassador to Malaysia B. Lynn Pascoe and Armed Forces Chief Tan Sri Mohamed Zahidi Zainuddin.

The US' military bases in Subic and Clark in the Philippines were closed in 1992 and there were reports that it was looking for new sites to maintain a strong presence in the region, especially in Southeast Asia.

Syed Hamid said Blair told him that the US would continue its presence in South Korea and Japan as it was important to maintain peace and security in the region.

"They are also keen to enhance military cooperation with us. Our view is that whatever we do, we have to take into consideration the region as a whole," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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